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The Letter in PDF format

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## Getting a grip on the climate challenge to build the future of Europe

Author: Dominique Perrut



The climate issue is the central stake in the economic challenges faced by the EU. According to D. Perrut the Union might be able to provide new impetus and a better path in responding to Euroscepticism if it takes world leadership for a climate transition strategy.

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### Foundation :

#### Permanent Atlas of the European Union



In view of the upcoming European elections, the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a new edition of the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union" which offers a full panorama of the Union, the euro zone, of each of the Member State and the overseas territories. This work provides the reader with the most recent and most objective political and statistical information at all moments. It is available in paper form and digital version from the Foundation site and from bookshops... [Read more](#)

#### A site to find out everything you need to know about the European elections



From 23rd May to 26th 2019 more than 300 million Europeans will be called to choose their 705 MEPs for the next five years. As in the previous elections, the Robert Schuman Foundation is offering its audience a website devoted to understanding the election and enabling voters to follow the campaign in the 27 Member States... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Guaranteeing access to British waters in the event of a no-deal Brexit



On 23rd January the Commission presented two measures to attenuate the impact of a no-deal Brexit on fishing. The first would enable Union's fishermen to receive compensation for the temporary halt to their activities. The second would guarantee British fishermen access to European waters until the end of 2019, on condition that the UK granted the same access to European fishermen. The two proposals are subject to the co-decision procedure; and the Commission recalled that it was working to guarantee their entry into force on 29th March 2019 at the latest... [Read more](#)

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### Fine of 570 million € for Mastercard



On 22nd January the Commission fined Mastercard 570 million € for having restricted the possibility for traders to benefit from the best conditions offered by banks established in other Member States, which is an infringement of community law on deals and abuse of dominant position. The Commission's investigation launched in 2013 led to the conclusion that "because of Mastercard's acquiring rules retailers paid more in bank services to receive card payments than if they had been free to shop around for lower-priced services. The fine was reduced by 10% following cooperation on the part of Mastercard... [Read more](#)

### Provisional agreement on the re-use of public data



Parliament, Commission and Council negotiators agreed on 22nd January on a revised directive which facilitates the availability and re-use of public sector data, notably those used for surveys and polls. All content from the public sector to which access is available according to the present legislation will mainly be freely available for re-use which is an advantage for businesses which want to access new markets. The Parliament and the Council must now formally adopt the new directive, which is due to be implemented with the next two years by the Member States... [Read more](#)

### Harmonisation of the radio frequency for 5G



On 24th January the Commission adopted an implementing act to harmonise the radio frequency necessary for the uniform deployment of 5G in Europe - in line with the European Electronic Communications Code that entered into force in December 2018. The 3.6 GHz has been identified as the main support to 5G, notably used in the development of the autonomous car and connected systems... [Read more](#)

### Green light for the free movement of data between the EU and Japan



On 23rd January the Commission adopted an adequacy decision on Japan, which launches the free-movement of personal data between the two countries and gives rise to the biggest area of safe data flows in the world. This decision completes the equivalent measure on the part of the Japanese adopted on the same day, as well as the economic partnership agreement which enters into force on 1st February. This framework will be re-assessed in two year's time... [Read more](#)

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## Council :

### Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council



The 28 Finance Ministers, who met on 22nd January discussed the InvestEU programme which brings together the various financial instruments which presently supports investment and the creation of employment, as part of the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027. They focused on the programme's governance and the financial guarantees other than those provided by the European Investment Bank. They also exchanged views on the revision of the European System of Financial Supervision, on the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union following the euro zone summit of December and on the priorities of the Romanian presidency of the Council in the area of the economy and finance... [Read more](#)

### Provisional agreement for the "work-life balance" directive



The Parliament and the Council came to a provisional agreement on 24th January on a new "work-life balance" directive for parents and carers. The agreement sets a European minimum standard of 10 days of paternity leave for fathers following the birth of their child, to be compensated at the level of sick pay. It strengthens the existing right to 4 months of parental leave, by making 2 months non-transferable between parents and introducing compensation for these 2 months at a level to be determined by the Member States. It also provides for 5 days per worker per year, as a new European entitlement for workers. Last but not least, the new rules strengthen the right for all parents and carers to request flexible working arrangements. The text now has to be adopted by co-legislators... [Read more](#)

### Conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council



The ministers who met for the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 28th January exchanged views regarding the priorities of the Romanian presidency of the Council, notably cohesion as a common European value. They also discussed the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the period 2021-2027 and the common market organisation (CMO), notably the possible opening of the market to new varieties of wine grapes. The Commission also presented a report on the development of plant proteins in the European Union... [Read more](#)

### Measures for Maritime Safety after Brexit



On 25th January, in view of Brexit, the representatives of the Member States approved the temporary agreement regarding the modification of the assessment rules of organisations that are able to inspect ships, whose task it is to ensure ship safety and prevent pollution at sea. Since the UK is the sponsor of two of them, new rules provide that their assessment immediately after Brexit be undertaken in another country. The text now has to be formally adopted by the Parliament and the Council... [Read more](#)

### Diplomacy :

#### EU-African Union Ministerial Meeting



The EU's Foreign Affairs Ministers and those of the African Union (AU) who met on 21st and 22nd January reviewed the implementation of the 5th Summit of November 2017. They exchanged views on the theme of economic cooperation, notably regarding the completion of the African continental free-trade area. They also discussed peace, security, governance and migration - agreeing to strengthen their relations and cooperation in these areas. They also spoke of climate issues and the importance of multi-lateralism in the international arena... [Read more](#)

### Court of Justice :

#### Responsibility in terms of Dublin III



In a decision delivered on 23rd January the Court of Justice indicated that the British decision to leave the EU does not dispense the country of its obligations provided in the Dublin regulation on immigration... [Read more](#)

### ECB :

#### Rates unchanged and threats to growth



The Council of Governors of the European Central Bank (ECB) met on 24th January and decided that the main interest rates would remain unchanged, at least until the summer of 2019. It intends to continue reinvestment to a total of 2,600 billion € in bonds, accumulated via the quantitative easing programme. Commenting this meeting the ECB's president Mario Draghi deemed that economic indicators "continue to be lower than forecast" in the euro zone. "Risks weighing on the euro zone's growth prospects have taken a downturn due to continued uncertainty associated with geopolitical factors, protectionist threats, vulnerabilities on the emerging markets and the volatility of the financial markets.".. [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### ArianeGroup is to study a moon mission for ESA



On 21st January the European Space Agency (ESA) awarded a study to ArianeGroup regarding the possibility of landing on the Moon before 2025, which would be a first for Europe and might be a prelude to autonomous human presence there. "I am convinced that the conquest of Space is vital for the future of humanity in general," declared André-Hubert Roussel, Executive Chair of the group. "Europe must have its place there." "The return to the Moon is possible", continued the new chief executive of ArianeGroup, whilst 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the first steps on the Moon by man... [Read more](#)

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## Germany :

### Signature of the Aachen Treaty



On 22nd January France and Germany signed the Aachen Treaty, a new cooperation treaty to go further than the Elysée Treaty of 1963. The treaty aims to deepen cooperation in terms of foreign policy, external and internal defence of both countries, to defend better their common interests. The Chancellor declared that she wanted this Treaty to provide impetus to "the unity of the European States". Amongst the innovations of this treaty there is a Franco-German Council of Defence and Security as a steering political body for reciprocal commitments, a committee of economic experts to make recommendations and a better cross-border cooperation... [Read more](#)

## Spain :

### Information Guide on Cybersecurity



The Spanish government has put an information guide on-line regarding the various risks involving cybersecurity - data theft, seizure of sites and networks ... and the ways to respond to this. Drafted by a public-private partnership the Spanish initiative is presented as the first of its kind in Europe to centralise all of this information on one site... [Read more](#)

## France :

### The CNIL condemns Google on the base of GDPR



On 21st January the French Committee responsible for IT and Freedoms announced that it has condemned Google to pay a fine of 50 million € because it did not respect the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), that entered into force in the EU in May last. This followed complaints lodged by the associations None of Your Business and the Quadrature of the Net that the CNIL launched an investigation. The first to use these new European regulations, the CNIL believes that there had been "a lack of transparency, unsatisfactory information and a lack of consent that is applicable for the personalisation of advertising.." [Read more](#)

## Greece :

### Parliament ratifies the Macedonian name agreement



On 25th January the Greek Parliament ratified the Prespes Agreement regarding the new name of Macedonia - "the Republic of Northern Macedonia" - 153 votes in support, 146 against. Negotiated by the Macedonian and Greek Prime Ministers, Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras, signed on 17th June 2018, the "historic agreement" ends a 30 year-old dispute between the two neighbouring countries and opens Macedonia's prospects in terms of membership of the EU and NATO... [Read more](#)

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## Latvia :

### New government led by Krišjānis Kariņš



On 23rd January the new Latvian government led by Krišjānis Kariņš (New Unity) won the confidence of Parliament (Saeima) 61 votes in support, 39 against. Outgoing MEP K. Kariņš leads a coalition government comprising five parties: New Conservative Party, Development/For, National Alliance, KPV LV and New Unity. The government has 14 ministers, four of whom are women. This development has come following the elections on 6th October last... [Read more](#)

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UK :

#### Theresa May seeks "plan B" for the Brexit Agreement



On 21st January British Prime Minister Theresa May presented a "plan B" for Brexit which is due to amend the agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU. She reasserted her red lines, notably rejecting a no-deal Brexit and a second referendum, which might "damage social cohesion". At the same time she promised to be more attentive to what Parliament was saying about the backstop for Ireland and the future trade agreement between the UK and the EU. The vote is planned for 29th January... [Read more](#)

Switzerland :

#### World Economic Forum Davos



From 23rd to 26th January the 49th World Economic Forum took place in Davos (Switzerland). The theme was the digital industrial revolution. Climate change and the loss of biodiversity dominated discussions, likewise the defence of multilateralism and the importance of dialogue advocated by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Chinese Vice-President Wang Qishan... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

#### Guaranteeing free passage in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait



On 24th January the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that it was "seriously concerned" by the rise in tension between Russia and Ukraine in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait, which were a threat to European security. The Assembly called on the Russian and Ukrainian authorities to "guarantee free passage" in the zone and to refrain from any further measures "that might intensify conflict and threaten security across the entire region.".. [Read more](#)

#### The situation of members of the political opposition in Turkey is worsening



On 24th January the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held emergency talks regarding the "downturn" in the political situation in Turkey as far as rights and the freedom of expression, association and assembly of the members of the political opposition are concerned. It adopted a resolution calling on the Turkish authorities to "fully respect the rights of the members of opposition parties", to "protect and respect parliamentary immunity" and to "free MPs and former MPs whose immunity was lifted in 2016 in violation of the Council of Europe's standards.".. [Read more](#)

NATO :

#### NATO-Russia Council



On 25th January the NATO-Russia Council met in Brussels. The 29 Allies and Russia discussed the situation in the Azov Sea and in the East of Ukraine. The Allies called on Russia to free the sailors and ships seized in November last. The Council also exchanged views on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The Allies agreed that Russia was infringing the treaty and exhorted it to return to its full and verifiable compliance... [Read more](#)

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WTO :

#### Discussions about e-Trade



During an informal ministerial meeting at the World Economic Forum of Davos on 25th January 75 WTO member countries, including those of the EU decided to take trade cooperation forward and to start negotiations as of March 2019, working towards the introduction of world rules that are "truly comprehensive and ambitious" in terms of e-trade. Negotiations are to lead to a multilateral legal framework which will facilitate purchases, sales and the conclusion of on-line deals safer for consumers and businesses... [Read more](#)

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Eurobarometer :

#### Perceptions of anti-semitism in Europe

According to a Eurobarometer study published on 22nd January 50% of





those interviewed across all Member States deem that anti-semitism is a problem in their country. 39% believe that it is at the same level as five years ago - and 36% believe it has increased. 53% (against 38%) believe that their country has a problem of negating the Shoah. 6 Europeans in 10 believe that the Shoah is not studied enough in school. 54% believe that the conflict in the Middle East influence the perception of Jews in their country... [Read more](#)

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**Eurostat :**

**Tourism is increasing**



In 2018 according to Eurostat's first estimates published on 23rd January the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation in the Union, for both leisure and business trips, is due to total 3.1 billion, i.e. an increase of 2.2% in comparison with 2017... [Read more](#)

**Studies/Reports :**

**Report on "golden passports and visas"**



On 23rd January the Commission published a report on the citizenship and residency programmes by investment introduced in several Member States. This concerns "golden passports" or "golden visas" that enable investors to acquire nationality or a residency permit in these Member States on more flexible terms than would normally be required (no obligation to have any physical residency or to have any real links). The report points to the dangers that result from these programmes such as the laundering of money, tax fraud and corruption, as well as threat to Community security. The report also notes the lack of transparency in the implementation of these programmes and the lack of cooperation between Member States... [Read more](#)

**Britons increasingly split over Brexit**



No solution regarding Brexit meets a majority support on the part of the British population, only opposition to the agreement to exit the EU negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May is a rallying force, says a report entitled "Brexit and Public Opinion 2019" published on 22nd January. "No option (...) seems to be both widely popular and able to end divisions associated with Brexit," indicates the report... [Read more](#)

**Study of the memory of the Shoah**



On the occasion of the International Day devoted to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, the University of Yale and the Grinnell College published a study of progressive Judaism made for the EU on the memory of the Shoah in Europe. The report notes a rise in revisionism but also a trend in several countries to challenge the past... [Read more](#)

**Euro zone growth close to stagnation**



The publication of euro zone business leaders' confidence indicators on 24th January has led to fears of sharp economic slowing. This level "is increasingly close to stagnation" and "marks extremely low growth in economic activity in the region" said a Markit communication... [Read more](#)

**800,000 people benefited from Erasmus in 2017**



On 24th January the Commission published its annual report on the Erasmus+ in 2017. The report shows that the EU invested a total of 2.6 billion €, i.e. an increase of 13% in comparison with 2016. It stresses that there is now greater opening for people from modest backgrounds. In all in 2017, 800,000 people participated in this programme to study, train or volunteer abroad, i.e. 10% more than in 2016, 160,000 of whom undertook professional training and 158,000 took part in socio-educational projects... [Read more](#)

**Culture :**

### Manifesto against the rise of populism in Europe



Thirty European writers signed an appeal to "save Europe" from the "fire of populism" on 25th January. Against the "Europe of nations and the protection of lost identities" they pitch "civilisation" and the "protection of democracy and its values". In view of the upcoming European elections in May they are calling on European citizens to wake up and to continue building Europe... [Read more](#)

### Vinterjazz Festival in Denmark



From 1st to 24th February more than 600 jazz concerts will be taking place across all of Denmark, Skagen in the north to Flensburg in the south, from Fanø in the west to Bornholm in the east, as part of the Vinterjazz International Festival... [Read more](#)

### Filmusic Festival Prague



From 1st to 4th February Prague is hosting the most famous film music composers as part of the film music Festival. The festival will start with a concert by John Powell, the composer of the music of the film "Solo: A Star Wars Story" who will interpret his music with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Prague... [Read more](#)

### Bill Viola and Michel-Ange at the Royal Academy of Arts London



Until 31st March the Royal Academy of Arts of London brings together the American film-maker Bill Viola and Michel-Ange for the very first time. The name of the exhibition, "Life, Death, Rebirth" looks into universal themes on which the two artists worked -several centuries apart... [Read more](#)

### Rembrandt and the Dutch Golden Age



350 years after his death, the Netherlands are celebrating the life and legacy of Dutch painter Rembrandt with exhibitions across the country, which will present a range of his works and the wealth from the Dutch Golden Age. From 31st January to 15th September the Mauritshuis Museum in the Hague will be showing 18 paintings from the Rembrandt collection or ones that are attributed to him... [Read more](#)

### BRAFA Art Fair Brussels



The BRAFA (Brussels Art Fair) is taking place until 3rd February in Brussels. More than 130 exhibitors from art galleries and merchants will be present with a selection of works, such as ancient painting, ceramics, cartoons and even tribal art. "Art Talks" are running every day with experts from the art world... [Read more](#)

### Rara Opera Festival in Krakow



From 31st January until 17th February the Rara Opera Festival is presenting major works of opera played according to the spirit of the period by the most illustrious musicians. The festival is co-organised by Capella Cracoviensis, a professional group of musicians specialised in period music played on instruments of the time... [Read more](#)

### Picasso, blue and pink at the Beyeler Foundation



Many paintings from Pablo Picasso's blue and pink periods have been gathered together at the Beyeler Foundation in Basel from 3rd February to 26th May. For the first time in Europe, a wealth of pictures and sculptures by Picasso between 1901 and 1906 will be on show together... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



28th January  
Brussels  
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



29th January  
London  
Vote in the House of Commons on Brexit



30th and 31st January  
Bucharest  
Informal meeting of Defence Ministers  
Brussels  
Mini Plenary Session of the European Parliament



31st January - 1st February  
Bucharest  
Informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

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