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## The governance of the European Defence Fund

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With €7 billion for the period 2021-2027, the European Defence Fund should facilitate the emergence of a European defence technological and industrial base and contribute to increasing the Union's strategic autonomy. Cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and the European Defence Agency will be crucial to its success. And the institutions will have to take full account of the challenges facing industry.

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#### Front page! :

##### 70 years Paris Treaty



On 18 April, the EU commemorated the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC was the first project of European integration and brought together Belgium, France, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It was initiated by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in his declaration of 9 May 1950. The Treaty of Paris came into force on 26 July 1952 for a period of 50 years and expired on 23 July 2002... [Read more](#)

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#### Foundation :

##### Table of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



Italy and Belgium announced an easing of restrictions from 26 April, and travel outside Belgium is again allowed. France has suspended air travel to Brazil to limit the spread of variants from that country, and has imposed a quarantine on travellers from Argentina, Chile and South Africa. Portugal announced the end of the suspension of flights to Brazil and the UK, and reopened restaurants, theatres, shopping centres, high schools and universities. In Germany, the city of Cologne has imposed a curfew. To follow the development of

the situation, the Foundation offers you a summary of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. An essential, regularly updated resource for a better understanding of the situation... [Read more](#)



### Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress



The European Union and the OSCE condemned the repression in Belarus on 16 April and called for the immediate release of political prisoners, while the regime banned the European news channel Euronews from broadcasting in the country. To follow the crisis ongoing since the August 2020 elections, the Foundation provides a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)



### Commission :

#### Financing strategy for the European Recovery Plan



On 14 April, the Commission set out its strategy for financing the NextGenerationEU recovery plan. It will borrow up to €800 billion in current prices on the capital markets by 2026, or around €150 billion on average per year, to be repaid by 2058. The instruments used will include medium and long-term bonds, some of which will be issued as green bonds, and short-term debt instruments. The Commission hopes to be able to launch the loan in July, if all Member States have ratified the own resources decision... [Read more](#)



#### New strategies to combat crime and trafficking in human beings



On 14 April, the Commission presented its new strategies to fight crime and trafficking in human beings. It focuses on the use of new technological tools to track down cybercrime and on enhanced cooperation between EU police institutions to dry up the criminals' sources of profit. It also stresses reducing the demand that fuels trafficking, destroying the traffickers' business model and protecting victims, especially women and children... [Read more](#)



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#### Delivery of extra BioNTech-Pfizer vaccinations in the second quarter



Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced on 14 April that an additional 50 million doses of BioNTech-Pfizer vaccines will be delivered in the second quarter. These doses were originally planned to be delivered only in the fourth quarter. This will bring the total number of doses supplied by BioNTech-Pfizer in the second quarter to 250 million. She mentioned the start of negotiations for a third contract with the laboratory to bring the delivery to 1.8 billion doses of vaccine in the Union over the period 2021-2023. The EU passed the 100 million vaccination milestone on 14 April... [Read more](#)



#### Proposed VAT exemption for essential goods and services



The Commission proposed on 12 April to exempt from VAT the goods and services it and EU bodies and agencies make available to Member States and citizens in times of crisis. The aim is to free up limited budgets in procurement operations and maximise the effectiveness of EU funds used to tackle crises, such as natural disasters and public health emergencies. The beneficiaries of these measures can be Member States or third parties, such as national authorities or institutions... [Read more](#)



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#### Meeting on the Northern Irish Protocol



Commission Vice-President Maros Sefcovic and UK Minister for EU Relations David Frost met on 15 April in Brussels to discuss the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which the British want to defer. Maros Sefcovic reaffirmed the EU's commitment to upholding the Good Friday Peace Agreement and preserving the integrity of the European single market. He stressed the need to find common, not unilateral, solutions agreed within the joint bodies established by the withdrawal agreement. Discussions will continue in the coming weeks... [Read more](#)



### Parliament :

[Platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)



The multilingual digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe went online on 19 April. It will allow citizens to contribute directly to the work of the Conference by leaving their opinions and suggestions on the issues they consider important for the future of Europe. Information such as decentralised events, European citizens' panels and the Conference plenary sessions will also be listed on the platform... [Read more](#)

### Vote to support the agreement with the UK



Members of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committees voted on 15 April in favour of the trade and cooperation agreement signed in December 2020 by the EU and the UK. The European Parliament will take a final decision and adopt an accompanying resolution in plenary session at a date yet to be set... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



Economy and Finance Ministers discussed economic recovery on 16 April, including progress on the ratification of the Own Resources Decision and the preparation of National Recovery Plans, which must be submitted to the Commission by 30 April. They adopted conclusions on the capital markets union, stressing the priority to be given to SMEs. They also discussed the future of the European financial architecture for development... [Read more](#)

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### Eurogroup Meeting



The 19 euro area finance ministers discussed the digital euro, the results of the IMF and World Bank spring meetings and the Eurogroup's policy on transparency on 16 April. They had a discussion on the banking union with their colleagues from non-euro area countries...

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### Negotiation mandate on the "digital green certificate"



On 14 April, the Council adopted its mandate for negotiations with the Parliament on the proposal for a digital green certificate that will indicate whether a person has been vaccinated against Covid-19, is negative or has recovered, in order to facilitate security and freedom of movement in the EU as well as in Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The Council wanted to introduce some changes in the proposal, including clarifications on the principle of non-discrimination and the guarantee of enhanced data protection. The Parliament is due to adopt its negotiating mandate at the April plenary session... [Read more](#)

### Position on the European Space Programme for 2021-2027



On 19 April, the Council adopted its position on first reading on the EU's space programme for the period 2021-2027, with a budget of €14.8 billion. The aim is to simplify and rationalise the existing legal framework for space policy, to harmonise the security framework of the space programme, to establish rules for the governance of the Union's space programme and to have a sufficient budget to continue and improve the programmes already launched... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### New Partnership Agreement with the ACP countries



The European Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) concluded negotiations on a new partnership agreement to replace the Cotonou Agreement on 15 April. The agreement, which has yet to be signed by both parties, sets the framework for economic, sectoral and political cooperation for the next 20 years. Both parties strengthen their commitments to the protection of peace and security, human rights, democracy and governance... [Read more](#)

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### Interview between Angela Merkel and Xi Jinping

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on 16 April and discussed climate protection and biodiversity issues... [Read more](#)



### Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



The Foreign Ministers reiterated on 19 April their commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the "very worrying" context of the Russian military build-up on the Ukrainian border and in Crimea. They called on the Russian authorities to grant Alexei Navalny immediate access to trusted medical professionals. They adopted new sanctions against individuals and companies linked to the military coup in Burma. They approved conclusions on the strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, on the EU's integrated strategy for the Sahel, and on the renewal of the partnership with the southern neighbourhood. They also discussed the situation in Georgia and Ethiopia... [Read more](#)

### Court of Justice :

#### Ban on electrofishing



On 15 April, the Court of Justice of the European Union rejected the appeal lodged by the Netherlands against the EU ban on electrofishing, which was adopted in 2019 and is due to take effect in June 2021. The Netherlands argued that the EU legislator had not based itself on the latest scientific advice on electrofishing. The Court recalls that the legislator is not obliged to base itself solely on available scientific advice, and stresses that the environmental risks of the practice have not yet been fully assessed... [Read more](#)

#### Rejection of Ryanair's appeals against aid to other companies



In two judgments handed down on 14 April, the European Court of First Instance rejected the actions brought by the airline Ryanair against the aid measures for SAS adopted by Sweden and Denmark, and against Finland's guarantee for Finnair. The judges found that the measures, decided in response to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, comply with EU law... [Read more](#)

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#### The Advocate General reiterates the right of national courts to send preliminary questions



The Advocate General of the Court of Justice ruled on 15 April that "a national court must disregard any national legislation or court practice which impairs its power to refer questions to the Court of Justice". He considers that the Hungarian legislation which allows the Supreme Court to declare a reference for a preliminary ruling illegal and to sanction the judge who made it, runs counter to the primacy of EU law. The Court will deliver its judgment in the coming months... [Read more](#)

#### The Advocate General deem that two Polish courts are infringing the Union's law



On 15 April, the Advocate General of the Court of Justice concluded that the two new chambers of the Polish Supreme Court, the Disciplinary Chamber and the Extraordinary Chamber of Control, may not comply with EU law because of the way their members are appointed, in "flagrant violation of national laws". The Court will issue its final judgment at a later stage... [Read more](#)

### Court of Auditors :

#### Report on charging infrastructures for electric vehicles



On 13 April, the European Court of Auditors published a report on the Commission's support for the deployment of public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. It points out that while the EU has increased the number of charging stations, the number of these is still unevenly distributed among Member States and payment systems are not sufficiently harmonised. She believes the Commission must ensure that EU funds are allocated where they are most needed... [Read more](#)

### ECB :

#### Consultation Report on a digital euro



The European Central Bank published on 14 April its report on the public consultation on a digital euro in 2020. The 18 questions set out by the ECB regarding the benefits and challenges of a digital euro project, as well as its possible design and use, received more than 8 200 responses. Respondents' main expectations of a digital euro are privacy, security, ease of use, no additional costs and offline use... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Report on the assessment of the criminal threat in the Union



On 12 April Europol published its annual threat assessment report on serious and organised crime in the EU. The report notes that two thirds of criminals regularly use corruption and 60% of criminal networks active in the EU use violence in their criminal activities. It provides an overview of the current state of knowledge on criminal networks, describes the factors in the general environment that shape crime, presents the latest developments in serious and organised crime, and identifies the main criminal groups and individuals involved... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### Strengthening the US military presence



US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced on 13 April that the US will not withdraw troops from Germany, as announced by Donald Trump, and that it will furthermore deploy 500 additional military personnel by the autumn. The troops, who will be stationed at US NATO bases in the Wiesbaden area, are to enhance existing space and cyber capabilities... [Read more](#)

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### Growth forecasts revised downwards



In their joint forecast published on 15 April, the major German economic institutes predict growth of 3.7% in 2021 and 3.9% in 2022. The recovery is expected to be sustained after the current restrictions are lifted, but the strengthening of measures over the winter has led to a downward revision of the 2021 forecast by 1 percentage point compared to that of autumn 2020. Economists expect German economic activity to normalise by the end of the second quarter of 2021... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Report on the progress of the Christchurch Appeal



On 13 April, French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern presented the report on the consultation of supporters of the Christchurch Appeal, an initiative launched by the two countries after the Christchurch attack in 2019, which brings together 10 heads of State and government as well as leaders of digital companies and organisations to fight terrorism and violent extremism online. The report highlights the progress made and outlines priorities for the coming years: gaining the support of other internet stakeholders, making progress in understanding the effects of algorithms, and being able to respond to terrorist and violent extremist content... [Read more](#)

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## Poland :

### Expulsion of the Defender of Rights Adam Bodnar



On 16 April, the Constitutional Court gave the Defender of Rights, Adam Bodnar, three months to step down. His five-year term had ended in September 2020, but he had continued in office because of a lack of agreement on the appointment of his successor, which the court ruled unconstitutional. The lower house of parliament voted to appoint a deputy from the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, Bartłomiej Wroblewski, to replace him, but the appointment has to be validated by the Senate, where the opposition has a majority... [Read more](#)

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## Czech Republic :

### Expulsion of 18 Russian diplomats accused of espionage

The Czech government announced on 17 April the expulsion of 18 Russian embassy employees identified as agents of the GRU, the Russian military spy service. Czech intelligence has "irrefutable" evidence of the agents' involvement in the explosion of



an ammunition depot in 2014, Prime Minister Andrej Babis said... [Read more](#)

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**Georgia :**

**Political agreement under the aegis of the Union**



The ruling Georgian Dream party and opposition parties signed an EU-brokered agreement on 19 April to end the political crisis in the country that followed the October 2020 elections. The agreement, presented the day before by European Council President Charles Michel, includes strengthening the independence of the judiciary, a reform of electoral rules and changes in the functioning of the parliament. The main opposition United National Movement (UNM) will join the agreement when its leader Nika Melia is released from prison. Charles Michel travels to Tbilisi on 20 April... [Read more](#)

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**Turkey :**

**Release of journalist, Ahmet Altan**



The Turkish authorities released journalist and writer Ahmet Altan on 14 April after the Court of Cassation overturned his 10 and a half year prison sentence, handed down in 2019 for complicity with the Gülenist organisation, described as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government. His release comes a day after the European Court of Human Rights ruled that his detention could not be legally justified, and that his rights such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of the press had been violated... [Read more](#)

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**Ukraine :**

**European support against Russian deployments**



On 16 April, French President Emmanuel Macron received his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky and reiterated "France's attachment to the unity and sovereignty of Ukraine". The two leaders and German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Russia to withdraw its troops deployed on the Ukrainian border. Calls for de-escalation and support for Ukraine had been voiced in previous days by US President Joe Biden, European Council President Charles Michel, as well as during a joint visit to Ukraine by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian foreign ministers... [Read more](#)

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**Meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Committee**



On 13 April, the NATO-Ukraine Commission met at NATO Headquarters in Brussels to discuss the situation in Ukraine, following a Russian military build-up around Ukraine's borders, as well as ongoing ceasefire violations in eastern Ukraine by Russian-backed paramilitaries. Allies reaffirmed support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called on Russia to stop its provocations and de-escalate the situation... [Read more](#)

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**Council of Europe :**

**GRECO Annual Report**



On 15 April, GRECO, the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, published its annual report examining the measures taken in 2020 against the emergence of corruption in Member States. It highlights the risk of corruption due to the emergency measures introduced to combat the pandemic, which have led to the concentration of power and derogations from fundamental rights. According to the report, by the end of 2020, Member States had implemented almost 40% of its recommendations to fight corruption of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors... [Read more](#)

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**Call for the respect of rights in the introduction of a "vaccine passport"**



The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, is calling on European governments to respect human rights standards, common values and principles in the implementation of a "vaccine pass". She highlights the importance of data protection, the obligation

of States to ensure access to vaccination and the risks to public health and safety...  
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#### IMF :

##### Report on Economic Outlook in Europe



In a report on the economic outlook for Europe published on 14 April, the International Monetary Fund forecasts growth of 4.5% in 2021 for all countries on the continent. It notes a V-shaped recovery of the European economy but points out that coronavirus variants and the pace of vaccination pose a significant risk to its pace... [Read more](#)

#### OECD :

##### Recommendations on growth



Published on 14 April, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) "Going for Growth 2021" report sets out its recommendations for developed economies to accelerate recovery...  
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#### Culture :

##### Gustavo Dudamel, new musical director of the Paris Opera



The Venezuelan Gustavo Dudamel is the first Latin American conductor to hold the position of musical director at the Parisian lyric institution. Appointed on 16 April, he will take up his post on 1 August until 2027. He succeeds Philippe Jordan, who has left for the Vienna Opera... [Read more](#)

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##### Online opera based on Elfriede Jelinek



The TR Warszawa Theatre will broadcast on 24 April at 18:45 "Rechnitz. The Exterminating Angel", an opera based on a play by Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek, which is set in Austria in March 1945. The performance will be broadcast in Polish with English subtitles... [Read more](#)

##### Deauville Easter Festival



The Deauville Easter Festival is being held online until 8 May. Five concerts will be broadcast live on the France 3 Normandie website, on Facebook, on the RecitHall platform and on the Music.aquerelle Festival webradio... [Read more](#)

##### Georgia O'Keeffe in Madrid



Until 8 August, the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou and the Fondation Beyeler, is hosting the first retrospective in Spain of Georgia O'Keeffe, one of the leading exponents of 20th century North American art. The exhibition traces the artist's artistic career since the 1910s and includes 90 of her paintings... [Read more](#)

##### Italy Street Photo Festival



The 4th edition of the Italy Street Photo Festival, the most important street photography event in Italy, is taking place this year online from 23 to 25 April. Alex Majoli, from the Magnum agency, will give a lecture. Workshops and discussions will also be offered to the public with the participation of professional photographers such as Tony Gentile, Stephanie Gengotti and Gabriele Croppi... [Read more](#)

##### The online collection of the Vitra Design Museum



The Vitra Design Museum is offering an online introduction to its diverse collection of objects. The collection is constantly being expanded and includes detailed information about the selected objects and the designers who created them... [Read more](#)

## Napoleon's Bicentenary :

### Napoleon and Bonapartism



Historian Steven Englund offers a 'political life' of Napoleon, in which he reviews his role in modern politics... [Read more](#)

### If I were told the story of Napoleon



Many books on Napoleon are available for a young audience. Ducksters offers a biography, as well as a quiz for children, to introduce them to the history of the French emperor... [Read more](#)

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## Agenda :



20 April 2021  
Videoconference  
Meeting of European Affairs Ministers



22 April 2021  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Energy Ministers  
Frankfurt  
Meeting of Council of Governors of the European Central Bank



23 April 2021  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Environment Ministers  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Defence Ministers



26 April 2021  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Agriculture Ministers

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