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The Letter

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"There is an extremely strong pro-European voice in Hungary"

Author: Katalin Cseh

The strengthening of the European Union requires the development of a common health policy, more effective decision-making and active defence of the rule of law, stresses Katalin Csech MEP of the Hungarian Momentum party.
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Foundation :

Parliament in the time of coronavirus

In partnership with a European university research network initiated by the University of Lille in 2016 on the subject of "Parliament and Time", the Foundation has launched a new series of reports aimed on " the impact of the health crisis on the functioning of national parliaments" in Europe. This week's publications focus on Germany and the European Parliament... Read more

Table of health measures and travel conditions in Europe

As Christmas approaches, European States are trying to strike a balance between health measures and maintaining business activities and family ties, 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 designed to help you understand the situation... Read more

Schuman Report on Europe, the 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 in English. It contains articles written by the highest

personalities and experts and offers a comprehensive view of the European Union and analyses the challenges facing Europe... Read more

European Council :

Conclusions of the European Council

The heads of State and government meeting on 10 and 11 December reached an agreement on the implementation of the conditionality mechanism for the protection of the budget and the recovery plan, thus enabling their deployment. They agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Union by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990. They approved sanctions against Turkey in response to its activities in the eastern Mediterranean and will consider further sanctions in March. They invited the Commission to propose a common framework for antigen testing and vaccination certificates against Covid-19. Also meeting in the context of the euro area summit, they called for the rapid implementation of the capital market... Read more

Other link

Commission :

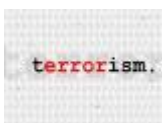### Sustainable and smart mobility strategy

On 9 December, the Commission presented its "sustainable and smart mobility strategy", comprising no less than 82 initiatives to underpin the ecological and digital transformation of European transport within the framework of the Green Deal. The initiatives target 30 million electric cars, the doubling of high-speed rail traffic and the installation of 3 million public electric recharging points by 2030. The transport sector is responsible for 27% of greenhouse gas emissions and is crucial to achieving the EU's climate goals... Read more

Launch of European Climate Pact

On 10 December, the Commission launched a "European Climate Pact", an area for cooperation and information sharing in the framework of the environmental objectives of the Green Deal. The Commission invites individuals and organisations to become ambassadors for the pact. These will be presented at the launch event on 16 December. The first phase focuses on green spaces, green mobility, energy-efficient buildings and professional skills for green jobs... Read more

Anti-terrorist Programme

On 9 December, the Commission presented a programme to combat terrorism and violent extremism more effectively and to improve the Union's resilience to terrorist threats. The programme provides for investment in new technologies to prevent terrorist threats and combat radicalisation online, in particular through rules on the removal of terrorist content. Europol's mandate will be extended to facilitate cooperation with private actors and the European Public Prosecutor's Office and to enable it to issue alerts on "foreign fighters"... Read more

Other link

Reform of the legislation on batteries

On 10 December, the Commission put forward a proposal to reform EU legislation on batteries, to improve their durability and reduce their environmental impact. Only rechargeable industrial batteries and electric vehicle batteries will be allowed from 1 July 2024. 70% of portable batteries will have to be recycled by 2030. All other batteries will be collected and recycled and end-of-life electric batteries will be reused for other purposes... Read more

UK: measures in the event of no deal

On 10 December the Commission presented proposals to prepare for the absence of an agreement with the United Kingdom after the transition period on 31 December. These contain three regulations guaranteeing air and road links and safety, valid for 6 months and under cover of reciprocity. As far as fishing rights are concerned, the proposal provides for mutual access to territorial waters until a new agreement is reached... Read more

Agreement with the UK over Ireland

The co-chairs of the Joint Committee between the European Union and the United Kingdom, Maros Sefcovic and Michael Gove, reached an agreement on 8 December on the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland provided for in the 2019 withdrawal agreement. The agreement covers border control posts and specific points of entry, export declarations, the supply of medicines, refrigerated foodstuffs and other foodstuffs, and clarification on the provision of state aid under the protocol... Read more

Parliament :

Agreement on the Erasmus+ programme

Council and Parliament negotiators agreed on 11 December on the details of the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027. The reformed €26.3bn programme is expected to triple the number of beneficiaries to 12 million young people, covering not only higher education but also other levels of education and training... Read more

Provisional agreement on the European Solidarity Corps

The Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on 11 December on the European Solidarity Corps programme for the years 2021 to 2027. 1 billion € will be allocated to the programme and will finance the voluntary participation of around 350 000 young people in two areas: solidarity activities responding to the needs of society and humanitarian aid... Read more

Agreement on the funds for the integrated management of the borders

The Council and Parliament agreed on 10 December on the details of the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF). The €6.2 billion for the 2021-2027 budget will be earmarked for border management and the common visa policy, in particular the interoperability of IT systems (Eurodac, VIS) and (SIS). The Frontex agency's budget depends on the Enhanced Internal Security Fund (ISF), with funding of around €2.5 billion, the details of which have yet to be negotiated by the co-legislators... Read more

Agreement on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds

Negotiators from the Council and the Parliament agreed on 9 December on the details of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which will receive €9.6 billion in the next budget, three times more than in 2014-2020. Member States will receive up to €10,000 in compensation costs per relocated person, up from €6,000 previously. All Member States except Denmark are participating in the fund... Read more

Agreement on the Just Transition Fund

Negotiators from the Council and the Parliament agreed on 9 December on the establishment of the Just Transition Fund (JTF), an instrument of the Green Deal with a budget of €17.5 billion. The Fund will be used to finance public investments in renewable energy, micro-enterprises working for energy transition, and innovation in the fields of education and research. The fossil and nuclear energy and tobacco sectors have been excluded however... Read more

Agreement on the strengthening of the transparency register

Negotiators from the Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached an agreement on 7 December to make it compulsory for interest groups to be entered in the Union's transparency register before they can carry out certain activities with the three institutions. A chapter dedicated to the implementation of the cross-compliance principle and transparency measures will be added to the annual report on the functioning of the transparency register... Read more

Council :

Meeting for Transport Ministers

The Transport Ministers agreed on 8 December on a mandate to negotiate with the Parliament for the revision of the "Eurovignette" Directive, which aims to make road transport more sustainable through the levying of user charges for heavy goods vehicles. They discussed the strengthening of the Single European Sky and some ministers expressed reservations about the project. 17 countries announced that they would join the European initiative for processors and semiconductor technologies. Portugal presented its programme for the next presidency... Read more

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Meeting of Telecommunications Ministers

On 7 December, Telecommunications Ministers discussed the Commission's proposal on data governance and the creation of European data interoperability spaces in strategic sectors such as energy, mobility and health. The ministers call for a transparent legislative framework to encourage businesses and individuals to share their data more widely. They stressed the importance of respecting the Union's commercial commitments regarding international data flows... Read more

Agreement on the European Defence Fund

Council and Parliament negotiators agreed on 14 December on the details of the European Defence Fund (EDF), which co-finances joint defence industrial and research projects. The Parliament secured an "ethical assessment" by the Commission for each project. The total budget will be €7.9bn, of which €5.3bn will go to projects and €2.6bn to research... Read more

Agreement on the fight to counter online terrorism

Council and Parliament negotiators agreed on 10 December on a proposal for legislation to combat online terrorism. The proposal aims to create a single instrument to help Member States coordinate and fight online terrorism as well as binding rules for internet hosting platforms. The text contains guarantees of compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as a right of supervision of judicial authorities... Read more

Provisional agreement on regional investments

The Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on 8 December on the use of the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) dedicated to regional investments for the years 2021 to 2027. Both funds will contribute to the digital and green transition, to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by financing projects such as replacing coal heating systems with natural gas, and to building resilience to disasters... Read more

Meeting of Home Affairs Ministers

On 14 December, the Home Affairs ministers exchanged views on the different aspects of the Migration and Asylum Pact put forward by the Commission. They agreed to strengthen Member States' security cooperation and set political priorities to be achieved by 2025 such as law enforcement cooperation, monitoring technological progress, global cooperation, the fight against transnational organised crime and the prevention and combating of terrorism... Read more

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Adoption of the multiannual budget and the recovery plan

On 14 December, the Council adopted the regulations on the multiannual financial framework 2021-207 and the recovery plan, as well as the decision on own resources which will provide for the Union to borrow the €750 billion set out in the recovery plan. The three texts were adopted following the agreement reached at the European Council on 10 and 11 December on the budgetary conditionality mechanism. They also have to be approved by the Parliament... Read more

Political Agreement regarding the Horizon Europe programme

Negotiators from the Council and the Parliament reached an agreement on 11 December on the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme for 2021-2027,

with a budget of €95.5 billion, an increase of 30% compared to the previous one. The agreement details the relationship between Horizon Europe and other European programmes and the conditions for cooperation with third countries. Among others, it funds InvestEU, Euratom, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the European Research Centre (JRC) and the new European Innovation Council (EIC) with a budget of €10 billion, which will focus on disruptive innovation and creating new market opportunities... Read more

Agreement on the attributions of the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre

The Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on 11 December to set up a European centre of competence for industrial, technological and research cyber security and a European network of national coordination centres. Both structures will serve to secure the digital single market. They will be responsible for managing cybersecurity funds from the Digital Europe and Horizon Europe programmes. On 9 December, the city of Bucharest was chosen as the seat of the future Centre... Read more

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Diplomacy :

Negotiations continue regarding the future relationship with the UK

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson decided on 13 December to continue negotiations to try to reach an agreement on the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom... Read more

Meeting of the EU-Algeria Association Council

The members of the Association Council between the European Union and Algeria discussed their cooperation on 7 December. The Union wishes to support Algeria in setting up a sustainable economic recovery and integrating environmental issues into its sectoral policies, particularly in the energy sector. Both parties wish to strengthen their cooperation on the return of illegal immigrants and the fight against criminal networks, radicalisation and the financing of terrorism... Read more

Aid of 24 million € for civil society in Belarus

The Commission announced on 11 December €24 million in financial support for civil society in Belarus, via assistance to independent media (€8 million) and a scholarship programme for young people (€8 million). The remainder of the aid targets the resilience of Belarusian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (€4 million) and support to the health sector (€4 million)... Read more

Court of Justice :

Validation of the Posted Workers' Directive

The Court of Justice ruled on 8 December that the Posted Workers Directive adopted in 2018, amending the original 1996 directive, does not call into question the freedom to provide services and employment contracts in the Member States. The Court of Justice holds that the directive fulfils the objectives of social protection and the maintenance of a high level of employment and that this treatment does not alter the original contracts concluded by posted workers with their State of origin... Read more

Court of Auditors :

Report on the States' response to the COVID-19 crisis

In a report published on 9 December, the Court of Auditors highlights the risk of increased inequalities between Member States following the Covid-19 crisis. The report warns that low public spending in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania or Cyprus could increase the social consequences of the crisis. For the EU, the auditors note that while the proposed recovery plan is an opportunity for more coordination, the challenge for the Union will be to restore or reform its fiscal rules without harming the recovery or debt sustainability... Read more

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ECB :

Re-calibrating monetary policy instruments

On 10 December, the European Central Bank (ECB) decided to recalibrate its monetary policy instruments to help the Union deal with the resurgence of the pandemic. The emergency pandemic procurement programme will be endowed with an additional €500bn and extended until the end of March 2022. The easing of conditions for long-term refinancing operations will apply until June 2022. The ECB has decided to conduct four additional emergency longer-term refinancing operations in response to the pandemic in 2021 to ensure the effectiveness of its safety net... Read more

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Frank Elderson appointed member of the board

The European Council appointed Frank Elderson to the Executive Board of the European Central Bank on 10 December. He is currently a member of the executive board of the central bank of the Netherlands and will take up his duties on 15 December for a non-renewable term of office of 8 years. He succeeds Yves Mersch whose term of office expires on 14 December... Read more

European Agencies :

Development of Space Rider, European atmospheric re-entry model

On 9 December, the European Space Agency signed a contract with the Thales Aliena Space joint venture to build the Space Rider, a reusable unmanned vehicle, by 2023. This space shuttle will provide the Union with an autonomous space transport system and will be used for scientific and commercial missions... Read more

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Germany :

OECD Report on the German economy

On 8 December, the OECD published a report on the German economy which forecasts a GDP contraction of 5.5% in 2020 before a rebound of 2.8% in 2021 and 3.3% in 2022. The report praises the strength of Germany's short-time working system, which has helped to limit the rise in the unemployment rate to 1.4% in the second quarter of 2020. The report considers that the government's €130 billion recovery plan is encouraging for the digital and energy transition, but recommends more investment in infrastructure... Read more

France :

Franco-German Working Group on Space

The French and German Ministers of Economy, Bruno Le Maire and Peter Altmaier, decided on 11 December to create a joint working group on space. In mid-2021, this group will present a report containing policy recommendations to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of the sector, with priority given to future European launchers... Read more

Lithuania :

New government led by Ingrida Simonyte

On 11 December, the Lithuanian Parliament approved the government led by Ingrida Simonyte by 78 votes to 30, with 20 abstentions, and she was subsequently sworn in. The government, comprising 15 ministers, 7 of whom are women, is the product of a coalition between the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats and 2 liberal parties, the Liberal Movement and the Freedom Party, which won the parliamentary elections of 11 and 25 October... Read more

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UK :

Trade Continuity Agreement with Norway and Iceland

On 8 December, the United Kingdom signed a " trade continuity " agreement with Norway and Iceland which is to take over from the existing agreements with the European Union after the transition period on 31 December 2020. Trade in goods between the UK and these two countries represented £20 billion in 2019 and this agreement provides that 95% of goods traded with Norway and 90% of those traded with Iceland will remain exempt from customs duties... Read more

Council of Europe :

Ukraine: the Council of Europe is concerned about a decision taken by the Constitutional Court

In an "urgent" opinion published on 10 December, the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's expert body on constitutional law, found that a decision taken by Ukraine's Constitutional Court challenging a new anti-corruption law was "not based on international law" and that it was "seriously flawed" because of conflicts of interest involving several judges. Following the court's decision at the end of October, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, elected on an anti-corruption platform, asked parliament to reform the body and the Venice Commission to issue an urgent opinion... Read more

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Studies/Reports :

Report on the Security Union Strategy

On 9 December, the Commission published a report on the implementation of the Security Union Strategy. Some progress has been made on protecting 5G networks, combating child sexual abuse, hybrid threats, misinformation and terrorism. But physical or digital infrastructures need to be better protected and States need to do more to implement security guidelines... Read more

Report on the state of private and public pensions systems

On 7 December, the OECD published a report on the effects of the Covid-19 virus on pension systems. This risk comes on top of an ageing population and low returns on savings that were already weighing on pensions. The OECD recommends that governments increase assessments to identify risk groups and develop measures to ensure that people in non-standard employment have the opportunity to save for retirement... Read more

Europeans badly protected as far as artificial intelligence is concerned

European States should toughen their legislation to protect fundamental rights in the face of artificial intelligence, which can be a source of error and discrimination, according to a report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published on 14 December... Read more

Culture :

LUX Prize: three pre-selected films for the European Audience Award

At the virtual ceremony of the European Film Awards in Berlin on 12 December, three films "Another Round", "Corpus Christi" and "Collective" were shortlisted for the LUX Audience Award. Viewers can vote until 11 April 2021. The three selected films will be subtitled in the 24 official languages of the Union. The winner will be announced at the plenary session of the European Parliament on 28 April 2021... Read more

Les Arcs Film Festival online

The 12th edition of the Arcs Film Festival, dedicated to European independent cinema, is running online until 26 December. 120 films from all over Europe are on the programme... Read more

Inspiration Beethoven

Until April 5, 2021, the Leopold Museum in Vienna is hosting the exhibition "Inspiration Beethoven", which shows the influence that Ludwig van Beethoven, whose 250th birthday is being celebrated, had on the Viennese modernists. The exhibition presents a reconstruction of the music cabinet made by Josef Maria Auchentaller, numerous works by Gustav Klimt, Carl Moll or Alfred Roller which illustrate the admiration of these artists for the composer... Read more

The Prado in Toledo

Until 25 December as part of the "Prado in the Streets" project, which is travelling around the different cities of Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo is presenting almost 50 real size photographs that reproduce European paintings from the early 12th to the early 20th century which are kept in the Prado Museum in Madrid... Read more

Press photos in Switzerland

Until 21 February 2021, the Château de Prangins - Swiss National Museum will host the exhibition Swiss Press Photo and World Press Photo 20, a collection of press photos tracing the key events of 2019... Read more

Acquisitions at the national museum of Ireland

On 9 December, the National Museum of Ireland acquired the series of works "Dressing our Hidden Truths" by contemporary artist Alison Lowry. These glass sculptures and installations, which explore Ireland's past and recent traumas, will become part of the museum's permanent collection... Read more

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Agenda :

14 Dec
14-17 December 2020
Strasbourg-Brussels
Plenary Session of the European Parliament

15 Dec
15-16 December 2020
Brussels
Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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Videoconference
Eurogroup Meeting

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Environment Council
Brussels
EU-Armenia Partnership Council

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EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council

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