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"Europe is increasingly innovative"

Author: Gauthier Van Malderen



To remain competitive and autonomous, the EU must invest and innovate. Over the last few years, the mindset towards entrepreneurship has changed and there are now many opportunities for start-ups. Europe needs to accelerate its commercialisation efforts, says Gauthier Van Malderen, co-founder of the Perlego university digital library.

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Elections :

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa re-elected President of Portugal in the first round



Incumbent Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was re-elected in the first round of the presidential election on 24 January with 60.7% of the vote. He easily outstripped Ana Gomes, a socialist candidate not supported by her party (12.97% of the vote) and André Ventura, leader of the populist Chega party (11.9%). The other four candidates received under 5% of the vote. In the midst of the Covid-19 epidemic, turnout totalled 39.49%, the lowest level ever recorded for a presidential election... [Read more](#)

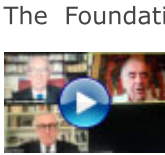
Foundation :

Conference with Josep Borrell on the European Union, a world player



On 1 February, the Foundation is organising an online conference with Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the Commission, in partnership with the Institut Catholique of Paris. He will give his vision to redefine the Union's external action in a changing geopolitical context... [Read more](#)

Joe Biden's USA



The Foundation, in partnership with the Institut Catholique of Paris, organised a videoconference on 10 January on the occasion of the inauguration of the new President of the United States, Joe Biden, with Pierre Vimont, French Ambassador, and Simon Serfaty, Professor Emeritus and member of the Foundation's Scientific Committee. The entire debat, together with Simon Serfaty's study, are available online... [Read more](#)

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Table of health measure and travel conditions in Europe



On 21 January, EU leaders discussed measures to deal with an increase in cases and a more virulent strain of the virus and to speed up the vaccination campaign. In Member States, restrictions are being extended or tightened. The Foundation provides an overview of the health measures in place and travel conditions across Europe. This is an indispensable, regularly updated resource to help you understand the situation... [Read more](#)

Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress



Protests continue in Belarus against the result of the rigged presidential election of 9 August to demand the departure of Alexander Lukashenko, whom the Union no longer recognises as president and who is subject to sanctions. To follow this crisis, the Foundation offers you a chronology of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Meeting of heads of State and government



Meeting by videoconference on 21 January, the Heads of State and Government discussed the challenges posed by the second wave of Covid-19. They stressed the importance of accelerating the vaccination campaign and limiting non-essential travel while keeping the Union's internal borders open. They also called on the Council to work on an interoperable form of proof of vaccination. The leaders also called on Russia to release opposition leader Alexei Navalny immediately... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Agreement with China over investments



On 22 January the Commission published the entire text of the draft agreement on investments concluded with China on 30 December 2020... [Read more](#)

Strategy regarding the international role of the euro



On 19 January, the Commission presented its strategy to strengthen the international role of the euro and foster an open, sound and resilient European economic and financial system. It wants to increase the use of the single currency in energy transactions and the issuance of European bonds. It calls for the development of the EU's financial market infrastructure and seeks to promote the standardisation and effectiveness of European sanctions... [Read more](#)

Order of 12 new Galileo satellites



On 20 January, the Commission awarded two contracts worth a total of €1.47bn to ThalesAleniaSpace and Airbus Defense & Space for the manufacture of 12 satellites for Europe's Galileo geolocation system, which already has 26 satellites in orbit. These 12 new satellites are due to be sent into orbit at the end of 2024 to improve the system's accuracy... [Read more](#)

The Commission's recommendations to counter the pandemic



On 25 January, the Commission recommended that Member States require travellers to present a negative PCR test within 72 hours before travelling. It calls for non-essential travel to and from high-risk areas to be strongly discouraged and calls for the development of a Common European Passenger Name Record (PNR) form that might be demanded of travellers arriving in the EU. The Commission also suggests a fourth colour, dark red, in the common colour code to reflect the high circulation of the virus when the notification rate is above 500 cases per 100 000 inhabitants over 14 days. On 19 January, the Commission called on member countries to vaccinate at least 80% of the elderly and

80% of health or social service professionals by March, and at least 70% of the adult population by the summer. It stresses the need to improve screening and sequencing of the virus genome to better trace it. It calls for non-essential travel to be "strongly discouraged", while preserving the single market and free movement... [Read more](#)

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Publication of the contract with CureVac



The Commission has published the contract signed with the CureVac laboratory for the delivery of 405 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine. The text omits confidential information such as the price of the vaccine and the legal liability of the laboratory. The Commission has so far signed contracts with 6 laboratories... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

New powers in the event of trade litigation



On 19 January MEPs adopted new rules allowing the EU to use countermeasures in trade disputes when arbitration is blocked. They will allow the EU to take action provided it obtains a favourable ruling from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute settlement body. The regulation still needs to be formally adopted by the Council... [Read more](#)

For a legal framework on artificial intelligence



On 20 January, MEPs called for a European legal framework on artificial intelligence (AI). They want AI to be explicitly designed to serve the common good and respect certain ethical principles such as the prohibition of discrimination or the protection of personal data. They also call for a ban on autonomous lethal weapons... [Read more](#)

Request to reform the European Arrest Warrant



In a resolution adopted on 20 January, MEPs called for a strengthening of the European arrest warrant to make it more effective, more immediate and more respectful of the decisions taken by national courts. It calls, inter alia, for an end to the "abusive" use of the arrest warrant for minor offences and calls for the refusal of execution to be allowed when it is in conflict with Article 6 of the Union Treaty (Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Convention on Human Rights)... [Read more](#)

Resolution for more male-female equality



In the EU's gender equality strategy adopted on 21 January, MEPs call for the establishment of emergency alert systems for women who are victims of violence and improved access to EU funds for women entrepreneurs. It calls for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women by the six Member States that have not yet done so. In a resolution adopted on the same day, MEPs call for better inclusion of women in the European Digital Agenda... [Read more](#)

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Debate regarding transatlantic relations at the Parliament



During a debate organised on 20 January in the Parliament, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, stressed that "transatlantic relations have suffered greatly over the last four years" and that Europeans must "take their destiny into their own hands in order to defend our interests and promote our values". The President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the fact that "Europe now has a friend in the White House" in the person of the new President Joe Biden, invested the same day, and said she was "ready for a new start with its oldest and most reliable partner"... [Read more](#)

Council :

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



The 27 Ministers for the Economy and Finance met on 19 January to discuss the establishment of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (€672.5 billion), which is due to be activated at the end of February, after validation by the Council and Parliament. The ministers discussed the Commission's proposal on non-performing loans, the European semester 2021 and the programme of the Portuguese Presidency... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers



Meeting on 25 January, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries discussed the negotiations with the United Kingdom on fishing, the state of negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council. The aim is to conclude the CAP reform by spring and to reach an agreement on fisheries with Norway... [Read more](#)

European framework for antigen tests



On 21 January, the Council adopted a common framework for the use and mutual recognition of results and the use of rapid antigen tests in the Union. The Council has called on Member States to share a standardised set of data with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and to agree on a common list of antigen tests and guidelines for situations in which these tests may be used (contact cases, outbreaks, travel)... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



On 25 January, foreign ministers discussed relations with Russia following the arrest of the opposition Alexei Navalny. They decided to send High Representative Josep Borrell to Moscow at the beginning of February and are considering the adoption of sanctions if Russian President Vladimir Putin continues his repression of the opposition... [Read more](#)

New task force on agreements with the UK



From 1 March, the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom (UKTF), which led the negotiation of the Trade and Partnership Agreement, will cease to exist and will be replaced by the EU-United Kingdom Agreements Department, responsible for ensuring implementation and compliance... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of the EU-Cuba Council



At the third meeting of the EU-Cuba Council, held on 20 January, the High Representative, Josep Borrell, met the Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, to discuss economic and institutional reforms in Cuba, the US embargo on the island, human rights, sustainable development and the pre-agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries reached last December... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Meeting of Council of Governors



The European Central Bank decided on 21 January to leave interest rates unchanged. ECB President Christine Lagarde said that the Emergency Pandemic Procurement Programme (EPPP), which continues at a monthly rate of €20 billion, will be adapted to the economic situation if necessary. She noted that inflation is expected to rise in the euro zone due to the suspension of VAT in Germany and the rise in energy prices, without reflecting a real recovery in demand. She called for a rapid launch of the €750 billion recovery plan... [Read more](#)

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Counterfeiting of euro notes at its lowest



460,000 counterfeit banknotes were seized in 2020, worth less than €22 million, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced on 22 January. The seized banknotes represent 0.017‰ of the more than 25 billion banknotes in circulation. This is the lowest level since the single currency came into circulation... [Read more](#)

EIB :

Annual EIB Conference



At the annual conference of the European Investment Bank (EIB) on 20 January, its president Werner Hoyer welcomed an investment of €76.8 billion for the EIB and the European Investment Fund (EIF), 13% of

which was outside the Union. 40% of the loans were intended for SMEs, followed by environmental projects (22%), infrastructure (20%) and innovation (19%). In total, more than 425,000 businesses received financing, while the top three recipients were Italy (15.5%), France (14%) and Spain (11%)... [Read more](#)

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European Agencies :

Cooperation Agreement between Europol and the European Prosecutor's Office



The cooperation agreement signed between Europol and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in December came into force on 19 January. The European Public Prosecutor's Office, a new independent body responsible for investigating, prosecuting and judging crimes affecting the EU's financial interests, will become operational later this year. Cooperation with Europol will take the form of information exchange on specialist knowledge or criminal investigation procedures and participation in training activities... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly



The Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly met on 22 January for a virtual plenary session devoted to the joint management of a way out of the crisis and innovation in the European Union. During the session, the German transport minister, Andreas Scheuer, spoke on cross-border mobility. The Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly, comprising 50 French and 50 German MPs, was established on 11 March 2019... [Read more](#)

Estonia :

Agreement on a coalition government



On 24 January, the Reform Party (ER) and the Centre Party (EK) reached an agreement to form a government headed by a woman, Kaja Kallas (ER). The coalition's programme gives priority to the fight against Covid-19 and the strengthening of the healthcare system. The new government is to be confirmed by a vote of confidence in Parliament, where the two parties have a majority of 59 of 101 seats... [Read more](#)

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France :

Birth of a new automotive group, Stellantis



On 16 January, almost a year and a half after the announcement of the merger of the automotive groups PSA (Peugeot, Citroën, Opel, etc.) and FCA (Fiat, Chrysler, Alfa Romeo, etc.), the Stellantis group was officially born. With 14 brands, 400,000 employees and a turnover of €167 billion, the new group went public on 18 January. Its managing director, Carlos Tavares, gave a press conference on the 19 January regarding the group's strategy... [Read more](#)

Greece :

Signature of the contract for the purchase of 18 Rafale fighter planes



On 25 January the Greek government and Dassault Aviation signed contracts for the purchase by Greece of 18 Rafale fighter aircraft and their armament, as well as logistical support and training. Greece will receive 12 second-hand and 6 new aircraft between now and 2023. The order, worth 2.5 billion euros, was approved by the Greek Parliament on 14 January... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

Prime Minister retains the confidence of the Senate but loses his absolute majority



On 19 January, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte won a vote of confidence in the Senate, after having won the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies the day before, thereby saving his government. By winning 156 votes, however, he lost his absolute majority in the Senate (161 votes). This was due to the abstention of 16 Senators of Italia Viva, the party of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi... [Read more](#)

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ECHR :

The Ukrainian State condemned for repression at the Euromaidan



In five judgments delivered on 21 January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned the Ukrainian State for its actions during the so-called "Euromaidan" demonstrations in Kyiv between November 2013 and February 2014. Around a hundred people were killed, more than 70 of them were shot. The Court found multiple violations of the rights to liberty, freedom of assembly and association and the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment in cases of police brutality, kidnapping and torture under the former pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich... [Read more](#)

Condemnation fo Turkey for the arbitrary detention of a columnist



In a judgment delivered on 19 January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled against Turkey for violation of the rights to freedom of expression and to liberty and security, guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court found that there was no evidence to prove the veracity of the terrorist-related offences with which Atilla Taş, a singer and satirical columnist who had criticised government policies, was charged... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Report on the German economy



On 19 January, the IMF published an economic study on Germany estimating the contraction of GDP at 5.4% in 2020 and growth of 3.5% in 2021. The report welcomes the budgetary measures taken by Germany, which have helped to limit the effects of Covid-19 on the economy. The study warns, however, that inflation, which was 0.4% in 2020, could move into negative territory. The IMF recommends that Germany give priority to supporting precarious workers and investing massively in infrastructure to revive the economy and create new opportunities... [Read more](#)

Report on the French economy



In a study on the economic situation in France published on 19 January, the IMF estimates that the GDP contracted by 9% in 2020 but that it should increase by 5.5% in 2021. It stresses that the government's response has enabled a reduction in the effects of the pandemic on employment but that it is essential to monitor the evolution of the public deficit and debt, which rose from 98.1% of GDP in 2019 to 115.3% in 2020. The report welcomes France's €100 billion recovery plan and encourages the government to prioritise the green and digital transition and the training of low-skilled workers... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Inflation stable



Inflation in the EU stood at 0.3% in December, according to final Eurostat figures released on 20 January. Annual inflation was -0.3% in the euro area... [Read more](#)

Increase in government debt and reduction of government deficit in the 3rd quarter



Government debt stood at 89.8% of GDP in the EU and 97.3% in the eurozone in the third quarter of 2020. The government deficit stood at 5.6% of GDP in the EU and 5.8% in the eurozone in the same period, according to figures published by Eurostat on 21 January... [Read more](#)

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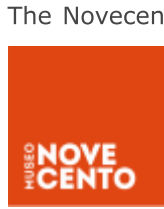
Culture :

Winners of the ArteKino Festival



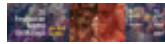
Greek director Elina Psykou and Lithuanian director Tomas Vengris received the ArteKino prize on 22 January. Their respective films, *Son of Sofia* and *Motherland*, were honoured by a jury of young Europeans at the end of the ArteKino festival organised in December by the Franco-German cultural channel. Both films are available online on the website... [Read more](#)

Henry Moore in Florence



The Novecento Museum, together with the Henry Moore Foundation, is paying tribute to the British artist with an exhibition that focuses on a central aspect of his art: the relationship between drawing and sculpture. The exhibition "Il disegno dello scultore" (The Sculptor's Drawing) will host around sixty drawings, paintings and sculptures until 16 July... [Read more](#)

Malaga Theatre Festival



The 38th Malaga Theatre Festival is being held in two parts. The first is being held until 4 February, and the second from the 30 April to 31 May at the Teatro Echegaray and the Teatro Cervantes. Around fifty plays are on the programme... [Read more](#)

Uncle Vanya online



Until 31 January, the Deutsches Theater Berlin is offering free online viewing of Anton Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, directed by Jürgen Gosch in 2009. The theatre's video library also offers interviews with the theatre's actors and directors... [Read more](#)

Black & White exhibition online



Until the "Black & White" exhibition opens, featuring more than 200 photographs from the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Grand Palais in Paris is offering an online exhibition of videos, texts, images and games. A film presents personal accounts by photographers such as William Klein, Man Ray and Valérie Belin. Three artists also offer their views on the artwork on display... [Read more](#)

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Jewish Culture of Poland online



The Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw is offering its permanent exhibition online and also proposes virtual visits to several cultural places such as the synagogue in Krakow... [Read more](#)

Living Record Festival online



Until 21 February the Living Record Festival is taking place online. It is an original festival created by 40 independent artists and theatre companies from all over the world. The festival offers improvisation, plays, short films and podcasts... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



28 January 2021

Videoconference
Informal Meeting of Home Affairs Ministers



29 January 2021

Videoconference
Informal meeting of Justice Ministers

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