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The feminisation at the EU's top in 2019 will it have positive repercussions for gender parity in Europe in 2020?

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The Commission and the European Central Bank are now chaired by women, and Parliament now has 39.5% female MEPs, more than the average for national parliaments. But parity remains a distant goal, in politics as well as in the economy and society, while some policies call into question women's rights.

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Contents

Elections : Slovakia **Foundation** : Law/Sofia **Commission** : European Semester - Albania/Macedonia - Coronavirus **Council** : Competitiveness - Future/EU - Employment **Diplomacy** : Syria - Agenor/Ormuz - EU/Africa **ECB** : Cybercrime/Finance **European Agencies** : Asylum - Intelligence - Spain/Football **Germany** : Migrants/Diplomas **Spain** : Catalunya **Greece** : Immigration **Italy** : France - Coronavirus **Poland** : Justice **Romania** : Prime Minister **UK** : Negotiations/EU **Slovenia** : Prime Minister **Council of Europe** : Racism **UN** : Coronavirus **IMF** : ECB **Eurostat** : Spending/Healthcare **Studies/Reports** : Brexit/Cost **Culture** : Exhibition/Madrid - Exhibition/Potsdam - Exhibition/Vienna - Exhibition/Paris

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

Elections :

The opposition led by Igor Matovic wins the general election



The Party of Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OL'aNO), a right-wing party led by Igor Matovic, won the Slovak parliamentary elections on 29 February with 25.02% of the vote and 53 seats out of 150 in parliament. The SMER-SD party of outgoing Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini won only 18.29% of the vote and 38 seats. Igor Matovic, whose policies are difficult to predict, will have to find stable allies to govern... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Rule of Law in Europe



On 6 March, Euractiv Bulgaria and the EPP Group are organising a meeting at the Commission's Representation in Sofia on the European Commission's plans for a common judicial mechanism and the crisis of the rule of law in the Union's East, with the participation of Eric Maurice, head of the Foundation's Brussels office... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Assessment of reforms, prevention and correction of macro-economic imbalances



On 26 February, the Commission published its country reports analysing the main socio-economic challenges Member States face to achieve four objectives: environmental sustainability, productivity gains, equity and macroeconomic stability. The reports highlight in particular wide disparities in terms of unemployment and debt levels. 3 countries, Greece, Italy and Cyprus, still show excessive imbalances, and 9 others, including France and Germany, show imbalances... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Reports on the progress made by Albania and North Macedonia



On 2 March, the Commission presented updated reports on the progress made by Albania and Northern Macedonia in pursuing reforms related to the rule of law. Both countries have achieved further tangible and sustainable results and the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations with Albania and Northern Macedonia remains valid... [Read more](#)

Establishment of a coronavirus response team



The Commission announced on 2 March the creation of a response team for the covid-19 virus (coronavirus) under the authority of the five Commissioners responsible for crises, health, borders, transport and the economy. It will coordinate with Member States on information sharing, needs assessment and the implementation of measures at European level. A website bringing together the available information is also being set up. For its part, the Council triggered the full activation mode of the EU's Integrated Crisis Response Capability (IPCR)... [Read more](#)

Council :

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council



The ministers responsible for competitiveness, meeting on 27 and 28 February, discussed the Green Deal and the most appropriate means of making the transition to a circular economy and supporting industry towards carbon neutrality in 2050. They adopted conclusions on competitiveness and sustainable growth, particularly for start-ups and SMEs. Ministers exchanged views on the conclusions of the report on the performance of the single market drawn up by the Commission, as well as on the impact of the coronavirus on industry. They agreed on the future strategic agenda for innovation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology... [Read more](#)

Negotiation mandate for the future relation with the UK



On 25 February, European Affairs Ministers adopted the negotiating mandate for a new partnership with the United Kingdom, to be led by Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier. The first round of talks began on 2 March. The ministers also prepared the European Council on 26 and 27 March. They discussed the Commission's proposals for reforming the enlargement process. They discussed the Union's legislative programme. The Commission also briefed ministers on the methodology and ongoing preparations for the new annual cycles and reports on the rule of law... [Read more](#)

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Guidelines for Employment



On 26 February the Commission proposed to the Council the annual amendments to the Employment Guidelines. The revision aims to take greater account of the annual strategy for sustainable growth and the UN sustainable development objectives (SDOs) in the European employment strategy... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

14 Foreign Ministers denounce the situation in Syria



14 European foreign ministers signed a joint forum published on 26 February concerning the situation in Syria. They denounced the air strikes on Idlib in the north of the country by the Damascus regime. These operations, supported by Russia, are in violation of international humanitarian law. Ministers called for a truce and encouraged the

parties to find a negotiated political solution... [Read more](#)

Operation Agénor fully operational



Operation AGENOR, the military component of the maritime surveillance and security mission in the Strait of Hormuz (Emasoh) led by eight European countries, reached full operational capability on 25 February with the deployment of the operation's forces, including the French frigates Forbin and De Ruyter from France and the Netherlands... [Read more](#)

Euro-African Cooperation



At the tenth meeting of the European Union Commission and the African Union Commission on 27 February in Addis Ababa, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat highlighted the "differences" between Africans and Europeans on issues of international justice or human rights. His European counterpart, Ursula von der Leyen, accompanied by 20 Commissioners, said that the two continents were "natural partners" and highlighted potential areas for cooperation, reaffirming that Africa is a priority for Europe... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Alliance to counter cybercrime in finance



Europol, the European Cybersecurity Agency, the European Central Bank and numerous public and private financial institutions announced on 27 February the launch of the Cyber Information and Intelligence Sharing Initiative (CIISI-EU) aimed at countering cybersecurity threats in the financial sector... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

European Agencies :

Asylum requests up for the first time since 2015



The European Union recorded a 13% increase in asylum applications in 2019, for the first time since the peak in 2015, according to data published on 26 February by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). More than 714,000 applications were lodged, mainly by Syrian, Afghan and Venezuelan applicants. The increase can be attributed to applications from nationals of Latin American countries that are visa exempt. These applications for international protection only lead to positive decisions in 33% of cases... [Read more](#)

Launch of European Intelligence College



On 26 February in Zagreb, 23 countries, including a majority of EU Member States, signed a letter of intent for the formal creation of the European Intelligence College, a new platform for exchanges that is supposed to strengthen the intelligence culture on the continent. The College, launched at France's initiative, is due to meet three or four times a year on specific topics... [Read more](#)

Investigation into corruption in football



After two years of investigation by the Spanish Guardia Civil, supported by Europol, several searches carried out in Spain on 18 February have corroborated the suspicions of criminal activities on the part of players' agents, first revealed by the football leaks of 2016. Five individuals are being prosecuted on suspicion of organising transfers of fictitious players through a Cypriot club in order to evade the tax authorities in Spain, but also in Belgium and Serbia. More than €10 million of profits were allegedly subsequently reinvested, including through a Maltese tax consultancy company, which ran shell companies to hide the illegal activities... [Read more](#)

Germany :

New law to facilitate economic immigration



A new law came into force in Germany on 1 March. Aimed at skilled workers, it simplifies the process of obtaining work visas, especially for qualified non-European applicants. Its aim is to alleviate the shortage of skilled workers in Germany... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Government meeting with Catalan leaders



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and the President of the Catalan region Quim Torra met on 26 February to discuss the crisis created by the regional government's demand for independence. The two leaders agreed that the "political nature of the conflict" requires a political solution. They agreed to set up a working group and to hold a meeting every month in Madrid and Barcelona... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Greece :

Influx of migrants from Turkey



According to the United Nations, there are more than 13,000 migrants on the border between Turkey and Greece. They have been brought from Istanbul with the support of the Turkish authorities who want the Union to help them in Turkey, where their troops are facing a Russian-Syrian offensive. The Greek government has suspended asylum procedures and requested the activation of Article 78.3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which provides for measures in the event of "an emergency situation characterised by a sudden influx of third-country nationals". On 2 March, the Frontex agency decided to launch a "rapid intervention" to help Greece. The leaders of the three EU institutions will visit Greece on 3 March, on the border with Turkey, because "the challenge facing Greece is a European challenge", announced European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Franco-Italian Summit



The President of the Italian Council Giuseppe Conte and the French President Emmanuel Macron met on 27 February in Naples for the 35th Franco-Italian summit. The two leaders discussed European economic and climate policy and stressed the need to support growth and employment. They also announced a strengthening of their coordination in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. While Italy has been affected by the coronavirus epidemic, the two countries expressed their solidarity... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Coronavirus: meeting of health ministers in Rome



Following a meeting in Rome on 25 February, the Health Ministers of Italy and six European countries - France, Germany, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and Switzerland - as well as the European Commissioner for Health, Stella Kyriakides, decided not to close the borders... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Poland :

Report on justice under pressure



In a report published on 29 February, Iustitia, the main association of Polish judges, describes the investigations and disciplinary proceedings initiated by the government against magistrates, as well as cases of pressure or harassment suffered... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Florin Cîtu appointed Prime Minister



Following the invalidation of Ludovic Orban's appointment by the Constitutional Court on 24 February, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis appointed on 26 February Florin Cîtu, Finance Minister of the outgoing National Liberal Party (NLP) government, as Prime Minister... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

UK :

The government presents its position on the future relation with the Union



On 27 February, the British Government published its position on future relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Several agreements are presented, following the standard model of the agreement between the Union and Canada: a proposal for a comprehensive free trade agreement covering almost all trade, a

separate agreement on fisheries, an agreement on law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, but also agreements in technical fields covering aviation, energy and civil nuclear cooperation. Negotiations start on 2 March... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Slovenia :

Janez Jansa, new Prime Minister



Janez Jansa, leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), was appointed Prime Minister on 26 February by President Borut Pahor. He signed a coalition pact securing him 48 of the 90 seats in Parliament, with a centre-right party, New Slovenia (N.Si), and two small parties (the Modern Centre Party (SMC) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners DeSUS) which had participated in the previous centre-left coalition. Janez Jansa previously served as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2008 and in 2012-13... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Concern about the rise of xenophobia in Europe



In its 2019 annual report published on 27 February, the Council of Europe's independent expert body for combating racism and intolerance (ECRI) expressed concern about the rise in hate speech and the rise of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe. While noting heterogeneous trends across the continent, ECRI points to extremely serious discrimination, whether on the Internet or in political discourse, which can result in violent acts - the most recent example being the shooting in Hanau in Germany, where nine people were killed... [Read more](#)

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UN :

Covid-19 - world situation



Nearly 91,000 cases of Covid-19 (coronavirus) have been reported in 60 countries and more than 3,100 people have died, according to World Health Organization figures as of 2 March. Considering it crucial to "break the chain of transmission", the organization is calling on all countries to inform their populations, expand surveillance, treat all cases and take all necessary measures... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Study of ECB assets purchase programme



In a report published on 28 February, the International Monetary Fund analyses the impact of the European Central Bank's asset purchase programme on international capital flows. It finds that investors in the euro area have redirected their assets to outside the euro area. It also finds that the programme has had different effects across sectors and countries in the euro area... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Report on public spending and healthcare



Government spending in the Union totalled 46.7% of GDP in 2018, falling steadily since 2012 when it was 49.7% of GDP, according to a Eurostat report published on 27 February. Social protection is the largest item: 41.2% of total public spending and 19.2% of GDP. It is the only item whose share increased between 2007 and 2018. Expenditure on public services fell by 2.1 points over the same period... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Brexit: cost of non-tariff barriers



According to a study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published on 25 February, a total failure of the United Kingdom and European Union negotiations by the end of the year could cost the British economy \$32 billion due to a drop in its exports (14%). The blow would be very hard on the British economy given that the European market represents 46% of its outlets... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Rembrandt in Madrid



An exhibition devoted to Rembrandt's life in Amsterdam is being held until 24 May at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. The exhibition shows 97 works by various Dutch 'Golden Age' artists, including 39 portraits by Rembrandt... [Read more](#)

Monet's Places



Until 1 June, the Barberini Museum in Potsdam, in partnership with the Denver Art Museum, is organising an exhibition on Claude Monet's landscapes. More than 100 works are on display to demonstrate the evolution over time of the artist's style... [Read more](#)

The Hahnloser collection at the Albertina



One of the most important private collections of modern art, the collection of the Hahnloser-Bühler couple, is on display at the Albertina Museum in Vienna until 24 May. Constituted between 1905 and 1936, it includes works by Pierre Bonnard, Ferdinand Hodler, Henri Matisse, and Félix Vallotton, as well as Cézanne, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and Van Gogh... [Read more](#)

Cézanne and the Masters. Italy's Dream



Until July 5, the Marmottan Monet Museum is organizing the exhibition "Cezanne and the Masters. Rêve d'Italie", featuring some of the best known works of art by the artist from Aix and by Italian Renaissance painters. It highlights the influence of Latin culture in Cézanne's artistic style, and the latter's influence on the Italian Novecento movement... [Read more](#)

Agenda :

4
Mar
4th March 2020
Zagreb
Informal meeting of Defence Ministers

5
Mar
5th March 2020
Zagreb
Informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers
Brussels
Environment Council

6
Mar
6th March 2020
Brussels
Extraordinary Health Council

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