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The Letter in PDF format

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Europe: good rules to recover growth

Authors: Ramona Bloj, Marion L'Hote



The unprecedented crisis triggered by the pandemic has led to exceptional action by the European Union. As Member States present their recovery plans financed by the common European loan, it is important to think about the future and ensure that States do not forget all the basic rules of good public management. In this study carried out with iFRAP and with a foreword by Alain Lamassoure, the authors make five proposals to restore growth in Europe.

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Foundation :

Germany turns the page post-Merkel



On 12 May, the Foundation organised a videoconference on the future of Germany in view of the elections of 26 September and the announced departure of Chancellor Angela Merkel, moderated by Pascale Joannin, with Frank Baasner, Director of the Franco-German Institute (DFI), Joachim Bitterlich, former German ambassador, and H el ene Kohl, Berlin correspondent for Europe 1, the Derni eres Nouvelles d'Alsace and the Journal du Dimanche. You can watch the debate again... [Read more](#)

The Permanent Atlas of the European Union is available



The new edition of the Permanent Atlas of the European Union has been published by Marie B. This book reflects the latest political and economic changes in the European Union and its Member States. With more than 50 maps, texts and thematic sheets, the Atlas summarises the essential history and political and statistical realities of the Union. It is available in hard copy in French in bookshops and on our website.

The digital version is available in French and English... [Read more](#)

Map of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



Greece reopened its borders to tourists on 15 May and travel between regions is allowed again. Portugal reopened its borders on 17 May. In Poland, terraces reopened on 15 May and masks are no longer required in the open air. Museums, bars and restaurants will reopen on 19 May in France, where the curfew will be extended to 9pm. On 19 May, hotels and restaurants, leisure and cultural facilities reopen under conditions in Austria. To follow the development in the situation, the Foundation offers you a complete map of the sanitary measures in place and the travel conditions across Europe. This is an indispensable, regularly updated resource to help you understand the situation... [Read more](#)

Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

On 10 May, opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya discussed with the Commission what a European aid package for Belarus might look like. To follow the crisis since the rigged elections of August 2020, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

Elections :

The Democratic Rally might remain in office in Cyprus after the elections on 30 May



The current ruling Democratic Rally (DISY) is expected to lead the 30 May parliamentary elections with 25.70% of the vote, ahead of the Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL), which is expected to win 22.90% of the vote, and the Democratic Party (DIKO), which is expected to win 12.10%. The main issues for voters are the fight against corruption, after the "golden passport" scandal, and the management of the health crisis... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Economic forecasts up



On 12 May, the Commission revised its growth forecasts for the European Union and the euro area upwards. It forecasts GDP growth of 4.2% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022 for the EU and 4.3% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022 for the euro area. All Member States are expected to return to their pre-crisis levels by the end of 2022. Inflation in the euro area is expected to reach 1.7% in 2021 and 1.3% in 2022. Public debt is expected to peak this year at 94% in the EU and 102% in the euro area before declining in 2022. The public deficit is expected to rise to 7.5% in the EU in 2021 and 8% in the euro area before falling in 2022... [Read more](#)

Action Plan against pollution of the air, water and soil



On 12 May, the Commission presented an action plan entitled "Towards zero pollution in air, water and soil", which aims to link all relevant EU policies to combat and prevent pollution. The plan sets targets for reducing pollution at its source by 2030 compared to the current situation. Citizens will be able to debate European environmental policy from 1 to 4 June at a number of events organised as part of European Green Week... [Read more](#)

Strategic guidelines on aquaculture



On 12 May, the Commission presented its strategic guidelines for more sustainable and competitive aquaculture in the EU. It proposes to reduce the sale of antimicrobials and to develop organic aquaculture. The Commission calls on Member States to adopt these strategies and to consolidate best practice in aquaculture to make it a sustainable and environmentally friendly resource... [Read more](#)

Proposal for a sustainable blue economy



On 17 May, the Commission adopted its proposal for a sustainable blue economy in the EU for industries and sectors linked to the oceans, seas and coasts. It aims in particular to develop offshore renewable energies such as wave and tidal energy, to protect the biodiversity of the European maritime area through new standards for fisheries and ship recycling, and to improve maritime spatial management. The Commission, the European Investment

Bank and the European Investment Fund have also announced a new European Fund for Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and Aquaculture... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Mikhail Khodorkovsky questioned by the Commission on Foreign Interference



Russian businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky, founder of Dossier Center, a project investigating the criminal activities of people close to the Russian government, was questioned on 10 May by the Parliament's special Commission on foreign interference in the EU's democratic processes. He said that Russian agents of influence are active in Member States, notably in Germany, and in France within the Rassemblement National... [Read more](#)

Return to plenary sessions in Strasbourg



After more than a year's absence, the Parliament will return to its seat in Strasbourg for the June plenary session. President Sassoli invited the political groups on 12 May to organise this return, for which only 20% of officials will travel, as teleworking is still the rule. MEPs will be allowed to participate online in the session, which will be held from 7 to 10 June... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Meeting of European Affairs Ministers



On 11 May, the Ministers for European Affairs discussed the progress of vaccination and the digital green certificate. They discussed the Conference on the Future of Europe and prepared the meeting of heads of State and government on 24 and 25 May. They also endorsed the new enlargement methodology to be applied to Montenegro and Serbia, which places greater emphasis on fundamental reforms and aims to improve the efficiency and predictability of the EU accession process... [Read more](#)

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Extension of framework regarding sanctions following cyber attacks



The Council decided on 17 May to extend by one year the framework for the adoption of sanctions against persons or entities involved in cyber attacks against the Union and its Member States. Sanctions can also be imposed after attacks against third States or international organisations. They can include an asset freeze and a travel ban... [Read more](#)

Provisional agreement on the immigration of skilled workers



The Council and the Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 17 May on a draft directive on the conditions of entry and residence of highly qualified third-country nationals. Member States will still have the possibility to maintain national schemes for highly qualified workers in parallel to this new system. The agreement must now be formally approved by both institutions... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Negotiations with the USA on steel and aluminium



The Commission and the US administration decided on 17 May to open negotiations on steel and aluminium, to end their trade dispute on the issue. Since 2018, the US has been levying additional tariffs on European imports of the two products, and the EU has been imposing an equivalent amount of taxes on many US products... [Read more](#)

Naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden



European ships took part in a naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden with Djibouti and Japan on 10 May. The joint exercise is part of the effort to combat piracy in the region and ensure freedom of navigation and maritime safety... [Read more](#)

Summit of leaders of the Christchurch Call

French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern co-chaired the Leaders' Meeting on the second anniversary of the Christchurch Call on



14 May. The summit brought together government leaders from 55 states, 10 internet companies, the Commission and representatives of civil society to assess progress in the fight against the publication of terrorist content online. The countries praised the effectiveness of the initiative and reiterated that efforts should be focused on improving algorithms and blocking live terrorist content... [Read more](#)

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Court of Justice :

European businesses can circumvent US sanctions



The Advocate General of the Court of Justice ruled on 12 May that a European company cannot terminate a contract with an Iranian company if it cannot put forward any other justification than the need to comply with US extraterritorial sanctions against companies trading with Iran. He considers that Iranian companies can invoke the EU's blocking statute which allows US sanctions to be ignored. The Advocate General's conclusions, which relate to a dispute between Telekom Deutschland and Bank Melli Iran, are not binding for the Court, which is due to deliver its judgment later... [Read more](#)

Decisions of the European Court of First Instance on tax rebates in Luxembourg



On 12 May, the European Court of First Instance upheld a Commission decision requiring the energy group Engie to pay €120 million in back taxes to Luxembourg. It found that the advance tax rulings granted to Engie by the Grand Duchy constituted a tax advantage. In a second ruling on the same day, the Court of First Instance annulled a Commission decision ordering a European subsidiary of the Amazon group to repay €250 million to Luxembourg. The judges found that the Commission had not sufficiently demonstrated that the agreements between Amazon and the Luxembourg authorities constituted aid incompatible with EU law. The Commission may appeal the decision... [Read more](#)

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ECB :

Decisions of the ECB Council of Governors



The ECB Governors' Council clarified on 14 May its decision on TLTROs, the targeted longer-term refinancing operations for banks, in particular on sanctions for non-compliance with deadlines, and on legal certainty. It published several other documents on market operations, market and payment infrastructure, corporate regulation and governance, statistics, international and European cooperation, and banking supervision... [Read more](#)

Bulgaria :

Appointment of an interim government



On 11 May, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev appointed Stefan Yanev, previously his Secretary for Security and Defence, as interim Prime Minister. The expert government will run the country's current affairs until elections are called for 11 July, after the three main parties failed to form a government following the 4 April elections. The new Prime Minister said on 12 May that the priority of his government will be to uphold the rule of law... [Read more](#)

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France :

Agreement on the study phase of the future air combat system (SCAF)



France, Germany and Spain reached an agreement on 17 May on the launch of contracts for studies on the Future Air Combat System (SCAF), which is due to enter service around 2040. The three countries will finance the design phase in equal parts for a total of €3.5 billion, and agreements have been reached on the issue of intellectual property and industrial governance. It will be possible to discuss the contracts with the participating companies after formal validation by the three States, in particular in the German Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Poland :

Senate rejects PiS candidate for Human Rights Defender



On 13 May, the candidacy of Bartłomiej Wróblewski of the Law and Justice party (PiS) for the post of Ombudsman was rejected by the Senate. Bartłomiej Wróblewski had been nominated on 15 April by the Diet, where PiS has a majority, but the Senate had to validate this

decision. This is the third unsuccessful attempt by the government to appoint a new Defender of Rights... [Read more](#)

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Czech Republic :

New tension with Russia



On 14 May, Russia placed the Czech Republic, together with the United States, on a list of "unfriendly States". Being on this list implies restrictions, such as limiting the number of local employees working in foreign diplomatic missions and other agencies. The decision follows diplomatic tensions between Russia and the Czech Republic and the expulsion of diplomats involved in a Russian secret service operation in the Czech Republic. In a statement, the EU deplored the decision, which it said was contrary to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations... [Read more](#)

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UK :

New Democratic Unionist Party leader



Northern Ireland's Agriculture Minister Edwin Poots was elected leader of the Democratic Unionist Party on 14 May, replacing Arlene Foster, who was forced to resign due to internal opposition over Brexit. E. Poots is not yet a candidate to succeed Foster as leader of the government, from which she will resign at the end of June... [Read more](#)

Montenegro :

Meeting with the French President



French President Emmanuel Macron and Montenegrin Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic held a videoconference on 10 May. They welcomed the COVAX initiative and the EU's assistance to Montenegro during the health crisis. The two leaders discussed the situation in the Western Balkans, and E. Macron recalled France's commitment to the economic and social development of Montenegro and its support for the country's accession to the EU... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Annual report on democracy



On 11 May, the Council of Europe published Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic Buric's report on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which shows a worrying decline in democracy in the 47 Member States. Ms Pejcinovic Buric encouraged States to make use of Council of Europe mechanisms based on key principles such as fundamental democratic principles and adherence to legal norms, multilateralism, freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the proportionate, necessary and time-limited nature of restrictions due to the Covid-19... [Read more](#)

Call for the protection of women against violence



On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence on 11 May, Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic Buric recalled the importance of this treaty and called on Member States to further support it. As the Convention is stricter than national laws in some countries, it allows for independent international monitoring to provide better protection for women... [Read more](#)

Report on ill treatment in North Macedonia



In a report published on 11 May, the Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee notes a resurgence of police practices in North Macedonia that are not in line with the Council's recommendations and highlights structural deficiencies in the penitentiary system, as well as a lack of political will to undertake reforms. The Committee calls on the North Macedonian authorities to improve police training and prison conditions... [Read more](#)

Venice Commission Opinion on Montenegro

The Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's body of constitutional legal experts, issued an opinion on the revised draft law on public prosecution in Montenegro on 10 May. It reiterates the need to ensure that the Prosecutors' Council is not politicised... [Read more](#)



NATO :

Meeting of the Bucharest Format



On 10 May, the Heads of State and Government of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia met by video conference in the Bucharest 9 (B9) format. The B9 is an informal organisation of leaders from NATO's Central and Eastern European member countries to coordinate their security positions. US President Joe Biden and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also attended the meeting. In a joint statement, the B9 members stressed the need to safeguard and expand NATO to countries that uphold democratic values... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Decrease in unemployment in industrialised countries



The unemployment rate in OECD countries fell from 6.6% in February to 6.5% in March 2021, according to figures released on 11 May. Youth unemployment stands at 13.3%. In the euro area, unemployment fell from 8.2% in February to 8.1% in March. The euro area countries that recorded the biggest decreases were Finland, Portugal, Spain and Lithuania... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Re-opening of museums and cultural venues in France



Museums, cinemas, theatres and other cultural venues reopen in France on 19 May with certain restrictions and within the 9pm curfew. On 9 June, the number of people admitted will be increased, festivals with seated audiences will be allowed, and the curfew will be extended to 11pm. On 1 July, capacity restrictions will be lifted but physical distancing will continue to apply, the curfew will be lifted; and shows and festivals with standing audiences will be allowed to take place following protocols... [Read more](#)

Exhibition on the unification of Ancient Italy



Until 15 July, the Quirinal Stables are reopening with an exhibition tracing the complex process and idea of the unification of the Italian peninsula in ancient Rome. The exhibition recounts, from the 4th century BC to the Julio-Claudian period, the process of Romanisation "which was a clash, an encounter and a hybridisation between cultures"... [Read more](#)

Rodin at the Tate Modern



From 18 May to 21 November, the Tate Modern in London is showing "The Making of Rodin", an exhibition on the early work of the French sculptor, with a particular focus on the importance of plaster in his work. The exhibition also shows the complex dynamics of sculpture, between the artist and his models and collaborators... [Read more](#)

The last Klimts



In an exhibition at the Belvedere Museum in Vienna running until February 2022, Gustav Klimt's last female portrait, The Lady with a Fan, returns to Austrian soil after more than a century. The painting is presented together with other late works from Klimt's life, such as The Bride, Amalie Zuckerkandl, Adam and Eve and Portrait of a Lady in White... [Read more](#)

20th Century Relics in Valladolid

The National Sculpture Museum in Valladolid is tackling the phenomenon of relics in the 20th century with the exhibition "Strange Devotion", which is on display until 22 August. Taking its name from an engraving by Francisco de Goya, this exhibition brings together around a hundred pieces testifying to the diplomatic, artistic and anthropological functions of relics in the modern era. The role of relics as mediators

Classical concert to an audience



The Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra will perform with an audience on 23 May at 6 pm. The programme will include works by Eugene Bozza, Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg. The orchestra will be conducted by Domingo Hindoyan... [Read more](#)

Eurovision 2021



The Eurovision Song Contest will take place on 22 May in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Most of the contestants from 39 countries will travel to the event, while others will participate via pre-recorded videos.

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Napoleon's Bicentenary :

Exhibitions at the Invalides Military Museum



From 19 May, the Musée de l'Armée and the Invalides are running two exhibitions: "Napoléon n'est plus" brings together historical pieces and paintings, reliquaries and objects that belonged to the emperor, and "Napoléon? Again! - From Marina Abramović to Yan Pei-Ming" is an exhibition of works by 15 contemporary artists inspired by the life and history of Napoleon... [Read more](#)

Restoration of Fort Napoleon



The French Ministry of Culture announced on 11 May that the recovery plan will contribute to the renovation of Fort Napoleon in Guadeloupe. Built in the 18th century and named after the emperor in 1805, the fort was rebuilt between 1844 and 1867, and is still one of the most visited monuments on the island... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



17 and 18 May
Brussels
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council



17-20 May 2021
Brussels
Plenary Session at the European Parliament



18 May 2021
Virtual meeting of foreign ministers Informal meeting of ministers responsible for cohesion policy



20 May 2021
Brussels
"Trade" Council



21 May 2021
Lisbon
Eurogroup Meeting



21-22 May 2021

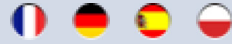
21
May

Lisbon
Informal Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers

24
May

24-25 May 2021
Brussels
Extraordinary Meeting of the European Council

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