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## Reforming the European Union: a political and democratic imperative

Authors: Thierry Chopin, Lukáš Macek



The authors put forward 10 real measures that aim to strengthen the Union's political and democratic dimension. These measures are both audacious in content and minimalist in form since they can be undertaken as the treaties stand.

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### Front Page! :

#### NATO, a military alliance that is less and less political



Jean-Dominique Giuliani regrets that the leadership of NATO is against Europe's efforts to strengthen its defence... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Proposal on the future of the European Budget



The European Commission presented a communication on 14th February on the future of the European budget. Modernisation means the strengthening of links between the budget's goals and the means of financing it. Moreover the communication highlights the possibilities of strengthening the link - often called "conditionality" - between funding and the respect of fundamental values... [Read more](#)

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[Proposals in view of an institutional reform of the European Union](#)



On 14th February the European Commission presented measures aiming to reform the Union's institutional system. Amongst these the appointment of lead candidates (Spitzenkandidaten) for the European elections of 2019, the establishment of transnational lists and even the rapprochement of the Commission and the Council under the aegis of a common president... [Read more](#)

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#### More work to support the protection of consumers



The modifications that Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ have made to their terms of use to bring them in line with European consumer protection rules were published on 15th February. The European Commission has invited businesses from the social media sector to agree to do more in response to European requirements... [Read more](#)

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#### European Defence Fund: new pan-European research projects



A series of defence research projects received the support of the European Defence Fund on 16th February. Launched by the President of the Commission in June 2017, this fund catalyses the creation of a powerful European defence industry. It enables the stimulation of defence capabilities and helps build cross-border partnerships... [Read more](#)

### Council :

#### Conclusions of the Education Council



On 15th February European Education Ministers made a mid-term review of the Erasmus+ programme and indicated that it should encourage the participation of the regions that are the least economically developed. Moreover they studied the issue of "European Universities"... [Read more](#)

#### The Council discusses the future of the CAP



The Agriculture and Fisheries Council met on 19th February. Ministers proceeded to an exchange of opinion regarding the communication of the future of the common agricultural policy (CAP). During a public session the Council notably focused on the direct support that the EU provides to European farmers, the environmental dimension of the CAP and rural development... [Read more](#)

#### Conclusions of the Eurogroup: Greece is on the right path



During its meeting on 19th February the Eurogroup chose Spaniard Luis de Guindos, the Spanish Minister for the Economy, for the post of Vice-President of the European Central Bank. For her part, Finn Marjut Santoni will be the Secretary General of the European Investment Bank. Greece is on the right path following progress in terms of the vital priority actions for the conclusion of the third Greek programme review... [Read more](#)

### Diplomacy :

#### Informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



European Foreign Affairs Ministers expressed their concern on 15th February about developments in the Syrian crisis and said that they wanted to be involved in peace talks under the aegis of the UN... [Read more](#)

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#### International Conference on the reconstruction of Iraq



Kuwait City hosted the international conference on the reconstruction of Iraq from 12th to 14th February. 24 billion € in financial contributions were gathered to this end. The final defeat of Daesh especially means the stabilisation of zones at risk in Iraq... [Read more](#)

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### European Agencies :

The Council is due to make its decisions public



On 13th February the EU's Ombudsman invited the 28 Member States to make their positions public so that there is greater transparency in their decision making process as co-legislator. "It is almost impossible for citizens to follow legislative discussions between the representatives of the national governments. The approach of discussions behind closed doors alienates the citizens and feeds negative opinions," said Emily O'Reilly... [Read more](#)

#### Warning against virtual currencies



On 12th February the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the European Banking Authority (EBA) and the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) warned consumers of the high risks of buying and/or holding so-called Virtual Currencies (VCs), "which are high risk, unregulated products that are not suitable for investments, savings or for the preparation of retirement... [Read more](#)

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#### Decrease in migrant arrivals in Spain and Greece, rise in Italy in January



According to figures published on 13th February by Frontex, 8300 illegal crossings were detected in January out of the four main migratory routes, i.e. a decrease of 7% in comparison with the previous year. A decrease in the arrival of migrants has been observed in Spain and Greece, whilst these have risen in Italy... [Read more](#)

### Germany :

#### Security Conference Munich



During the security conference in Munich from 16th to 18th February discussions focussed on the future of role of the European Union as a global player and its relations with Russia and the USA. France and Germany wanted to embody a new European commitment to defence and advocated greater military spending, more pooling of arms programmes and more common operations... [Read more](#)

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#### Martin Schulz resigns from his post as leader of the SPD



Martin Schulz resigned on 13th February from the leadership of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and announced that an extraordinary congress would take place on 22nd April to appoint his successor. Olaf Scholz is ensuring the interim but Andrea Nahles, former Employment Minister is candidate to succeed him... [Read more](#)

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#### Resumption of German/Turkish dialogue



On 15th February German Chancellor Angela Merkel met her Turkish counterpart Binali Yildirim. They agreed to strengthen bilateral dialogue after months of particularly tense relations between the two countries. The liberation of German-Turkish journalist, Deniz Yücel, on 16th February, by the Turkish government is said to have helped the situation. At the same time the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjorn Jagland, re-iterated his concern about the duration and extent of the state of emergency established in Turkey after the failed putsch of July 2016... [Read more](#)

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### Cyprus :

#### Tension between Cyprus and Turkey



On 11th February the Cypriot authorities deemed that Turkey which occupies the Northern part of the island had infringed international law by blocking an Italian ship that had gone to drill for gas in the island's Mediterranean waters. On 12th February the President of the European Council Donald Tusk called on Turkey to avoid all types of threat that might affect the island's stability... [Read more](#)

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### Croatia :

#### Meeting between the Serb and Croatian Presidents

Serb President Aleksandar Vucic travelled to Croatia on 12th February to hold talks with his Croatian counterpart, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic. Croatia and Serbia have committed to do more to support minority



rights and those who disappeared between 1991 and 1995, during the war in former Yugoslavia. Both presidents set a two-year deadline to settle their border dispute... [Read more](#)

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#### Spain :

##### Catalonia: European Court of Human Rights



The Catalan parliament announced on 13th February that it was going to refer to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). It will ask the ECHR to guarantee the political rights and quite specifically Carles Puigdemont's right to political participation, who, since he is in exile in Belgium, cannot govern the region again... [Read more](#)

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#### France :

##### Return to a single constituency in the European elections



On 13th February the National Assembly approved a draft law on the "election of the representatives for the European Parliament" with the return to a single national constituency... [Read more](#)

##### The President of the French Senate, Gérard Larcher visits Poland



The President of the French Senate, Gérard Larcher was hosted by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on 14th and 15th February. This visit aimed to strengthen bilateral Franco-Polish relations and to discuss the European agenda, especially the integration of the Weimar Triangle into Europe... [Read more](#)

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#### Greece :

##### Further incident between Turkish and Greek patrol boats



In the night of 12th to 13th February there was a collision between a Turkish and Greek patrol boat. During a discussion with his Turkish counterpart Binali Yildirim, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras stressed that this type of event "was directly undermining Greek-Turkish and also Euro-Turkish relations..." [Read more](#)

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#### Ireland :

##### New Plan "Ireland 2040" and new website on Brexit



On 16th February the Irish government launched its investment plan in support of sustainable development. New funds are being allocated to rural and urban growth, to the climate and innovation. In the same week the Irish government also launched its new website on Brexit...

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#### Italy :

##### Meeting between Paolo Gentiloni and Angela Merkel



On a visit to Berlin Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni announced that there was "no risk that Italy would have a populist government following the elections on 4th March next." He also spoke with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the European elections of 2019... [Read more](#)

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#### Lithuania :

##### Lithuanian State enters a new century



On 16th February, Lithuania celebrated its 100th anniversary of independence. "At the beginning of the last century, we looked to the future with great hope seeing signs of support," declared the Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, during a ceremony in Vilnius. "Today we know that we have real friends and allies and the support of their powerful arms," she added surrounded by several European heads of State... [Read more](#)

## The Netherlands :

### Resignation of Foreign Affairs Minister



The Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Halbe Zijlstra handed in his resignation on 13th February after admitting that he had lied regarding his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2006... [Read more](#)

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## Poland :

### Visit by Polish Prime Minister to Berlin



Two weeks after the adoption of the Polish law banning speech about "Polish death camps" and recalling the responsibility of the Nazis, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki met German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 16th February in Berlin... [Read more](#)

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## UK :

### Theresa May meets Angela Merkel



On 16th February British Prime Minister Theresa May met Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin to discuss post-Brexit relations between their two countries. The Chancellor called on her counterpart to clarify her positions in negotiations, inviting her to maintain close links with the EU... [Read more](#)

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## Sweden :

### Presentation of the foreign strategy



Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström presented her country's international strategy on 14th February. Security has become a priority... [Read more](#)

## NATO :

### NATO Ministers Meeting



NATO's Defence Ministers met on 14th February to discuss Europe's contributions to defence spending, the ongoing modernisation of the Alliance and the reforms made to NATO command. The Europeans recalled that European defence is not a threat to NATO but that they want to strengthen it so that they are less dependent on the USA...

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## OECD :

### OECD says unemployment in the euro zone is stable



On 12th February the OECD published unemployment figures in December 2007 for the OECD countries. In the euro zone the unemployment rate remained stable at 8.7% in December but is down by 0.3% in Portugal, (to 7.8%), and by 0.2% in Ireland (to 6.2%), Slovenia (to 6.2%), and Spain (to 16.4%)... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### GDP up in 2017



According to a study published by Eurostat on 14th February the GDP adjusted to seasonal variations increased by 0.6% in the fourth quarter of 2017 in the EU and in the euro zone in comparison with the previous quarter. Over 2017 as a whole, the GDP rose by 2.5%... [Read more](#)

### International Goods Trade Surplus



According to figures published by Eurostat on 15th February for December 2017 the EU's international goods trade is in surplus by 14.3 billion € in December 2017 and that of the euro zone was in surplus of 25.4 billion €... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Bright Festival: illuminated Brussels



Bright Brussels is a festival of light, a walk through the city comprising a dozen artistic, interactive and fun light installations. Bright Brussels is a free event open to all from 22nd to 25th February... [Read more](#)

### David Goldblatt Exhibition at the Georges Pompidou Museum



From 21st February to 13th May the Pompidou Centre is devoting a retrospective for the very first time to the work of David Goldblatt, a key figure in the South African photographic scene and a leading artist in the engaged documentary. In his work the artist maintains singular tension between the subjects, the land, politics and representation... [Read more](#)

### Film Festival Berlin



The Berlin Film Festival is taking place until 25th February. This international festival brings together players of various origins, and spectators will be able to take part in workshops and many debates... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



19th February

Brussels

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council Eurogroup Meeting



20th February

Brussels

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council



23rd February

Brussels

Informal Summit of Heads of State and Government



26th February

Brussels

"Foreign Affairs" Council

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