



## "Germany must have greater involvement in overcoming crises and conflicts"



Author: Andreas Schockenhoff

On the occasion of the 16th Franco-German Council of Ministers on 19th February 2014 the Robert Schuman Foundation has published an interview with Andreas Schockenhoff, Deputy Chair of the CDU/CSU group and chair of the France-Germany Friendship group at the Bundestag. Interviewed notably about foreign policy, Mr Schockenhoff advocates a new German defence strategy: Germany must invest more in finding solutions to conflicts" saying he would prefer "a culture of responsibility and solidarity" rather than "a culture of restraint".

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### Elections :

#### Slovakian Presidential Election



On 15th March Slovaks are being called to ballot in the first round of the presidential election. 14 people are running including Robert Fico the present Prime Minister (Direction-Social Democracy, SMER-SDY). The most recent poll by Median for the TV/radio station RTVS credits Robert Fico with 38.8% of the vote in the first round, followed by Andrej Kiska 18.6%, Milan Knazko 12.9%, Radoslav Prochazka 9.9%, Pavol Hrusovsky 5.7%, Helena Mezenska 5.6%, Gyula Bardos 2.6%, Viliam Fischer 2.1% and Jan Carnogursky 1.8%. The other four candidates (Milan Melnik, Jozef Behyl, Jozef Simko and Jan Jurista) are due to win less than 1% of the vote. If none of the candidates wins more than 50% in the vote on 15th March a second round will take place on 29th March. The president is elected for five years. The present President Ivan Gasparovic has undertaken two mandates already and cannot stand again...

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### Early general elections in Serbia



At the end of January President Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party, SNS) announced that early elections would be taking place on 16th March two years ahead of schedule. The National Assembly (Narodna skupstina), the only chamber in parliament comprises 250 members elected for a 4 year mandate by proportional voting. Each political party has to win at least 5% of the vote to be able to sit in parliament.

According to the most recent poll by Faktor+ 43% of the Serbs are about to vote for the Progressive Party. The coalition rallying the Socialist Party (Member of the outgoing government coalition), the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia and United Serbia are due to win 13.1% of the vote; the Democratic Party 11.6%, the Serb Democratic Party 7%; the New Democratic Party 6.8% and the Liberal Democratic Party 5.2%... [Read more](#)

### Financial Crisis :

#### The German government publishes its annual economic report



In its new annual economic report adopted at the Council of Ministers on 12th February 2014 the German government indicated that it was now counting on GDP growth of 1.8% in 2014 against 1.7% announced last autumn and indicated that for the first time there was a growth forecast of 2% for 2015. A growth level like this would mark a clear increase after two years of rather weak growth with 0.4% in 2013 and 0.7% in 2012. Moreover according to Destatis on 14th February Germany's economic growth was slightly more dynamic than planned in the fourth quarter of 2013 lying at 0.4% thanks to a rise in exports and investments. For the whole of 2013 GDP growth of Europe's leading economy was confirmed at 0.4%... [Read more](#)

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#### Investment up in France in the final quarter of 2013 according to INSEE



The French National Statistics institute, INSEE announced on 14th February 2014 that investments were rising again in 4th quarter of 2013, up by 0.6% after seven quarters of contraction. As for growth INSEE indicates that 2013 was better than forecast, with growth of 0.3% over the whole year... [Read more](#)

#### The IMF approves the disbursement of 910 billion euro to Portugal



On 12th February 2014 the IMF announced that it had approved the disbursement of 910 billion euro to Portugal. This sum brings the total amount of loans granted by the IMF since the country's bail-out in May 2011 to 25.1 billion euro. The troika will return to Lisbon on 20th February 2014 to start its 11th quarterly assessment mission. This will be the second to last before Portugal's exit from the aid plan planned for May 2014. Moreover on 14th February 2014 the Portuguese Statistics Institute (INE) announced that the country's GDP had risen by 1.6% in the last quarter of 2013 in comparison with December 2012 and after a contraction of 0.9% in the third quarter of 2013. The GDP increased by 0.5% in real terms in comparison with the third quarter of 2013 but has decreased by 1.4% in comparison with 2012... [Read more](#)

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#### The Bank of England publishes an optimistic report on inflation



The Bank of England published its report on inflation on 12th February which presents optimistic data about the British economy. Growth lay at 1.9% in 2013, its highest level in six years. Inflation is still at 2%. Demand rose and unemployment decreased more rapidly than forecast, with the Bank hoping to reach a 7% unemployment rate by the spring of 2014. The bank is also forecasting the possibility of maintaining its main interest rate at a low level - it is 0.5% at present... [Read more](#)

#### Cyprus: end of the IMF, European Commission and ECB observation mission



A delegation of experts from the IMF, the European Commission, and the ECB was in Cyprus from 29th January to 11th February for the third analysis of the island's economic programme. The goals of Cyprus's economic programme are to establish stability in the financial sector and to implement structural reforms in order to support growth long term. The delegation observed that the country had made significant progress and sometimes this was even better than expected but the dangers were still great. In this sense it invited the country to continue its work to implement its economic programme... [Read more](#)

### Unemployment drops in the OECD zone by to 7.6% in December 2013



On 11th February the OECD indicated that the unemployment rate had declined to 7.6% in the OECD zone in December 2013. However 46.2 million people were still out of work in December 2013 ie +11.5 million more than in July 2008. In the euro zone the unemployment rate was stable at 12% with the most notable declines in Spain (0.3% less down to 25.8%) in Ireland (-0.2% down to 12.1%) and in Slovakia (-0.2% down to 13.8%). However youth unemployment remained high in several euro zone countries particularly in Greece (59.2%), Spain (54.3%), Italy (41.6%) and Portugal (36.3%)... [Read more](#)

### The economy in Finland is recovering but there is still work to do according to the OECD



The OECD published its economic study on 12th February devoted to Finland. In this report it analyses the development of the country's economy. According to the OECD the Finnish economy is recovering gradually but uncertainty still reigns. The OECD indicates that decisive action is necessary to undertake structural reforms that will enable the revival of economic growth, re-establish competitiveness and maintain a high standard of life and well-being... [Read more](#)

### Italy: GDP increased by 0.1% in the last quarter of 2013



According to estimates published by the Italian Statistics Institute (ISTAT) on 14th February 2014 the Italian GDP increased by 0.1% in the fourth quarter of 2013 in comparison with the third quarter of the same year. However the GDP declined by 0.8% in comparison with the fourth quarter of 2012. The improvement in the Italian economy in the fourth quarter of 2013 is mainly linked to the agricultural and industrial sectors. Finally ISTAT points out that in 2013 the national GDP contracted by 1.9% overall... [Read more](#)

### Greece records a primary budgetary surplus of 1.5 billion euros



Greece achieved a primary budgetary surplus of more than 1.5 billion euros in 2013 going beyond the demands of its creditors in order to lighten its debt said Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras on 16th February 2014. "We made a primary budgetary surplus (budgetary surplus excluding servicing the debt) in 2013 whilst this goal had been set for 2014 (...) it totals 1.5 billion euro," maintained A.Samaras in the weekly "To Vima". Moreover the unemployment rate in Greece totalled 28% in November and has continued to rise over one year affecting six out of ten young people, announced the Greek Statistics Authority on 13th February... [Read more](#)

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### Commission :

#### Reforming the management and use of the internet



Following the revelations of the internet surveillance programmes the European Commission is proposing a reform of the management and use of the internet. In its communication dated 12th February 2014 it promotes more transparent governance which fosters responsibility and integration. Amongst its proposals the Commission suggests the strengthening of the world forum of internet governance, to introduce a world internet policy observatory which will promote the transparency of the policies linked to the internet and undertake an assessment of conflict between national laws and jurisdictions... [Read more](#)

### Parliament :

#### Guaranteeing the respect of confidentiality of citizens' data



On 12th February 2014 MEPs of the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee adopted a report stipulating that the European Parliament would not adopt the trade agreement between the EU and the US unless the latter guaranteed the confidentiality of European citizens' data - 33 votes against 7 and 17 abstentions. Moreover the text states that measures regarding data protection should be the focus of separate talks and not linked to trade negotiations... [Read more](#)

## Taking into account the citizens' vote in the appointment of the President of the Commission



On 11th February 2014, 18 votes in support, 4 against and 1 abstention, MEPs in the Constitutional Affairs Committee at the European Parliament adopted a report encouraging the heads of State and government in the Union to respect the vote of the citizens in the European elections regarding the appointment of the President of the Commission... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### The EU condemns the introduction of Swiss quotas regarding European citizens



On 11th February 28 European Affairs Ministers discussed the European Council on 20th and 21st March. They did not reach a qualified majority for or against the proposal made by the European Commission enabling the marketing of genetically modified corn 1507 (GMO). Moreover the ministers analysed the results of the Swiss immigration referendum and they said that the introduction of quotas against European citizens was contrary the principle of free movement approved in the bilateral agreements between the EU and Switzerland. Finally they approved the appointment of Ms Sabine Lautenschläger as Vice-President of the ECB's Supervisory Board... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### Meeting between Ivica Dacic and Hashim Thaci with Catherine Ashton



On 12th February 2014 the Serb and Kosovar Prime Ministers Ivica Dacic and Hashim Thaci met the EU's High Representative Catherine Ashton in the context of normalising relations between Belgrade and Pristina. They discussed issues pertaining to justice included in the agreement signed in April 2013. Discussions are coming to an end and may be finalised during their next meeting... [Read more](#)

## ECB :

### Banking Union will help to stabilise financial integration



On 12th February 2014 during the conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the European monetary institution the President of the ECB Mario Draghi declared that Banking Union would help to stabilise financial integration of the euro zone since the risks of financial fragmentation would be reduced. He explained that financial integration was necessary for a more effective monetary union. Banking Union will create better quality financial integration and the supervisory mechanism will enable the attenuation of destabilising effects... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### New Projects with France



Chancellor Angela Merkel announced on 15th February 2014 that Germany wanted to step up cooperation with France in the area of defence, particularly in Africa, just as the 19th Franco-German Council of Ministers will be taking place on 19th February. "I have agreed with French President François Hollande that we would like to take advantage of this council to speak of new joint projects (...) notably in the area of security, particularly in Africa," she stressed. "Greater convergence is possible" notably in terms of military cooperation in Mali and Central Africa added the Chancellor. The German army is taking part in an EU training mission in Mali. Berlin decided at the beginning of the month to increase its contingent in Mali from 180 to 250 soldiers. The Bundeswehr will also provide a medical Airbus in Central Africa... [Read more](#)

### Resignation from the Agriculture Ministry



Criticised for having betrayed the secret of an inquiry into child pornography the German Agriculture Minister, Hans-Peter Friedrich resigned on 14th February 2014. The CSU, the Bavarian branch of the CDU appointed Christian Schmidt as the new Agriculture Minister on 17th February 2014. Only two months after its entry into office the

"grand coalition" government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel is to undergo a mini-reshuffle with the replacement of Mr Friedrich. A CSU member and Minister for Home Affairs until December 2013 in the previous government Mr Friedrich was under pressure after having infringed his duty of reserve by informing the social democrats in the autumn of an international inquiry that targeted one of their members as part of a pedo-pornographic ring. He will be replaced by Christian Schmidt... [Read more](#)

## Cyprus :

### Resumption of negotiations in view of reunification



On 11th February 2014 the Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and the representative of the northern part of the island, Dervis Eroglu maintained in a joint communication, that they wanted to reach settlement "as quickly as possible" for the reunification of the island. This press release summarises the negotiations for a reunification made necessary by the prospect of using the island's gas deposits and the difficult situation of the Cypriot economy. The settlement will comprise "a two-community - two zone federation" in which Cyprus "will be a legal unified entity from an international point of view with single sovereignty." The EU welcomed this historic meeting and said it was ready, together with the UN, to support the key goals that should lead to a final solution in terms of reunifying the island... [Read more](#)

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## France :

### State visit by François Hollande in the USA



French President François Hollande travelled to the USA from 10th to 13th February on a state visit during which time he met American President Barack Obama. During their press conference the two presidents recalled the strong friendship between their countries and the entente which typified Franco-American relations. They addressed international issues and highlighted the negotiations ongoing between the EU and the US for the introduction of a free trade agreement (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)). François Hollande travelled to San Francisco where he met some French entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley as well as the leaders of the main digital companies... [Read more](#)

### France steps up its presence in Central Africa



On 14th February 2014 French President François Hollande convened a restricted Defence Council designed to review the operation Sangaris in Central Africa and to answer the call by Ban Ki Moon to mobilise the international community as well as the EU's decision to start a military operation in Central Africa. François Hollande decided to take the events into account thereby bringing the number of soldiers engaged in CAR up to 2000. The Elysée believes that "this additional effort of 400 men includes the early deployment of combat troops and French Gendarmes who will then participate in the EU's military operation as soon as it starts..." [Read more](#)

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### Pierre de Villiers, new Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces



On 15th February 2014 Army General Pierre de Villiers became Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in the wake of Admiral Edouard Guillaud. For the last four years he was General Major which enabled him to follow ongoing military operations closely, as well as the preparation of the White Paper and the law on military programming. He will be replaced by Air Force General Gratien Maire... [Read more](#)

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## Hungary :

### Hungary develops its trade links with China



Hungary and China announced on 14th February 2014 that they intended to strengthen their bilateral relations in the areas of finance, telecommunications and infrastructures. This communication comes just as Hungary and China signed an agreement on 13th February, which makes Hungary the hub of Chinese tourism in central and eastern Europe... [Read more](#)

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## Italy :

## The President of the Italian Council, Enrico Letta has resigned



On 14th February 2014 the President of the Italian Council Enrico Letta met the president of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano to present his resignation. Mr Letta's decision came after the vote on 13th February by the national executive of his party, the Democratic Party which demanded a change in government. This motion put forward by the party's leader, Matteo Renzi was approved 136 votes in support out of 150 voters. The Italian President accepted Mr Letta's decision and started consultations with the political groups to appoint a new government. On 17th February 2014 Mr Napolitano met the head of the Democratic Party, Mr Renzi to ask him to form a new executive... [Read more](#)

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## Portugal :

### COTEC Conference



On 12th February 2014 the King of Spain, Juan Carlos 1er, Presidents, Giorgio Napolitano of Italy and Anibal Cavaco Silva of Portugal met in Lisbon during the 9th COTEC conference - a network of entrepreneurs from three countries devoted to reindustrialisation. In a joint declaration they advocated a "more ambitious and more effective" industrial policy. They stressed the importance of industry as a factor of economic growth and the creation of jobs. The European Commissioner Antonio Tajani said that the economy and industry must remain the focus of the European political agenda, especially during a time when "positive economic signs were appearing across the entire continent, particularly in Portugal, Spain and Italy".. [Read more](#)

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## UK :

### The government publishes its new Review of Union Competences



The British government published the second part of its Review of EU Competences on 13th February 2014. This review which is open to contributions - the first part of which was published in July 2013 was implemented in prevision for possible renegotiations of the UK's status in the EU in view of a referendum over it remaining a member of the latter. The conclusions show, as if it were necessary, that the UK's membership of the EU provides many benefits to the British population and is advantageous in many ways. It is not certain therefore that this will fuel the arguments put forward by those who are fighting for the UK's withdrawal from the EU!.. [Read more](#)

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### The Anglican Synod takes a step towards ordinating more women bishops



The Anglican Synod, which met in Westminster from 10th to 12th February 2014, voted on 11th February 2014 in support of amendments to its canonical law aiming to step up procedures to enable the ordination of women bishops, 304 votes in support, 33 against and 45 abstentions. The first appointments might come during 2014... [Read more](#)

## Ukraine :

### Ukraine: Opposition meets Angela Merkel in Berlin



On 16th February 2014 a large demonstration took place in Independence Square in Kiev. The amnesty for Ukrainian demonstrators entered into force on 17th February announced the high court, after the evacuation of the townhall of Kiev and other public buildings in the provinces. This decision was appreciated by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton who highlighted, in a press release, the amount of work necessary to find a solution to the political crisis. On 14th February Yulia Tymoshenko called for union amongst the demonstrators and the political opposition in order to push President Yanukovych to resign. On 17th February the Ukrainian opponents V Klychko and A Yatsenyuk met German Chancellor A Merkel in Berlin together with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the Chair of the CDU group at the Bundestag, Andreas Schockenhoff. The development in the political crisis in Ukraine was the focus of discussion. Mssrs Klychko and Yatsenyuk asked Germany to set sanctions on the Ukrainian President Yanukovych and his entourage. In their opinion to settle the crisis it is necessary to have financial aid, to introduce a system to liberalise the visa system for Ukrainians and finally to offer the prospect of accession to the EU. These changes have to go together with the reform of the State's institutions and a return to the constitution of 2004... [Read more](#)

**Iceland :****Strengthening of Nordic Cooperation**

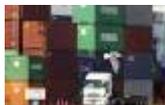
After the Nordic Council on 11th and 12th February 2014 in Reykjavik the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden published a joint declaration in which they commit to strengthening their cooperation in terms of foreign and security policy. Moreover they debated the end of the crisis, climate change, sustainable development, Arctic issues, operations undertaken by international organisations and finally the security of information systems. They stressed that they want to create a secure international area... [Read more](#)

**Switzerland :****The Swiss Federal Council sets a calendar for immigration reform**

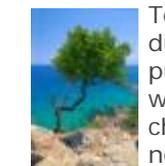
The Swiss Federal Council decided on 12th February 2014 on a calendar for the implementation of immigration reform following the referendum on 9th February. The Council asked the Federal Police, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Training and Research Departments to set out a draft reform by the end of June in order to present a draft bill by the end of the year. The Department for Foreign Affairs is responsible for staying in contact with the EU's institutions and its 28 Member States for the follow-up on bilateral negotiations... [Read more](#)

**Eurostat :****Growth of 0.3% in the euro zone and 0.4% in the EU**

Growth increased in the 4th quarter with a GDP rise of 0.3% in the euro zone and 0.4% in the EU, said Eurostat on 14th February. Over 2013 as a whole the euro zone's GDP contracted by 0.4% whilst that of the EU grew by 0.1%... [Read more](#)

**Euro zone and EU international trade surplus**

According to Eurostat's figures published on 14th February, in 2013 the euro zone recorded an international goods trade surplus of 153.8 billion euro against 79.7 billion in 2012. The EU recorded a surplus of 49.9 billion in 2013 against a deficit of 115 billion in 2012... [Read more](#)

**Eurobarometer :****Tourism continues to rise**

Tourism is one of the European economy's high points and the trend is due to continue in 2014. As shown by the Eurobarometer survey published on 13th February 2014 internal demand in the tourist sector was the engine for economic growth in 2013 since many more people chose to spend their holidays away from their home country but nevertheless within the EU. In 2013 38% of Europeans spent their holidays in another Member State ie+5 points more in comparison with 2012, 42% in their own country, -5 points less than in 2012. The five most popular tourist destinations in the EU have been the same since 2012: Spain (15%), France (11%), Italy (10%), Germany (7%), Austria (6%). Moreover tourists feel safe and are satisfied in Europe... [Read more](#)

**Roaming tariffs too high**

On 17th February 2014 the European Commission published a survey indicating that 94% of Europeans reduce their use of telephones due to high roaming tariffs. Telephone operators are said to be losing a market of some 300 million users. The study says that because of roaming bills 47% of Europeans never use their mobile when they are in another EU country, that only one citizen in 10 uses his e-mail as he should in his country, that more than one European in four simply switches their mobile off when they go to another country and finally that millions of users prefer to send an SMS rather than pay for a call... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### European apps sector promising



On 13th February 2014 the European Commission published a report saying that the European apps sector might represent 63 billion euro by 2018 and nearly 4.8 million jobs. The study says that European game apps creators were on the cutting edge; that the market was growing and that job opportunities were rising; that the lack of qualified personnel had to be rectified and finally that 4G had to be developed more in Europe. The Robert Schuman Foundation updated its smartphone and tablet app. You can download and access free European news... [Read more](#)

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### Report on Industrial Structure



According to the report by the European Commission on the situation of industry in the EU published on 17th February 2014, most sectors have not yet recovered their pre-crisis levels of production and there are major differences between sectors and Member States... [Read more](#)

### EU 2013 General Report



The EU published its "General Report on the European Union's Activities" for 2013. This report is designed for European citizens who can read about the EU's activities in 2013 in all sectors and in all policy areas. The report reviews the results of the European institutions' work... [Read more](#)

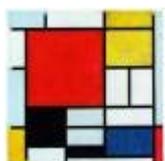
## Culture :

### Photographer John Stanmeyer wins the World Press Photo Award



American photographer John Stanmeyer has won the World Press Photo Award 2013. The selected photo shows African migrants at night on the coasts of Djibouti trying to capture a cheap Somali network with their mobile phone in order to contact their families. Jillian Edelstein a member of the jury declared "it is a photo that is linked to many stories, it takes us to technology, globalisation, migration, poverty, despair, alienation and humanity." Last year Swede, Paul Hansen won the prize with a photo of children who were the victims of bombings in Gaza... [Read more](#)

### Mondrian - Colour



The Bucerus Kunst Forum in Hamburg is running an exhibition until 11th May 2014 devoted to the work of one of the most influential painters of the 20th century, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). The exhibition highlights for the very first time the importance of colour in the artist's work. The 50 paintings on show follow the trajectory, the works painted in different grades of colour at the beginning of Mondrian's career, to the squares of primary colour after 1921. Mondrian's work was not a revolution but a slow development. His aim was to transcend painting and to bring it down to the essential. His abstractions were not a mathematical game with shapes but the expression of his quest for a new universal harmony. The exhibition brings together paintings from famous collections belonging to several European museums... [Read more](#)

### Decline in the number of cinema entries in the EU in 2013



The European Audiovisual Observatory, part of the Council of Europe, published a report on European cinema-going in 2013. According to this study cinema entries declined by 4.1% over this period to total their second lowest level since the "start of the century". This decline is linked to a relative fall in cinema-going in Spain (-16%), France (-5.3%), UK (-4%) and Germany (-4%). Italy, Bulgaria, Romania and other states in Central Europe have withstood this decline... [Read more](#)

### Rodin and 20th century Italian sculpture

The Gallery of Modern Art of Rome is running an exhibition until 25th May 2014 devoted to August Rodin's influence on Italian sculpture. The exhibition shows several works, most belonging to the Gallery's collection which highlight how the plasticity of Rodin's sculpture was a



model for the Italian artists until the 1940's... [Read more](#)

#### Gustave Doré at the Musée d'Orsay



The Musée d'Orsay is running an exhibition until 11th May 2014 devoted to 19th century artist Gustave Doré. This, the first retrospective in 30 years presents the wealth and variety of Doré's work as well as his influence over the modern mind. Although Gustave Doré was only famous as a professional illustrator he was also a caricaturist, painter, watercolour artist, printer and sculptor and "a conveyor of European culture"... [Read more](#)

#### Musical Europe through Greek Myths



On the occasion of the Greek Presidency of the European Council the Association "Femme d'Europe" is organising a philanthropic gala concert. "Musical Europe through Greek Myths" comprising several airs from the opera from different periods of time and in different languages and songs by Sapfo and Hadjidakis. The concert will take place on 20th February... [Read more](#)

#### Agenda :



17th February  
Brussels  
Agricultural and Fisheries Council

Brussels  
Meeting of Euro Zone Finance Ministers (Eurogroup)



18th February  
Brussels  
Economic and Financial Affairs Council



19th February  
Paris  
16th Franco-German Council of Ministers



20th and 21st February  
Brussels  
Competitiveness Council

Athens  
Informal Council of Defence Ministers



21st and 23rd February  
Sydney  
Meeting of Finance Ministers and governors of central banks of the G20 countries



24th February  
Brussels  
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council



24th-27th February  
Strasbourg  
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



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