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The Letter in PDF format

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## The Importance of the Moral Dimension in the European Project

Author: Francisco Juan Gomez Martos



The Covid-19 crisis has left the feeling that Europeans lack solidarity and trust in each other, especially in budgetary matters. Yet the Union's integration model has benefited all its members. In order to strengthen confidence, it is necessary to reinforce the communication effort and the Union's cultural and moral dimension.

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### Contents

**Front page!** : Europe/Law - State/Union **Foundation** : Publication/Schuman Report - Belarus - Post-Covid/Europe **Commission** : Duties/USA - Misinformation - Brexit **Parliament** : Budget **Council** : Eurogroup - Economy/Finance - Tunnel/Channel - Budget 2021 - 2020 Budget - Russia/Ukraine **Diplomacy** : Russia/Navalny - Belarus - China **Court of Auditors** : Recovery - China **ECB** : Decisions **European Agencies** : Pollution **Germany** : Europe **Estonia** : Forum/Baltic **France** : Mediterranean - Hydrogen **Greece** : Migrants **Ireland** : Brexit **UK** : EU-UK - Japan **Council of Europe** : Migrants/Greece - Belarus **UN** : Russia/Navalny **Eurostat** : GDP/Employment **Studies/Reports** : Strategy - VAT - Education **Culture** : Cinema/San Sebastian - Science/Glasgow - Festival/Hamburg - Music/Warsaw - Exhibition/Paris - Mostra/Venice

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

**Front page!** :

**Europe, the law and trust**



As more and more governments around the world break international rules, including the British government which is considering reneging on the agreement reached with the European Union last year, the continent of Europe must remember that only the law guarantees freedoms and protects it from excesses, Jean-Dominique Giuliani said... [Read more](#)

**The Union, in which state?**



The President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, delivers her first State of the Union address on 16 September. With its recovery plan and the action of the ECB, Europe has reacted better to the crisis than other powers. It must now think of itself as a "geopolitical power" in order to face the challenges and speak directly to its citizens, to assert its singularity and defend its model, said Jean-Dominique 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 it faces. You can order a copy on our website... [Read more](#)

### Belarus: timeline of a revolution in progress



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](#)

### Table of health measures and travel 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 indispensable, regularly updated resource to understand the period which is now in progress... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Reduction in customs duties on US imports



The Commission proposed on 8 September to reduce customs duties on US imports into the Union by \$111 million a year, eliminating in particular taxes on lobsters. The proposal confirms the agreement reached on 21 August between the EU and the United States, in which the latter undertakes to reduce taxes on European imports by \$160 million a year. The measures will apply retroactively from 1 August 2020... [Read more](#)

#### Evaluation of Code of Good Practice against disinformation



In its evaluation of the Code of Good Practice against Disinformation on 10 September, the Commission welcomed the action of signatories, including Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Tiktok, against disinformation and illegal advertising. It wants more companies to join the code. It also believes that it is necessary to develop common definitions of concepts such as "influence peddling", "political advertising" or "inauthentic behaviour", indicators (such as the reliability of sources), more precise commitments, and greater sharing of information and algorithmic data... [Read more](#)

#### Warnings made to the UK



At the end of the 8th round of negotiations between the Union and the United Kingdom on the future relationship which took place in London, the Union's chief negotiator Michel Barnier deplored the lack of cooperation from the British on 10 September. He stressed that in the absence of progress in the negotiations, the Union would continue its preparations in the event of a no deal. On the same day, commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic urged the British government to withdraw "before the end of the month" the draft bill on the British internal market presented on 9 September, which calls into question certain provisions of the withdrawal agreement that came into force on 1 February. He warned that the EU was ready to start legal proceedings against the UK. The Parliament's coordination group on the UK and the leaders of the political groups said they would not ratify any new agreement if the UK did not comply with the withdrawal agreement... [Read more](#)

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### Parliament :

#### Negotiations with the Council regarding the multi-annual budget

In their third round of negotiations with the Council Presidency on the EU budget for 2021-2027, Parliament's negotiators once again called for an increase in appropriations for the Union's flagship programmes such as Horizon for Research and



Erasmus+, as well as for the EU4Health programme for health. They also noted progress in the discussions on the issue of own resources to finance the budget... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### Eurogroup Meeting



The 19 Eurogroup ministers, meeting in Berlin on 11 September, expressed their wish to move forward with the deepening of banking union and the reform of the Treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) by the end of the year. This was their first physical meeting since February, and the first chaired by the Irish Minister Paschal Donohoe, who was elected head of the Eurogroup in July... [Read more](#)

### Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



The 27 Economy and Finance Ministers met in Berlin on 12 September. They discussed four issues: recovery, own resources, tax harmonisation and digital tax. The German minister, Olaf Scholz, who chaired the meeting, explained that a majority of Member States are in favour of additional own resources... [Read more](#)

### Chunnel: France requested to negotiate with the UK



In the context of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, the Council authorised France on 9 September to negotiate an amendment to the Treaty of Canterbury, which has governed the operation of the Channel Tunnel since 1986. European rules on railway safety and interoperability will be amended so that the current Franco-British commission can remain the competent safety authority for the application of Union law on the tunnel rail link... [Read more](#)

### Position on the 2021 budget



On 9 September, the Council adopted its position on the Union's draft budget for 2021. The budget totals €162.9 billion in commitment appropriations and €164.8 billion in payment appropriations... [Read more](#)

### Increase in 2020 budget



On 11 September, the Council adopted an amended budget for the year 2020 which provides for €6.2 billion to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic and to finance the vaccination strategy against Covid-19. €1.09 billion is allocated to the deployment and development of a vaccine and €5.1 billion to the coronavirus investment initiative and the +€5.1 billion investment initiative... [Read more](#)

### Extension of sanctions against breaches of Ukrainian territorial integrity



On 10 September, the Council decided to extend sanctions against persons and entities accused of undermining the "territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence" of Ukraine for a further six months. The sanctions comprise travel restrictions and the freezing of assets, with regard to 175 individuals and 44 entities. These have been in place since March 2014... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### G7 Declaration regarding the poisoning of Alexei Navalny



On 8 September, the foreign ministers of the G7 countries (France, Germany, Canada, the United States, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom) and the High Representative of the Union condemned the poisoning of Russian opponent Alexei Navalny. In a joint statement, they called on Russia to "shed full light, without delay and in full transparency, on the identity of the perpetrators of this heinous poisoning". Navalny, who was poisoned on 20 August, is being treated in Berlin where his condition remains serious... [Read more](#)

### Condemnation of arrests in Belarus



On 7 September, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, condemned the recent politically motivated arrests and detentions in Belarus. He called for the release of all persons arrested on political grounds before or after the presidential election on 9 August. On 11 September, it condemned the "escalation of violence" by the regime, the forced exile and arrest of the members of the Coordination Council and called for their immediate release... [Read more](#)

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### Digital Dialogue with China



The first high-level digital dialogue with China was held on 10 September between Commission Vice-President Margrethe Vestager and Chinese Vice Prime Minister Liu He. The meeting identified priorities for the digital transformation of their respective economies and areas where concrete progress can be made. The meeting was held in preparation for the EU-China meeting on 14 September... [Read more](#)

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## Court of Auditors :

### Opinion on the European recovery plan



In an opinion delivered on 9 September, the Court of Auditors stresses the importance of rigorous implementation of the national plans through which the €672 billion Recovery and Resilience Facility will be used. The auditors recommend that the plans be linked to compliance with Commission objectives and benefit from strong European coordination. They also recommend measures to combat fraud and consider that the role of the European Parliament in the governance of the plans should be more clearly defined... [Read more](#)

### Analysis of the Union's response to China's investment strategy



The European Union is struggling to cope with China's investment strategy in Europe, says the Court of Auditors in an analysis published on 10 September. It highlights the economic and political risks that the China strategy poses for the EU. It recommends better coordination between EU institutions and member countries in their respective relations with China and a proper analysis of the risks and prospects of these investments... [Read more](#)

## ECB :

### Meeting of Council of Governors



The Governing Council of the European Central Bank decided on 10 September to leave interest rates unchanged. It states that interest rates will only change when inflation stabilises at around 2%. The President of the ECB, Christine Lagarde, has noted a "strong rebound in activity" which however remains subject to the course of the pandemic. She stressed that she was closely monitoring the development of the euro exchange rate, which has been on the rise recently... [Read more](#)

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## European Agencies :

### Pollution to blame for one death in eight in Europe



In a report published on 8 September, the European environment agency explains that environmental degradation claims more than 600 000 victims a year in Europe, accounting for 12% of deaths. The agency warns of the effects of air pollution, heat waves and exposure to dangerous chemicals... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### Angela Merkel's speech on Germany and European Unity



At a conference organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on 10 September, German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed that German unity, whose 30th anniversary will be celebrated on 3 October, has only been possible within the framework of European solidarity, and that the challenges now facing Europe, in particular the coronavirus and immigration, can only be tackled together... [Read more](#)

## Estonia :

### Meeting of the 8 countries of the North-Baltic Forum



Meeting in Tallinn on 9 September, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden, members of the Nordic-Baltic Eight forum, condemned the use of the chemical weapon against Russian opponent Alexei Navalny. They reiterated their solidarity with the Belarusian people and called for the release of the opponents. They announced that they wanted to strengthen their economic cooperation to tackle the health crisis... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Summit of the countries in the Union's south



On 10 September, 7 Heads of State and Government (France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta) present at the Summit of Southern European Union countries organised by France in Corsica stressed the importance of giving a new impetus to European policy in the Mediterranean. They called on Turkey to end its unilateral activities in Greece's maritime waters so that the two countries could engage in a dialogue on the delimitation of their maritime area... [Read more](#)

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### Strategy for the development of decarbonated hydrogen



On 9 September, the French government presented a €7 billion plan to develop decarbonated hydrogen. This project aims to encourage the consumption of clean hydrogen in order to decarbonise sectors such as industry and transport. Interest in this technology is shared by Germany, which has presented a €9 billion plan for its development... [Read more](#)

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## Greece :

### Fire at the Lesbos camp and transfer of migrants



Several fires broke out on 9 September in the overcrowded migrant camp of Moria, on the Greek island of Lesbos. The European Union announced the immediate transfer to mainland Greece of 400 children and adolescents. The Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced the dispatch of three ships to accommodate 2,000 migrants temporarily. On 10 September German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a Franco-German initiative to take in 100 to 150 children each from Moria. In all, 10 European countries will receive 400 migrants... [Read more](#)

## Ireland :

### The government presents its Brexit readiness plan



On 9 September, the Irish government presented a Brexit readiness plan for companies. This document is organised around two scenarios: a trade agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union and a no deal with trade relations based on WTO rules. The Irish government warns that both scenarios will have "profound political, economic and legal implications" as the UK is Ireland's largest trading partner... [Read more](#)

## UK :

### The government is planning to breach the withdrawal agreement concluded with the Union



On 9 September, the British government published a bill on the organisation of its internal market after Brexit. Some provisions run counter to the withdrawal agreement negotiated with the European Union, including derogations from agreed state aid obligations and changes to rules on the movement of goods, if the UK and the EU fail to conclude a trade agreement. The Commission considered that the bill would be contrary to international law and called on the UK government to withdraw it... [Read more](#)

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### Trade Agreement with Japan



On 11th September the UK and Japan concluded a free-trade agreement which provides for the lifting of 99% of customs duties on British exports to Japan. This is the first trade agreement negotiated by the UK since Brexit... [Read more](#)

## Council of Europe :

### Appeal to help migrants in the Greek camps



On 9 September, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, called on the Greek authorities to provide urgent assistance to those in need following the fire at the Moria migrant camp. She condemned the harsh conditions in which asylum seekers and migrants live in camps on the Aegean islands. She called on other members of the Council of Europe to provide assistance to Greece... [Read more](#)

### Concern regarding situation in Belarus



On 8 September, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, expressed her concern about recent human rights violations in Belarus. She denounced the unjustified arrests of anti-government demonstrators and the intimidation of the Coordination Council there. She offered the Council of Europe's assistance to open a fair dialogue between the Belarusian leadership and civil society... [Read more](#)

## UN :

### Call for an "in-depth", "independent" investigation into the Navalny affair



The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, asked on 8th September for Russia to lead an in-depth, independent, impartial, transparent investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny. She expressed her concern about the numerous attempts to assassinate Russian or former-Russian citizens over the last few years... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Reduction in the GDP and employment in the second quarter



During the second quarter, GDP fell by 11.4% in the Union and by 11.8% in the euro zone, according to figures published by Eurostat on 8 September. The number of people in employment fell by 2.7% in the EU and 2.9% in the eurozone over the same period... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### Commission's first strategic foresight report



The Commission presented its first Strategic Foresight Report on 9 September, focusing on the notion of resilience after the COVID-19 crisis. The report mainly addresses socio-economic, numerical, ecological and geopolitical issues... [Read more](#)

### VAT fraud cost the economy 140 billion € in 2018



The loss of revenue to EU economies due to VAT fraud, tax evasion and deficiencies in national tax and statistical administrations was estimated at €140bn in 2018, according to a report published by the commission on 10 September. Romania and Greece have lost more than 30% of their VAT, while Sweden has lost just 0.7%. The report predicts a shortfall of €164bn for the year 2020. The commission concludes that this figure, which is higher than the EU's annual budget, demonstrates the need for a comprehensive reform of the EU's VAT rules and a strengthening of tax cooperation between Member States... [Read more](#)

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### Report on Education



In a report on education released on 8 September, the OECD assesses the potential effects of the pandemic on education systems. The report stresses that strengthening education must remain a priority for governments at a time when "governments may nevertheless have to make difficult decisions on the allocation of public funds as economic growth slows down". Finally, the report predicts a decline in international student mobility and a risk to the added value of institutions of higher education... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Festival in San Sebastian



The 68th edition of the San Sebastian International Film Festival will be held from the 18th to 26th of September, and will be presided over by Italian director Luca Guadagnino. More than 250 screenings are on the programme... [Read more](#)

### Glasgow Science Festival



"Science on the Couch", an online version of the Glasgow Science Festival which normally takes place in June, is being held until 9 November. The theme of the events and animations is the scientific response to the global pandemic... [Read more](#)

### Reeperbahn Festival in Hamburg



From the 16th to 19th September, the Reeperbahn Festival is held in Hamburg on the main avenue of the same name, with more than 200 concerts on the programme for all tastes. Due to the health conditions, some of the concerts will be online... [Read more](#)

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### Autumn Festival in Warsaw



The Warsaw Autumn Festival, Poland's main contemporary music event, will take place from 17 to 27 September. The relationship between music and language will be at the heart of the programme, which includes François Sarhan's new opera and a verbal-musical performance by Agata Zubel... [Read more](#)

### De Chirico at the Orangerie



The exhibition "Giorgio de Chirico. Metaphysical Painting", on show at the Orangerie Museum from 16 September to 14 December, follows the work of the Italian artist and his artistic and philosophical influences... [Read more](#)

### Winner of the Venice Mostra



The Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival was awarded on 12 September to the film Nomadland by American director Chloé Zhao. Britain's Vanessa Kirby won an award for her role in Pieces of a Woman, and Italy's Pierfrancesco Favino for his role in Padrenostro, both for Best Actress and Best Actor... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



14-17 September 2020  
Brussels  
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



16 September 2020  
European Parliament  
Speech on the State of the Union



16-17 September 2020  
Osnabrück  
Informal Education Ministers Meeting



18 September 2020  
Brussels  
Competitiveness Council

20  
Sep

20-21 September 2020  
Berlin  
Informal Trade Ministers Meeting

21  
Sep

21 September 2020  
Brussels  
Agriculture and Fisheries Council  
Brussels  
Foreign Affairs Council

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