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The Letter in PDF format

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Coronavirus: globalisation is not the cause but the remedy

Author: Blaise Wilfert



With the Covid-19 pandemic, globalisation, defined both as liberalisation and planetisation, are said to have become a form of disease fatal to the world that must be defeated. But history and the need for multilateralism invalidate this vision.

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Foundation :

The health crisis seen from ... a European panorama of the fight against the virus



All European Union Member States are being affected by Covid-19 to varying degrees. How have they coped? How have their health systems adapted? What have their responses been to the economic shock caused by the pandemic? With this collection, the Foundation would like to share with you the impressions of Europeans who are fighting the virus in their own countries. These accounts are neither exhaustive nor academic; they are real and personal. Let's get to know each other better! New countries: Austria, Greece, the Czech Republic and Sweden... [Read more](#)

Covid-19: European responses, a full picture



Faced with the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the European Union is trying to deploy the various means at its disposal. In order to react and be resilient for the future, its capacity to act depends largely on the Member States and their resolve to act together. The Foundation provides you with a regularly updated overview of all the measures taken at national and European level... [Read more](#)

Coronavirus :

Towards a European Recovery Fund



Heads of State and government discussed on 23 April the Union's response to the coronavirus crisis. They validated the €540 billion support plan proposed by the Eurogroup on 9 April. They agreed on the need to increase the Union's strategic autonomy and to set up an ambitious recovery fund. They asked the Commission to make a proposal by 6 May and to specify the details in relation to the EU's multi-annual budget... [Read more](#)

Progressive deconfinement as of 4th May in Italy



The President of the Italian Council, Giuseppe Conte, announced on 26 April a relaxation of the containment measures from 4 May. Factories, shops and parks will be allowed to reopen, as well as bars and restaurants for take-away sales. Family visits will be allowed. Bars and restaurants should be able to reopen, with specific measures, from 1 June. Schools will only reopen in September... [Read more](#)

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National measures



On 28 April, French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe will present the deconfinement plan to be put in place after 11 May. In Belgium, the multi-stage deconfinement will start on 4 May but shops will not reopen until 11 May, in Spain the state of emergency is to be extended until 10 May, children under 14 can go out accompanied for one hour from 26 April and physical activities will be allowed from 2 May. In Poland, schools will remain closed until 24 May. In Germany, the authorities will discuss the de-confinement phase on 30 April. In Austria, schools are expected to reopen on 4 May. On 27 April, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson explained that it was too early to relax the confinement. In Ireland, measures will remain in place until 5 May... [Read more](#)

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Measures to support the economy



In France, Parliament adopted a €110 billion support plan on 23 April, instead of the 45 billion planned, which includes business support measures, tax exemptions and VAT reductions. In Germany, the government introduced new tax measures on 23 April, including a VAT cut in the restaurant sector which could be extended to benefit employees of other companies on short-time working. In Spain, on 22 April the government approved additional measures to support the economy. In Poland, the Minister of Finance stated on 23 April that taxpayers could pay their taxes until 1 June without late payment penalties. In the United Kingdom, the Treasury announced on 23 April new support measures for individuals and businesses. On 25 April the Belgian authorities took measures to support workers and employers... [Read more](#)

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For a safe return to work



The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work published on 24 April guidance on safe return to the workplace to help employers assess the risks of their employees and involve them in the process. They also contain information dedicated to certain sectors of the economy... [Read more](#)

Additional aid measures for fishermen



On 22 April the Council adopted support measures for the fisheries and aquaculture sector in order to limit the impact of the coronavirus. The measures include support for the temporary cessation of production and sales activities, including for fishermen on foot, and greater flexibility in the granting and use of funds. In particular, storage aid will be increased... [Read more](#)

New support measures to the most vulnerable



On 22 April the Council adopted new measures already approved by Parliament to mitigate the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the poorest citizens. The measures allow, in particular, for more flexible use of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which benefits 13 million European citizens. In

addition to the food and material aid managed by the FEAD, the purchase of protective equipment for protection against COVID-19 is now eligible for these funds... [Read more](#)

Flexibility in the use of European funds



On 22 April the Council adopted new rules on the use of cohesion funds to make their disbursement more flexible as part of the response to the coronavirus crisis. These new rules will enable the Member States to transfer money between the various funds and between their regions, and to have their actions financed by the cohesion funds at 100% instead of 50% up to now... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Sports Ministers



On 21 April, the Sports Ministers discussed the consequences of the coronavirus on the sports sector. They stressed the importance of the measures taken to protect the health of citizens, which have, however, resulted in the cancellation of many sporting events with strong economic repercussions, as well as the disruption of the functioning of federations and small clubs. They spoke of the importance of training athletes... [Read more](#)

Guaranteeing world supply chains



The European Union and 21 members of the World Trade Organisation committed on 22 April to ensure the proper functioning of global food supply chains and to avoid taking measures that could have a negative impact on the food security of other WTO members during the coronavirus pandemic. Emergency measures related to the agri-food sector must therefore be targeted, transparent and temporary and not lead to unjustified trade barriers... [Read more](#)

Warning against the secondary effects of chloroquine



The European Medicines Agency (EMA) recalled on 23 April the dangers associated with the use of chloroquine and hydrochloroquine, which can cause serious side effects such as cardiac arrhythmia, especially when taken in high doses or in combination with certain antibiotics. Chloroquine and hydrochloroquine can cause liver and kidney problems. The EMA points out that current clinical trials are still limited and inconclusive and therefore recommends that health professionals closely monitor patients with COVID-19... [Read more](#)

Platform for the exchange of scientific data



The European Commission launched a European Coronavirus Data Platform on 20 April to provide researchers with access to and sharing of available data, with the aim of accelerating research. The platform can store all types of data, from DNA sequences to clinical trials... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of Tourism Ministers



On 27 April, tourism ministers agreed on the need to establish a recovery plan for the sector. The idea of setting up tourist corridors pending the full reopening of borders within the Union was raised. Some ministers co-signed a declaration calling for priority to be given to tourism in the preparation of the Union's Recovery Fund. Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton called on Member States to make full use of EU funds... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

No tangible progress during the 2nd round of negotiations with the UK



The Union's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, spoke on 24 April at the end of the second round of negotiations on the future relationship. He noted several points of disagreement between the two parties, in particular on guarantees preventing unfair trade practices, on the form of the agreement, on police cooperation and on fisheries. It called for "political will, realism and mutual respect" in order to make progress and avoid a lack of agreement at the end of the transition period on 31 December... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



On 22 April the Foreign Ministers discussed the situation in Turkey, Libya and Afghanistan and measures to deal with the coronavirus: repatriation of European citizens, combating misinformation, implementation of the €20 billion aid package to the Union's partner countries. They also discussed the creation of an air bridge for the distribution of medical equipment. Lastly, the ministers discussed aid to the Eastern Partnership countries and expressed their support for Ukraine's reform projects... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Judgment on the display of prices by airlines



In a judgment delivered on 23 April, the Court of Justice replied to a reference for a preliminary ruling by the Italian Council of State on the display of airline prices, stating that the carrier must display VAT on domestic flights and credit card charges... [Read more](#)

Opinion of the Advocate General on the retention of migrants in Hungary



In an opinion delivered on 23 April, the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice ruled that the detention of asylum seekers in the detention camp in Röszke, Hungary on the border with Serbia was illegal. The Advocate General considers that the applicants find themselves isolated, deprived of their freedom of movement and unable to leave the camp, as this would render their asylum application null and void. He asked the Court to rule that the detention of asylum seekers is contrary to EU law... [Read more](#)

Homophobic declarations can be discriminating in terms of finding work



The Court of Justice ruled on 23 April that when a person who can influence an employer's recruitment policy makes homophobic remarks, these can be considered to constitute discrimination in recruitment... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Report on the state of the road network



On 21 April the Court of Auditors published a report on the state of the European road network, in particular the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). It notes reduced journey times and an increase in the number of kilometres of motorway, but considers that the network is not fully operational: central and eastern Europe is lagging behind. Several cross-border sections remain unfinished. Since 2007, the Commission has allocated around €78 billion to Member States for road construction and upgrading... [Read more](#)

Report on cultural spending



In a report on cultural expenditure published on 23 April, the Court of Auditors considers that the promotion of cultural sites is not sufficiently targeted and coordinated and is becoming too complex. Moreover, aid is mainly distributed through the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER), which does not give priority to culture. The Court of Auditors thus regrets the pre-eminence of economic objectives over the question of the viability of sites or the restoration of heritage... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Speculative assets accepted as bank guarantees



The European Central Bank announced on 22 April that it will accept speculative assets as collateral (or guarantee) for loans to banks. As the rating of some companies in the countries most affected by the coronavirus crisis was downgraded from investment grade to speculative grade, they could no longer be used as collateral with the ECB. This decision allows banks to continue to obtain financing from the ECB... [Read](#)

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France :

For tomorrow's Europe



Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing published an op-ed on 23 April in a dozen major European media, signed by some twenty personalities including former European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering, the President of the Foundation for European progressive studies, Maria João Rodrigues, and Alain Lamassoure, Chairman of the Foundation's Scientific Committee... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Annual report on Human Rights



In her activity report for 2019 published on 21 April, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, believes that human rights are increasingly being challenged across the continent. She highlights the growing acceptance of racism, violations of migrants' and refugees' and women's rights, the repression of dissent and the questioning of the independence of the judiciary... [Read more](#)

Preventing corruption under coronavirus



The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) published on 21 April guidelines for Member States to fight corruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. The health situation, the urgent need for medical equipment and the simplification of certain regulations increase the risks of corruption... [Read more](#)

Declaration on women's rights during the pandemic



The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence reminded signatory States on 20 April of the importance of continuing its implementation during the period of containment and the pandemic, which has seen a sharp increase in domestic violence. The Committee suggests concrete measures, such as including a gender perspective in the development and implementation of strategies to combat the pandemic, strengthening collaboration with civil society actors, ensuring the continuity of support services for victims or adapting financial resources to the specific needs of this period... [Read more](#)

WTO :

Growing number of export restrictions



In a report released April 23, the World Trade Organization found that 80 countries and territories have adopted export bans or restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. On 24 April, the IMF and the World Trade Organization called on governments to refrain from imposing export and other restrictions on the export of medical supplies and essential foodstuffs, and to quickly remove those that have been in place since the beginning of the year... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Trade surplus in February



According to Eurostat estimates of 20 April, the European Union recorded a trade surplus of €22.4 billion and the euro area a surplus of €23 billion in February 2020, while intra-euro area trade fell by 0.6%... [Read more](#)

Public deficit and public debt down in 2019



On 22 April Eurostat published government debt data for 2019. The average annual deficit for the European Union is 0.6%, the same as for the euro area. The average ratio of government debt to GDP is 77.8% in the Union, down 1.8% compared to 2018. It is 84.1% for the euro area, a decrease of 1.7% compared to 2018... [Read more](#)

The share of 30-34 year olds graduates in higher education rises above 40%



According to Eurostat figures published on 22 April, the share of tertiary education graduates among 30-34 year olds reached 40.3% in 2019. The Union has therefore achieved its overall Europe 2020 target of 40%, and 18 Member States have achieved their respective national targets... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Study on the economic value of registered designations of origin



On 20 April the Commission published a report on the economic value of the Union's registered designations of origin. It estimates their sales value at €74.76 billion, including €39 billion for wines, i.e. 7% of the total sales of the European agri-food sector. These products sell twice as well as unprotected products... [Read more](#)

Report on the digital transition in the EU and the USA



The European Investment Bank published on 20 April a report on digital transition in the European Union and the United States from a business perspective. According to this study, only four European States are ahead of the United States in terms of digitisation: Denmark, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Finland... [Read more](#)

Increase in military spending in the world



Global military spending increased by 5 percent in 2019 to a total of \$356 billion, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released April 27. Germany recorded the largest increase with a 10% rise, the highest increase in military spending since 1993... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Sculpture in Valladolid



The National Sculpture Museum in Valladolid now has virtual tours and online exhibitions, including one on Miro and sculpture... [Read more](#)

Medieval Treasures of Waterford



A virtual tour of Waterford's Medieval Museum immerses us in the history of the Irish Middle Ages, as well as a presentation of archaeological artefacts from the medieval period... [Read more](#)

Masterpieces of the Hamburg Kunsthalle



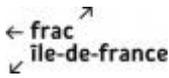
The Hamburg Kunsthalle offers a virtual catalogue of its collections by period, as well as online exhibitions... [Read more](#)

Salt Chapels of Wieliczka



The Wieliczka Salt Mines near Krakow are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and include several chapels. The place can be visited in several videos... [Read more](#)

Collections of contemporary art in the Ile de France



The works collected by the Fonds régional d'art contemporain (FRAC) d'Ile de France are visible online, classified by artist, type, and year...
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Agenda :



27 April 2020

Meeting of Ministers responsible for Tourism



28 April 2020

Meeting of Interior Ministers Meeting of Energy Ministers



29 April 2020

Meeting of Transport Ministers



30 April 2020

Meeting of Council of governors of the European Central Bank

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