

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

Parliamentary oversight in the health crisis

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With the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a general trend in Europe towards the divestment of Parliaments to the Executive. However, at a time of "distancing", the assemblies are more important than ever before, the publicity of their work being a vector of the legitimacy of the action of the powers that be. And the control of assemblies remains an essential requirement of parliamentary democracy.

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Foundation :

70 years since the Schuman Declaration : personal accounts given by European personalities



On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, several European personalities, including Ursula von der Leyen, Charles Michel, Christine Lagarde, David Sassoli, Wolfgang Schäuble and Michel Barnier responded to the Foundation's invitation and expressed their hopes for the next 70 years for Europe in a video message. Find these accounts on the special page on our website... [Read more](#)

Europe will be democratic .. or not



On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration on 9 May, the founding act of European construction, VoxEurop asked Jean-Dominique Giuliani, President of the Foundation, about the state of the Union and its prospects... [Read more](#)

Covid-19: European responses, a complete picture



Faced with the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the European Union is trying to deploy the various means at its disposal. In order to react and be resilient for the future, its capacity to act depends largely on the Member States and their resolve to act together. The Foundation provides you with a regularly updated overview of all the measures taken at national and European level... [Read more](#)

Coronavirus :

National Measures



Deconfinement began in France on May 11, with the reopening of stores and primary schools. The state of health emergency was extended until 10 July. In Belgium, meetings of more than 4 people have been allowed since 10 May and shops reopened on 11 May. In Spain, the Parliament extended the status of high-alert until 24 May. In Germany, the reopening of schools and shops continues but the infection rate is rising again. The Länder decide whether to open restaurants, museums and theatres. The professional football championship will resume on 16 May. In Austria, restaurants can reopen and religious services will resume on 15 May. In Ireland, confinement will continue until 18 May. In the United Kingdom, confinement has been extended until 1 June with permission for outdoor exercise... [Read more](#)

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Support Measures to the Economy



In France, the deferral of contributions and social security contributions for the month of May for companies was renewed. In Spain, the government mobilised 24.5 billion euros to guarantee the liquidity of companies and the self-employed. In Germany, the "Corona Tax Assistance Act" includes measures for short-time working and grants a 7% reduction in sales tax on food for restaurant owners. The Austrian government has introduced new grants to support start-ups. In the UK, new funding of £10,000 has been introduced to support dairy farmers. The Irish government has made an advance payment of 16 million euros to help the most disadvantaged students. The Belgian government has extended the validity of certain vouchers (gift vouchers, meal vouchers, sports and cultural grants)... [Read more](#)

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Deconfinement in Italy



Deconfinement began in Italy on 4 May with permission to go out, contacts with people close to them, and the resumption of certain economic activities. The next step will be on 18 May with the reopening of small shops and museums... [Read more](#)

Eurogroup Meeting



Finance ministers agreed on 8 May on the modalities of the support instrument in the context of the pandemic crisis; a credit line of €240 billion from the European Stability Mechanism will be available from 1 June for Member States affected by the crisis up to 2% of their GDP. They also took stock of the implementation of the SURE programme for financing short-time working due to the crisis... [Read more](#)

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Restrictions on the Union's borders until 15 June



The Commission has proposed to extend the restriction on non-essential travel to the Union until 15 June. It considers that the control of the pandemic is still too fragile and calls for the measures in place at the external borders to be maintained and for a gradual and coordinated lifting of restrictions... [Read more](#)

New rules governing State Aid



On 8 May the Commission announced a further adaptation of the rules on state aid to provide a framework for recapitalisation and the use of aid instruments for firms in difficulty. The Commission will extend the easing of the rules decided on in March until the end of June 2021, but will lay down conditions regarding the remuneration of managers, governance and the exit of capital from the assisted companies. These rules also provide a framework for

cross-subsidies and oblige Member States to prohibit assisted companies from carrying out acquisitions... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Telecommunications Ministers



On 5 May the telecommunications ministers discussed the role of the digital sector in the fight against the pandemic. They exchanged views on the use of tracking applications to combat the virus. They also discussed the importance of digital technology in enabling society to continue to function. They concluded that it is important to support investment in digital infrastructure for economic recovery... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Social Affairs and Employment Ministers



The Ministers for Social Affairs and Employment discussed the Union's economic recovery on 5 May and measures to support employment. The Commission stressed the importance of validating the SURE programme for short-time working by 1 June. They referred to the report on the demography of the Union which the Commission is due to publish shortly, recalling the urgency of meeting demographic challenges... [Read more](#)

Support to the agri-food sector



On 4 May the Commission presented the latest package of exceptional measures to support the agri-food sector, which has been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The Commission proposed to allow Member States to use rural development funds to compensate farmers (up to €5 000) and small agri-food businesses (up to €50 000), in addition to the increase in the state aid ceiling... [Read more](#)

Acceleration of treatment and vaccine evaluation procedures



The European Medicines Agency announced on 4 May a simplification of its regulatory procedures to speed up the marketing approvals of drugs related to COVID-19, provided they are safe and effective. In particular, delays in obtaining scientific advice and compliance checks will be reduced... [Read more](#)

Declaration by German, French and Italian business leaders



In a joint statement issued on 12 May, the presidents of the BDI, Medef and Cofindustria, which represent companies in Germany, France and Italy, call for "a major Europe-wide public policy response" of "unprecedented" scale to deal with the crisis generated by Covid-19..

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Additional help for Roma



The Council of Europe announced on 7th May the enhancement of the ROMACTED programme which helps the Roma population across Europe as they face the COVID-19 epidemic... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Union's GDP might decrease by 7.4% in 2020



The Commission presented its updated economic forecasts for 2020 and 2021 on 6 May. It estimates that the Union is facing a shock that may lead to a 7.4% fall in GDP in 2020 that is expected to be followed by a 6% recovery in 2021. For the euro area, the recession in 2020 is estimated at 7.7% and the recovery in 2021 at 6.3%. Unemployment is expected to rise from 6.7% to 9% in 2020 and to fall to 8% in 2021, and the average debt of the countries of the Union is expected to rise from 79.4% of GDP to 95% in 2020 before falling back to 92% in 2021. The Commission recalls that these forecasts depend on the evolution of the pandemic, but they highlight the need for a European recovery strategy... [Read more](#)

Plan to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism



On 7 May the Commission proposed a new Action Plan to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. It sets out measures that should be implemented over the next 12 months. It also includes an updated list of third countries considered to be high-risk, as well as a new methodology for identifying these third countries. The Action Plan is based on 6 pillars: effective enforcement of EU rules, harmonisation of rules between Member States, EU-wide supervision, judicial and police cooperation, and EU involvement in the global fight against terrorism... [Read more](#)

Declaration regarding the decision of the German Constitutional Court



The President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen recalled on 10 May that "the last word on European law is given in Luxembourg", where the Court of Justice of the Union is based. The Commission is studying the judgment of the German Constitutional Court, delivered on 5 May, which calls into question the action of the European Central Bank and a judgment of the Court of Justice, and does not rule out the opening of infringement proceedings... [Read more](#)

Council :

Zagreb Declaration



Support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries was reiterated at the virtual summit on 6 May. The joint declaration underlines the efforts made by the Western Balkan countries to establish fully functioning democratic systems, the rule of law and a market economy. The EU Member States have committed themselves to supporting this dynamic, recalling the €3.3 billion aid package against coronavirus allocated by the EU, as well as the reconciliation package for the countries of the Western Balkans... [Read more](#)

Financial aid programme for neighbouring States



On 5 May the Council approved the €3 billion aid programme for the Union's neighbouring countries. The assistance will be provided in the form of low-interest loans. Ukraine, Tunisia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Jordan will be the first recipients with €1200 million, €600 million, €250 million and €200 million respectively. Albania, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia will also receive aid... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

EUNAVFORMED Iriini mission operational



The Iriini naval mission, tasked with enforcing the arms embargo in Libya, has been operational since 4 May, with the arrival in the area of the French anti-aircraft frigate Jean Bart and a Luxembourg ship... [Read more](#)

Conclusions concerning the Eastern Partnership post 2020



On 11 May the Council approved conclusions concerning the future of the Eastern Partnership. The text reasserts the framework of the partnership, in particular the "20 results for 2020" plan adopted in March 2019, which promotes economic development, the strengthening of the rule of law, transition and energy security as well as free movement. The Council hopes that the Eastern Partnership policies will continue to provide incentives and that its next framework will help member countries to deal with the crisis caused by the coronavirus... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

MEPs ask the Czech Prime Minister to end any conflicts of interest



On 7 May, the Parliament's Budget Control Committee studied the problems of conflicts of interest in the Czech Republic regarding EU funds. MEPs asked that if the Commission can confirm that there is a conflict of interest concerning Prime Minister Andrej Babis and his

company Agrofert, he should immediately put an end to it. They have asked him not to take part in negotiations on the EU budget pending the outcome of the investigation. MEPs also denounced the lack of mechanisms to combat conflicts of interest in the Czech Republic and asked the Czech Republic to introduce systematic controls and to apply zero tolerance on conflicts of interest... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Clarification after the ruling of the German Constitutional Court



The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled on 8 May - following the 5 May ruling by the German Constitutional Court holding the European Central Bank (ECB) to account - that it had "sole" jurisdiction over the ECB's actions. It recalls the primacy of European law, its role as the court of last resort for European law and the binding nature of its preliminary rulings... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Declaration by Christine Lagarde



At a conference on 8 May, on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, the President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, said that the coronavirus crisis both confirms and tests Robert Schuman's ambition to create "de facto solidarity" to move Europe forward. She also assured that the ECB would not let itself be discouraged in its action, three days after a ruling by the German Constitutional Court calling into question the institution's monetary policy. In a statement, the ECB also assured that it would continue to do "whatever is necessary within its mandate" to maintain price stability... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Annual report of the European Ombudsman



European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly published her annual report for 2019 on 4 May. 458 inquiries were opened in 2019, almost 27% of which concerned transparency, to give the public a better understanding of European decision-making processes, in particular with regard to annual fishing quotas or Eurogroup meetings. The Ombudsman also investigated the European Medicines Agency, whose independence in decisions to grant market access to new medicines needs to be strengthened. She also investigated the institutions' staff who go to work in the private sector and vice versa... [Read more](#)

Dismantling of an international art trafficking network



Europol announced on 6 May the success of an international police operation against art traffickers. The operation was conducted jointly with Interpol and the World Customs Organization and took place in 103 different countries. It led to the arrest of 101 traffickers and the recovery of 19,000 works of art worldwide. Among the works recovered were pre-Columbian objects and antique pieces... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Last minute postponement of the presidential election



On the evening of 6 May, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of the ruling party (PiS), and his coalition partner Jaroslaw Gowin said that in their view the Covid-19 crisis made it impossible to hold the presidential election scheduled for 10 and 24 May. The Central Election Commission indicated on 7 May that it was physically impossible to hold the election, which had been due to be held by mail. A new polling date could be set within two weeks... [Read more](#)

Vatican :

Call by the Pope in support of a united, brotherly Europe



On 10 May Pope Francis recalled the importance of the commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the 70th anniversary of Robert Schuman's declaration. He called for a united, fraternal and diverse Europe... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Romania condemned for the dismissal of prosecutor Laura Codruța Kövesi



In a ruling issued on 5 May, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Romania for dismissing anti-corruption prosecutor Laura Codruța Kövesi in July 2018 following her criticism of legislative reforms, including the decriminalisation of abuse of office in the approval or adoption of a law. The Court found that Romania had violated Article 6.1 on the right to a fair trial and Article 10 on freedom of expression... [Read more](#)

EESC :

Commemoration of the Schuman Declaration



In a text published on 9 May to mark the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, the President of the European Economic and Social Council, Luca Jahier, and the Presidents of 10 European Economic and Social Councils called for "building a new development model adapted to the major transformations of the 21st century" within the framework of a united Europe. In a video message to the Foundation, L.Jahier also said that "either we are a Union or we are nothing"... [Read more](#)

Culture :

European Heritage Awards 2020



The results of the European Heritage Awards were announced on 7 May. The prize acknowledges 21 projects in the field of restoration and enhancement of European heritage... [Read more](#)

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Launch of the Creative Unite platform



The Commission announced on 5 May the launch of the Creative Unite platform. The platform provides resources and a forum for cultural professionals and creators to foster exchange and collaboration between artists despite the pandemic... [Read more](#)

Courtauld Institute Lessons



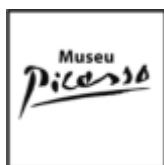
The Courtauld Institute of Arts in London is offering a series of expert lectures on art, history and society every Thursday until 21 May... [Read more](#)

Old and Modern Masters in Schwerin



The museum in Schwerin, Germany, brings together works from the 17th century to the present day, including many old masters. A virtual visit is possible... [Read more](#)

With Picasso



In addition to its collections, the Picasso Museum in Barcelona offers games based on the artist's works on its website, as well as various online events - visits, concerts, quizzes - under the keyword #DIM2020... [Read more](#)

Raphaël in Chantilly

The Chantilly estate website offers a video guided tour of the exhibition "Raphaël in Chantilly. The master and his pupils" organized on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Italian painter's death... [Read more](#)



The Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow re-opens



Like most museums in Poland, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow will reopen its doors on 12 May, with new exhibitions devoted in particular to realism and space. Its collections remain accessible online... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



11-15 May 2020

Negotiations between the European Union and the UK



12 May 2020

Meeting of Health Ministers Meeting of Defence Ministers



13th May 2020

Meeting of Agriculture Ministers



13-16 May

Brussels
Plenary Session at the European Parliament



15th May 2020

Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting of Industry Ministers Meeting of the Eurogroup



18 May 2020

Meeting of Education Ministers

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