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Reforming European Economic Policies

Authors: Olivier Marty, Damien Ientile



The crisis caused by the pandemic has highlighted one of the Union's problems: the questioning, in practice, of the principles and concepts governing the major European economic policies. While the budgetary and competition rules are suspended, we need to think about adapting them to realities and re-legitimising them.

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Front page! :

Strength and Faith



Companies in the EU Member States filed 65,000 patents in 2020, Europe remains democratic and its lifestyle is attractive. Yet Europeans underestimate and criticise themselves. They still have the strength, but do they still have faith, asks Jean-Dominique Giuliani... [Read more](#)

Elections :

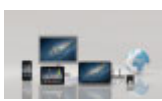
Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte wins the general election for the fourth time running



The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the liberal party of outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte, won the Dutch parliamentary elections for the fourth time in a row on 17 March. The party won 35 seats in the House of States General, the lower house of parliament. The Democrats 66 (D66), came second with 23 seats. A total of 17 parties will be represented in the new House of States General. The question is with which other parties Mark Rutte will form his new government coalition?.. [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Regulating the Digital Markets: the European Model



On 25 March, the Foundation is organising an online debate on the draft Digital Market Act. Andreas Schwab, MEP and rapporteur of the project in the Parliament, and Filomena Chirico, member of the cabinet of Commissioner Thierry Breton, will discuss how Europe wants to regulate the platforms' trading activity. Pascale Joannin, Managing Director, will moderate the debate. Register now... [Read more](#)

Belarus: chronology of a revolution in progress



The European Union reiterated on 18 March its support for political dialogue in Belarus and for the organisation of a new presidential election under international supervision. Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is calling for expressions of support for the Belarusian people on 25 March, Freedom Day, which commemorates the country's independence in 1918. To follow the crisis since the August 2020 elections, the Foundation offers a chronology of events and links to European reactions and initiatives... [Read more](#)

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Table of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



Due to an increase in cases, France has reintroduced restrictive measures for 4 weeks in 16 departments. Poland extended the restrictions imposed in several regions nationwide until the end of the Easter holidays. Germany decided to extend the measures in place until 18 April, with stricter confinement for the Easter period. For its part, the European Commission has presented its draft certificate, which will facilitate travel. To follow the development of the situation, the Foundation offers you a summary of the sanitary measures in place and the conditions for travel throughout Europe. An essential, regularly updated resource for an up-to-date understanding of the situation... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Certificate to travel freely and post-pandemic recommendations



On 17 March, the Commission presented its digital green certificate for people travelling in the Schengen area, which will indicate whether they have been vaccinated, tested or cured of the virus. The certificates will be available free of charge and will be issued in electronic form. The Commission has also issued recommendations for Member States to act in a coordinated and balanced way as they phase out restrictions. It calls on them to share epidemiological data and to coordinate to help the tourism and cultural sectors... [Read more](#)

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Strategic plan for Horizon Europe and the Innovation Council



On 15 March, the Commission set out the research and innovation priorities for the Horizon Europe programme for the period 2021-2024. Among the objectives of the €99.5 billion programme are: promoting open strategic autonomy, restoring ecosystems and biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources, making Europe the leading circular, climate-neutral and sustainable economy based on digital technologies, and creating a more resilient, inclusive and democratic European society. On 18 March, the Commission launched the European Innovation Council (EIC). With a budget of €10 billion, it aims to diversify and develop breakthrough and promising innovations... [Read more](#)

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Fishing Agreements with Norway and the UK



After two months of negotiations, an agreement was reached on 16 March between the European Union, Norway and the United Kingdom to establish the total allowable catch and sharing of quotas covering over 636,000 tonnes of fish. The three parties agreed to cooperate on monitoring, control and surveillance and to reduce quotas by 10% in order to promote sustainable fisheries. The EU has concluded bilateral consultations with Norway on shared stocks and quota exchanges in the North Sea... [Read more](#)

State Aid: the UK before the Court of Justice



The Commission referred the UK to the Court of Justice on 19 March for failing to comply with a 2018 decision considering the corporate tax exemption scheme applied between 2011 and 2013 in Gibraltar as illegal State aid. The UK has still not recovered €100 million that the Commission asked it to collect... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Appointment of representatives of the committee for the Conference on the Future of Europe



Parliament's Conference of Presidents appointed its representatives to the Executive Committee of the Conference on the Future of Europe on 19 March. Comprising representatives of the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, the committee will be responsible for overseeing the work and preparing the plenary meetings. Guy Verhofstadt (Renew Europe, BE) will co-chair the conference. Manfred Weber (EPP, DE), and Iratxe Garcia Pérez (S&D, ES) will be the other two members from the Parliament. The other four groups will be represented by observers... [Read more](#)

Council :

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



On 16 March, the Ministers of Economy and Finance discussed the priorities for recovery plans and resilience and exchanged views on the conduct of fiscal policy in the current context, as well as the prospects for recovery. They agreed that fiscal support should not be withdrawn too soon. They also discussed taxation related to the digitalisation of the economy... [Read more](#)

New rules to limit terrorist content



On 16 March, the Council finally adopted new rules to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content on the internet. The rules will apply to all service providers offering their services in the EU. Member States' competent authorities will be able to limit incitement to violence and radicalisation via video platforms and social networks by requiring service providers to remove or block terrorist content within one hour... [Read more](#)

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Approval of the Digital Europe programme



The Council approved on 16 March the Digital Europe programme, with a budget of €7 588 million for the period 2021-2027. The programme aims to stimulate digital transformation by funding projects in five areas: high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and trust, advanced digital skills, and deployment with better use of digital capabilities and interoperability. The Commission presented a Communication on the implementation of this programme on 19 March... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of Health Ministers



On 16 March, the Health Ministers discussed the Europe against Cancer plan. As the pandemic has delayed the detection and treatment of cancer cases, the ministers set prevention, early detection and the reduction of treatment inequalities in the EU as priority objectives for the Member States. They stressed the importance of cooperation and sharing of medical and scientific data between Member States. Ministers reiterated the need to accelerate vaccination campaigns against the coronavirus... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Environment Ministers



On 18 March, the Environment Ministers discussed the European strategy for adapting to climate change and the European climate law. They also discussed the role of the recovery and resilience mechanism in the context of the greening of the European semester. Finally, they discussed a legislative proposal on batteries and battery waste that promotes the circular economy and aims to ensure the protection of health and the environment... [Read more](#)

Provisional agreement on the ETIAS file



The Council and the Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 18 March on the modalities of data sharing between the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and existing databases such as the Schengen Information System (SIS), the Visa Information System (VIS), the Entry and Exit System (EES) and Eurodac, as well as Europol and Interpol data, and data on criminal records of third country nationals (ECRIS-TCN).

The formal adoption of this agreement will be the last step before the establishment of ETIAS, which should be operational in 2022... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of Ministers responsible for competitiveness



On 22 March, the Ministers for Competitiveness stressed the importance of investing and encouraging the diversification of supply and production chains in Europe. They said they wanted to strengthen the Union's autonomy in the production of critical goods and access to raw materials. Ministers discussed how to ensure a level playing field in the single market, in particular with regard to the distorting effects of foreign subsidies. They discussed the Commission's proposal for a Digital Compass 2030... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Irini - One year in operation



High Representative Josep Borrell visited Sigonella airbase in Sicily on 19 March to mark the first anniversary of the establishment of the EU's Irini operation, deployed as a successor to Operation Sophia to monitor the UN arms and oil embargo in Libya. The EU is the only force present in the Mediterranean to ensure this control. The EU has decided to extend its Irini naval mission by two years, until 31 March 2023... [Read more](#)

Association Council with Georgia



On 16 March, the European Union and Georgia held the 6th meeting of the Association Council, which oversees the implementation of the Association Agreement between the two parties. The Council welcomed Georgia's progress in several areas such as respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, cooperation on migration, and implementation of the Free Trade Agreement. The Union regretted the growing political polarisation in Georgia and called for a rapid resolution of the political crisis. Concern was expressed about the deteriorating security situation, ethnic discrimination and freedom of movement in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and South Ossetia... [Read more](#)

Sanctions against China for serious infringements of Human Rights



The Council decided on 22 March to apply restrictive measures against four Chinese officials because of serious human rights violations in China. Several individuals and entities were sanctioned in North Korea, Libya, Chechnya, South Sudan and Eritrea. In retaliation, China decided to ban the entry into its territory of ten Europeans, including 5 MEPs and national MPs, as well as 4 entities, including the Political and Security Committee (PSC) of the Council and the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



The Foreign Ministers met on 22 March and decided to sanction eleven people responsible for the military coup in Burma on 1 February 2021. They also took stock of relations with Turkey, which will be on the agenda of the European Council. They discussed the partnership with the southern neighbours. They also adopted a new financial instrument in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy: the European Peace Facility... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Ban on hunting birds with glue



On 17 March, the Court of Justice prohibited Member States from using methods of capturing birds, such as glue hunting, if they are likely to cause more than negligible damage to the species concerned. It stressed that the traditional nature of a method of hunting is not in itself sufficient to establish that a satisfactory alternative cannot be found... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

2020 Report by the European Patent Office

Companies from European Patent Office (EPO) Member States filed 45% of patents registered in 2020, compared to 25% from the US and 7% from China. Germany

The Astra/Zeneca Vaccine is safe and additional doses of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines



The European Medicines Agency concluded on 18 March that AstraZeneca's vaccine is "safe and effective" and that its benefits continue to outweigh the risk of side effects. The Commission and BioNTech-Pfizer agreed on 16 March on an accelerated delivery of 10 million doses of the vaccine for the second quarter. This agreement needs to be validated by the Member States... [Read more](#)

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Denmark :

Dispatch of a frigate into the Gulf of Guinea



The Danish government announced on 16 March that it will send a frigate to the Gulf of Guinea in November to help fight piracy. Denmark, which has an exemption for the European Security and Defence Policy but is the world's fifth largest navy, wants to defend freedom of navigation... [Read more](#)

Finland :

World Happiness Report



Finland has topped the World Happiness Report's list of happiest countries for the fourth year in a row. It is ahead of another EU country, Denmark, followed by Switzerland, Iceland and Norway. Ireland is 16th, Germany 17th, France 21st, Spain 28th and Poland 48th... [Read more](#)

France :

26th Franco-Spanish Summit



On 15 March, as part of the 26th Franco-Spanish summit, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to Montauban. This meeting led to the signing of an agreement on the recognition of Franco-Spanish dual nationality. Two joint projects were announced: a joint cross-border strategy and the launch of consultations for a future bilateral cooperation treaty... [Read more](#)

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Greece :

Med5: meeting on immigration and asylum



The interior ministers of five countries (Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Italy and Malta) met on 19 and 20 March in Athens, in the presence of European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, to discuss "joint proposals" on the new European migration pact and "the mechanism for returning migrants" who have been refused asylum... [Read more](#)

Hungary :

FIDESZ leaves the EPP



FIDESZ, the party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban announced on 18 March that it was leaving the European People's Party (EPP), two weeks after having left the European People's Party group in the European Parliament, as it denounced the adoption of a reform of statutes that would have facilitated its expulsion... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

32 billion € support plan



On 19 March, the government adopted a €32 billion aid package. 11 billion will go to businesses and self-employed entrepreneurs, 1 billion will be allocated to a citizenship income for the most disadvantaged and 900 million will be spent on seasonal workers. The freeze on redundancies has been extended until the end of June, and partial unemployment until the end of the year for SMEs. Finally, €5 billion is being spent on health, including €2.8 billion to purchase vaccines and medicines and €200 million to launch vaccine production... [Read more](#)

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Creation of a Franco-Italian group for European space launchers



On 19 March, France and Italy decided to set up a joint high-level working group on the future of European space launchers and to develop a common strategic vision on the future of European launchers. The conclusions of this working group are expected in early September.

The two countries have also invited the European Space Agency (ESA), the European Commission and the Member States to engage in an in-depth joint reflection on the subject... [Read more](#)

UK :

New review of security and defence



On 16 March, the UK government published its Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review, which details its strategic priorities based on the idea of "Global Britain". It identifies China and Russia as threats and emphasises the fight against global warming. It plans to increase its nuclear arsenal and invest in science

and technology... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Declaration on women/men equality



On 17 March, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed the importance of equal pay and equal opportunities so that women can enjoy other rights that flow from them, such as civil and political rights, or economic and social rights. It noted that there has been progress but also many cases of non-compliance with the requirements of the European Social Charter... [Read more](#)

Request for inquiry into the refoulement of migrants from Cyprus



The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, called on 18 March on Cyprus to conduct independent and effective investigations into allegations that members of the Cypriot security forces illegally turned back migrants, including people who may be in need of international protection... [Read more](#)

Report on victims of trafficking in Denmark



In a report published on 17 March, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) urges Denmark to improve the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking and to allocate the necessary human and financial resources to assist them... [Read more](#)

Call for the respect of Human Rights by Poland



The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, called on the Polish Prime Minister on 16 March to respect European human rights standards. She expressed concern about the proposed tax on media advertising revenues, which could limit media content and thus undermine media pluralism and freedom. It is concerned about the draft law on the "protection of the freedom of expression of users of social networks", which has many loopholes and gives too broad a definition of "illegal content" and could hamper freedom of expression and the right to privacy... [Read more](#)

Withdrawal from the Convention of Istanbul by Turkey



The Council of Europe has "deeply regretted" Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, decided by a decree issued by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on 19 March. The Council notes that the convention is "widely supported in the country" and that the decision was taken without any parliamentary debate... [Read more](#)

Publication of two reports on justice and corruption in Turkey

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) published two reports on Turkey on 18 March. In the first one, it expresses its concerns about the lack of transparency in the legislative process and urges the authorities to adopt



stricter standards regarding conflicts of interest for parliamentarians. The lack of independence of the judiciary is also highlighted. In the second report, GRECO calls on Turkey to make more progress regarding the transparency of political party financing, as only one of the nine recommendations already issued has been implemented... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Trade surplus in January



According to Eurostat's first estimates published on 18 March, the EU's trade surplus was €8.4 billion in January 2021, compared with €2.2 billion in January 2020; the euro area's surplus was €6.3 billion in January, compared with €1.5 billion in January 2020... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Pritzker Price for Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal



French architects Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal were awarded the Pritzker Prize, the most prestigious award in this field, on 16 March. The jury rewarded their architecture which "gives priority to enriching the human view through the prism of generosity and freedom of use"... [Read more](#)

Concerts by the Luxembourg Philharmonic



The Philharmonic Orchestra of Luxembourg is offering several concerts between now and the end of April, including on 25 March the Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 5 "L'Égyptien" by Camille Saint-Saëns and the Symphony No. 3 "Rheinische" / "Rhénane" by Robert Schumann... [Read more](#)

Jules de Balincourt in Malaga



Until 30 March, the Malaga Contemporary Art Centre is presenting 'After The Gold Rush', an exhibition dedicated to the French painter Jules de Balincourt. The exhibition consists of 40 paintings of different sizes, inviting the viewer to reflect on his life experiences... [Read more](#)

Re-opening of the Moderna Museum



The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Malmö reopened on 16 March with the exhibition "Artist, Researcher, Medium", dedicated to the Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862-1944), which has been extended until 11 April... [Read more](#)

Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker in Riehen



Until 28 March, the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen is hosting an original creation by the choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker in connection with an exhibition of sculptures by Auguste Rodin and Hans Arp. The contemporary choreography contrasts with the worlds of the two sculptors and echoes the exploration of the body's capacity for abstraction... [Read more](#)

Biennial Liverpool



The Liverpool Biennial began this spring under the title "The Stomach and the Port" and features contemporary artists from over 30 countries. Until 6 June, exhibitions are being held in parks, libraries, historic sites and art halls around the city of Liverpool. Online events are also planned... [Read more](#)

Hockney's Normandy



David Hockney's "My Normandy" exhibition at the Lelong & Co. gallery is now available online. It is possible to walk virtually through the room and admire paintings inspired by the region in which the American painter settled... [Read more](#)

Virtual visit of the amber museum in Gdansk



The Gdansk Amber Museum offers a unique virtual collection of natural ambers and art objects made from this plant resin. The most valuable objects in the collection come from the "golden period" of Gdansk's development, when the city was one of the most important centres of amber crafts and trade... [Read more](#)

Napoleon's Bicentenary :

Family Biography



Patricia Tyson Stroud revisits the "American exile" of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, in *The Man Who Was King*. Glenn J. Lamar discusses the war years of another brother, Jerome, and Kate Williams looks at Josephine's "dangerous life"... [Read more](#)

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Agenda :



23 March 2021
Videoconference
Meeting of European Affairs Ministers



23-24 March 2021
Brussels
Meeting of NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers



24 March 2021
Brussels
Tripartite Social Summit



24-25 March 2021
Brussels
Plenary session of the European Parliament



25-26 February 2021
Videoconference
European Council



26 March 2021
Videoconference
Euro Zone Summit

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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

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Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

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