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The Letter in PDF format

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The Foundation Team is happy to be back and wishes you a very Happy New Year 2021!

## The Biden Transition

Author: Simon Serfaty



The grotesque and dangerous years of the Trump administration are coming to an end. The new US President Joe Biden, who will place the transatlantic relationship at the top of his agenda, will have to face a world in turmoil and threatened alliances at a time when American democracy is in danger, says Simon Serfaty, professor and researcher emeritus, a member of the Foundation's Scientific

Committee.

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**Front page!** :

**2020: Europe at work in the turmoil**



2020 was not just the year of the lockdown! It might also have been that of a European awakening, writes Jean-Dominique Giuliani. The European Union has responded to the challenges it has faced. It has not only responded, it has also innovated in a number of areas... [Read more](#)

**Europe at the Dictators' Ball**



The riot unleashed by the US President in Washington on 6 January played into the hands of dictators around the world. Europe, which through European treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe conventions protects the rights of citizens, including against abuses by States, must serve as an example now more than ever before, writes Jean-Dominique Giuliani... [Read more](#)

**Elections** :

Outgoing President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, favourite in the election on 24 January



The outgoing Portuguese President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, leads all opinion polls that show him winning in the first round of the presidential election to be held on 24 January. Supported by two centre-right parties, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the People's Party (PP), he is expected to win against the other 6 candidates in the race. Prime Minister Antonio Costa's Socialist Party (PS) has decided not to present a candidate, but a party member, former MEP Ana Gomes, is competing without the party's endorsement... [Read more](#)

## Foundation :

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



After the festive season and in order to cope with a more virulent strain of the virus, European countries have taken new measures or extended those already in place, while the vaccination campaign is now being implemented. The Foundation offers you a summary of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. It is an indispensable, regularly updated resource providing you with a better understanding of the situation... [Read more](#)

### Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress



Since 9 August, the Belarusians have been protesting against the result of the rigged presidential election and demanding the departure of Alexander Lukashenko, who the Union no longer recognises as president and who is subject to sanctions. On 16 December, former candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya was awarded the Sakharov Prize 2020 in the European Parliament in the name of the democratic opposition. To follow this crisis, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Approval and new vaccination order



On 6 January, the Commission validated the marketing of the vaccine of the Swedish-American pharmaceutical company Moderna, following the recommendation of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The contract provides for the delivery of 160 million doses. On 8 January, it offered to purchase 200 million additional doses of the vaccine from BioNTech and Pfizer, which was authorised on 21 December. The European Medicines Agency is now inviting Member States to inject six doses using a single vial. The Commission has placed orders for 2.3 billion doses from 6 laboratories... [Read more](#)

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### Temporary implementation of the agreement with the UK



The Trade and Cooperation Agreement concluded on 24 December between the European Union and the United Kingdom entered into force provisionally on 1 January. It provides for the absence of customs duties and import quotas on agricultural and industrial products. It includes a "non-regression" clause with respect to the standards currently in force, and rules on state aid, as well as mechanisms for consultation and dispute settlement. It provides for reciprocal access to territorial waters and a reduction of around 25% of European fishing quotas in UK waters by 2026. Ratified by the British Parliament on 30 December, the agreement will be examined by the European Parliament in February... [Read more](#)

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### 178 million € for breakthrough innovations



The Commission announced on 6 January the allocation of the first wave of direct equity investments through the new European Innovation Council (EIC) Fund. 42 European companies will receive €178 million to develop breakthrough innovation projects such as automation or drones... [Read more](#)

### Three new countries now have rescEU equipment



Since 11 January, Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovenia have joined the other 6 countries hosting the common European stockpile of vital medical equipment (rescEU). The stockpile, which includes 80 million masks and pairs of gloves as well as respirators and oxygen concentrators, is part of the EU's civil protection mechanism, which can be activated for any type of natural or man-made disaster... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### Beginning of the Portuguese Presidency



Portugal has held the six-month presidency of the Council since 1 January. The Portuguese Prime Minister, António Costa, received the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, in Lisbon on 5 January. The priorities of the Presidency are the fight against Covid-19, in particular vaccination, the strengthening of multilateralism under the sign of a "global Europe", as well as the strengthening of the "social pillar" of the Union, through more "social rights, access to education, the fight against all forms of discrimination and against inequalities"... [Read more](#)

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## Diplomacy :

### Protests against arrests in Hong Kong



EU High Representative Josep Borrell condemned on 7 January the arrest of more than 53 Hong Kong citizens who took part in pro-democracy protests last July. He denounced an attack on "political pluralism and the exercise of human rights and political freedoms". The European Union calls for the "immediate" release of all of those arrested. On 8 January, 50 of the 53 detainees were released... [Read more](#)

### Agreement in principle with China over investments



The European Union and China reached an agreement in principle on investment on 30 December. The text, not yet published, is intended to ensure more fairness for European companies investing in sectors such as health services, environmental services, construction and technology. In return, China will gain limited access to the EU energy market and commit to combating forced labour... [Read more](#)

### Of Democracy in America



After the attack on the Capitol by pro-Trump protesters on 6 January, the High Representative, Josep Borrell, said in a blog that it was a warning to democracy advocates around the world. He calls on them to fight misinformation and inequality and to strengthen international cooperation... [Read more](#)

### Extension of the EU's civilian mission in Mali



On 11 January, the Council approved the extension of the European civilian mission "EUCAP Sahel Mali" for the period from 15 January 2021 to 31 January 2023, at a cost of €89.1 million. The mission, launched in January 2015, aims to assist and advise the international security forces (ISF) in the implementation of the programme to secure vulnerable territories led by the Malian government... [Read more](#)

### Declarations on the Iranian nuclear programme



On 6 January, the French, German and British Foreign Ministers expressed their concerns in a joint communiqué following Iran's decision to enrich uranium to 20%. This decision is a blatant violation of the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan for 2015 (JCPOA) which provided for the progressive lifting of sanctions against the country in exchange for abandoning its military nuclear programme. The three countries called on Iran to immediately cease this violation of the agreement and to return to the uranium enrichment limit of 3.67%. On 11 January, High Representative Josep Borrell also called on Iran to "refrain from any escalation and to immediately reverse its actions"... [Read more](#)

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## European Agencies :


### Migrant arrivals at their lowest point since 2013



The number of detected illegal crossings of the European Union's external borders fell by 13% in 2020 compared to the previous year, to 124,000, according to preliminary figures published by Frontex on 8 January. This is the lowest number since 2013. Illegal arrivals have fallen by three-quarters in the eastern Mediterranean (20,000) and by 29% in the western Mediterranean (17,000), but have increased eightfold in the Canary Islands (22,600)... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### The CDU chooses its next candidate for the Chancellery

 On 15 and 16 January, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is holding an online congress to renew its governing bodies and elect a new president. The three candidates are : Armin Laschet, Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia, Friedrich Merz, former chairman of the CDU-CSU group in the Bundestag, and Norbert Röttgen, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag. The winner will be the party's candidate to lead the CDU-CSU list in the parliamentary elections on 26 September... [Read more](#)

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## Belgium :

### Record hauls of cocaine seized in 2020



Belgian customs seized 65 tonnes of cocaine worth €7.5 billion in 2020 in the port of Antwerp, the Finance Ministry announced on 5 January. In 2019, customs intercepted 62.1 tonnes in the port, which is the first point of entry for drugs into Europe... [Read more](#)

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## Denmark :

### Start of work on the tunnel between Germany and Denmark



In the week of 4 January, the French company Vinci began work on the 18 km-long Femern tunnel, which is to link Germany and Denmark by road and rail from 2029. Approved in 2008, the work was able to begin after the German Federal Administrative Court rejected 7 complaints on 3 November 2020... [Read more](#)

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## France :

### Merger between PSA and Fiat-Chrysler



On 4 January, the shareholders of Peugeot SA (PSA) and Fiat Chrysler Automobile (FCA) gave the go-ahead for the proposed merger between the two groups to create Stellantis on 16 January. The European Commission had authorised the merger of the two groups on 21 December, considering that competition in the sector will remain strong after this operation. Stellantis will have 400,000 employees, 14 brands and will be the world's third largest manufacturer in terms of turnover... [Read more](#)

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### Successful launch of CSO-2



CSO-2, the French armed forces' Optical Space Component (OSC) Earth observation satellite built by Airbus, was successfully launched on 29 December from the European space port of Kourou, on board a Soyuz launcher... [Read more](#)

### The US suspend their customs sanctions against France



On 7 January, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative announced the suspension of customs sanctions against France decided in July 2020 and due to take effect on 6 January. Following France's plan for a tax on digital platforms, the US administration had decided to impose a tax on imported handbags and cosmetics worth \$1.3 billion a year. The press release explains this suspension by the desire to give itself time to find a coordinated response on the issue of taxes on digital technology, because since the French decision, 10 other countries, including the United Kingdom and India, have proposed similar taxes... [Read more](#)

## Greece :

### Government reshuffle



On 4 January, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis reshuffled his government and appointed Makis Voridis as Minister of the Interior, Spilios Livanos at the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Kostis Hatzidakis at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Kostas Skrekas at the Ministry of Environment and Energy. The new government was sworn in on 5 January before the President of the Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou... [Read more](#)

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## Council of Europe :

### Women finalists for the Vaclav Havel Prize



The Council of Europe has chosen to honour women's rights by selecting the finalists for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize on 8 January. Created in 2013 and worth €60,000, the prize rewards exceptional actions by civil society each year. The three nominees are Saudi activist Loujain al-Hathloul, Congolese activist Julienne Lusenge and an order of Buddhist nuns in Nepal. The winner is due to be announced on April 19... [Read more](#)

## World Bank :

### Economic Prospects



The World Bank

On 5 January, the World Bank published a report forecasting world GDP growth of 4% in 2021, a figure that will depend on how well the pandemic is brought under control and on the success of national vaccination campaigns. The report also forecasts other recovery scenarios, a pessimistic one in which vaccination is too slow and protective measures are maintained, leading to a growth of 1.6% in 2021, and an optimistic one in which recovery could reach 5% in 2021 if herd immunity is quickly achieved. For the euro zone, the World Bank forecasts growth of 3.6 in 2021, after a decline of 7.4% in 2020... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### ECB study of the economic consequences of COVID-19



more

In its latest Economic Bulletin, published on 7 January, the ECB reviews the economic analyses that have guided the Governing Council's latest decisions. It also develops four models to estimate the macroeconomic consequences of the Covid-19 crisis on the euro area economies... [Read more](#)

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### Report on Worker Mobility 2019



On 8 January the Commission published its report on the intra-EU mobility of workers for the year 2019, observing a slight increase in cross-border mobility, at 4.2% of the population, a rate which, however, falls to 3.7% when the United Kingdom is excluded. The majority (58%) of workers come from five countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal and Italy. In terms of destination, 46% of foreign workers resided in Germany or the United Kingdom in 2019... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Inflation rate stable in December



Inflation in the euro zone rose by 0.3% in December compared to November, Eurostat announced on 7 January. Energy prices rose by 1.6% while food prices fell by 0.4% compared to the previous month, a first since January 2020... [Read more](#)

### Unemployment stable in November



The unemployment rate in the EU (7.5%) and the eurozone (8.3%) was stable in November, according to figures published by Eurostat on 8 January. Compared with November 2019, the number of unemployed rose by 1.8 million in the EU and 1.4 million in the eurozone. The youth unemployment rate rose to 17.7% in the EU and 18.4% in the eurozone... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### European Capitals of Culture extended until April



Due to the pandemic, Galway (Ireland) and Rijeka (Croatia) will retain their title of European Capitals of Culture 2020 until 30 April. In Galway, exhibitions, concerts and events will continue on site and online, while Rijeka has yet to announce its programme. The cities chosen to be European Capitals of Culture in 2021 will be chosen in 2022 for Novi Sad (Serbia), and in 2023 for Timisoara (Romania) and Elefsina (Greece)... [Read more](#)

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700th anniversary: Dante and the Divine Comedy online

On the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the death of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, an online exhibition at the Uffizi Museum in Florence is presenting until 14 July 88 engravings by the painter Federico Zuccari illustrating the "Divine Comedy", drawings rarely shown to the public. The exhibition is complemented by paintings depicting Dante and works of art of his time... [Read more](#)



#### German museums online



To keep busy during the lockdown in place at least until 31 January in Germany, the federal government's website suggests a selection of museums and cultural venues accessible online free of charge. Many cultural venues can be visited from home, from the Museum Island in Berlin, to Goethe's houses and the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar... [Read more](#)

#### Inverfest in Madrid



Until the 7th of February the Inverfest is being held in Madrid, offering a series of 32 concerts that mixes musical genres with Spanish variety, rock, flamenco and symphonic music. This festival aims to give a broad overview of the contemporary Spanish music scene. The concerts are also broadcast online... [Read more](#)

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#### Young Polish artists



On 4 January the 12th edition of the exhibition "Coming out" opened online, bringing together the works of 31 young artists from the nine faculties of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Various art forms are represented, including painting, sculpture, design and architecture, providing a broad insight into the Polish youth art scene... [Read more](#)

#### 5th anniversary of the death of David Bowie



To mark the 5th anniversary of David Bowie's death, numerous initiatives are being set up to celebrate the artist's work, including the online release by Arte of the July 3, 1973 concert at the Hammersmith Odeon in London. In addition, the artist's record company is releasing previously unheard versions of David Bowie's covers of John Lennon's "Mother" and Bob Dylan's "Tryin' to get to heaven". Finally, the Irish Times newspaper is running a quiz about the artist's musical career... [Read more](#)

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#### Agenda :



14-15 January 2021

Lisbon

European Commission visit for the launch of the Portuguese presidency of the Council



18 January 2021

Brussels

Eurogroup Meeting

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