

Tuesday 9th February 2021

issue 922

The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on



and



The foundation application available on [Appstore](#) and [Google Play](#)

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

Brexit and the Irish Question

Author: Marie-Claire Considère-Charon



The implementation by the European Union and the United Kingdom of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland to maintain an open border on the island after Brexit is complex. The British province of Ulster finds itself at the crossroads of two entities which, far from providing it with "the best of both worlds", may very quickly appear to be a deadlock.

[Read more](#)

Contents

Foundation : Europe/World - Industry/Europe - Health/Europe - Belarus
Commission : Fight/Cancer - Brexit/Ireland - Employment/SURE - Telecommunications
Council : Competitiveness - Finance/LIBOR - Free movement - Fight/Terrorism
Diplomacy : Russia - Libya - Myanmar - Multilateralism - Russia/Expulsions
Court of Justice : Hungary/Pollution
ECB : Report/Recovery
Bulgaria : Report/IMF
France : EU/Own Resources
Italy : Draghi/Government
Poland : Energy - Report/IMF
Slovakia : France
Sweden : Reshuffle
Moldova : France
Council of Europe : Russia/Navalny
Eurostat : GDP - Inflation
Culture : Expo/Rome - Museums/Poland - Picasso/Madrid - e-expo/London - Theatre/Weimar - Singing/Davos - e-Festival/Brussels - e-Festival/Paris - e-Carnival/Venice

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

Foundation :

The European Union, world player



On 1 February, the Foundation organised a video conference with the High Representative, Josep Borrell, in partnership with the Institut Catholique de Paris, to discuss the major issues facing the European Union on the international stage. The replay of the conference is now available, together with the article on the High Representative's blog... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Reindustrialising Europe: lessons of the health crisis



On 11 February, the Foundation, in partnership with the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Lille and the Institut Catholique de Paris, will receive the Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, to discuss the reindustrialisation of Europe and economic innovation in the context of the dual climate and digital transition... [Read more](#)

Table of health measures and travel conditions in Europe



While the progression of the virus remains unclear, States are extending health measures, but some are beginning to ease restrictions. Museums are reopening in Italy, schools and shops in Austria, and hairdressing salons in Austria and Belgium. Member States agreed on 1 February to restrict non-essential travel within the EU. The Foundation provides you with an

overview of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. An indispensable, regularly updated resource for you to understand the situation... [Read more](#)



Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

On 7 February, the Belarusian opposition organised the Day of Solidarity with Belarus to mark the six months of contestation against the result of the rigged presidential election held on 9 August 2020. The Union reiterated its support for the Belarusian people and its demand for new transparent elections. To follow this crisis, the Foundation provides you with a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)



Commission :

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan



On 3 February, the Commission presented a €4 billion European plan to fight cancer, structured around four areas of action: prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment and improving quality of life. Special attention is given to children to ensure that they all have access to early and optimal detection and treatment... [Read more](#)



Meeting on the implementation of the Northern-Ireland Protocol



On 3 February, Commission Vice-President Maros Sefcovic and UK Minister of State Michael Gove discussed the implementation of customs controls in Northern Ireland, after the Commission announced the withdrawal of EU staff responsible for controls in Northern Irish ports due to security threats. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to an open border in Ireland and to the implementation of the protocol maintaining Northern Ireland in the European internal market. The European Union rejected the UK's request to extend the exemption from checks on goods arriving in Northern Ireland... [Read more](#)



Disbursement of an additional 14 billion € to counter unemployment



On 2 February, the Commission paid €14 billion to nine Member States under the SURE instrument to support employment, bringing the total aid distributed to Member States to €53.5 billion of the €90.3 billion... [Read more](#)



Infringement Procedure against 24 States in the area of telecommunications



On 4 February, the Commission launched infringement proceedings against 24 Member States for failure to transpose the new rules of the European electronic communications code. The code modernises the regulatory framework, strengthens consumer rights and ensures high standards for communication services. So far, only Hungary, Greece and Finland have met the deadline for transposing the Code into national law... [Read more](#)



Council :

Meeting of Competitiveness Council



Meeting by videoconference on 3 February, the Ministers for Science and Research discussed the development of scientific careers and the promotion of qualified human resources, particularly within the framework of the European Research Area and the new Horizon Europe programme, presented the day before... [Read more](#)



Replacement of LIBOR



On 2 February, the Council adopted amendments to the regulation on financial benchmarks, decided in the context of the abolition of the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), to which thousands of contracts are indexed. The new rules aim to introduce a legal replacement rate. The changes will come into force on 13 February... [Read more](#)



Recommendations regarding free movement and travel

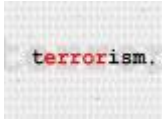
In recommendations adopted on 1 February, the Council calls on Member States to restrict all non-essential travel and to impose quarantine and negative testing on



travellers... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Renewal of the list of terrorists subject to sanctions



On 5 February, for a period of six months, the Council renewed the list of persons, groups and entities suspected of terrorism who are subject to restrictive measures. The 14 individuals and 21 entities concerned are subject to a freezing of their funds and all EU operators are banned from making economic resources available to them... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Visit by Josep Borrell to Moscow



Visiting Moscow on 5 February, EU High Representative Josep Borrell deplored, in the presence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, that relations with Russia faced "fundamental differences" and a "lack of trust". He reiterated the demands for the release of the opponent Alexei Navalny, and called for "joint work" on digital issues, climate, research and the fight against Covid-19. He condemned the expulsion, announced during his visit, of three German, Polish and Swedish diplomats accused of taking part in a demonstration in support of Alexei Navalny... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#) | [Other link](#)

Declarations regarding the situation in Libya



EU High Representative Josep Borrell, together with France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, welcomed the agreement reached on 5 February by the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum on the inauguration of an interim government with a view to holding national elections on 24 December 2021. Abdel Hamid Dbeibah, aged 61, reputed to be close to Turkey and having worked for the Gaddafi government from 2007 to 2011, was appointed Prime Minister... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Call for the liberation of Aung San Suu Kyi and her government



On 2 February, High Representative Josep Borrell condemned the military coup in Myanmar the previous day and called for the immediate release of all those arrested. He called on the military to restore civilian government and inaugurate the legislature of the parliament elected in November, adding that the EU "will examine all options at its disposal to ensure that democracy" prevails in the country. Massive crowds have been demonstrating for several days to protest against the coup... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Article on multilateralism



In an op-ed published on the Project Syndicate website, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the Presidents of the Commission and the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel, together with the UN Secretary-General and the President of Senegal, call for increased international cooperation to overcome the pandemic and the resulting crisis... [Read more](#)

Germany, Poland and Sweden expulse Russian diplomats



On 8 February, Germany, Poland and Sweden simultaneously decided to expel Russian diplomats posted on their territory, in response to the expulsion of 3 of their diplomats by Russia on 5 February. The three countries reject the accusation that their diplomats participated in an illegal demonstration in support of Alexei Navalny and recall that they were legally carrying out their mission... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Hungary has infringed the rules governing air ambient quality



The European Court of Justice ruled on 3 February that Hungary has breached EU air quality rules due to the high and persistent presence of fine particles (PM10). It found that the daily limit value set by the ambient air quality directive was "regularly exceeded" from 2005 to 2017 in the country... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Report on budgetary response to the Covid-19 crisis



In a report published on 3 February, the European Central Bank analyses the different budgetary responses by Member States to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as tax deferrals, business loans, support for short-time working or VAT cuts. It welcomes the increase in public investment, but is concerned about the widening macroeconomic differences between the 19 economies of the eurozone and calls for public debt to be brought under control, which it forecasts will increase from 85.9% to 101.7% of the GDP in 2020... [Read more](#)

Bulgaria :

Report on the Bulgarian Economy



On 1 February, the IMF published a report on Bulgaria which forecasts a 4.6% contraction in the GDP in 2020 and an upturn of 3.6% in 2021. The IMF stresses that poverty has decreased in recent years but that income inequalities have increased and are liable to continue to grow. The Bulgarian government should therefore focus its efforts on promoting more inclusive growth and carry out reforms to improve the efficiency of public services and the education system... [Read more](#)

France :

Parliament ratifies the decision on the Union's own resources



With its adoption by the Senate on 4 February, the French Parliament definitively ratified the decision regarding the European Union's own resources. The ratification of this decision is a necessary step in the implementation of the European recovery plan by means of a shared loan... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Mario Draghi asked to form a new government



Italian President Sergio Mattarella gave former European Central Bank (ECB) President Mario Draghi a mandate on 3 February to form a new government. This decision follows the failure of consultations between political parties after Giuseppe Conte's government resigned on 26 January... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Poland :

Energy Plan until 2040



On 2 February, the Polish Council of Ministers adopted the new plan for the country's energy policy until 2040. The plan is based on three pillars: a fair transition, the construction of a "zero emission" energy system and good air quality. It foresees a minimum 23% share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by 2030 and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by around 30% in 2030 compared to 1990... [Read more](#)

IMF report on Poland



In a report published on 8 February, the IMF notes that the Polish economy is one of the least affected by the pandemic in the Union, with a drop in GDP of 3.4% in 2020, which should be followed by a recovery of 2.7% in 2021. The report finds that the Polish government has responded quickly and effectively to the crisis, but that supervision needs to be stepped up over the banking sector, whose revenues have fallen. The IMF is encouraging Poland to increase public investment, particularly in the energy and digital sector in line with the European recovery plan... [Read more](#)

Slovakia :

Meeting with the French President



French President Emmanuel Macron received Slovak Prime Minister Igor Matovic on 3 February. The two leaders discussed the pandemic, the European recovery plan, the green deal and nuclear energy. They discussed the safety of journalists with Reporters Without Borders

secretary general Christophe Deloire three years after the murder of Slovak journalist Jan Kuciak... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Sweden :

Government reshuffle



Prime Minister Stefan Lofven reshuffled his government on 5 February after changes within the Green Party, his coalition partner. Märta Stenevi has become Minister for Gender Equality and Housing. Isabella Lövin, is leaving her post as Deputy Prime Minister, to be replaced by Per Bolund, responsible for the Environment and Climate. Per Olsson Fridh will enter the government as Minister for International Development Cooperation, and Asa Lindhagen will become Minister for Financial Markets... [Read more](#)

Moldova :

Meeting with Emmanuel Macron



On 4 February, French President Emmanuel Macron received Moldovan President Maia Sandu. The two Heads of State discussed political, economic, educational and cultural issues. Emmanuel Macron underlined the "turning point that the Republic of Moldova has recently reached, with the election by the people, to the presidency, of a personality of integrity and solidarity in all her political activity, who has been fighting for years for a state governed by the rule of law, free of corruption"... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Council of Europe :

Response to Alexei Navalny's conviction



On 4 February, Council of Europe officials "deeply regretted" the conviction of Russian opponent Alexei Navalny, which they considered arbitrary, unreasonable and contrary to Articles 6 and 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights. They consider that the mass arrests of journalists and demonstrators challenge the respect of fundamental rights in Russia... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Eurostat :

Decrease in GDP



In the fourth quarter of 2020, the Union's GDP fell by 0.5% and that of the euro zone by 0.7% compared to the previous quarter, Eurostat announced on 2 February. This represents a 5.1% and 4.8% decrease compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. According to estimates, GDP fell over the whole of 2020 by 6.4% in the Union and 6.8% in the eurozone... [Read more](#)

Inflation rising



Euro-zone annual inflation is estimated at 0.9% in January 2021, compared with -0.3% in December, according to an estimate released on 3 February by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Napoleon and Ancient Rome



The Museum of the Imperial Forums in Rome is showing the exhibition "Napoleon and the Myth of Rome" until 30 May, on the occasion of the bicentenary of his death, which retraces the emperor's relationship with the ancient world and Rome... [Read more](#)

Re-opening of Museums in Poland



Many Polish museums reopened on 2 February, including the National Museum in Warsaw, the National Museum in Krakow and the Wawel Castle in Krakow, the National Museum in Wroclaw, and the World War II Museum in Gdansk... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

[Picasso's Guernica explained in Madrid](#)

The Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid has launched "Rethinking Guernica", an interactive digital resource that offers multiple paths through the immense body of research that has been carried out on painting. This month, the museum has announced the enhancement of its resources, with the addition of more than 200 documents, as well as two new sections: "Oral History" and "(Im) Possible Counter-Archives"... [Read more](#)



The Raphaël Cartoons on view again in London



Raphael's Cartoons, one of the greatest treasures of the Renaissance, can now be viewed via a new online service from the Victoria & Albert (V&A) Museum in London... [Read more](#)

The Metamorphosis online



Until 28 February, the German National Theatre in Weimar is presenting Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis, directed by Juliane Kann. It is being filmed from several angles... [Read more](#)

Singwoche in Davos



From 15 to 20 February, the Davos Festival is organising the week of singing 2.1 online. This event provides an opportunity for young artists to come and work on their voice and learn singing alongside professionals, including remotely, via tutorials prepared by members of the Orion Vokal 4 ensemble. Each day starts with a short Zoom concert by all the participants followed by vocal training... [Read more](#)

Anima Online



Anima, the Brussels International Animated Film Festival, is taking place online from 12 to 21 February. Exclusive feature films, short films, event sessions and meetings with directors as well as meetings for professionals are on the programme of this 40th edition... [Read more](#)

L'envers du décor Festival online



The 4th edition of the festival L'Envers du décor organised by the Palais de la Porte Dorée in Paris is running in digital format until February 28th. It features installations, performances, shows, dance, circus skills and drawing exhibitions. Twelve performances by artists will be filmed... [Read more](#)

Venice Carnival online



The 2021 edition of the Venice Carnival is going online, live and streaming on social networks, from 11th to 16th February. Shows are broadcast daily from Palazzo Vendramin Calergi. Virtual rooms of the Carnival, as well as videos on its history and traditions are offered... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



8 February 2021
Brussels
Plenary session of the European Parliament



11 February 2021
Brussels
EU-Ukraine Association Council



15 February 2021

Eurogroup Meeting

The Letter is also available in:



I love the Robert Schuman Foundation's Letter

The Letter's Editorial Team :

Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;
Thomas Hinzelin, Mathieu Moiroud, Anne-Célia Cordier,
Arthur Allier, Julian Parodi, Eléonore de Saint-Sernin

Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice

Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

N° ISSN : 2729-6482

Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

The Robert Schuman Foundation, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.

You no longer wish to receive our letters. {LINK}