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The Letter in PDF format

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The European Trade Policy in the time of Covid-19: adaptation or change of paradigm?

Author: Alan Hervé



The pandemic has revealed Europeans' dependence on supplies, but the EU has shown a form of responsiveness and pragmatism. Its strategic autonomy requires a renewed trade policy, based on a comprehensive economic policy, with its agricultural, industrial and defence aspects truly designed on a European scale.

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Foundation :

Joe Biden's USA



The Foundation is organising a videoconference with Pierre Vimont, French Ambassador and former Secretary General of the European External Action Service, and Simon Serfaty, Professor Emeritus and member of the Foundation's Scientific Committee, on 20 January, the day of the inauguration of the new American President Joe Biden... [Read more](#)

Table of health measures and travel conditions in Europe



To cope with an increase in cases and a more virulent strain of the virus, European countries are taking new measures or extending those already in place, as the vaccination campaign continues to develop. The Foundation offers you a summary of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. It is an indispensable, regularly updated resource, to help you understand the situation...read more.. [Read more](#)

Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

Protests continue in Belarus, on a small scale because of the winter and repression. The population has risen up against the result of the rigged presidential election of 9 August, 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](#)

Impact of the health crisis on the functioning of parliaments in Europe



The Foundation, in partnership with a European university research network, is publishing a series of reports studying the impact of the health crisis on the functioning of thirteen national parliaments in Europe (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and on that of the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Investment in innovative breakthrough space technologies



On the occasion of the European Space Conference on 12 and 13 January in Brussels, the Commission announced that €300 million from the European Investment Fund (EIF) will be devoted to two funds focusing on space technologies. Orbital Ventures invests in space technologies (cryptography, data storage and processing, geolocation, earth observation and space hardware) while Primo Space invests in space projects and promotes the marketing of breakthrough innovations in the European space industry... [Read more](#)

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Conclusion of discussions for the purchase of a new vaccine



The Commission concluded on 12 January preliminary discussions with the European biotech company Valneva for the purchase of 60 million doses of a potential vaccine against COVID-19. The Commission has already concluded contracts with 6 laboratories and entered into preliminary discussions with a seventh... [Read more](#)

Report on the processing of PNR data



On 12 January, the Commission published reports on the implementation of the agreement between the European Union and certain countries (United States, Australia) on the processing and transfer of passenger name record (PNR) data by air carriers to customs and border protection services... [Read more](#)

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Proposed distribution of the Brexit adjustment fund



On 13 January, the Commission published the breakdown between Member States of the first tranche of the Brexit adjustment fund. The fund, endowed with more than €5 billion, is intended to support the economic sectors most affected by the UK's exit from the single market. Ireland is the first beneficiary with €1.052 billion, followed by the Netherlands (€757.4 million), Germany (€455.4 million), France (€420.8 million) and Belgium (€324.1 million). The distribution has yet to be approved by the Council and the Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Explaining the agreement with the UK



The Commission has published a document which explains the content of the trade and partnership agreement concluded in December 2020 between the European Union and the United Kingdom, and provides extensive data on trade between the two parties... [Read more](#)

Trip to Lisbon for the launch of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council



Visiting Lisbon on 15 January with several Commissioners to mark the start of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council, the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stressed the priority for the Union to successfully vaccinate its citizens. She welcomed the alignment of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency with those of the Commission, particularly on economic recovery and the green and digital transitions. A Social Summit will be held in Porto on 7 May... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Informal meeting of Health Ministers



At the end of their videoconference on 13 January, the 27 health ministers stated their determination to contribute to increasing vaccine production capacity, as well as to strengthening joint negotiations for the acquisition of a greater number of doses. Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakídou recalled that Member States had committed in June not to enter into bilateral agreements with pharmaceutical companies, and asked that Member States send their vaccination figures "at least twice a week" to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)... [Read more](#)

Eurogroup Meeting



The 19 euro area finance ministers met on 18 January to discuss national recovery plans and macroeconomic imbalances. They stressed the need for economic coordination and the unique opportunity provided by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

Europe targets Iran with a further warning



On 16 January, the French, German and British foreign ministers asked Iran to renounce the production of uranium metal, which would mark a new violation of the 2015 agreements... [Read more](#)

The Union adds the head of Syrian diplomacy to its black list



The Council added Syrian foreign minister Faisal Mekdad to the list of persons subject to EU restrictive measures on 15 January. The measures include an assets freeze and a ban on entry into the Union... [Read more](#)

Call for the release of Russian opponent Navalny



In a statement on behalf of the Union, High Representative Josep Borrell on 18 January condemned the detention of Alexei Navalny on the eve of his return to Moscow and called for his "immediate release". He stressed that the detention of A. Navalny "confirms a constant negative trend characterised by the shrinking space for opposition, civil society and independent voices in the Russian Federation". A. Navalny had just returned from Germany where he had received medical treatment after the attempted assassination by poisoning attributed to the Russian authorities. He was sentenced on 18 January to 30 days in prison for violating the conditions of a parole granted prior to his poisoning... [Read more](#)

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Court of Justice :

Conclusions of the Advocate General regarding the cross-border processing of data



The Advocate General of the Court of Justice ruled on 13 January that the GDPR allows the data protection authority of a Member State to take legal action against an infringement committed by an undertaking having its seat in another Member State. The Belgian data protection authority had requested in 2015 that Facebook, based in Ireland, be ordered to stop placing cookies without its consent... [Read more](#)

A Member State must guarantee adequate reception facilities in the country of return for an unaccompanied minor



On 14 January, the Court of Justice recalled that the authorities of a country wishing to implement a decision to return an unaccompanied minor must ensure the existence of adequate reception facilities in the State of return... [Read more](#)

Accusation alone cannot justify a European arrest warrant



In a judgment of 13 January, the European Court of Justice ruled that a European arrest warrant cannot be based solely on an accusation but must be based on a national arrest warrant... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Armin Laschet, elected leader of the CDU



On 16 January, Armin Laschet was elected president of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) with 52.8% of the votes ahead of Friedrich Merz during a party congress organised online. The third candidate Norbert Röttgen was eliminated in the first round. Minister-President of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia since 2017, Armin Laschet defends a centrist, liberal and European line, close to that of Chancellor Angela Merkel. The CDU and its Bavarian partner, the CSU, will choose their lead candidate for the elections on 26 September in the spring... [Read more](#)

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Estonia :

Resignation of Prime Minister Jüri Ratas



Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas resigned on 13 January over suspicions of corruption involving his Centre Party (EKE). President Kersti Kaljulaid has asked the leader of the opposition, Kaja Kallas of the Reform Party, to form a new government to be approved by Parliament within 14 days. On 12 January, an investigation was opened against the Centre Party which allegedly received funding of €1 million in exchange for authorisation for a construction project in Tallinn... [Read more](#)

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France :

One Planet Summit in Paris



The 4th One Planet Summit devoted to biodiversity protection issues brought together, in Paris and online on 11 January, heads of State and government, heads of international and financial organisations and NGOs. The participants decided to commit budgets for actions such as the protection of marine and land spaces (via the Coalition of High Ambition for Nature and People and the Coalition for an Exemplary Mediterranean Sea), the promotion of agroecology (Great Green Wall in the Sahel), the financing of biodiversity and the protection of tropical forests, species and human health (PREZODE Initiative)... [Read more](#)

Franco-German Friendship: divided memories, but a joint future!



On the occasion of the next meeting of the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly on 22 January, the President of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Schäuble, and the President of the National Assembly, Richard Ferrand, signed a column in Ouest France recalling the importance of Franco-German relations... [Read more](#)

Greece :

The Parliament approves the purchase of 18 Rafale fighter planes



On 14 January, the Greek Parliament approved the purchase of 18 Rafale fighter aircraft from Dassault Aviation. The contract, worth €2.5 billion, includes the delivery of six new and twelve second-hand aircraft by 2023... [Read more](#)

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Meeting with the Portuguese Prime Minister



On 11 January, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa hosted his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis in the context of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the Union. The two Prime Ministers visited the headquarters of the European Maritime Safety Agency in Lisbon, responsible for preventing accidents and pollution at sea... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

Recovery plan totalling 222 billion € and political crisis



On 13 January, the government presented a €222.9 billion recovery plan focusing on 3 main priorities: digitisation and innovation, ecological transition and social inclusion. 144.2 billion will be used to finance new projects, 65.7 billion for existing projects, and 20 billion will be devoted to projects in important sectors such as the high-speed rail network, integrated ports, social and health infrastructures and 5G. This plan will be financed by the European recovery plan set up to emerge from the pandemic crisis. Following this presentation, the 3 ministers of the Italia Viva party of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi left the government... [Read more](#)

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The Netherlands :

Resignation of the government



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced the resignation of his government on 15 January after the publication of a parliamentary enquiry into an administrative scandal. Thousands of families were falsely accused of child benefit fraud between 2013 and 2019. Some were forced to repay the payments, which plunged them into serious financial difficulties. The government is responsible for managing day-to-day affairs until the parliamentary elections scheduled for 17 March... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Observations by the Commissioner for Human Rights on the return of migrants in Croatia



The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatovic, issued her observations on 11 January regarding the return of Syrian migrants from Croatia to Bosnia Herzegovina. She underlines that the Croatian authorities did not use an official procedure for the return of these migrants, nor did they identify the persons concerned or assess their particular situation. It also states that it is aware of evidence of ill-treatment of migrants by Croatian law enforcement officials in the context of collective removals... [Read more](#)

Compliance reports on corruption in Latvia



The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe published on 11 January two compliance reports dealing with the prevention of corruption and the promotion of integrity among parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors in Latvia... [Read more](#)

Guidelines against the trafficking of human beings



On 12 January, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) issued guidelines to assist States in the fight against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. It recommends making it a criminal offence to use the services of a trafficked person, improving working conditions in sectors prone to employ trafficked labour, and improving the protection of migrant workers... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Crimea: the complaint made by Ukraine against Russia deemed admissible



The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled on 14 January "partially admissible" the application filed by Ukraine against Russia after the annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Ukraine accuses Russia of violating twelve articles, including the prohibition of torture, protection of property and freedom of assembly and religion. The case will be tried by the Grand Chamber of the ECHR... [Read more](#)

The publication of recordings of Ms Bettencourt by Mediapart were illegal



The European Court of Human Rights ruled on 14 January that the Versailles Court of Appeal's injunction to Médiapart to remove from their site the recordings of Liliane Bettencourt's private conversations did not violate Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights on freedom of expression. It considers that the publication of the illegal recordings violates the right to privacy and that in this case the limitation of freedom of expression was justified... [Read more](#)

WTO :

Further US customs duties on certain French and German products



Additional customs duties of 25% have applied in the United States since 12 January on imports of French wines and spirits and 15% on aircraft parts produced in France and Germany. These new taxes are part of the dispute between Airbus and Boeing over State subsidies and have been approved by the WTO, which has authorised the United States to impose \$7.5 billion in additional customs duties on EU products... [Read more](#)

The Union for action against Indonesian restrictions on the export of stainless steel



On 14 January, the European Union requested the establishment of a panel within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for the elimination of illegal export restrictions imposed by Indonesia on raw materials for the production of stainless steel. It considers that these measures illegally restrict access for the European steel industry... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

The Union's trade surplus returns to its pre-crisis level



The EU's trade surplus stood at €25.3bn in November 2020, up 27% on November 2019 (€20.2bn), according to figures published by Eurostat on 15 January... [Read more](#)

Decrease in household savings



The household savings rate in the euro zone was 17.3% in the third quarter of 2020, remaining at a high level despite a drop from 24.6% in the second quarter, according to figures published by Eurostat on 12 January. The business investment rate remains unchanged at 23.3%... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Re-opening of the Zante library



The historical library of Zante (Zakynthos), is reopening its doors after being renovated. Established in 1628, this public library is the oldest in Greece and houses 50,000 rare editions and 20,000 books from the last decades. It hopes to attract the interest of private sponsors in order to make up for the lack of staff and to enable the maintenance of the rare editions... [Read more](#)

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Bacon and Freud in Madrid



The Marlborough Gallery is showing twenty prints and etchings by Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon on the theme of "The Human Condition" until 27th February... [Read more](#)

Bruegel the Elder in 3D



The Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna which hosts the largest collection in the world of paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, including the Tower of Babel, is presenting a 3D exhibition devoted to the Flemish painter... [Read more](#)

Warsaw Philharmonic online



The Warsaw Philharmonic will be hosting a re-run of the opening concert of the 2020-2021 season, a performance of the Russian composer Anatoli Liadov's Nenie, conducted by Andrzej Boreyko... [Read more](#)

Online concerts in Naples



The Department of Culture and Tourism of the Municipality of Naples offers daily concerts at 2 pm and 6 pm, recorded in the city's Palazzo dei Arte and broadcast on the Facebook page Napoli suona ancora (Naples plays again)... [Read more](#)

Celtic Connection 2021 on line



Glasgow's Celtic music festival, the Celtic Connection, will be held online until 2 February. This annual festival brings together around 100 musicians from all over the world and promotes Celtic music in all its forms, both traditional and contemporary... [Read more](#)

Musical Hypernuit at Radio France

On January 23rd, from 9pm onwards, Radio France is organising HyperNuit, a 6-hour live event to support the music industry. Around a hundred artists from the French scene will be present for live broadcasts, original artistic encounters and testimonials by musicians. The event will be broadcast on France Inter, France Musique, France Bleu, Fip and Mouv'... [Read more](#)



Launch of the conception phase of the European Bauhaus



On 18 January, the Commission launched the design phase of the new European Bauhaus, a space for collaboration, dialogue and innovation aimed at "bringing the Green Pact into the home" and developing a sustainable lifestyle. During this first phase the concept will be defined, exploring initial ideas and identifying the most urgent needs and challenges. The Commission is calling on "Europe's architects, engineers, designers, scientists, students, entrepreneurs and creative minds" to participate... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



18-21 January 2021
Brussels
Plenary session of the European Parliament



19 January 2021
Videoconference
Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



20 January 2021
Videoconference
Meeting of the Joint EU-Cuba Council



21 January 2021
Videoconference
Meeting of heads of State and government
Frankfurt
Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank



25 January 2021
Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council
Brussels
Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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