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The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on



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## "Engaging in politics is a source of risk for the Commission. But it has become inevitable."

Author: Frédéric Mérand



Canadian researcher Frédéric Mérand studied the workings of the European Commission from within for four years and has written a book, "A Sociologist in the European Commission", based on his experience. He explains how the crises of recent years have changed the institution and the functioning of the Union as a whole.

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#### Elections :

##### Provisional results of the parliamentary elections



The provisional results of the parliamentary elections held in Bulgaria on 11 July give a very narrow victory to the party Such a People Exist, led by Slavi Trifonov (23.91%), ahead of the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party of former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov with 23.69% of the vote... [Read more](#)

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#### Foundation :

##### Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2021



The 2021 edition of the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union", a reference work for European decision-makers, has just been published by Marie B. Articles by leading experts and personalities such as Josep Borrell and Margaritis Schinas offer an overview of European achievements and new forms of solidarity in the context of the pandemic, as well as a broad vision of Europe's role in the world. It is available in hard copy in bookshops and on our website, and in digital version in English and French. Order your copy here... [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 paper version in French in bookshops and on our website, and in digital version in French and English. You can order it here... [Read more](#)

## Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

Following the sentencing of opposition politician Viktor Babariko to 14 years in prison, the EU again called for the immediate release of political prisoners. It also gave its support to Lithuania, which is facing illegal immigration organised by the Belarusian regime. To follow the crisis since the rigged presidential election of August 2020, the Foundation offers a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

## Map of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



European states are facing an increase in cases linked to the variants. From 14 July, only vaccinated travellers will be able to enter Malta. The curfew is being extended in Portugal, where a "health certificate" is required in hotels and restaurants. In the Netherlands, discos are to be closed again and bars must close at midnight. In Spain, Catalonia has closed discos. In the Czech Republic, a negative test is required for unvaccinated employees returning from holiday. France is advising against holidays in Spain and Portugal. Border controls have been reinforced in France, where a "health certificate" will be introduced on 21 July in leisure and cultural venues. To follow the development of the situation and learn about the conditions of entry into the various Member States of the Union, the Foundation is offering its readers a complete map of the measures in place. An indispensable, regularly updated resource... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### The Commission's economic forecasts



On 7 July, the Commission revised its growth forecasts for 2021 and 2022 upwards to 4.8% in 2021 and 4.5% in 2022, driven mainly by private consumption and investment, as well as by the ease of recovery and resilience. Inflation is expected to rise to 2.2% in 2021 and 1.6% in 2022... [Read more](#)

### New strategy and standard for a sustainable economy



On 6 July, the Commission presented a sustainable finance strategy to strengthen investment in the green transition. It presented a proposal for a green bond standard, which aims to create a voluntary standard to demonstrate the financing of environmentally friendly projects. It also adopted rules on the information to be published by financial and non-financial companies to indicate the degree of sustainability of their activities... [Read more](#)

### Draft budget 2022



On 9 July, the Commission published its draft EU budget for 2022. It proposes to set appropriations at €167.8 billion in commitments and €169.4 billion in payments, including special instruments. The NextGenerationEU recovery plan will add €143.5 billion in commitment appropriations, for a total of €311.3 billion... [Read more](#)

### Competition: fine for German car manufacturers



On 8 July, the Commission found that Daimler, BMW and the Volkswagen Group had infringed EU competition rules by colluding between 2009 and 2014 on technical development in the field of nitrogen oxide emission control and ordered them to pay fines totalling €875 million... [Read more](#)

### Assessment of aid given to refugees in Turkey

According to the Commission's strategic mid-term review published on 7 July, the EU's €6 billion assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey has provided improved health, education, protection and socio-economic support since 2016. The EU is to provide a further €3 billion in aid for the period 2021-2023... [Read more](#)



## Parliament :

### Resolution to strengthen the Union's sanctions regime



In a resolution adopted on 8 July, MEPs, by endorsing the EU Magnitsky Act, call for corruption to be included in the scope of the EU's global human rights sanctions regime. They also want sanctions falling within the scope of this regime to be taken by qualified majority, and no longer by unanimity... [Read more](#)

### Violations of the rule of law must be addressed as soon as possible



In a resolution adopted on 8 July by 529 votes to 150 and 14 abstentions, MEPs regret that the European Commission has decided to comply with the non-binding conclusions of the December 2020 European Council and to delay the application of the regulation on conditionality for the protection of the EU budget by drawing up guidelines for its application... [Read more](#)

### Protecting maritime zones in the Antarctic



MEPs adopted a resolution on 8 July calling for a swift resolution to the impasse in international negotiations on the establishment of two maritime protected areas in Antarctica... [Read more](#)

### Resolution on citizen participation in the decision making process



In a resolution adopted on 7 July, MEPs call for citizens to have a greater say in the Union's decision-making process. They stress that the conference on the future of Europe is an opportunity for citizens to engage in direct dialogue and to be involved through participatory mechanisms. They call for the improvement of existing participatory mechanisms through new technologies, so as to facilitate the exchange with citizens at European level but also at national, regional and local level... [Read more](#)

### Condemnation of the repression of opposition in Turkey



On 8 July, MEPs adopted a resolution condemning the repression of the opposition in Turkey, the demand for the dissolution of the HDP, the third largest party in the Turkish Parliament, and the political blacklisting of almost 500 HDP members on terrorism-related charges. MEPs also condemn the Turkish authorities' decision to dismiss democratically elected mayors on the basis of "dubious" evidence, and are calling for any progress in the development of EU-Turkey relations to be made only if the human rights and rule of law situation improves... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### Western Balkans Summit



The Western Balkans summit, held online on 5 July under the leadership of Angela Merkel, addressed the consequences of the pandemic, green and digital transitions, energy infrastructure and economic development. Participants stressed that enlargement to the Western Balkans is a strategic investment in peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. The summit is part of the "Berlin Process", an initiative launched by several Member States, led by Germany, to advance regional cooperation and the European integration agenda... [Read more](#)

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### Summit of the Three Seas Initiative



The 12 participating States of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) met for their 6th Summit on 8-9 July in Sofia. They reiterated their support for the Initiative as a platform for cooperation to increase North-South

connectivity in Central and Eastern Europe in the fields of transport, energy and digitalisation. They stressed the importance of energy security, the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund (3SIIF) and sustainable development. They welcomed the commitment of European and international financial institutions as well as the United States, Germany and the European Commission to the Initiative's activities... [Read more](#)



#### Foreign Affairs Council



On 12 July, the Foreign Affairs Ministers discussed the geopolitics of new digital technologies and in particular the EU's capacity to influence global norms and standards, as well as the finalisation of the strategic compass project for March 2022. They formalised the EU's military training mission in Mozambique, agreed on the principle of sanctions against those responsible for the situation in Lebanon, and extended for six months a series of economic sanctions against Russia. The Council also met with the new Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid... [Read more](#)



#### Court of Justice :

##### Judgment on the condition of aid to young farmers



The Court of Justice ruled on 8 July that the criterion for determining whether a young farmer is eligible for start-up aid is the standard gross production of the whole holding, not just the share he or she holds in that holding. It considered that setting different conditions for a young farmer setting up with other young farmers than those set for a young farmer setting up with farmers in another category is not discriminatory... [Read more](#)



##### Judgment on authorisations for the marketing of medicines



The Court of Justice ruled on 8 July that no medicinal product may be placed on the market of a Member State without a marketing authorisation having been issued by the competent authority of that State, or by the Commission. Thus, if a medicinal product does not have such an authorisation, it cannot be marketed in that State, even if it can be sold in another Member State without a medical prescription... [Read more](#)



#### Court of Auditors :

##### Special Report on the polluter/payer principle



In a report published on 5 July, the Court of Auditors considers that the polluter pays principle has been applied to varying degrees in the EU's environmental policies. It observes that the EU budget has been used to finance decontamination actions whose costs should have been borne by the polluters. It recommends that EU funds be better protected by ensuring that they are not used to finance projects that should be borne by the polluter and that the polluter-pays principle be further integrated into environmental legislation... [Read more](#)



#### ECB :

##### New monetary policy strategy



On 8 July, the European Central Bank adopted its new monetary policy strategy, which includes a symmetric inflation target of 2% over the medium term. It clarifies that in some cases monetary policy may lead to inflation slightly above the target during a transitional period. It confirms that the harmonised index of consumer prices remains the appropriate measure for the assessment of price stability. In addition, the ECB has announced that it will further integrate climate change considerations, including in corporate debt buybacks, into its communication and risk assessment... [Read more](#)



#### Cyprus :

##### Visit by the Commission President



Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited Cyprus on 7 and 8 July to approve the EU's €1.2 billion recovery and resilience plan for Cyprus. This plan will enable the country to deal with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and to ensure the ecological and digital transition. 41% of the plan will be devoted to climate objectives and 23% to measures to support the digital transition... [Read more](#)



## Croatia :

## Commission Approval of the Plan for Recovery and Resilience



On 8 July, the Commission approved Croatia's recovery and resilience plan, to which the EU will contribute €6.3 billion in grants. The funding will support the implementation of investments and reforms in the context of the green and digital transition, economic resilience and the reconstruction of areas devastated by the December 2020 earthquake... [Read more](#)

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## Spain :

## Government Reshuffle



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez reshuffled his government on 10 July. The number of vice-presidents was reduced from 4 to 3 and 7 new ministers joined the executive, including Pilar Llop as Justice Minister and José Manuel Albares as Foreign Minister. The average age of the new government was reduced from 55 to 50, while the share of women at the head of ministries rose from 54% to 63%... [Read more](#)

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## Visit to the Baltic States



On 6 and 7 July, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez visited Estonia where he met with President Kersti Kaljulaid and Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, to discuss bilateral economic and trade relations, issues on the European agenda, such as the recovery fund, the pandemic, the eastern and southern neighbourhood. On 8 July, he travelled to Lithuania where he met President Gitanas Nausėda. Discussions focused on bilateral relations and their potential, especially in the economic field. He took the opportunity of his visit to Lithuania to meet the Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya... [Read more](#)

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## France :

## Attribution of contracts for the tunnel between Lyon and Turin



On 7 July, the Board of Directors of TELT, the company in charge of the Lyon-Turin link project via a tunnel under the Alps, gave the green light to the signing of contracts for the construction of the base tunnel on the French side. The contracts were awarded to the Eiffage (€1.47 billion) and Vinci Constructions (€1.43 billion) groups, as well as to a consortium led by the Swiss company Implenia (€228 million). The tunnel is scheduled to open in 2030... [Read more](#)

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## Report on transnational lists and the principle of the Spitzenkandidat



In a Senate report on the proposal for transnational lists and the Spitzenkandidaten system, published on 6 July, Jean-François Rapin (LR) and Laurence Harribey (PS) consider that neither of these two systems can end the Union's "democratic deficit". They advocate a "Europeanisation of the ballot" by inviting future election candidates to really take up European issues in their campaign, while stressing the role that the media has to play... [Read more](#)

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## Italy :

## State visit to France



Italian President Sergio Mattarella was welcomed for a State visit to France from 4 to 6 July by his counterpart Emmanuel Macron. The two leaders recalled the historical ties between the two countries, asserted their commitment to defending a common European political agenda with regard to the EU budget, the transatlantic relationship, the Conference on the Future of Europe and the political situation in Libya. They discussed the draft treaty on enhanced bilateral cooperation, known as the "Quirinale Treaty", and announced that a Franco-Italian civic service would be set up in the framework of this treaty... [Read more](#)

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## Sweden :

## New government led by Stefan Löfven



On 7 July, Stefan Löfven was reinstated as Prime Minister by the Swedish Parliament. He obtained only 116 votes against 173, with 60 abstentions, but the opposition was not able to gather the 175 votes that would have been necessary to reject his nomination. Prime Minister since 2014, he resigned on 28 June after a vote of no confidence. He presented his

new government on 9 July, comprising social democrats and Greens already in the previous government... [Read more](#)

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#### Moldova :

##### The party of President Maia Sandu wins the general elections



President Maia Sandu's Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) won the parliamentary elections in Moldova, held after the dissolution of parliament on 28 April. It won 48% of the vote, ahead of the Bloc of Socialists and Communists (BESC) of pro-Russian ex-president Igor Dodon, which won 31%... [Read more](#)

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#### Switzerland :

##### Mutual recognition of Swiss and EU certificates



On 9 July, the European Union decided to recognise the Swiss Covid certificate, and the Swiss government in turn recognises the certificates issued by the EU Member States and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)... [Read more](#)

#### Council of Europe :

##### Joint note on European standards regarding redress



On 9 July, the Council of Europe and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights published a joint note on European standards on redress for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees at European borders. The aim is to protect human rights by incorporating standards derived from the European Convention on Human Rights and EU law. The note stresses the importance of investigating allegations of rights violations at borders and gives the mechanism for complaints if these are not respected... [Read more](#)

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##### 4th Conference on reforms in Ukraine



On 7 July, in the opening speech of the 4th Conference on Reforms in Ukraine, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, recalled the important contribution of Ukraine to European life, as well as the steps taken by the country to move forward on reforms and the need to continue these efforts, while underlining the fact that reforms are more difficult to achieve in the context of armed conflict... [Read more](#)

#### G20 :

##### World agreement on the taxation of multinational businesses



The Finance Ministers of the G20 countries, meeting in Venice on 9 and 10 July, reached an agreement on a comprehensive reform of the international corporate tax system. The agreement builds on the work of the OECD: the world's largest companies will have to pay taxes wherever they do business and a global minimum effective tax rate of at least 15% will be introduced to avoid a race to the bottom in corporate tax rates. A final agreement is expected at the G20 summit in October... [Read more](#)

#### Council :

##### Eurogroup Meeting



The 19 euro area finance ministers, who met on 12 July, discussed the post-pandemic economic recovery as well as banking and financial stability. They discussed the potential implications of a digital euro for citizens, businesses and the Economic and Monetary Union as a whole. The 27 Finance Ministers met with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to discuss the international dimension of economic and financial policies in the euro area and the budgetary outlook for 2022... [Read more](#)

#### Eurobarometer :

##### Climate change is the most serious issue in the world say Europeans

According to the Eurobarometer survey published on 5 July, Europeans consider climate change to be the most serious global problem today. More than 9 out of 10 respondents consider climate change to be a serious problem (93%), while almost



78% consider it to be a very serious problem. 90% of Europeans agree that greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced to the absolute minimum... [Read more](#)

### Report on support to the euro in the non-member countries



According to a survey published on 9 July, a strong majority of citizens of Member States that have not yet adopted the euro, 60%, think that the single currency has had positive consequences for the countries that already use it. 50% consider the introduction of the euro in their country to be positive, and 55% say that the introduction of the euro would have positive consequences for them. The opinion is most favourable in Romania (75%) and Hungary (69%). In all Member States surveyed (except the Czech Republic), the share in favour of the introduction of the euro has increased compared to 2020... [Read more](#)

### Studies/Reports :

#### Report on the Competition Policy in 2020



On 7 July, the Commission published its report on Competition Policy 2020, which reports on the evolution of EU policy since the beginning of the current mandate. The Commission considers that competition policy has proved its relevance, flexibility and speed of adaptation, and has played a key role in the efforts to counter and overcome the health and economic crisis caused by the pandemic. In particular, the Commission underlines its determination to use this policy to help prepare the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility... [Read more](#)

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#### Justice Scoreboard 2021



On 8 July, the Commission published the EU Justice Scoreboard 2021, which provides comparative data on the efficiency, quality and independence of European judicial systems. According to the document, digital tools have helped courts and public prosecutors to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic... [Read more](#)

### Culture :

#### Damien Hirst at the Cartier Foundation



Until January 2, 2022, the Fondation Cartier is presenting the exhibition "Cherry Blossoms", comprising a new series of paintings by British artist Damien Hirst. The painter mixes Impressionism and Pointillism. Cherry Blossoms is both a diversion from and a tribute to the great artistic movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries... [Read more](#)

#### Dürer in Aachen



Until 24 October, the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum in Aachen is showing an exhibition of Albrecht Dürer's travel diary from 1520-1521, when he toured the Rhineland to attend Charles V's coronation. Entitled "Dürer was here. A Journey Becomes Legend", the exhibition brings together 90 drawings from the historical copy of his diary... [Read more](#)

#### Viking Treasure



The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh is showing an exhibition of Viking treasure until 12 September. The Galloway Hoard, which dates back to the year 900, contains over 100 objects that provide an insight into the link between the Viking Age and Scotland. The exhibition gives visitors the opportunity to see the cleaned and preserved treasure items, which reveal intricate Viking decoration that has never been seen before... [Read more](#)

#### Ballet La Bella Otero in Madrid



The Zarzuela Theatre in Madrid is presenting the dance show La Bella Otero, organised by the Spanish National Ballet and choreographer Rubén Olmo, which tells the story of one of the most influential dancers of the late 19th century, Carolina Otero... [Read more](#)

### Jazz Festival in Krakow



The 26th Krakow Summer Jazz Festival is running until 1 August. Nearly one hundred indoor and outdoor concerts are being organised by some of the biggest names in jazz, together with young virtuosos. Special concerts are planned to highlight the great figures of Polish jazz such as Dorota Miskiewicz and Marek Napiorkowski. This year's festival coincides with the Jazz Night on 17 July, for which additional festivities are being planned... [Read more](#)

### Jazz Festival in Montreux



The 55th edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival takes place until July 17 on the shores of Lake Geneva. Several concerts on the Lake Stage will be broadcast via free live streaming. Some sixty concerts by jazz, hip-hop, electronic and world music groups are on the programme, with Ibrahim Maalouf, Camelia Jordana and Zuccherò among the headliners.. [Read more](#)

### Pause Guitare Festival in Albi



The Pause Guitare festival in Albi is running until 18 July, a stone's throw from the Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile. The programme includes top names such as Soprano, Patrick Bruel, Tryo, Grand Corps Malade and Christophe Maé, as well as emerging artists... [Read more](#)

### Napoleon's Bicentenary :

#### Bonapart and the Desert Sands



The town of Saint-Raphaël, "Imperial Partner City", is presenting the exhibition "Bonaparte and the desert sands" until 30 October. The Archaeological Museum is exhibiting several objects from the Egyptian campaign, such as weapons and military outfits, the model of the Muiron, and also a copy of the Rosetta Stone... [Read more](#)

#### Napoleon at Plessis-Bourré



On 16 and 17 July, for the 6th consecutive year, the castle of Plessis-Bourré, in the Loire region, will host a life-size re-enactment of a confrontation between Napoleon's soldiers, an army of Chouans and some English spies. A hundred or so soldiers will be mobilised to share their knowledge of bivouac life, uniforms and military manoeuvres... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



13 July 2021

Brussels  
Economic and Financial Affairs Council  
Brussels  
EU Bosnia-Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Council



14-15 July 2021

Kranj  
Informal meeting of Ministers of Justice and Internal Affairs



19 July 2021

Brussels  
Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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### The Letter's Editorial Team :

Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;  
Mathieu Moiroud, Anne-Célia Cordier,  
Arthur Allier, Eléonore de Saint Sernin,  
Martin Muller, Jean-Toussaint Battestini

**Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice**

**Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin**

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Contact/Suggestions  
[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

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