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## Europe and the identity challenge: who are "we"?

Author: Thierry Chopin



In the context of European integration the Member States are the vectors of specific national cultural and historic identities. At the same time, a Union of States like this supposes a minimum degree of coherence and common identity. From this point of view, who are the Europeans and what are the foundations of this "European identity"? [Read more](#)

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### Front page! :

#### European revival, a Franco-German responsibility



Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron met in Paris on March 16th. In Jean-Dominique Giuliani's opinion Europe's revival is on the agenda and by the summer an ambitious road-map will be presented by France and Germany... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Aid to Syrian refugees and reform of the visa policy



On 14th March the European Commission suggested mobilising additional funds for the facility in support of Syrian refugees in Turkey. It also suggest the reform of the Union's common visa policy to make it stronger, more effective and safer. Finally it took note of the progress made in terms of migration in virtue of the European agenda and laid out the main additional measures to take in view of an overall agreement by June 2018... [Read more](#)

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#### Towards a European Employment Authority and access to social protection

On 13th March the European Commission presented its proposals for a





at the European Parliament as part of the debate over "The Future of Europe". He declared that "no major challenges that we face could be solved outside of the Union" and he notably insisted on the convergence of the economies and the need for a euro zone budget... [Read more](#)

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**Council :**

**Which social policy after 2020?**



Social Policy Ministers met on 15th March to discuss the future of Social Europe post 2020. They addressed wage inequality between men and women, the effect of digitisation on the world of work, as well as apprenticeships and vocational training. They adopted the introduction of an effective, quality European apprenticeship framework to train skilled labour and to integrate young people into the labour market... [Read more](#)

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**Towards greater tax transparency**



On 13th March the Economy and Finance Ministers adopted measures in terms of taxation, notably a directive that aims to strengthen transparency for the improved detection of tax evasion risks in the Union... [Read more](#)

**Conclusions of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council**



During the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 19th March debate mainly focused on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with most Member States expressing a common vision regarding the latter and approving the conclusions of the Bulgarian Presidency. Rumen Porodzanov, the Bulgarian Agriculture Minister and President of the Council of the European Union welcomed this consensus in support of a CAP "oriented towards the future, which is effective and fair"... [Read more](#)

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**Diplomacy :**

**Joint declaration by the US, France, Germany, UK**



In a joint declaration Paris, Washington, London and Berlin addressed a warning to Russia on 15th March in the shape of a joint declaration on the side-lines of the diplomatic crisis with the UK in the affair of the poisoning of a double agent... [Read more](#)

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**Declaration on Crimea**



On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sebastopol by Russia, the High Representative Federica Mogherini declared on 16th March that the European Union remained firmly attached to Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and integrity and re-iterated her determination to implement the Union's policy of non-recognition to the full... [Read more](#)

**Conclusions of the "Foreign Affairs" Council**



Europe's Foreign Ministers who met in Council on 19th March addressed the Salisbury attack and adopted a declaration asserting the EU's solidarity and its unreserved support to the UK. They recalled the need to find a political solution and not a military one to the conflict in Syria and expressed their concern about the worsening of the humanitarian situation in the region. Ukraine and the nuclear pact with Iran were also on the agenda... [Read more](#)

**Germany :**

**Angela Merkel - re-elected for a fourth mandate**



Angel Merkel was re-elected Chancellor of the Bundestag on 14th March thereby starting her fourth term in office. Winning 364 votes of a possible 692, i.e. 53% of the MPs, this election has brought a period of six months of uncertainty that followed the German elections to an end.

The coalition government CDU-CSU/SPD includes 7 women out 16 ministers... [Read more](#)

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### Angela Merkel in Paris



For her first official trip outside of Germany, the German Chancellor together with several ministers came to Paris on 16th March in reminder of the strength of Franco-German relations and to discuss the future of Europe... [Read more](#)

### Visit by the Foreign Affairs Minister in France and Poland



On 16th March German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, the newly appointed German Foreign Affairs Minister travelled to France then to Poland. He met Polish President Duda. Maintaining that the future of Europe lay in its unity he called on France to renew the Weimar Triangle... [Read more](#)

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## France :

### Launch of European Citizens' Consultations



In 26 Member States citizens' consultations were to take place between April and October 2018. National and European delegations will be working in the field to collate opinions but also proposals regarding European policies. Moreover many debates as well as exercises in participative democracy will take place across all Member States which are organising these consultations... [Read more](#)

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## UK :

### Diplomatic sanctions against Russia



Following the poisoning of the former double-agent Serguey Skripal, the British Prime Minister announced on 14th March that the UK would be suspending its bilateral contacts with Moscow. She announced the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats in line with the Vienna Convention. Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Washington gave their support to the Prime Minister. The issue will be on the agenda of the next European summit in Brussels. Russia replied with the expulsion of British diplomats... [Read more](#)

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### The House of Lords examines the withdrawal bill



In the UK the House of Lords examined the withdrawal bill from the EU line by line. A document on the progress made in negotiations was published. It strongly advises the implementation of a "transition period" between the time when the UK leaves the Union and the time when it recovers its total independence... [Read more](#)

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## Slovakia :

### Resignation of Prime Minister Robert Fico



On 14th March Robert Fico, the Slovakian Prime Minister presented his resignation to the President of the Republic, Andrej Kiska. The Prime Minister thereby aimed to prevent a snap election, requested by the opposition. He will be replaced by Peter Pellegrini, who was asked by the President on 15th March to put a new coalition together... [Read more](#)

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## Slovenia :

### The Slovenian Prime Minister resigns



On 14th March Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar resigned following the invalidation of the referendum in September 2017 by the Constitutional Court - the referendum approved one of his leading projects - the building of a second railway linking Koper (the only major trading port in the country) with Divača... [Read more](#)

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## Eurostat :

### Inflation down in February 2018

According to Eurostat the EU's annual inflation rate lay at 1.3% in February 2018 against 1.6% in January and that of the euro zone lay at 1.1% against 1.3% in January. A year ago it lay at 2%... [Read more](#)



### Rise in employment in the 4th quarter of 2017



According to a Eurostat press release published on 14th March in the fourth quarter of 2017 and in comparison with the third quarter 2017, employment rose by 0.2% in the EU and by 0.3% in the euro zone, i.e. +1.5% and +1.6% respectively in comparison with the fourth quarter of 2016... [Read more](#)

### Studies/Reports :

#### Toys and cars lead in terms of dangerous products



On 12th March the Commission published its report 2017 on the rapid warning system regarding dangerous products. In 2017 the mechanism was used nearly 2000 times by the national authorities. Today several models of hand spinner, cars and motorcycles were the leading products ranked as dangerous detected and withdrawn from the market... [Read more](#)

#### NATO Annual Report



Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General presented the organisation's annual report on 15th March announcing the strengthening of the Alliance "to protect our nations in an unpredictable world". The report shows that European and Canadian allied defence spending increased by 5% in 2017... [Read more](#)

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#### The fight to counter disinformation



In report delivered on 12th March to the European Commissioner for the Economy and Digital Society, the panel of expert on false information and online disinformation suggests making a definition of the phenomenon. They deliberately avoided using the expression "fake news" which in their opinion is not enough to cover the complex issues linked to disinformation... [Read more](#)

#### World Report on World Happiness: Finland in the lead



Finland is ranked in the lead in the World Happiness Report 2018, published on 14th March. This report ranks 156 countries according to the happiness of their population. The first four in the ranking are all northern countries: Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. In the Union, Bulgaria is the last. This ranking is based on population satisfaction/happiness surveys... [Read more](#)

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### Culture :

#### "Birth of a Nation" exhibition at the Strozzi Palais



Until 22nd July the Strozzi Palazo in Florence is running a unique exhibition devoted to post-war Italian works of art leading up to the 1960's: a journey mixing art, politics and society... [Read more](#)

#### Keith Haring at the Albertina Museum



The Albertina Museum in Vienna is running a unique exhibition showing the works of Keith Haring until 24th June. It highlights the symbolic language that is to be admired in Haring's work... [Read more](#)

#### Kupka Exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris

From 21st March to 30th July, the Grand Palais, Paris is running an exhibition that covers the career of Czech artist Frantisek Kupka. More than 300 paintings, drawings, books and documents will be presented to



visitors... [Read more](#)

### Bacon and Freud Exhibition at the Tate, London



The Tate Britain Museum in London is hosting the exhibition "All too Human" until 27th August in tribute to British painters who devoted their work to the intimate representation of human beings, their bodies and human relations. Artists such as Freud and Bacon are notably on show... [Read more](#)

### International Documentary Film Festival - Brussels



From 20th to 31st March the festival is offering documentary films selected from amongst more than 1300 proposals. The festival aims to promote millenium goals not just via film but also discussions and conferences... [Read more](#)

#### Agenda :



19th March 2018  
Brussels  
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council  
Brussels  
"Foreign Affairs" Council



20th March 2018  
Brussels  
"General Affairs" Council



From 22nd to 23rd March 2018  
Brussels  
European Council

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