

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

issue 927

The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on  and 

The foundation application available on [Appstore](#) and [Google Play](#)

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

## The Greens will do everything they can to make the Conference on the future of Europe a success!

Author: Franziska Brantner



A coalition between German Christian Democrats and Greens at national level has become a possibility in the run-up to the federal elections on 26 September. Green MEP Franziska Brantner, her parliamentary group's spokesperson on European affairs, explains the relationship of the German Greens to power and their positions on Europe, its future and the Franco-German relationship.

[Read more](#)

### Contents

**Foundation** : Future/Europe - Health/Europe - Belarus - Vaccination/Export - Aid/Humanitarian - EU/2020  
**Commission** : Digital - InvestEU - Health - E-trade - Tax/Carbon - Compliance - Future/EU  
**Parliament** : Justice - Home Affairs - Infrastructures - Eurogroup - Equality - Migration  
**Council** : Climate - Ukraine - Hong Kong  
**Court of Justice** : Hungary/Poland  
**ECB** : Decisions  
**European Agencies** : Vaccinations - Europol  
**Germany** : Elections  
**Spain** : Recovery  
**France** : Digital  
**UK** : Trade - Law/Infringement  
**Council of Europe** : Migration - Poland - Malta  
**OECD** : Outlook - Secretary General  
**Eurobarometer** : Future/EU  
**Culture** : French Language Week - Exhibition/Rome - Exhibition/Madrid - Exhibition/Vienna - Exhibition/Paris - e-Shakespeare  
**Napoleon Bicentenary** : Marengo

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

### Foundation :

#### Europe of urgency, Europe of hope



On 18th and 19th March the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly in partnership with the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Jacques Delors Institute is organising a colloquium that will offer an opportunity to debate issues that are central to the European Union and to answer questions that are crucial to its future. The Chairman of the Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani, will moderate a round table entitled "Defending Europe? The shortfalls of pacifism, the limits of Atlanticism"; the Managing Director, Pascale Joannin, will moderate a round table on "Is Europe geopolitically marginalised?"; the Chairman of the Scientific Council, Alain Lamassoure, will speak on budgetary democracy; Roza Thun, MEP and member of the Board of Governors, on the institutional model; and Sabine Thillaye, Chairwoman of the National Assembly's European Affairs Committee and member of the Board of Governors, on the involvement of the national parliaments,.. [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### Table of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



Italy is locking down ten regions from 15 March, Poland is implementing regional restrictions and Portugal is gradually ending lockdown. To follow the development of the situation in European countries, the Foundation offers you a summary of the sanitary measures in place and

travel conditions across Europe. An essential, regularly updated resource for a better understanding of the situation... [Read more](#)

### Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress

As the protests continue in Belarus, the European Broadcasting Union has rejected the Belarusian song, which is considered to be pro-regime, for the Eurovision Song Contest. To follow the crisis since the rigged presidential elections of August 2020, the Foundation is offering you a chronology of events and links to European reactions and initiatives... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Digital Transformation Strategy for 2030



On 9 March, the Commission published its "digital compass" for a digitally autonomous Union in 2030. Among the objectives set: basic digital skills for 80% of adults, access to digital infrastructure for all Europeans, the digital transformation of businesses and the digitalisation of public services. The Commission wants the EU to produce 20% of the world's advanced sustainable semiconductors by 2030 and have its own quantum computer. It proposes to develop a framework of digital principles to guarantee Europeans' rights... [Read more](#)

### Extension of vaccine export control mechanism



The Commission announced on 11 March the extension until the end of June of the transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of Covid-19 vaccines. It requires prior authorisation for exports of vaccines produced in the Member States outside the EU. It concerns companies with which the Commission has concluded a purchase contract and does not apply to exports to neighbouring countries or on humanitarian grounds. The Commission has announced a simplification of the administrative procedure... [Read more](#)

### Proposals to strengthen humanitarian action



On 10 March, the Commission called for a strengthened and accelerated external humanitarian response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These actions also aim to uphold respect for international humanitarian law and to address the consequences of climate change. The Commission wants to set up a European humanitarian response capacity to facilitate and improve interventions by simplifying logistics and pooling resources... [Read more](#)

### Union Activity Report 2020



On 10 March, the Commission published the general report on the Union's activities in 2020, which summarises the Union's concerted responses to the health and economic crisis and the decisions taken to achieve the Union's political priorities... [Read more](#)

## Parliament :

### Approval of the InvestEU programme



On March 9, MEPs approved the InvestEU programme to support public and private companies in the face of the health crisis. The aim is to ensure access to strategic investment projects. 30% of the investments must be devoted to the fight against global warming. The programme is expected to generate €400 billion by 2027 and the European Investment Fund will receive €375 million to help implement it. The text is subject to final adoption by the Council... [Read more](#)

### Approval of the health programme, EU4Health



On 9 March, MEPs approved the EU4Health programme, with a budget of €5.1 billion for the period 2021-2027. The aim is to prepare the EU's health systems for cross-border health threats by encouraging States to work together, share data and provide better access to medicines through available and affordable medical devices... [Read more](#)

### Position on taxation on online trade



On 10 March, MEPs adopted a proposal to tax digital commerce. They call for faster information sharing between tax authorities, harmonised penalties for platforms and for non-EU platforms to register in a Member State where they have substantial economic activity... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

### Resolution regarding carbon tax on the Union's borders



In a resolution adopted on 10 March, MEPs call for the EU to set up a European border carbon adjustment mechanism to tax certain goods imported from third countries that are not ambitious enough on climate change. The mechanism should be aligned with WTO rules and apply from 2023 to the energy and energy-intensive sector... [Read more](#)

### Corporate due diligence and accountability



On 10 March, MEPs called for binding EU legislation to ensure that companies are held accountable when they harm or contribute to harming human rights, the environment and good governance. The Commission is due to present a proposal later this year... [Read more](#)

### Common declaration on the Conference on the future of Europe



Parliament President David Sassoli, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa, whose country holds the Council Presidency, signed a joint declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe on 10 March. The declaration sets the framework for the organisation of the debates and discussions with European citizens, who will be able to publish their contributions on a multilingual platform. It defines how the three institutions will oversee the work of the conference... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## Council :

### Meeting of Justice Ministers



On 11 March, the Justice Ministers discussed the possibilities of disclosing electronic communication data to police and judicial authorities in order to fight crime and terrorism. They are considering the establishment of a harmonised legal system for data retention. The ministers spoke of their desire to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office... [Read more](#)

### Meeting of Home Affairs Ministers



On 12 March, the Home Affairs Ministers discussed the proposal for a directive aimed at strengthening the resilience of critical entities providing essential services such as health, transport or drinking water in the EU and their capacity to respond to the risks of major incidents. They also discussed the asylum and migration pact, particularly with regard to return, and the launch of a political dialogue to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the countries of North Africa... [Read more](#)

### Agreement on the Connecting Europe Facility



The Council and Parliament reached agreement on 11 March on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the period 2021-2027. The programme, with a budget of €33.71 billion, concerns the financing of projects in the transport and mobility sector (€25.81 billion), energy (€5.84 billion), and digital (€2.06 billion). Climate action is to be integrated into the programme... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

### Eurogroup Meeting



Eurozone Finance Ministers took stock of the state of play of fiscal support measures on 15 March. They agreed on the need to maintain this support for 2021 and 2022. They discussed the 9th Enhanced Surveillance Report on Greece, exchange rate developments and the international role of the euro, in preparation for the Eurozone summit on 26 March... [Read more](#)

## Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs



On 15 March, the Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs discussed the action plan on social rights and initiatives on equality and non-discrimination and called for a global strategy to ensure "a true union for equality". They then exchanged views on employment and social policies in the context of the European Semester 2021, in the context of recovery and resilience plans... [Read more](#)

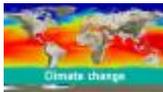
## Meeting of ministers regarding Migration



On 15 March, the ministers for foreign affairs and home affairs discussed the EU's migration policy and how best to develop cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, within the framework of the new asylum and migration pact. They discussed migration objectives, in particular how coordination and cooperation within the EU should be improved. Furthermore, the Council presented elements for a proposal for a comprehensive dialogue with the North African partner countries... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### John Kerry's visit to Brussels and Paris



Visiting Brussels, US climate envoy John Kerry called on 9 March for "enhanced" cooperation between his country and the EU in the fight against climate change, stressing that it was "time" to act. The US has recalled its nationally determined contribution to the Paris agreement and has committed to achieving zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050... [Read more](#)

### Extension of sanctions linked to violations of Ukraine's integrity



On 12 March, the Council decided to extend the sanctions targeting those responsible for actions that undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine for a further six months. The sanctions were introduced in 2014 and include travel restrictions, asset freezes and a ban on making funds or other economic resources available to the 177 individuals and 48 entities concerned... [Read more](#)

### The Union condemns the electoral reform in Hong Kong



The Commission's annual report on political and economic developments in Hong Kong, published on 12 March, highlights the significant erosion of autonomy, democracy and fundamental freedoms in the territory. This is illustrated by China's reform of electoral rules, which violates the territory's status and the "one country, two systems" principle on which it is based. The Union called on 11 March for the restoration of the democratic process and an end to the persecution of those who defend democratic values... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## Court of Justice :

### Referral by Hungary and Poland on budget conditionality



Poland and Hungary filed an application with the European Court of Justice on 11 March to challenge the EU regulation setting up a mechanism making the payment of EU funds conditional on compliance with the rule of law. The two countries consider that the mechanism has no basis in the Treaties and that it constitutes an interference in the competences of the Member States... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## ECB :

### Boost to debt purchases



The European Central Bank announced on 11 March that it is keeping its key interest rates unchanged and that it plans to increase the pace of its emergency debt purchase programme (EDPP) over the next quarter to calm the nervousness of the markets in the face of a recent rise in bond rates. Although the EDPP envelope (€1.850 billion to be used by March 2022) is not expected to be fully utilised, it can be recalibrated if the situation requires it... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## European Agencies :

### Green light for the Janssen vaccine by Johnson&Johnson



The Commission, following the recommendation of the European Medicines Agency, gave the green light on 11 March for the marketing of the Janssen vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson. The fourth vaccine to be used in the EU, it can be administered in a single dose. The Commission has ordered 200 million doses. On 10 March, the Commission reached an agreement with BioNtech/Pfizer to supply Member States with a further 4 million doses, to be delivered by the end of March. Their use will be targeted in border regions, to restore or ensure free movement within the European area... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

### Large scale operation against groups of criminals



The Belgian, French and Dutch police have succeeded in decrypting the communications of criminal groups and on 10 March launched operations to prevent more than 100 large-scale criminal operations planned for the coming months. Europol states that 170 000 people were using the encrypted Sky ECC platform, 20% of whom were based in Belgium and the Netherlands... [Read more](#)

### Germany :

#### Elections in Rhinland Palatinate and Baden Württemberg



Elections were held on 14 March in two Länder. In Baden Württemberg, which has been governed since 2016 by a Green/CDU coalition, the Greens won with 31% of the vote. The results could pave the way for a new alliance between the Greens, the SPD and the FPD. In Rhineland-Palatinate, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) came first with 34.5% of the vote. In office since 2016, the SPD/FDP/Green coalition is expected to be renewed. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) lost ground, with 23% of the vote in Baden-Württemberg and 26% in Rhineland-Palatinate... [Read more](#)

### Spain :

#### 11€ billion plan for businesses



On 12 March, the Spanish government approved a plan totalling €11 billion to help businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan includes €7 billion in direct non-repayable aid to avoid bankruptcies that would be detrimental to the recovery of the economy... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

### France :

#### Scale Up Europe



The Scale-Up Europe initiative was launched by the French Secretary of State for Digital Transition and Electronic Communications in partnership with the European Commissioner for Innovation. This initiative, announced by E. Macron in December 2020, aims to develop a series of recommendations to accelerate the emergence of European technological champions in the digital field... [Read more](#)

### UK :

#### Collapse of trade and postponement of customs controls



In the first month after the UK's exit from the single market, British exports to the European Union fell in January by 41% and imports by 29% compared with the previous month, the Office for National Statistics said on 12 March. In price and volume terms, this was "the biggest decline in a month since measures began in January 1997", the ONS said. The British government decided on 11 March to postpone customs controls on imports from the EU until January 2022. It explained that it wanted to allow British businesses to focus on recovering from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### European Union launches a procedure for the infringement of the withdrawal agreement



The European Commission sent a letter of formal notice to the United Kingdom on 15 March because of the postponement until 1 October of certain controls on the arrival in Northern Ireland of agri-food products and pets from Great Britain, in breach of the Protocol on Ireland signed at the time of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The UK has one month to respond and faces a fine or penalty payment. The Commission is also asking the UK

government to enter into "good faith" discussions in the EU-UK Joint Committee...  
[Read more](#)

## Council of Europe :

### Call for the protection of migrants in the Mediterranean



In a report published on 9 March, the Council of Europe deplored the "lack of will on the part of European States" to establish policies for the protection of migrants crossing the Mediterranean. It stresses that the situation has deteriorated due to the gradual withdrawal of rescue vessels, the practice of turning back migrant boats, and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. It calls on European States to respect the European Convention on Human Rights and to take measures to protect the lives of migrants... [Read more](#)

### Poland must guarantee women's access to abortion



The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers called on Poland on 12 March to introduce clear and effective procedures to ensure women's access to legal abortion. The resolution highlights Poland's failure to implement three rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, while the Polish Constitutional Court further restricted access to abortion in an October 2020 ruling... [Read more](#)

### Malta: handling of the problem of migrants in detention



The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published on 10 March a report on the difficult conditions of detention of migrants in Malta. The report calls on the Maltese authorities to improve the conditions of detention by ensuring that detainees are treated with dignity and humanity... [Read more](#)

## OECD :

### World economic outlook



In its interim forecast published on 10 March, the OECD expects stronger-than-expected global growth of 5.6% in 2021 and 4% in 2022. For the euro area, the forecast remains the same, with 3.9% growth in 2021 and 3.8% in 2022. The OECD stresses that economic and employment recovery is linked to the pace of vaccination... [Read more](#)

### Mathias Cormann appointed Secretary General of the OECD



Australian Mathias Cormann was appointed Secretary-General of the OECD on 16 March by the OECD Council. He won the vote of member states on 12 March. He will succeed Mexican Angel Gurría on 1 June for a five-year term. A former finance minister of his country, he has said his priorities are sustainable economic recovery, expanding global trade and setting rules for the digital economy and business taxation... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## Eurobarometer :

### Survey regarding the conference on the future of Europe



On 9 March, the Parliament and the Commission published a joint Eurobarometer survey on the Conference on the Future of Europe. 76% of respondents support the Conference, and 92% call for the voice of citizens to be better taken into account in the European decision-making process. In 14 countries, respondents consider respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law as the Union's most important asset. Furthermore, 6 out of 10 people say that the Covid-19 crisis has made them think about the future of Europe... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### French Language Week



As part of the International Day of La Francophonie celebrated on 20 March, the 54 member countries and 27 observer countries of the International Organisation of La Francophonie are offering a month of activities to celebrate the French language around the world. This year, all the events

presented in Europe will be held online with literary meetings, online competitions, theatre workshops and film screenings... [Read more](#)

### The architecture of Aldo Rossi in Rome



The National Museum of 21st Century Art in Rome is presenting a retrospective of the architect Aldo Rossi until 17 October. The exhibition analyses Rossi's theoretical and practical contribution to modern architecture through drawings and sketches, projects, writing and models... [Read more](#)

### Marinus van Reymerswale in Madrid



Until 13 June, the Prado National Museum in Madrid is presenting the first monographic exhibition devoted to the Dutch painter Marinus van Reymerswale (1490-1546). The exhibition features 10 paintings by the artist, complemented by books, engravings and coins, with the aim of offering a different perspective on his work... [Read more](#)

### The faces of Weimar in Vienna



The Albertina Museum in Vienna is showing an exhibition of portraits from the Weimar Republic period of the 1920s and 30s, when photography was no longer intended only to show the personality of the subject, but became a material for the photographer's ideas... [Read more](#)

### Warhol's photos in Paris



Until April 10, the Galerie Italienne in Paris is hosting an exhibition of Andy Warhol's photographs, entitled "Instantanés", which includes Polaroids, silver prints, collages and what the artist called "stitched photographs"... [Read more](#)

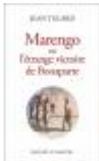
### Shakespeare in virtual reality



Until 20 March, the Royal Shakespeare Company presents Dream, a 50-minute virtual production based on Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, in which the actors perform in a virtual reality setting... [Read more](#)

## Napoleon Bicentenary :

### Marengo or Bonaparte's strange victory



In "Marengo ou l'étrange victoire de Bonaparte" (Marengo or Bonaparte's Strange Victory), Jean Tulard reveals all the facets of this battle fought in Piedmont on 14 June 1800, which enabled the First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte to remove the last obstacles in his quest for power. The battle is also the subject of a book by the military historian Olivier Lapray, "La bataille de Marengo, la première victoire du siècle", translated into English, and a work by the Pole Slawomir Lesniewski. Napoleon is the subject of a biography in German by the historian and journalist Volker Ullrich... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



16 March 2021

Videoconference

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers

Videoconference

Meeting of Health Ministers

Brussels

EU-Georgia Association Council

Brussels

Tripartite Social Summit

17  
Mar

17 March 2021  
Netherlands  
General Elections

18  
Mar

18 March 2021  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Environment Ministers

22  
Mar

22 March 2021  
Brussels  
Foreign Affairs Council  
Brussels  
Agriculture and Fisheries Council  
Videoconference  
Meeting of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness

The Letter is also available in:



 I love the Robert Schuman Foundation's Letter

#### The Letter's Editorial Team :

Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;  
Thomas Hinzelin, Mathieu Moiroud, Anne-Célia Cordier,  
Arthur Allier, Eléonore de Saint Sernin  
**Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice**  
**Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin**  
**N° ISSN : 2729-6482**

Contact/Suggestions  
[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

---

**The Robert Schuman Foundation**, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.

You no longer wish to receive our letters. {LINK}