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The Letter in PDF format

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The European Council: a self-proclaimed "sovereign" off the rails

Author: Jean-Guy Giraud



Over time, the European Council has become the real nerve centre of the European Union, multiplying the number of meetings, going into the detail of issues, and exceeding its remit as laid down in the Treaty. A reform of its functioning and of its relations with the other institutions would help to correct this trend.

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Elections :

The rightwing opposition leads in the first round of the Lithuanian legislative election



The Homeland Union - Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the main opposition party in Lithuania, came out ahead in the first round of parliamentary elections on 11 October with 24.8% of the vote. It won 23 seats in the 70 constituencies that voted by proportional representation. It leads the Farmers' and Green Party (LVZS) of outgoing Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis, which obtained 17.5% of the vote and 16 seats. 68 seats remain to be filled in the second round on 25 October in a single-member constituency (3 candidates were elected in the first round). The LVZS may find it difficult to stay in power as its two coalition partners have not managed to cross the threshold to be represented in the Seimas, the single house of parliament... [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 the contributions made by the highest personalities and the best experts. With original maps and annotated statistics, this book offers a

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

Parliament in the time of the coronavirus

 The Foundation, in partnership with a European university research network initiated by the University of Lille in 2016 on the subject of "Parliament and Time", is launching a new series of reports aimed at documenting the "impact of the health crisis on the functioning of national parliaments" in Europe. The first two publications concern France and the United Kingdom, two States particularly affected by the pandemic, which have reacted differently, according to a time frame and on the basis of specific legal mechanisms... [Read more](#)

Belarus: chronology 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, exiled in Lithuania, has just met German Chancellor Angela Merkel and addressed French MPs, and while arrests of opponents and police violence continue, the Union has decided to punish leaders of the regime and continues to call for political dialogue. 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



Whilst the pandemic remains present in Europe, the 27 Member States of the European Union are taking further restrictive measures while trying to maintain economic and social activities. 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 situation... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Plan of 9 billion € for the Balkans



On 6 October, the Commission set priorities for negotiations with official and potential candidates for EU membership, proposing a €9 billion economic and investment plan to boost economic convergence with the Western Balkans. The annual reports show that the main sticking point for the candidate countries remains the rule of law, especially corruption, justice and the press. Accession negotiations have been open with Montenegro since 2012 and Serbia since 2014, while they have stalled with Turkey (2005). Northern Macedonia and Albania are candidates for membership but have not begun negotiations; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have the status of potential candidates... [Read more](#)

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Negotiations over a fisheries agreement with UK and Norway



The Commission proposed on 7 October to open negotiations for a fisheries agreement with the United Kingdom and Norway. It notes that an agreement is necessitated by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, one of the consequences of which is that "certain fish stocks in the North Sea can no longer be considered as stocks shared bilaterally between the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway only"... [Read more](#)

Entry into force of the investments screening mechanism



The foreign investment screening mechanism came into force on 11 October. It facilitates the exchange of information about foreign investment in sensitive or strategic sectors and allows Member States to raise concerns. The mechanism allows the Commission to issue opinions when an investment constitutes a threat to the security or public order of more than one Member State or jeopardises a project/programme of European interest... [Read more](#)

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Social bonds to finance SURE programme



The Commission announced on 7 October the launch of social bonds to finance the European SURE programme to combat unemployment. The

funds raised, for a maximum total amount of €100 billion, will be transferred to the beneficiary Member States in the form of loans... [Read more](#)

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New strategic framework for the integration of Roma



On 7 October, the Commission presented a 10-year plan to support the Roma in the EU. The plan includes new objectives in seven areas of action: equality, inclusion, participation, education, employment, health and housing. The new targets should help to reduce discrimination against Roma, the gap in poverty, life expectancy, housing deprivation and participation in child rearing between Roma and the general population... [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

MEPs approve the Commission reshuffle



The Parliament approved the reshuffle in the Commission on 7 October. Following the plenary vote, the Commission's executive vice-president Valdis Dombrovskis will take over the trade portfolio (515-110 in favor, with 70 abstentions). Mairead McGuinness will become commissioner for financial services, financial stability and capital markets union (583 votes in favour and 75 against (37 abstentions). The two candidates were interviewed by MEPs on 2 October. Ms McGuinness' appointment was formally adopted by the Council on 12 October... [Read more](#)

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Goal of climate neutrality to 60%



On 8 October, MEPs adopted a position in the negotiations on the European climate law. They call for a 60% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and not 55% as proposed by the Commission. To achieve this, climate neutrality must be achieved for each Member State by 2050 and not only at EU level. They call for the phasing out of direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuels by 2025 and the creation of a European Climate Change Council to ensure the progress and implementation of this policy... [Read more](#)

Proposal for a mechanism to protect the Union's values



In a resolution adopted on 7 October, MEPs call on the Commission to propose the creation of a mechanism for the protection of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights with the establishment of an evidence-based tool, applicable to all Member States and enabling the Union to ensure the protection of its legal order, its values and the fundamental rights of European citizens... [Read more](#)

Vote on cooperation regarding the Channel Tunnel



In the context of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, on 8 October MEPs adopted two proposals enabling France 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 have to be amended so that the current Franco-British commission can remain the competent safety authority for the application of EU law on the tunnel rail link. The proposal now has to be approved by the Council before 31 December... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Meeting of Interior Ministers



On 8 October, the 27 interior ministers discussed the pact on migration and asylum presented by the Commission. The German Presidency of the Council announced its intention to reach a political agreement by December, particularly on the issue of border controls, in order to make progress on legislative changes during the Portuguese Presidency of the Council. The ministers discussed the cooperation structures initiated with partners from North Africa and the Western Balkans and affirmed their commitment to improve the sharing of police data between the countries and Europol... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Justice Ministers

On 9 October, the Ministers of Justice gave their support to the project to encourage the legal systems of the Member States to make greater use of digital tools in the course of proceedings. Ministers discussed the respect of fundamental rights with



regard to artificial intelligence and digitisation, had an exchange of views on anti-Semitism and hate speech as well as on the fight against sexual violence against children. They followed developments relating to the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



The 27 Ministers of Economy and Finance, meeting by videoconference on 6 October, reached an agreement on the recovery plan, which has yet to be negotiated with Parliament. The plan provides for a 37% share devoted to the ecological transition, 20% for digital technology and the allocation of 10% of the funds (€672.5 billion) from 2021...

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Position of recovery funds



On 9 October, the Council adopted its position on the European recovery plan, negotiated by the Ministers of Economy and Finance on 6 October. Validating the amount of €672.5 billion, the proposal provides for €312.5 billion in appropriations for the Member States, of which 70% will be paid out in 2021 and 2022 and 30% in 2023. These will be allocated after the national plans have been submitted, on the basis of demographic criteria, GDP per capita and unemployment rates over the last five years. For loans up to €360 billion, the maximum allocation will be 6.8% of each State's GNP. The text now has to be negotiated with the Parliament... [Read more](#)

Towards the coordination of the restrictions of movement



On 13 October, the Council adopted a recommendation aimed at coordinating measures taken to restrict movement between Member States as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) will be responsible for placing European regions in 3 categories according to 3 criteria: the number of newly notified cases per 100 000 inhabitants in the last 14 days, the screening rate and the test positivity rate. States will not be allowed to restrict free movement to or from green zones. For the Amber and Red Zones, the Council calls for the authorisation of quarantine and testing requirements, but for the removal of travel restrictions... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

EU-Ukraine Summit



On 6 October, the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the High Representative of the Union Josep Borrell met the Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky on the occasion of the 22nd EU-Ukraine Summit. They assessed the results of the association agreement in place since 2017 and agreed on the criteria for economic aid such as economic reforms, the fight against corruption as well as the media situation and the visa issue. Ukraine announced its intention to join the European Horizon Europe and EU4Health programmes... [Read more](#)

Franco-German call for further sanctions against Russia



On 7 October, the French and German Foreign Ministers Jean-Yves Le Drian and Heiko Maas jointly called for European sanctions against Russia for the poisoning of Russian opponent Alexei Navalny on 20 August. The two countries consider "that there is no other plausible explanation for the poisoning of Mr. Navalny than Russian responsibility and involvement". The two ministers will propose additional European sanctions against personalities and organisations involved in the crime... [Read more](#)

Declaration on the situation in the High Karabakh



High Representative Josep Borrell said on 11 October that the European Union supports the 10 October ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but expressed the Union's "extreme concern" about continuing military activities in Nagorno-Karabakh and the damage they cause to civilians. He called on both states to implement the agreement as soon as possible and to start negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Foreign Affairs Minister



Foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg on 12 October approved the principle of sanctions against those linked to the poisoning of Russian opponent Alexei Navalny and against more Belarusian officials, including Alexander Lukashenko. They condemned the opening of the "ghost town" of Varosha in the occupied zone of Cyprus and called for the maintenance of the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ministers also took stock of the military operation "Althea" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in place since 2004, and called for the resumption of dialogue with the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region... [Read more](#)

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Court of Justice :

Decree limiting the collection of general data



A national law may not impose on providers of electronic communications services the generalised, undifferentiated transmission or the retention as a precautionary measure of personal data relating to traffic or location, the Court of Justice ruled on 6 October. However, the judges acknowledged "the usefulness of an obligation to retain data in order to safeguard national security and combat crime", provided that data retention and access are limited and differentiated. The Court was requested by French, Belgian and UK courts in three separate cases. The subject was the topic of a round table discussion and a publication by the Foundation in April 2019... [Read more](#)

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Rejection of Hungarian legislation on higher education



On 6 October, the Court of Justice rejected a Hungarian law on higher education provided by foreign institutions on its territory. The 2017 law, which concerned the Central European University, made the possibility for foreign institutions to teach in Hungary subject to the existence of an international agreement with the country of the institution and to the exercise of the same activity in the State of the institution. The Court considered that the legislation was contrary to non-discriminatory treatment and the free movement of services, both guaranteed by the WTO, Union law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights... [Read more](#)

Entry into office of two new judges



Latvia's Ineta Ziemele and Czech Republic's Jan Passer took office as judges of the Court on 6 October for a four-year term. A formal sitting was held in Luxembourg on the occasion of these two replacements... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Report on Plastic Waste



According to an analysis document published on 6 October by the European Court of Auditors, the Commission needs to strengthen its recycling policy if it wants to reach its target of 55% recycled plastic waste by 2030. This target is likely to be undermined by future restrictions on waste recycling, in particular the extended producer responsibility regime to promote recyclability, as well as the ban on shipments of waste outside the EU. Increasing recycling capacities in the EU and establishing an effective preventive framework against illegal waste shipments are to be considered by the Commission in order to achieve its strategy... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Rise of Cybercrime



In a report on cybercrime in 2020 published on 5 October, Europol notes that the pandemic and lockdown have led to "significant changes and criminal innovations". Cybercriminals have been able to exploit the increase in time spent on the internet to steal more data and increase sales of fake medicines against Covid-19. The report highlights the lack of adequate protection on a large number of computers... [Read more](#)

Woman elected to lead the EBRD

Odile Renaud-Basso, Director General of the French Treasury since 2016, was elected President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on 8 October by the Bank's shareholders and Board of Governors. She is the first woman to

Spain :

Presentation of recovery plan



On 7 October, the President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sanchez, presented a recovery plan financed to the tune of €72 billion from the European Recovery Fund, to which €27 billion will be added in 2021 from the national budget. He listed 10 priorities, including infrastructure (12% of the funds), education and training (18%), modernisation of industry (17%) and science and innovation (17%). In line with the targets set by the European Commission, public investment related to the ecological transition will account for more than 37% of the plan's total... [Read more](#)

Greece :

The Neonazi party, Golden Dawn, qualified as a "criminal organisation" by the courts



The Athens Criminal Court ruled on 7 October that the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party was a "criminal organisation". The party founder Nikos Michaloliakos as well as 6 former MPs and MEP Ioannis Lagos were found guilty of "leading a criminal organisation". About 40 other persons, including former MEPs, were convicted of "membership" of such an organisation. They will know their sentences at a later hearing, but they face between 5 and 15 years in prison. The court found Yorgos Roupakias, a party member, guilty of the murder of rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013. He faces life imprisonment... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

Relaxation of laws governing migrants



On 6 October, the Italian government adopted a decree-law amending the anti-migrant laws introduced 16 months ago by the previous government. From now on, NGOs that carry out rescues in compliance with the law of the sea and in coordination with national authorities will no longer be fined... [Read more](#)

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Poland :

Government reshuffle



The new Polish government was sworn in on 6 October after a reshuffle to resolve tensions between Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's Law and Justice (PiS) party and two minority parties in the ruling coalition. The PiS president, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the real inspiration behind the government's policy, has become Deputy Prime Minister with authority over the ministers of Justice, Defence and the Interior. The government has been reduced from 20 ministers to 14 and only one woman remains in office... [Read more](#)

Gazprom Fine



On 7 October the Polish Office for Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK) imposed a fine of 29 billion zlotys (€6.45 billion) on the Russian company Gazprom for the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline between Russia and Germany. Gazprom's 5 partner companies in the project, Engie Energy, Uniper, OMV, Shell and Wintershall, were collectively fined 34 million zlotys (€52 million). The UOKiK found that Nord Stream 2 and the partnership between the 6 companies violates competition rules and leads to increased dependence of gas consumers on a single supplier, Gazprom... [Read more](#)

UK :

No deal Brexit would increase the dangers of terrorism in Northern Ireland



On 5 October, the UK Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee issued a report on terrorism in Northern Ireland. The MPs and Lords warned that a hard Brexit and the return of a physical border to the island of Ireland would increase the risk of a return to violence because the new infrastructure would be "both a target and a recruitment opportunity for dissident Republican groups". The issue of Northern Ireland and the preservation of

the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that ended the violence has been a priority for the EU since the start of the Brexit negotiations... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Threat of sanctions against Turkey



On 6 October, the European Court of Human Rights announced that following the escalation of tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh, it will apply Article 39 against "all States directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, including Turkey" if they violate Convention rights. Article 39 is an urgent procedure that allows for interim measures to be taken against any State party to the European Convention on Human Rights that is found to be in breach... [Read more](#)

WTO :

International trade shows signs of recovery



On 6 October, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) unveiled its forecasts for international trade, which is expected to contract by 9.2% in 2020 due to the effects of the pandemic, before rebounding by 7.2% in 2021. The drop in trade flows would finally be less significant than expected (-12.9% anticipated by the WTO in April 2020) but the figures for the recovery could also be revised downwards as the pandemic has created "an exceptionally high degree of uncertainty"... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Assessment of the consequences of the lockdown on the economic and the pandemic



On 6 October the IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said that the world economy is emerging from the depths of the crisis. But it is far from being over. All countries are facing "the long climb" - a difficult one that will be long, uneven and uncertain. And subject to setbacks". In a study published on 8 October on the effects of lockdown measures, 'Francesco Grigoli and Damiano Sandri indicate that one of the enduring lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is that a sustainable economic recovery will only come through the resolution of the health crisis... [Read more](#)

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Culture :

Lille, world capital of design



Design Week is taking place in Lille, the world capital of design 2020, until 18 October. At the TriPostal, Gare Saint-Sauveur, POC Houses and other venues, workshops, debates and meetings with numerous designers are taking place. As part of the "Émergences" exhibition, students and young graduates present their ideas for a world in transition on contemporary subjects such as artificial intelligence, interculturality, care or safety in public spaces... [Read more](#)

Jean Dubuffet, a Barbarian in Europe



The Museum of Ethnography of Geneva (MEG) is showing the exhibition "Jean Dubuffet, a Barbarian in Europe" until 28 February 2021, a tribute to the artist's visit to post-war Switzerland, which was decisive for his definition of "Art Brut"... [Read more](#)

Jablonka Collection at the Albertina



Until 21 January 2021, the Albertina Museum in Vienna is hosting the exhibition "My Generation", which presents 110 works from the American and German art scene of the 1980s from the collection of art dealer Rafael Jablonka... [Read more](#)

Esperimento, Art and Science at the Uffizi



The Uffizi Gallery in Florence has an exhibition on the relationship between art and science until 24th January 2021, based on the painting "An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump" by Joseph Wright, on loan from the National Gallery in London and presented for the first time in Italy... [Read more](#)

Manifesta, European Biennale of Contemporary Creation



As part of the 13th edition of the European biennial of contemporary creation Manifesta which opened in Marseilles, the exhibition "Traits d'union.s" presented in 6 chapters (The House, the Refuge, the Hospice, the Port, the Park and the School), in several museums of Marseilles and more unexpected places can be viewed until November 29th... [Read more](#)

"Warsaw under construction" at the Museum of Modern Art



Until 17 January. 2021, the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw is hosting the exhibition "Warsaw under Construction", an event that proposes a reflection on the construction of community life through architecture and urban planning. The exhibition is accompanied by conferences and debates on the link between architecture and living together... [Read more](#)

The American Dream in Madrid



Until 31 January 2021, the CaixaForum cultural space in Madrid will be presenting the development of the graphic arts in the United States since 1960 through the works of great artists such as Lichtenstein, Judd, Warhol and Kooning, mainly on loan from the British Museum. Topics will include civil rights, the Cold War, the space race, feminist movements and many others... [Read more](#)

Cabu's Laugh in Paris



Until 19 December, an exhibition at Paris City Hall is being devoted to the press cartoonist Cabu, who was murdered in Charlie Hebdo on 7 January 2015. More than 350 original drawings are presented in a collection that brings together the cartoonist's characters, caricatures and favourite themes such as French society, ecology, pacifism and freedom of expression... [Read more](#)

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Frankfurt Book Fair



The Frankfurt Book Fair, Europe's largest publishing event, is being held from 14 to 18 October in digital format. There will be no stands at the usual venues, but 80 events will be held in bookshops around the city, while conferences, round tables and readings will be broadcast online... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



13 october 2020

Videoconference
Meeting of Labour, Social Affairs and Equality Ministers
Luxembourg
General Affairs Council



14 October 2020

Videoconference
Tripartite Social Summit



15 October 2020

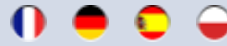
Videoconference
Informal meeting of Telecommunications Ministers



15-16 October 2020

Brussels
European Council

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