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## Chronicle of an epidemic: a health crisis which is severely disrupting the economy

Author: Françoise Grossetête



Detected last December, the Covid 19 outbreak has now spread to every continent, covering 98 countries. Only Antarctica remains untouched. The sanitary shock has thus been compounded by an economic one, amplified by society's psychosis. The coronavirus shows us we are facing a collective challenge and More than ever before, the need to build "Healthcare Europe" is becoming obvious.

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### Foundation :

#### Data sharing and new industrial revolution



On 19 March, the Foundation is organising a seminar in Brussels on data sharing and the new industrial revolution, with an opening speech by the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton. The seminar will be held at the Permanent Representation of France to the Union. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

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#### 25 years of EUROMARFOR, specific features of the European Maritime Force



The Foundation is organising a European Strategic Dialogue in Brussels on 25 March, on the occasion of EUROMARFOR's 25th anniversary. The four fleet commanders of the participating countries - France, Spain, Italy and Portugal - will talk about the challenges related to the European maritime force... [Read more](#)

### Coronavirus :

#### Healthcare Council Conclusions



Health Ministers held an extraordinary meeting on 6 March to discuss the increase in cases of Covid-19 in the EU. They stressed the need to cooperate and strengthen information exchange. They reiterated the importance of raising awareness and protecting populations at risk.

Ministers also stressed the need to control movement in areas considered dangerous and to monitor the availability of medical equipment and medicines in the Union...  
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### 37.5 million additional € to combat COVID-19



The Commission has announced an increase in the appropriations earmarked for research to combat Covid-19 (coronavirus), with a contribution of €37.5 million from the Horizon 2020 fund. These funds are intended to finance 17 projects led by 136 research teams working to develop diagnostic tests for Covid-19 as well as vaccines and treatments...  
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### National measures to combat COVID-19



Faced with the Covid-19 epidemic, European governments have set up websites to inform their populations about the virus, the measures taken and the precautions to be taken. In France, the government decided to ban gatherings of more than 1,000 people, a measure also recommended by the German government... [Read more](#)

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### Italy: quarantine to counter coronavirus



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed a decree on 9 March to take quarantine measures throughout the country until 3 April against the Covid-19 virus. The decree prohibits gatherings in public places, and limits the movement of the population to emergencies and professional imperatives. Universities, cultural centres and sports facilities will remain closed. Bars and restaurants will close at 6 p.m., and sporting events will be suspended... [Read more](#)

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## Migration :

### Conclusions on the external borders



EU interior ministers meeting on 4 March expressed their support for Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus, which are facing an influx of migrants from Turkey. They "strongly rejected" Turkey's use of migration pressure for political purposes and called on the Turkish government to respect the 2016 agreement on managing the movement of migrants. They expressed their readiness to strengthen the Frontex mission and take "all necessary measures" to prevent illegal crossings of the Union's borders... [Read more](#)

### Declaration on Syria and its effects on the Greek Border



Meeting on 6 March, foreign ministers called on Turkey to respect the 2016 agreement on migrant management and to stop using migrants as instruments at the Greek border. They also called on the warring parties in Syria to implement a lasting ceasefire, including in Idlib, to return to the negotiating table, and to allow humanitarian access to civilians... [Read more](#)

### Union aid to Greece to manage the influx of migrants



The Presidents of the Commission, Parliament and the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen, David Sassoli and Charles Michel, as well as the Greek and Croatian Prime Ministers, Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Andrej Plenkovic, visited the Greek-Turkish border on 3 March, where more than 13,000 migrants had arrived in the previous days. U. von der Leyen announced the dispatch of a rapid border intervention team, as well as 7 patrol boats, 2 helicopters and 1 plane, deployed by the Frontex agency. 100 additional guards will be sent on the spot and Greece will receive €700 million to manage migration and the necessary infrastructure, as well as medical assistance on request...  
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### War in Syria: 170 million € in humanitarian aid



Josep Borell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, announced during a visit to Ankara on 4 March the release of €170 million in humanitarian aid for Syria, including €60 million for the north-west of the country. In total, the Commission estimates that 11 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in Syria. These funds are intended to finance humanitarian missions carried out by local NGOs and agencies operating in Syria... [Read more](#)

## Meeting with the Turkish President



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was received in Brussels on 9 March by the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen to discuss the migration crisis at the Greek-Turkish border. At the heart of the discussions was the Syrian crisis and the failure to comply with the 2016 agreement, by which Turkey undertook to control its borders with the Union in exchange for European aid for refugees in Turkey... [Read more](#)

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## Gender equality :

### New Commission Strategy



On 5 March the Commission presented its strategy for gender equality. The strategy sets out legal measures for the next five years, including the harmonisation of the criminalisation of violence against women and the adoption of binding measures on equal pay. In addition, the Commission has committed itself to achieving parity at all levels of its own hierarchy by the end of 2024 and to mainstreaming the gender dimension in all EU policies through a new Task Force... [Read more](#)

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### Only one managerial position in three is occupied by a woman



According to a Eurostat report published on 6 March, women held only 37% of management positions in 2019, compared to 36% in 2012. Women make up only a quarter of board members of listed companies and hold only 18% of senior management positions. The highest proportion of women in management positions is found in Latvia (53%) and the lowest in Cyprus (19%), while France still has the highest proportion of women board members (45%)... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Proposal for a European law on the climate



On 4 March, the Commission presented its proposal for a climate law, which aims to make the climate neutrality target for the Union binding by 2050. The Commission would be responsible for monitoring Member States' progress on environmental issues and could make recommendations to them. By September, it would set a climate target for 2030 and then propose a trajectory for the period 2030-2050... [Read more](#)

### Proposals for a strategy with Africa



On 9 March, the Commission presented its proposals for strengthening cooperation with Africa in five areas: green transition, digital transformation, growth and jobs, governance, and migration. These proposals will be discussed at the next summit with the African Union in October to define common strategic priorities... [Read more](#)

### Agreement with platforms on the publication of data



The Commission announced on 5 March an agreement with Airbnb, Booking, Expedia Group and TripAdvisor on sharing their data with Eurostat. The shared data will cover the number of nights booked and the number of customers. Eurostat will use these figures to carry out studies at European level, but also at local and national level, to develop a more accurate picture of the tourism sector... [Read more](#)

## Council :

### Conclusions of the Environment Council



The environment ministers meeting on 5 March adopted the Union's long-term strategy to achieve the objectives of the Paris agreements, but also to exchange views on the implementation of the Green Deal. The consideration of ecological sustainability in the European Semester was discussed, and conclusions on the measures to be taken to improve water and air quality were adopted... [Read more](#)

### Informal meeting of Defence Ministers



and its consequences for south-eastern Europe, as well as the strengthening of defence cooperation within the EU and with NATO. They then exchanged views on permanent structured cooperation in the field of cyber security and stressed the need to put in place a clear strategy for the future of European defence... [Read more](#)

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#### Extension of the freezing of assets of 10 people in Ukraine



The Council decided on 5 March to extend by one year the freezing of assets of 10 individuals considered responsible for misappropriation of Ukrainian public funds. Measures against 2 other people were not renewed. The sanctions were introduced in 2014 and are renewed on an annual basis. These individual measures come in addition to other comprehensive restrictive measures (economic sanctions, diplomatic measures)... [Read more](#)

#### Court of Justice :

##### Rejection of the appeal made by Catalan secessionist Oriol Junqueras



On 3 March, the Court of Justice of the European Union rejected the appeal of Catalan independence activist Oriol Junqueras, elected Member of the European Parliament in 2019. Sentenced to 13 years in prison by the Spanish Supreme Court for his role in the holding of the referendum on Catalan independence in 2017, he had not been allowed to take his seat by the Spanish judiciary. He asked for his release, parliamentary immunity and the suspension of the vacancy report issued by Parliament on 13 January. The Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction to annul this act of Parliament or to issue injunctions to the Spanish authorities... [Read more](#)

##### The law against foreign universities in Hungary breaches European law



The requirements imposed by Budapest on foreign universities are discriminatory, breach European rules and must be condemned, the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice said on 5 March. The Central European University (CEU) founded by Hungarian-born American financier George Soros had to move most of its activities from Budapest to Vienna in November 2019 because of new legislation requiring foreign universities in Hungary to have a campus and curricula in their home country... [Read more](#)

#### Court of Auditors :

##### Report on sustainable transport in cities



According to a report by the European Court of Auditors published on 4 March, cities have not moved towards more sustainable modes of transport, despite the Commission's call for a radical change in 2014 and €16.5 billion of investment. In particular, the report notes that the use of private vehicles has not decreased and that air pollution still exceeds acceptable health thresholds. Moreover, EU-funded projects have faced many difficulties and have not been as effective as expected... [Read more](#)

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#### European Agencies :

##### One European in five is a victim of sound pollution



One in five Europeans is a victim of noise pollution, a nuisance that endangers their health, the European Environment Agency (EEA) warned on 5 March, pointing out that the target set for 2020 to reduce noise pollution will not be met. Noise pollution "is even expected to increase due to future urban growth and increased demand for mobility", the EEA noted... [Read more](#)

#### France :

##### Launch of European Plastics Pact



14 Member States, more than 30 companies and two NGOs signed the Plastics Pact on 6 March, committing them to better manage single-use plastic packaging and products, with 448 million tonnes of plastic produced in 2015. The aim of this initiative launched by France and the Netherlands is to reduce the use of "virgin" plastic by increasing the share of recycled plastic. The pact also calls for a 25% increase in recycling capacity and for all single-use packaging and plastic to be recyclable by 2025... [Read more](#)

## Romania :

### Request for excessive deficit procedure against Romania



On 4 March, the Commission recommended to the Council to open an excessive deficit procedure against Romania. It considers Romania's deficit to be too high, at 3.9% of GDP in 2019, and has requested the Romanian government to take measures to bring it below 3% by 2022... [Read more](#)

## Slovakia :

### Igor Matovic asked to form the government



On 4 March, Slovakian President Zuzana Caputova instructed Igor Matovic to form a government, with the Party of Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OL'aNO) which came out ahead in the 29 February elections. Mr Matovic will discuss with the parties Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), For the People (Za L'udi) and We are a Family (Sme Rodina) to form a coalition which would have 95 seats out of 150 in Parliament... [Read more](#)

## Slovenia :

### Janez Jansa appointed Prime Minister



The Slovenian Parliament appointed Janez Jansa as Prime Minister on 3 March by 52 votes to 31. His government coalition would comprise the Democratic Party (SDS), the Modern Centre Party (SMC), the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS) and New Slovenia (NSi). He must now present the composition of his government and seek parliamentary approval... [Read more](#)

## Ukraine :

### New government led by Denys Chmygal



Denys Chmygal, hitherto Deputy Prime Minister, was sworn in as Prime Minister by the Ukrainian Parliament on 4 March by 291 votes. He succeeds Oleksiy Goncharuk, who resigned after six months in office. The head of diplomacy Vadym Prystaiko became Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and Dmytro Kouleba was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs... [Read more](#)

## Council of Europe :

### Report on corruption in the Czech Republic



The Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, GRECO, said on 5 March that the Czech Republic needs to accelerate ongoing reforms to combat high-level corruption, particularly among parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors. In its follow-up report, GRECO notes that only one of the 14 recommendations has been fully implemented. The Czech authorities will have to report on their progress by the end of the year... [Read more](#)

### Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights



The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted on 6 March 39 decisions concerning 19 Member States to implement judgments and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. Final resolutions - the end of supervision of the execution of a judgment - were also adopted, concerning 81 judgments and decisions concerning 11 States. The Committee's next human rights meeting will be held in June... [Read more](#)

## ECHR :

### Turkey condemned for the detention of a judge



In a 3 March ruling, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned Turkey to compensate a former judge dismissed after the failed coup of 2016. The Turkish government was found guilty of unlawfully detaining the applicant, violating his right to liberty and security. The government accused the judge of belonging to Fethullah Gülen's movement, which it considered to be behind the coup... [Read more](#)

## Eurobarometer :

### Inquiry into Europeans and the Digital



On 5 March, a Eurobarometer survey was published on Europeans' digital behaviour. 8 out of 10 respondents want digital camera producers to be obliged to make their repairs easier. 59% are in favour of sharing their data with public authorities to improve public services. 71% say they have recently been confronted with misinformation, and 51% think that public intervention is needed to regulate artificial intelligence... [Read more](#)

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### Inquiry into undeclared work



While the Commission launched a campaign to promote declared work on 2 March, a Eurobarometer survey reveals that one in 10 Europeans say they have paid for a product or service that included undeclared work in the last 12 months. These purchases, in a third of the cases made from acquaintances, were mostly for home repair or renovation work and beauty care. In one out of two cases, the choice is based mainly on financial considerations... [Read more](#)

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## Studies/Reports :

### Sipri report on the arms trade



According to the annual report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri), published on 9 March, France became the world's third largest arms exporter over the period 2015-2019, behind the United States and Russia. While the arms trade increased by 5.5% over the period, notes Sipri, US exports increased by 23%. French exports increased by 72%, in particular through contracts with Egypt, Qatar and India. Exports from Germany, fourth in the ranking, increased by 17% at the same time... [Read more](#)

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## Culture :

### Art Fair in Maastricht



TEFAF, the Maastricht Art Fair, is being held until 15 March. With 275 art dealers from 20 countries, the fair exhibits numerous works of painting, antiques, contemporary works and photography... [Read more](#)

### Lygia Clark at the Guggenheim



Until May 24, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is presenting the first works of Lygia Clark, emphasizing the international dimension in the style of this post-war Latin American figure. Defined as "a field of experimentation," Clark's painting always seeks to push back the traditional limits of the medium... [Read more](#)

### Andy Warhol at the Tate Modern



From March 12 to September 6, the Tate Modern in London pays tribute to Andy Warhol. The exhibition will show many works, paintings, rarely seen before, created after 1970... [Read more](#)

### Turner retrospective in Paris



From March 13 to July 20, the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris is organizing a retrospective of the British painter Joseph Turner in collaboration with the Tate Gallery. 70 works will be on display, some of them for the first time in France... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



**10**  
Mar

10th March 2020  
Brussels  
Plenary session of the European Parliament

European Council on the Coronavirus (video conference)

**12**  
Mar

12 March 2020  
Brussels  
Trade Council  
Frankfurt  
Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank

**13**  
Mar

13 March 2020  
Brussels  
Justice and Internal Affairs Council

**16**  
Mar

16th March 2020  
Brussels  
Eurogroup Meeting

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