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In the time of COVID-19, China's mask has fallen with regard to Europe

Authors: Sylvain Kahn, Estelle Prin



2020 was forecast to be a busy Chinese-European year on the diplomatic front, with numerous meetings designed to bring crucial issues such as the investment agreement to a successful conclusion. The coronavirus crisis and China's attitude, between mask diplomacy and the strategy of the "wolf warriors", crystallised the turning point taken by the Union, towards a more balanced relationship, more respectful of European interests.

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Front page! :

Europe: For an even more comprehensive recovery



Since the start of the health crisis, some Member States have suspended free movement and have withdrawn behind their national borders, flouting EU rules. Now that the ambitious European recovery plan is being put in place, it is time to consider making its benefits conditional on another step forward, since the harmonisation of health decisions has an impact on free movement. Those who keep their borders closed to their European partners should be excluded from the benefits of the recovery plan, says Giuliani... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

The Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2020



The 2020 edition of the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union", a reference work for European decision-makers, is available in hard copy in French, published by Marie B, and in electronic format in French and English. With contributions from leading personalities and experts, together with original maps and annotated statistics, it provides a comprehensive

view of the European Union and analyses the challenges facing Europe. You can order it on our website... [Read more](#)



Table of health measures and travels conditions in Europe



At the start of the new school year, the 27 Member States of the European Union are trying to determine the conditions for resuming activities without rekindling the epidemic. The Foundation offers you a summary of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. An essential, regularly updated resource to help you understand the period that is now beginning... [Read more](#)



Belarus - a Chronology of a revolution now underway



Since the "rigged" presidential election of 9 August, the Belarusian people have been protesting against the continued rule of Alexander Lukashenko. While opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is in exile in Lithuania and arrests of opponents and police violence continue, the European Union is calling for political dialogue and preparing sanctions against the regime. To follow this crisis, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European reactions and initiatives... [Read more](#)



Commission :

Plan of action regarding rare raw materials



On 3 September, the Commission presented its strategy to secure the Union's supplies of rare raw materials and published a list of 30 raw materials considered critical. It proposes a plan of 10 concrete measures, including the creation of a European alliance by the end of the year... [Read more](#)



Call for a coordinated approach to free movement during the pandemic



On 4 September, the Commission presented its recommendations for harmonising and coordinating measures restricting the free movement of persons in the Union. Four areas for action are proposed, including the introduction of a common colour code to identify outbreaks more clearly and the criteria for taking restrictive measures... [Read more](#)



Mairead McGuinness put forward for the post of Commissioner



The President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, proposed on 8 September the appointment of Mairead McGuinness, Vice-President of the European Parliament, as Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Market Union. Her appointment is subject to confirmation by the Parliament and the Council. Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis will take over Phil's trade portfolio while keeping the Eurogroup... [Read more](#)



Council :

Informal meeting of Agriculture Ministers



Agriculture ministers, who met on 1 September in Koblenz, discussed the introduction of a European animal welfare label. They looked at ways to strengthen European supply chains and the agri-food sector to make them more resilient to crises. The Commission has been asked to draw up a report on the subject... [Read more](#)



Diplomacy :

The Union threatens Russia with sanctions after the poisoning of Alexei Navalny



In a statement on behalf of the 27 Member States, High Representative Josep Borrell condemned the poisoning of Russian opponent Alexei Navalny and recalled that the use of a neurotoxic product such as Novichok was "totally unacceptable". He called for a common international response and said the EU was ready to take appropriate measures, including further sanctions against Russia. Germany, which holds the EU presidency, is demanding answers from the Russian authorities "within the next few days" about the circumstances of the poisoning... [Read more](#)



Court of Justice :**Invalidation of an Italian law regarding the ownership of the media**

The Court of Justice ruled on 3 September that Italian legislation preventing the French media company Vivendi from acquiring 28% of the capital of the Italian telecommunications giant Mediaset was contrary to EU law. It considers that it constitutes a restriction on the freedom of establishment and that it is not justified as it does not meet the objective of information pluralism... [Read more](#)

Air passengers can be reimbursed in their national currency

The Court of Justice ruled on 3 September that a passenger on a cancelled or delayed flight is entitled to claim compensation under EU law in the national currency of his place of residence, even if the currency is not the euro. The case was brought before the Court by a Polish court... [Read more](#)

Appointment of three judges and an advocate general

On 2 September, the Member States appointed three Judges and an Advocate General to the Court of Justice. Belgian, Koen Lenaerts, the current President of the Court, has been appointed for a new term of office which will run from October 2021 to October 2027. The Latvian Ineta Ziemele and the Czech Jan Passer have been appointed until October 2024. The Greek Athanasios Rantos has been appointed Advocate General until October 2021, following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :**Report on the European Semester**

In a report published on 3 September, the Court of Auditors made several recommendations to improve the European Semester, the mechanism for coordinating the economic and budgetary policies of the Member States. It proposes, among other things, to give priority to research and the fight against poverty, to ensure better monitoring of the implementation of the Commission's country-specific recommendations (RPPs) and to strengthen the link between EU funds and the application of these recommendations... [Read more](#)

ECB :**Capital Markets Union**

In an article published on 2 September, the Vice-President of the European Central Bank, Luis de Guindos, and two members of the Executive Board, Fabio Panetta and Isabel Schnabel, stress the need to strengthen the Capital Markets Union... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :**First European "rideshare" service**

The Vega rocket took off from the Kourou base on 3 September and put 53 nano and micro-satellites into orbit. This mission was a validation flight for the SSMS (Small Spacecrafts Mission Service), the European Space Agency's (ESA) new small satellite launch programme... [Read more](#)

Germany :**Visit of Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister**

The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi completed a diplomatic tour of Europe in Berlin on 1 September, which also took him to Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and France. Hosted by his German counterpart Heiko Maas, they discussed the deepening of bilateral relations between the two countries, the fight against Covid-19, international tensions and human rights. On 30 August, Wang Yi met in Paris with the head of French diplomacy

Jean-Yves Le Drian. The two ministers discussed trade and climate issues as well as human rights... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

Appointment of 7 in a bid to start the formation of a government



On 4 September, King Philippe of the Belgians appointed Egbert Lachaert (Open Vld) and Conner Rousseau (sp.a) to carry out a pre-government formation mission in order to create the conditions for the establishment of a coalition resulting from the elections of 26 May 2019. After 16 months of discussions, 7 parties are expected to form a coalition. The "pre-formateurs" are due to submit their report to the king on 11 September... [Read more](#)

Bulgaria :

Towards a new Constitution?



On 2 September, the Bulgarian Parliament approved by 127 votes out of 240 the launch of the examination of Prime Minister Boïko Borissov's plan to reform the Constitution. The discussion could last between two and five months and will have to be followed by a vote to set up a Constituent Assembly. The draft new constitution is a response to the demonstrations that have been taking place since July against the government and corruption... [Read more](#)

France :

Presentation of recovery plan



On 3 September, the French government presented its economic recovery plan, called France Relance. The €100 billion plan is divided into three parts: ecology (€30 billion), competitiveness (€35 billion) and cohesion (€35 billion), directed towards investment, the reduction of manufacturing taxes, training, the health sector and the fight against unemployment and job insecurity. The plan is to be financed to the tune of €40 billion by the European recovery plan decided in July... [Read more](#)

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Slovakia :

Renewed call for justice for a murdered journalist



Slovak President Zuzana Caputova said she was "shocked" on 3 September after a court acquitted billionaire Marian Kocner in the trial for the murder of journalist Jan Kucak and his girlfriend in 2018. Kocner is regarded by investigators and the families of the victims as the instigator of the murders, which led to the fall of the government. While the public prosecutor's office and the civil parties intend to appeal, the president assured that "the search for justice is not over and will continue before the Supreme Court". The Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Justice, Vera Jourova, said that the Union was still waiting for those responsible to be brought to justice... [Read more](#)

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Serbia :

Economic agreement with Kosovo



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovar Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti signed an agreement on "economic normalisation" between their countries on 4 September. The agreement provides for the improvement of transport infrastructure and movement, the reduction of customs duties and the sharing of water and energy resources. At a meeting with the Union in Brussels on 7 September, the two leaders discussed for the first time the arrangements between communities and the issue of mutual compensation... [Read more](#)

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Switzerland :

Inauguration of new tunnel under the Alps



Swiss President Simonetta Sommaruga inaugurated the Ceneri railway tunnel on 4 September. 15.4 km long, it completes the Loetschberg and Gotthard tunnels, which were opened in 2007 and 2016, to complete the New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA) project designed to facilitate traffic and reduce lorry traffic... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Request for inquiry into police violence against journalists in Bulgaria



The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, expressed "concern" on 3 September about police violence against Bulgarian journalists covering a demonstration against the government. She has called for an investigation to be opened... [Read more](#)

Turkey called on to free Osman Kavala



The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe urged Turkey on 4 September to release businessman and human rights defender Osman Kavala immediately. Arrested in 2017 for attempting to overthrow the Turkish government and constitutional order, Osman Kavala was acquitted in February 2020 but was again arrested and imprisoned. The Council of Europe has given the Turkish authorities until 11 November to submit an action plan to prevent further violations of the European Convention on Human Rights in the future... [Read more](#)

Spain calls for the relocation of migrants from Melilla



In a letter to the Spanish Ministers of the Interior and Migration made public on 3 September, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, asked the Spanish authorities to accommodate around 500 migrants elsewhere than in the Melilla bullring where they are currently located, in conditions she described as "deplorable". The Ministry of the Interior replied in a letter that 80 people would be transferred from the Spanish enclave in Morocco to mainland Spain after medical examinations... [Read more](#)

NATO :

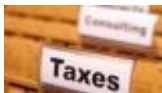
Condemnation of the poisoning of Russian opponent Navalny



Following a meeting of NATO countries on 4 September, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called on Russia to fully disclose its Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, following confirmation by Berlin two days earlier that Russian opponent Alexei Navalny had been poisoned. NATO is calling for those responsible to be brought to justice. After the meeting, he spoke of "technical talks" between Greece and Turkey to resolve the crisis created by Turkish gas prospecting operations in Greek territorial waters... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Report on progress in States' tax policy reforms



According to an OECD study released on 3 September, governments have taken unprecedented budgetary measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis, but they will need to sustain economic recovery in the face of growing budgetary challenges. The OECD encourages governments to continue their efforts to support future economic recovery... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Drop in inflation in August



Euro-zone annual inflation fell to an estimated -0.2% in August from 0.4% in July, Eurostat estimated on 1 September... [Read more](#)

Rise in unemployment in July



The unemployment rate increased in July by 0.1% in the Union and 0.2% in the euro zone according to figures published by Eurostat on 1 September. It was 7.2% in the EU and 7.9% in the eurozone... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Annual report on the fight to counter financial fraud



In its Annual Fraud Report published on 3 September, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) takes stock of its activities in 2019. It calls for better co-ordination between Member States in the face of the new challenges posed by the pandemic, such as the flow of illegal medicines and medical supplies. It notes that the financial value of detected fraud has decreased by 34% since 2018. Detected fraud affecting the EU budget has increased by 9% compared to 2017, to €461 million... [Read more](#)

Annual report of the Creative Europe programme



The Creative Europe Programme Report 2019, published on 2 September by the Commission, provides an annual review of the programme to support Europe's cultural and creative sector and presents the key elements of the programme, Creative Europe 2021-2027. In 2019, the programme financed 25% of European film production; 44 television series, 290 films and 75 festivals... [Read more](#)

Culture :

European Heritage Days



The European Heritage Days, a joint initiative between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, will continue until the end of October on the themes of culture and education. More than 20 000 events are being organised in 50 countries to raise awareness among European citizens of Europe's cultural wealth and diversity... [Read more](#)

Hundertwasser-Schiele in Vienna



The Leopold Museum in Vienna has extended the exhibition "Hundertwasser-Schiele", a dialogue between the two painters Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928-2000) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918), with 170 works and archive documents, until 10 January 2021... [Read more](#)

Cartier-Bresson in Venice



Palazzo Grassi will host until 20 March 2021 a selection of more than 200 works by the French photographer, chosen and commented on by five personalities: photographer Annie Leibovitz, filmmaker Wim Wenders, writer Javier Cercas, the director of the Prints and Photography Department of the French National Library Sylvie Aubenas and the collector François Pinault, the owner of the venue... [Read more](#)

Photographs of Ireland in the 1950's



The Collins Barracks, which houses part of the Irish National Museum in Dublin, is presenting an exhibition until November on Ireland in the 1950s as seen by 3 photographers: Henri-Cartier Bresson, Dorothea Lange and Robert Cresswell. Urban and rural landscapes, portraits and scenes of daily life make up the exhibition... [Read more](#)

Mallorca Live Festival



The Mallorca Live Festival is taking place until 27th September. The programme combines several types of alternative music with concerts that respect mandatory health rules... [Read more](#)

Short films in Brussels



The BSFF (Brussels Short Film Festival) is taking place in 5 locations in the Belgian capital until 12 September. 34 short films are in competition. Sessions for young audiences, workshops and a selection of European films that have won awards during the year are also on offer... [Read more](#)

Classical music in Wroclaw

The 55th Wratislavia Cantans International Festival of Classical Music is being held from 11-13 September in Wroclaw. It will include a tribute to the composer Krzysztof Penderecki, who passed away this year... [Read more](#)



Berlin Art Week



The Berlin Art Week, an annual event that allows Berlin museums, galleries, private collectors and artists to showcase their work through exhibitions, film screenings, concerts and other events throughout the city, is taking place from 9 to 13 September... [Read more](#)

Art Paris at the Grand Palais



The Paris Modern and Contemporary Art Fair is being held at the Grand Palais from 10 to 13 September. 112 galleries are present for this 22nd edition, and address two main themes: the French art scene focusing on the notions of narrative, singular and universal stories; and Spanish and Portuguese art from the 1950s to the present day... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



7-11 September 2020

London

Negotiations between the European Union and the UK



10 September 2020

Frankfurt

Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank



11 September 2020

Berlin

Eurogroup Meeting



12 September 2020

Berlin

Informal meeting of Finance Ministers



14 September 2020

EU-China Meeting

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