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The Letter in PDF format

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## Military naval industry: the urgent need for European consolidation

Author: Hervé Guillou



In order to cope with increasing competition from Asia, Russia and the United States, and to influence the export markets that are crucial to its activity, the European military shipbuilding sector must coordinate and move towards greater industrial integration, according to Hervé Guillou, Chairman and CEO of Naval Group in an exclusive interview for the Foundation.

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**Front page!** :

### The 7 Capital Challenges



To prevent the health threat posed by the Covid-19 virus from turning into a global and deadly political crisis, seven major challenges, as unexpected as they are important, will have to be met, according to Jean-Dominique Giuliani. For Europeans in particular, coordination and solidarity will be essential... [Read more](#)

**Foundation** :

### Study of the Union and the COVID-19 pandemic



The confinement imposed on 40% of the Union's population and the closure for 30 days of its external borders underline the seriousness of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. To cope, the Union is trying to deploy the various means at its disposal. But to respond and show resilience for the future, its capacity to act depends to a large extent on the Member States and their resolve to act together... [Read more](#)

**Coronavirus** :

### The ECB announces 750 billion € bonds repurchase

On 18 March, the European Central Bank announced the launch of a new contingency plan to deal with the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It will



repurchase €750 billion of public and private bonds by the end of 2020, the largest refinancing operation in its history. The Governing Council expressed its determination to take all measures at its disposal to support the euro area... [Read more](#)

### Activation of the general escape clause



On 23 March, the Ministers for the Economy and Finance approved the activation, for the first time, of the general derogation clause of the Stability and Growth Pact in order to address the socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus. The measure, proposed by the Commission on 20 March, means that Member States will be able to derogate from the fiscal rules imposed and thus increase their deficits in order to combat the negative effects of the pandemic... [Read more](#)

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### Creation of a strategic reserve of medical equipment



On 19 March, the Commission presented a strategic reserve of the RescEU programme dedicated to medical equipment to deal with Covid-19. This will have a budget of €50 million, 90% of which will be covered by the European budget. It will contain equipment to be used by the most affected Member States to deal with the coronavirus: respirators, masks, vaccines and laboratory equipment. Each Member State will be able to volunteer to host a storage site and place orders for the equipment... [Read more](#)

### Recommendations regarding public health measures and testing



On 19 March the Commission published its recommendations to the Member States on Community public health measures and screening. These documents propose to coordinate Member States' approaches. The first proposes postponing non-urgent surgery, setting up more teleconsultations and mobilising all qualified personnel or personnel in training to combat the virus. The second recommends that priority should be given to screening hospital patients and carers... [Read more](#)

### Videoconference of heads of State and government



The European Council, meeting by videoconference on 17 March, adopted the measures proposed by the Commission to combat the coronavirus epidemic, including the introduction of restrictions on entry into the Union from third countries. Other measures include temporary rules for the granting of State aid, the economic support package, recommendations on the EU's internal borders, the sharing of medical equipment and funds for research. The Heads of State and government also decided not to meet for the European Council scheduled for 26 and 27 March, but to hold a weekly video conference... [Read more](#)

### New guidelines on passenger rights



On 18 March, the Commission presented guidelines to help European passengers and carriers cope with flight cancellations due to restrictions imposed by national governments to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The guidelines will apply to journeys made by air, rail, sea or bus... [Read more](#)

### Temporary framework for State aid



On 19 March the Commission adopted a temporary framework for State aid to ensure that companies have sufficient liquidity during the Covid-19 crisis. The temporary framework includes 5 types of aid: direct grants, loan guarantees, public loans, guarantees for banks and export credit insurance... [Read more](#)

### National plans to support the economy



On 17 March, the French government announced a package of more than €300 billion to support the economy and businesses, especially SMEs, in the Covid-19 crisis. In Germany, the government adopted on 23 March a plan comprising a €156 billion loan and €822 billion in bank guarantees for companies. On 19 March, the Spanish government promised to mobilise up to €200 billion. In Poland, the government has decided to implement a 212 billion zloty (€47.3 billion) plan. In the United Kingdom, the package

includes a £330 billion (€358.6 billion) guarantee scheme and £20 billion (€21.7 billion) in tax support for businesses... [Read more](#)

## National Measures



Spain, the second most affected European country after Italy, closed its borders with France and Portugal on 17 March, while the population has been confined since 14 March. In Germany, the authorities banned gatherings of more than two people on 22 March and the population is being asked to stay in their homes. In a rare move, the Chancellor appeared on television on 18 March. In France the population is to be confined until at least 31 March, and Parliament has adopted a health emergency plan. In Poland, gatherings of more than 50 people are banned and only essential shops are open. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the confinement of the population on 23 March... [Read more](#)

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## Further measures in Italy



On 21 March, the Italian government decided to step up measures to try to slow down the Covid-19 pandemic. Travel by public or private public transport is prohibited, except for proven work requirements, absolute urgency or for health reasons. Production activities "that are strictly necessary, crucial and indispensable" have also been suspended... [Read more](#)

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## Transport Ministers' decisions on freight



Transport ministers, meeting by videoconference on 18 March, discussed the Commission's proposals to decongest internal borders and ensure the free movement of goods, in particular medical equipment, despite the restrictions applied to persons. In particular, the Commission proposes to set up so-called "green" priority lines for freight transport and to make driving and rest rules more flexible... [Read more](#)

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## Decisions taken by Employment and Social Affairs Ministers



Employment and Social Affairs Ministers discussed the social and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic by videoconference on 20 March. They were able to exchange views on the measures taken in their respective countries to help vulnerable businesses and individuals. They also discussed the use of European funds to support the European economy... [Read more](#)

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## Meeting of Industry Ministers



Ministers for industry and the internal market discussed the consequences of the coronavirus by videoconference on 20 March. They reaffirmed the importance of protecting the single market against the risk of fragmentation under the pressure of the pandemic, which would lead to major disruptions in production chains. They also discussed ways to increase the production of medical equipment, business support measures and the protection of the free movement of goods and services... [Read more](#)

## The OECD calls for international coordination



OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría proposed on 20 March an international action plan to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, stressing the need for coordination in vaccine production, in the regulation of macroeconomic and financial policies, and to restore confidence... [Read more](#)

## Postponement of elections in Serbia and North Macedonia



Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić announced on 17 March the postponement of all upcoming elections in Serbia, in particular the parliamentary elections on 26 April. Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski also postponed the parliamentary elections scheduled for 12 April... [Read more](#)

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**Commission :**

[Draft agreement with the UK](#)



On 18 March the Commission published its draft agreement for the future partnership with the United Kingdom. It incorporates the Directives approved by the Member States and covers all aspects of the future partnership: legal, economic, commercial and judicial. For its part, the United Kingdom is also preparing texts on its future relationship with the European Union at a time when the rounds of negotiations have been suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic... [Read more](#)

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### New goals for the Eastern Partnership



On 18 March the Commission proposed new long-term strategic objectives with the six Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The aim is to increase economic integration and strengthen the rule of law in these countries. The Commission is committed in particular to sustainable growth, reducing the carbon footprint and protecting human and minority rights... [Read more](#)

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## Diplomacy :

### Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



Foreign Ministers discussed the international response to the coronavirus during a videoconference on 23 March. They discussed the repatriation of EU citizens from third countries, assistance to the countries most vulnerable to the virus and misinformation targeting EU citizens outside the EU. The implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement on migration and the progress of discussions on the creation of a new mission in the Mediterranean, to monitor the arms embargo on Libya, were also discussed... [Read more](#)

### Videoconference between French, German, British and Turkish leaders



A meeting between French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was held by videoconference on 17 March. Discussions focused on the fight against Covid-19, as well as the humanitarian situation in the Syrian town of Idlib and the migrant crisis, in particular with regard to the EU-Turkey agreement on border management... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Warning about the situation of unaccompanied minors in Greece



On 17 March the Fundamental Rights Agency published a report on unaccompanied minors in Greece. It denounces the living conditions of these young migrants, who are exposed to street life and violence. It proposes recommendations at all stages of relocation, such as the appointment of a guardian and preparation for transfer. In particular, it recommends that the well-being of the children be taken into account, but also that safety measures related to the coronavirus be taken into account... [Read more](#)

### Decline in illegal border crossings



In February, the number of detections of illegal border crossings on major European migration routes decreased, according to data published by Frontex on 16 March. The agency counted around 6,200, down 42% from the previous month. The Eastern Mediterranean route remains the most used, followed by the Western Balkans, where Afghan and Syrian nationalities are the most represented among migrants... [Read more](#)

### Investigation into fake coronavirus-related products



The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) announced on 20 March the launch of an investigation into fake coronavirus-related products. These products sold at between €5 and €10 each, three times the market price, are presented as protection against the virus and are shipped with false import certificates. However, they do not protect against coronavirus, and can be dangerous to health, as they do not comply with European standards... [Read more](#)

## Belgium :

### New government led by Sophie Wilmès



The Belgian Chamber of Deputies voted to give its confidence to the government led by Sophie Wilmès (Mouvement réformateur) on 19 March to manage the coronavirus crisis. This vote ended 454 days without a fully functioning government. The government is supported by the French- and Dutch-speaking Liberal, Socialist, Christian-Democratic and Environmentalist parties, but remains in a minority. The Prime Minister pledges to relinquish her full powers once the coronavirus pandemic is over... [Read more](#)

#### Slovakia :

##### Government led by Igor Matovic sworn in



Solidarity and  
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The new Slovakian Prime Minister Igor Matovic was sworn in with his government before President Zuzana Caputova on 21 March. He leads a coalition, which emerged from the parliamentary elections of 29 February, which includes his party OL'aNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities), and We are a Family, Freedom and For the People. Of the 16 ministers in the government 3 are women...

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#### Council of Europe :

##### Any action in the field of asylum and migration must be based on Human Rights



The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights made public on 17 March a letter addressed to Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, and Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs, in which she draws their attention to important human rights issues concerning the protection of the rights of migrants, including refugees and asylum-seekers, in the member States of the European Union and its immediate neighbourhood... [Read more](#)

##### Report by the anti-racism commission on Germany



In a report published on 17 March, the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) calls on Germany to step up its efforts to prevent and counter extremism and neo-Nazism and to ensure that evidence of online hate speech is passed on to the police... [Read more](#)

##### Report on racism and intolerance in Belgium



The Council of Europe's Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its report on Belgium on 18 March. It notes progress since the previous report in 2013. It recommends, however, that the obligation for public and private service providers to report illegal residents be discontinued. ECRI remains concerned about certain points such as the consideration given to diversity in schools, victims' access to justice, cyber-harassment, the integration of migrants and the protection of Travellers' rights... [Read more](#)

#### NATO :

##### Annual report



allies with regard to defence spending... [Read more](#)

In his annual report, published on 19 March, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stresses that NATO adapted to the complex security situation in 2019, in particular with a new space policy, an adapted command structure and new means to combat hybrid and cyber attacks. He emphasises the need to ensure fair burden-sharing among

#### IMF :

##### Report on Italy's economy



attract investment and reduce public debt... [Read more](#)

In a report on the state of the Italian economy published on 20 March, the IMF notes the progress made in strengthening the banking sector. It advises Italy to continue to reduce vulnerabilities in the financial sector. The IMF stressed, however, that the report was prepared before the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. It recommends post-crisis measures focused on strengthening growth and structural reforms to increase productivity,

**Eurostat :****More than 600,000 asylum requests recorded in 2019**

612,700 first-time asylum seekers were registered in 2019 in the EU, according to data published by Eurostat on 20 March. This represents an increase of 12% compared to 2018, but is still half the number recorded in 2015. The majority of asylum seekers came from Syria, Afghanistan and Venezuela. 23% of applications were lodged in Germany and 20% in France. At the end of the year, 842,500 asylum applications were still being examined in Europe... [Read more](#)

**Surplus in the international trade of goods**

According to Eurostat's report of 18 March, the euro area recorded a surplus of €1.3 billion in international trade in goods in January. The European Union recorded a deficit of €2.6 billion, with imports accounting for €169 billion and exports for €166.5 billion... [Read more](#)

**Decrease in inflation**

EU annual inflation fell to 1.6% in February 2020, down from 1.7% in January, and euro area annual inflation was 1.2%, down from 1.4% in January, Eurostat announced on 18 March. The lowest annual inflation rate was recorded in Italy (0.2%), and the highest in Hungary (4.4%)... [Read more](#)

**Culture :****European Centre of Solidarity**

The European Centre of Solidarity in Gdansk traces the history of the trade union Solidarnosc (Solidarity) and its mission to promote democracy, citizenship and solidarity. The whole Centre, and in particular its seven exhibition rooms, can be visited virtually... [Read more](#)

**Re-thinking Guernica**

The Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid offers an exhibition dedicated to Pablo Picasso's Guernica. A digital exploration of the painting allows the visitor to understand the context of the work through academic and historical debate, including commentaries by Picasso himself... [Read more](#)

**The masters of the Museums of Bavaria**

Bavaria's museums are putting their collections online, from German Renaissance painting to 20th century art, from the Romantics to the Impressionists. In addition, a virtual exhibition is devoted to portraits by Anthonis van Dyck, a 17th-century Flemish painter... [Read more](#)

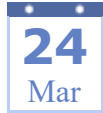
**Fantasy at the National Library of France**

The Bibliothèque Nationale de France is presenting the online exhibition "Fantasy - Back to the Sources", which provides an understanding of the evolution of fantasy, a literary genre mixing myths and the supernatural, and its links with the major societal issues of each era. Aimed at people of all ages, the exhibition offers games for children and educational tools to facilitate the transmission of information... [Read more](#)

**World Museum Liverpool**

The Liverpool Museums are opening part of their collections to virtual tours. The World Museum immerses you in ancient history, natural history and archaeology, science and space... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



24th March 2020  
Brussels  
General Affairs Council



25th March 2020  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers



26th March 2020  
Videoconference  
European Council  
Brussels  
European Parliament (teleplenary session)



27th March 2020  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Cohesion Ministers

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