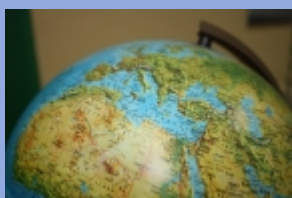




— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

Europe-Africa Relations in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. State of play and prospects

Author: Alexandre Kateb



The pandemic has shaken the European Union's agenda vis-à-vis African countries, which have successfully coped with the crisis. Europe must now further assert its role as the continent's leading partner, from industrial co-production to digitisation and the fight against climate change.

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Foundation :

Reindustrialising Europe: lessons of the Health Crisis



On 11 February, the Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, was the guest speaker at a videoconference organised by the Foundation, in partnership with the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Lille and the Institut Catholique de Paris, on Europe's industrial strategy after the Covid-19 crisis. You can watch the entire discussion in full again... [Read more](#)

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Table of health measures and travel conditions in Europe



As the vaccination campaign continues across Europe, Member States are maintaining the restrictions and curfews in place. Travel restrictions have been extended in Italy until 25 February. In Germany, measures have been extended until 7 March and the border has been closed with the Czech Republic and Austrian Tyrol. 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 be able to understand the situation better... [Read more](#)

[Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress](#)



As the protest against the result of the rigged presidential election of 9 August 2020 continues in Belarus despite the repression, the German government has indicated its readiness to take in victims of torture and police violence. To follow this crisis, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Growth forecasts up



The Commission's economic forecasts, published on 11 February, anticipate growth of 3.7% in 2021 and 3.9% in 2022 for the EU, and 3.8% over both years for the eurozone. The Commission expects stronger than expected growth for the second half of 2021 and the year 2022, provided that an effective vaccination programme is implemented and containment measures are relaxed. Regarding inflation, the Commission forecasts an increase of 1.1% in the euro area... [Read more](#)

Immigration: review of cooperation with third States in terms of returns



On 10 February, the Commission published a Communication on how to improve cooperation with third countries on the return and readmission of migrants who do not qualify for asylum, in which it gives the elements of a first assessment of its action in this area... [Read more](#)

Meeting regarding the Protocol on Northern Irish



On 11 February, the Vice-President of the European Commission, Maros Sefcovic, and the British Minister of State, Michael Gove, met in London to prepare the next meeting of the Joint Committee on the implementation of the Protocol on Northern Ireland. Both sides agreed to convene the Joint Committee no later than 24 February to provide the political direction and approval necessary for the proper implementation of the Protocol... [Read more](#)

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Extension of the temporary application of the agreement with the UK



On 9 February the Commission proposed to extend the provisional application of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the United Kingdom until 30 April. The European Parliament, which has started to examine the text, will not have ratified it before 28 February, the date originally planned for the end of provisional application. The new deadline has to be accepted by the UK government... [Read more](#)

Vaccines: publication of the contract with Sanofi-GSK



On 9 February, the Commission published the contract signed with the pharmaceutical company Sanofi-GSK on 18 September for the supply of a vaccine against Covid-19. At the request of the laboratory, whose vaccine is still under development, the document contains many redacted paragraphs and pages... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Final adoption of the recovery and resilience facility



On 10 February MEPs and then the Council on 11 February gave their final approval to the Recovery and Resilience Facility, with €672.5 billion in grants and loans to help Member States emerge from the crisis caused by the pandemic. Each must present a plan by the end of April, which must be part of actions such as the green transition, for at least 37% of the budget, and digital transformation, for a minimum of 20%... [Read more](#)

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Resolution on the circular economy



In a resolution adopted on 10 February, MEPs stress the need for a circular economy to achieve the objectives of the green pact. They call for binding targets for 2030 regarding the use of raw materials and consumption footprints for all categories placed on the market. They call on the Commission to bring forward new legislation on eco-design to include non-energy-related products... [Read more](#)

New permanent rules against "empty flights"



On 11 February MEPs adopted a revision of the rules on airport take-off and landing slots, making permanent the suspension of the rules decided in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Airlines will be able to use only 50% of their slots, compared to 80% under the previous rules, so that they can keep them for the next season. In future, the Commission will be able to adjust the minimum usage rate to between 30 and 70%. The text was formally adopted by the Council on 15 February... [Read more](#)

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Request for further action by the ECB



In a resolution on the European Central Bank's (ECB) 2020 report, MEPs call on the ECB to consider further measures to stimulate the European economy weakened by the Covid-19 crisis. They call for "strong" intervention for price stability, new and effective strategies and the inclusion of climate change in the ECB's strategies and decisions... [Read more](#)

Council :

Position regarding the confidentiality of electronic communications



Member States agreed on 10 February to revise the rules regarding the protection of privacy and confidentiality in the use of electronic communications services. The new rules will define the situations in which service providers are allowed to process electronic communications data or access data stored on end-users' devices. The Portuguese presidency of the Council will be able to start negotiations with the Parliament on the final text... [Read more](#)

New measures on the recapitalisation of businesses and in support of the recovery



On 15 February, the Council formally adopted the revision of the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) II and the Prospectus Regulation to facilitate the recapitalisation of European companies on the financial markets as a way out of the crisis. On 11 February, MEPs amended Directive 2014/65/EU and Regulation (EU) 2017/1129 on the reporting obligations of credit and financial institutions to regulatory authorities in order to speed up and reduce investment costs and thus support economic recovery... [Read more](#)

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Agreement on European Civil Protection



Negotiators from the Council and Parliament reached an agreement on 8 February on the rules and budget for European civil protection in the framework of the multi-annual budget 2021-2027. The agreement provides for an envelope of €1.26 billion, three times the previous budget, and a ceiling of €2.06 billion as part of the response to the Covid-19 crisis. The text has yet to be formally adopted... [Read more](#)

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Eurogroup Meeting



On 15 February the Finance Ministers of the Eurozone discussed macroeconomic developments, the outlook for economic policy in the Eurozone in the face of the pandemic and its consequences, the international role of the euro and corporate solvency... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Agenda for the Mediterranean



On 9 February, the Commission presented its Agenda for the Mediterranean, designed to guide the Union's Southern Neighbourhood Policy. The new partnership, with a budget of €7bn by 2027, involves nine countries in the Middle East and Maghreb and focuses on women and young people to build a "safer, more democratic, greener, prosperous and inclusive" neighbourhood... [Read more](#)

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Association agreement with Ukraine



On the occasion of the 7th meeting of the Association Council with Ukraine on 11 February, the representatives of the European Union and the Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal reiterated the importance

of their partnership which, in 2020, notably took the form of European aid of €1.1 billion. In a resolution adopted on the same day, MEPs recalled their "unwavering support and commitment" to Ukraine but also the need for Ukraine to show greater commitment to reform and adherence to EU principles... [Read more](#)

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17th meeting with the Republic of Korea



At the 17th meeting between the Republic of Korea and the European Union, the two partners reviewed achievements in bilateral and strategic cooperation, as well as their experiences in the fight against the pandemic. They agreed to ensure that post-pandemic economic recovery strategies are environmentally sound and based on free and fair trade... [Read more](#)

Declaration regarding Iranian nuclear activities



In a joint statement on 12 February, France, Germany and the United Kingdom called on Iran to end "without delay" the production of metallic uranium. The three States deem that this step in the development of a nuclear weapon has "no credible civil justification" and constitutes a violation of the international agreement signed in 2015... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

ExoMars provides new answers



The ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter interplanetary probe developed by the European Space Agency and placed in orbit around the planet Mars recently detected a new gas. This research is helping to find out whether the red planet has already been inhabited and whether human exploration is possible. The spacecraft has also provided new information about the changing seasons and how Mars loses its water... [Read more](#)

Dismantling of a tax fraud network



On 10 February, the Dutch authorities dismantled a criminal network involved in international VAT fraud through a "Secure Digital" (SD) memory card exchange system. The Netherlands estimates the damage at €9 million. Europol supported the operation by providing analytical support to stimulate cross-border cooperation. It also deployed a mobile office to support the authorities on the ground and help identify the criminal network... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Catalonia: separatists retain their majority



The Catalan Socialist Party led by the Spanish Health Minister, Salvador Illa, came out on top in the regional elections in Catalonia on 14 February with 22.96% of the vote and 33 seats out of 135. The Independence Party of the Republican Left of Catalonia, with 21.35% of the vote, also won 33 seats. The pro-independence parties won a total of 74 seats, up from 70 in 2017, and retain their majority in the regional parliament. Turnout totalled 53.5%... [Read more](#)

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Hungary :

The country's leading independent radio is forced off air



The Budapest court confirmed on 9 February a decision taken by the Media Council to revoke the broadcasting licence of Hungary's leading independent radio station, Klubradio, as of 14 February, which is now web-based. NMHH criticises Klubradio for having submitted administrative documents late twice in a year... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

New government led by Mario Draghi



Mario Draghi was officially sworn in as Italy's head of government on 13 February during the inauguration ceremony before Italian President Sergio Mattarella, which was broadcast live on television. He has skilfully mixed technocrats and politicians, choosing personalities from all the parties that have offered him support, but without appealing to the leaders. Daniele Franco, No. 2 at the Bank of Italy, became Minister of the Economy. Mario

Draghi announced the creation of a "super-ministry" of Ecological Transition to be headed by a renowned physicist, Roberto Cingolani. The government includes 8 women out of 24 members... [Read more](#)

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Latvia :

Ban on Russian channels



On 9 February, Latvia's National Council for Electronic Media (NEPLP) banned the broadcasting of 16 Russian channels in the country due to a lack of clear information on the identity of their new representatives and officials. The day before, another channel, "Rossija RTR", was also banned from broadcasting because its content was deemed illegal...

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Poland :

Meeting of the Visegrad Group



The presidents of the Visegrad Group countries met in Jurata, Poland, on 9 and 10 February to mark the 30th anniversary of their birth. Poland's Andrzej Duda, Slovakia's Zuzana Caputova, the Czech Republic's Andrej Babis and Hungary's Janos Ader discussed the Covid-19 crisis, energy security, climate protection and international and transatlantic relations... [Read more](#)

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UK :

GDP contraction of 9.9% in 2020



The UK's GDP contracted by 9.9% in 2020, according to figures released by the National Statistics Office on 12 February. This is the steepest annual contraction ever recorded. Growth in the fourth quarter was 1%, compared with 16.1% in the previous quarter... [Read more](#)

Kosovo :

Vetevendosje wins the general election



On 14 February, the opposition Vetevendosje party, led by Albin Kurti, won the early parliamentary elections in Kosovo with 47.88% of the vote. The pro-independence party PDK obtained 17.36% of the vote. The LDK (centre-right) received 13.06%. Vetevendosje is committed to fighting corruption, poverty and political instability in the country... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Call for the respect of freedom in Russia



The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, has called on Russia to respect the freedom of assembly after many peaceful demonstrators were arbitrarily arrested during political rallies in different cities across the country. She is also concerned about freedom of the press after journalists were arrested without explanation... [Read more](#)

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WTO :

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, new Director General of the WTO



On 15 February, the General Council of the World Trade Organization elected by consensus the new Director-General of the organization. Her name is Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, from Nigeria, the first woman and the first African woman to be chosen for the post. She will take office on 1 March for a renewable term that will expire on 31 August 2025... [Read more](#)

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ECHR :

Internet access for prisoners: Turkey condemned



The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled on 9 February that Turkey had violated Article 10 of the Human Rights Convention when it banned a lawyer, imprisoned in 2016, from accessing websites such as the ECHR or the Turkish Constitutional Court to prepare his defence... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

International goods trade surplus in 2020



According to figures published by Eurostat on 15 February, in December 2020 the European Union recorded a surplus of €30.1 billion in its international trade in goods with the rest of the world and the euro zone, €29.2 billion. For the year 2020, the euro area recorded a surplus of €234.5 billion (221 in 2019) and the European Union a surplus of €217.3 billion (191.5 in 2019). Eurostat notes that China became the EU's biggest trading partner in 2020, ahead of the US... [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Survey of citizens and the pandemic



According to a Eurobarometer survey for the Parliament published on 12 February, 66% of Europeans are optimistic about the future of the Union and 72% support the European recovery plan. But in the face of global challenges and the consequences of the pandemic, they are calling for a reform of the Parliament's political priorities and a review of the hierarchy of fundamental values... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Report on the Union's demography



A report published on 11 February by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) demonstrates the increasingly important regional differences in population ageing and its link to economic activity. The report is part of the debate opened by the Commission on the issue of Europe's ageing population... [Read more](#)

Publications :

10 lessons for a post-Pandemic World



In 10 lessons for a post-Pandemic World, the American political scientist and essayist Fareed Zakaria outlines ways to tackle global challenges such as climate change, technological upheaval and the growing confrontation between China and the United States... [Read more](#)

Culture :

The four elements by Johann Jakob Hartmann at the Belvedere



Until 29 August, the Vienna Belvedere Museum will be showing the complete works of the four elements by the 18th century painter Johann Jakob Hartmann in their entirety for the first time in over 100 years. The exhibition is part of the "Im Blick" series, which highlights particular aspects of the museum's collection and analyses the works of art from new scientific perspectives... [Read more](#)

Anselm Kiefer at the Bourget



The Gagosian Gallery, at Le Bourget, is presenting Field of the Cloth of Gold, an exhibition of four large paintings by Anselm Kiefer, inspired by poetry, the Old and New Testaments, and the Kabbalah, by appointment until 28 March... [Read more](#)

Da Vinci's Codex in Madrid



Until 16 May, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid is presenting "Spirit in the Service of Power", an exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's codexes at the court of the House of Austria, which at the time was based in the Spanish capital. Among other things, the exhibition includes hydraulic architecture and civil engineering projects proposed by the artist... [Read more](#)

Cardiff National Museum online

The National Museum in Cardiff is offering a 360° virtual tour, with information on works from its collections of Welsh and international art from the last five centuries...



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e-festival Opera Rara



Krakow's Opera Rara festival will run online until 21 February. The programme includes Monteverdi's *Il ballo delle Ingrate*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and *Der goldene Drache*, a work by contemporary Hungarian composer Peter Eötvös... [Read more](#)

The Four Seasons



Until 28 February the San Carlo Theatre in Naples is offering *The Four Seasons*, a choreography to music by Antonio Vivaldi recorded last November... [Read more](#)

Modern Oedipus at the Volksbühne



On 19 February, the Volksbühne in Berlin will broadcast a 360° streaming of the premiere of *Anthropus, Tyrant*, a play by Alexander Eisenach, inspired by Sophocles' *King Oedipus* to explore the history of humanity and its relationship with the world around it... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



16 February 2021

Videoconference

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



19 February 2021

Videoconference

Meeting of Education Ministers

Videoconference

Meeting of EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council



22 February 2021

Brussels

Foreign Affairs Council

Videoconference

Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

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