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The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on  and 

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## European Democracy, a fundamental system to be protected

Author: Eric Maurice



As the moral and political basis of the European Union, democracy is also a condition for its capacity to act. The system that organises it is subject to many hybrid threats affecting the integrity of elections and public debate. Gradually, Europeans are organising themselves to respond collectively.

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### 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, published by Marie B, is available in electronic format in French and English. It contains contributions by the highest personalities and the best experts and offers a comprehensive view of the European Union and analyses the challenges facing Europe... [Read more](#)

#### Table of health measures and travel conditions in Europe



Faced with the second wave of the pandemic, European States are trying to strike a balance between health measures and maintaining business activities and family ties for the festive season, while trying to coordinate their action. The Foundation offers you a summary of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. An indispensable, regularly updated resource that helps you to understand the situation... [Read more](#)

#### Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

Since 9 August, Belarusians have been protesting against the result of the rigged presidential election and demanding the departure of Alexander Lukashenko, whom the Union no longer recognises as president and who is subject to sanctions. To follow



this crisis, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe



On 25 November, the Commission presented a pharmaceutical strategy that aims to ensure fair and affordable access to medicines and to strengthen the competitiveness, innovation capacity and sustainability of the EU pharmaceutical industry. The strategy aims to meet all patients' medical needs, develop safe and environmentally friendly medicines and improve crisis preparedness and response mechanisms by enhancing the security of supply of medicines... [Read more](#)

### Draft proposals for data governance



On 25 November, the Commission proposed a regulation to facilitate data sharing within the Union and between different sectors of activity. The proposal includes new EU rules on neutrality, measures to facilitate the re-use of certain data held by the public sector and to allow citizens to control the use of the data they generate. More specific proposals on data spaces should follow in 2021... [Read more](#)

### Action plan to strengthen intellectual property



On 25 November, the Commission presented an action plan to strengthen intellectual property rights for businesses in the EU to protect their innovations, fight counterfeiting and ensure fair competition at international level. The action plan is intended to provide financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises to manage and use their intellectual property and to step up the fight against industrial espionage... [Read more](#)

### Increase in the capital of the European Investment Fund



On 25 November, the Commission proposed an increase in the authorised capital of the European Investment Fund to the tune of €2.87 billion. The European Investment Fund contributes to the development of the Union's future economic recovery programme, InvestEU. The decision now needs to be approved by the Council and the Parliament... [Read more](#)

### Plan of action for the integration and inclusion of migrants



The Commission presented its 2021-2027 Action Plan for the integration and inclusion of migrants on 24 November. The plan sets out areas for action, ranging from education and training to improving employment prospects, access to housing and health care for the 34 million people in the EU who have immigrated there... [Read more](#)

### Action plan on gender equality in external action



On 25 November, the Commission presented a new action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in the world. 85% of the measures undertaken in the Union's external actions should contribute to gender equality by 2025. Member States and civil society will also have to work together to develop concrete multilateral, national and regional actions such as combating gender-based violence and promoting the social, economic and political empowerment of women... [Read more](#)

### Formal notice for failure to transpose the Audiovisual Directive



The Commission issued letters of formal notice to 23 Member States and the United Kingdom on 23 November for failing to transpose the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which aims to guarantee the independence of national media regulators and to strengthen the protection of viewers against hate speech on TV and video-sharing platforms... [Read more](#)

## Parliament :

### MEPs and Commission ask the Council to approve the budget



During a debate in the European Parliament on 25 November, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen discussed the validation of the multiannual budget, vaccines, Brexit and climate policy. She called on Hungary and Poland to end blockades and to turn to the European Court of Justice if they wanted to challenge the compliance of the rule of law conditionality mechanism with the treaties... [Read more](#)

### Resolution to revise the European industrial strategy



In a resolution adopted on 25 November, MEPs call on the Commission to revise its industrial strategy, presented in March 2020 ahead of the closures and the recovery plan. MEPs call for the new strategy to promote the recapitalisation of companies, saving jobs and adapting production to the "new norm" of the post-COVID era. In a second phase, the strategy should contribute to the transformation and resilience of European industry, under the banner of the digital and environmental transitions... [Read more](#)

### Assessment of the trade policy



In a resolution on the review of the EU's trade policy adopted on 26 November, MEPs support the WTO modernisation process, call for a plurilateral agreement on e-commerce, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and call for more widespread use of the euro in international trade. MEPs are calling for the establishment of a strategic stockpile of essential goods on EU territory and diversification of supply sources... [Read more](#)

### Resolution on the freedom of the press



In a resolution voted on 25 November, MEPs denounce the "growing trend of intimidation to silence journalists" and call on the Commission to assess, as part of its annual report on the rule of law, the transparency of media ownership, as well as private and government interference in the press in each Member State... [Read more](#)

### Preparing the European Elections of 2024



In a resolution adopted on 26 November, MEPs call for transnational lists for the 2024 European elections proposing a candidate for president of the Commission, with a view to providing greater clarity for voters. They call for strengthening the voting rights of minorities, the homeless and prisoners to increase turnout, and for a ban on campaign funding by foreign bodies... [Read more](#)

### Demand for sanctions against Turkey



On 26 November, MEPs condemned the reopening of the town of Varosha, in the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus. They called for the European Council to take sanctions against Turkey... [Read more](#)

### Directive on collective claims in consumer law



On 24 November, MEPs adopted rules ensuring that each Member State has a procedural mechanism in place for collective proceedings that can be taken by consumer associations or groups. The directive allows collective claims to be brought against all allegedly illegal business practices carried out or which have been carried out by professionals in areas such as tourism, telecommunications or energy, and also provides a deterrent against abusive claims... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### Meeting of research ministers

On 27 November, the Ministers for Research discussed the Commission's proposals for a new European Research Area (ERA). They expressed their support for a 3% of GDP



target for research and development (R&D) and the need to strengthen European partnerships and cooperation between higher education institutions. They expressed their willingness to see the Horizon Europe research programme validated within the framework of the multi-annual financial framework... [Read more](#)

### Conclusions regarding fair, efficient taxation



On 27 November, the Council adopted conclusions for a fair and efficient taxation policy. It sets out priorities for action on the digitisation of the economy, improving administrative cooperation between member states and promoting good governance in the Union and beyond... [Read more](#)

### Eurogroup consolidates Banking Union



On 30 November, the Ministers of Economy and Finance of the Eurozone finalised the reform of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), which must be ratified by the Member States. The reform establishes a common safety net (backstop) for the Single Resolution Fund (SRF), which will complement the banking union and ensure that a bank failure does not harm the economy. This "backstop" provides a double safety net in case the "single resolution mechanism" is insufficient. It will be operational in early 2022, two years ahead of its original date... [Read more](#)

### Court of Auditors :

#### The Union is not doing enough to protect maritime areas



In a report published on 26 November, the Court of Auditors notes that EU action is failing to restore the good ecological status of Europe's seas and bring fisheries back to a sustainable level. The auditors call for more marine protected areas (MPAs) to be turned into marine reserves (currently around 30 out of more than 3 000 MPAs) and for more regulated fishing. Of the €6 billion from the European Fund for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (EFAMF) for the period 2014-2020, only 8% has been earmarked for the conservation of maritime areas... [Read more](#)

### Diplomacy :

#### G5-Sahel Meeting



The President of the European Council Charles Michel held talks on 30 November with the Heads of State and Government of the G5 Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) and the Secretaries General of the United Nations and the African Union, on the joint fight against terrorism, the strengthening of security and defence capacities in the Sahel, the re-establishment of the presence of the State and public services in the liberated areas, and the increase in development efforts, starting with development aid and debt relief... [Read more](#)

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### Spain :

#### 19th Italian/Spanish Summit



The Prime Ministers of Spain and Italy, Pedro Sanchez and Giuseppe Conte, met on 25 November for the 19th Hispano-Italian Summit. In a document supported by Greece and Malta, the two countries commented on the migration and asylum pact proposed by the Commission. They consider the solidarity mechanism to be complex and want the principle of compulsory relocation to be the main tool of solidarity... [Read more](#)

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### France :

#### Franco-British Cooperation against illegal immigration



On 29 November, the French and British Home Affairs Ministers, Gérald Darmanin and Priti Patel, agreed on a new joint operational plan to combat illegal immigration. The plan includes an increase in the number of staff deployed at the border, greater use of high-definition surveillance technology and the setting up of structures to help migrants find accommodation. The UK has announced an additional financial investment of €31.4 million to help France tackle irregular crossings... [Read more](#)

## Hungary :

### Budget: joint declaration by the Hungarian and Polish Prime Ministers



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban received his Polish counterpart Mateusz Morawiecki in Budapest on 26 November. In a joint statement, the two leaders vowed that they will prevent the adoption of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the Recovery Plan if the rule of law conditionality is not removed. They propose a "two-track process" to facilitate adoption of the budget package, saying the European Council should discuss whether a link between the rule of law and the Union's financial interests should be established... [Read more](#)

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## Lithuania :

### Ingrida Simonyte invested as Prime Minister



Lithuanian deputies approved the appointment of Ingrida Simonyte as Prime Minister by 62 votes to 10 with 41 abstentions on 24 November. A member of the Homeland Union - Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the party that came out ahead in the parliamentary elections of 11 and 25 October, she must now seek approval within 15 days for a coalition government with the Freedom Party and the Liberal Movement. The Lithuanian President is receiving candidates for ministerial portfolios... [Read more](#)

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## Council of Europe :

### Greece is not doing enough to counter corruption



The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) notes in a report published on 27 November that Greece has not implemented its recommendations and calls on the country to strengthen its criminal legislation. GRECO regrets that prosecutors can continue to avoid prosecuting corruption crimes and that gaps remain in the criminalisation of the passive bribery of public officials... [Read more](#)

### Opinion regarding the new draft Bulgarian Constitution



The Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's body of constitutional experts, issued an urgent opinion on the draft reform of the Bulgarian Constitution on 23 November. It calls for the amendments relating to the reform of the justice system and the public prosecutor's office to be submitted to public debate. It considers that the reduction in the number of deputies from 240 to 120, "seems to have been chosen arbitrarily, without an exhaustive assessment of the consequences of this reduction on the Bulgarian political system". It welcomes the abolition of the full Supreme Judicial Council and the creation of independent councils for judges, prosecutors and investigators... [Read more](#)

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### Action plan for Moldova



On 26 November, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a new Action Plan to further harmonise the legislation and institutions of the Republic of Moldova with European standards in the fields of human rights, the rule of law and democracy for the years 2021-2024... [Read more](#)

### Report on the protection of minorities



The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities published a report on 25 November on the protection of minorities by European States. The report shows that the rise of extremist and xenophobic parties in Europe is increasing the exclusion of minorities. Even though legislation and official structures allow for better representation and integration of minorities, obstacles still exist. The Committee advises States to assist minorities by addressing poverty, literacy and social inclusion as a priority... [Read more](#)

## Court of Justice :

### Transnational road hauliers are posted workers



The Court of Justice ruled on 1 December that lorry drivers from one Member State who carry out journeys on behalf of companies established in other Member States can be treated as posted workers. The Court held that where there is a sufficient connection between the

drivers and the Member State of posting, foreign drivers must have the same rights as national drivers within the meaning of the Posted Workers Directive... [Read more](#)

## OECD :

### Economic outlook of Lithuania



In a report published on 23 November, the OECD suggests ways to strengthen the recovery. According to the study, GDP is expected to contract by 2% in 2020 before rebounding by 2.7% in 2021, thanks in particular to a policy favourable to business investment. The OECD is encouraging governments to invest more in infrastructure, rural areas and social benefits... [Read more](#)

### Strong recovery of international trade in the G20 countries in the third quarter



On 26 November, the OECD released third quarter figures for international merchandise trade in G20 countries, up 21.6 per cent for exports and 18.1 per cent for imports compared to the second quarter. However, international trade remains 5% below its pre-pandemic level in the fourth quarter of 2019. The EU experienced a similar recovery with an increase in exports of 27.4% and 22.4% for imports... [Read more](#)

### The pandemic is creating regional disparities from the health and economic points of view



On 30 November, the OECD published a report on regional disparities in the means to fight the pandemic and its effects on the economy. The report warns of disparities in access to healthcare, with metropolitan regions having an average of 10 hospital beds per 1000 inhabitants, twice as many as rural areas, and this gap is widening with a 6% drop in the number of beds in metropolitan areas compared to 22% in rural areas... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### Report on the application of the Schengen rules



On 25 November, the Commission published a report on the application of the Schengen rules since 2015, proposing operational measures to improve the Schengen evaluation mechanism. While the overall assessment is positive, Member States' border management does not yet guarantee a uniform level of control at the EU's external border, due to divergent national practices, particularly in Spain and Greece... [Read more](#)

### Report on world trade 2020



In its World Trade Report 2020, published on 23 November, the WTO examines the increasing use of policies to promote digital innovation. The WTO stresses the importance of better regulation and international coordination of the digital economy, and expresses concern about protectionism and emerging conflicts in this area... [Read more](#)

### Recommendations to the G20 for sustainable recovery



On 24 November the OECD published its report which it presented to G20 leaders on 21-22 November. The report recommends that governments maintain fiscal and monetary measures as long as the crisis lasts to cushion the shock to economies. In preparation for the post-Covid-19 period, the OECD encourages countries to increase public and private investment in health, digital transition, lowering carbon emissions, education and training for young people and the low-skilled... [Read more](#)

### Report on the rule of law in the Union: a first step towards a shared European public area?



The report on the rule of law, published for the first time by the Commission in September, intends to be a comprehensive review of the rule of law in all Member States, without exception. The discussion it generates should provide a better understanding of the situation in each country, in all its complexity and in its entirety, and thus contribute to the creation of a European public space, according to Frédéric Petit, Member of Parliament for the French abroad... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Kandinsky in Bilbao



The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is holding an exhibition of Kandinsky's paintings and works on paper until 23 May 2021. It follows the artist's development, from his creations reflecting his interest in the expressive power of colour to his experiments with pigments and sand... [Read more](#)

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### Berlin in photos



The City Museum of Berlin and several others museums in the German capital are joining forces until 31 May 2021 to offer the online platform "1000x Berlin" which brings together 1000 photographs retracing the history and emblematic places of the city. These photographs, organised in 150 thematic series, show the wider and more intimate history of Berlin. The platform offers the public the opportunity to send in personal photographs to add to the collection... [Read more](#)

### Fenêtre sur Cour at the White Cube Gallery



During the lockdown, the White Cube Gallery in London, closed until December 3, is presenting, in its viewing room until January 19, 2021, "Rear Window" on the theme of voyeurism, a tribute to the author of "Fenêtre sur cour" (Window on the Courtyard), but also a strong allusion to life in confinement... [Read more](#)

### New portal of the National Museum of Warsaw



The National Museum in Warsaw has unveiled a new digital portal containing 60,000 of the 800,000 works in its collections, many of which are kept in reserve due to their great fragility... [Read more](#)

### Virtual Concert at the Scala Milan



La Scala of Milan will open its season on 7 December with the event "A riveder le stelle" (Seeing the stars again), an evening of music that will take place in private and will be broadcast on television. The programme will feature operatic excerpts and ballet music performed by around twenty artists, including singers Plácido Domingo and Roberto Alagna... [Read more](#)

### Online concerts in Hamburg



The Elbe Philharmonic and the Laeiszhalle in Hamburg are offering numerous concerts online that can be watched free of charge in streaming, from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 9 to Helena Hauff's electro music and jazz with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis... [Read more](#)

### Penthesilea at the Paris Philharmonic



The Paris Philharmonic presents Penthesilea, Pascal Dusapin's concert, in binaural listening on its website. The result of joint work with the German playwright Beate Haeckl, the libretto is a "rewriting-variation" of one of Heinrich von Kleist's most complex and violent pieces, Penthesilea (1808), which was already the inspiration for a symphonic poem by Hugo Wolf... [Read more](#)

### Chagall and stained glass



Until 15 March 2021, the Centre Pompidou in Metz is hosting an exhibition entitled "Marc Chagall, le passeur de lumière" (Marc Chagall, the Emissary of Light), featuring models of the artist's stained-glass windows, matched with a collection of paintings, sculptures, ceramics and drawings from the Centre Pompidou, the Musée national Marc Chagall, international museums and private collections. The exhibition is accessible virtually... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



1 December 2020

Videoconference  
Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers  
Meeting of Sports Ministers  
Meeting Culture and Audiovisual Ministers  
Videoconference  
Meeting of EU-ASEAN Foreign Affairs Ministers



1-2 December 2020

Videoconference  
Meeting of NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers



2 December 2020

Videoconference  
Meeting of Health Ministers  
Meeting of Justice Ministers



3 December 2020

Videoconference  
Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers



6 December 2020

Romania  
Parliamentary elections



7 December 2020

Videoconference  
Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

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