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Sanctions, privileged instrument of European Foreign Policy

Author: Ramona Bloj



More moderate than an embargo, less dangerous than military retaliation, sanctions are increasingly part of the EU's foreign policy toolbox. They also allow the EU-27 to find a common strategic interest.

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Elections :

President Anastasiades' DISY wins the parliamentary elections in Cyprus



The Democratic Rally (DISY) of President Nicos Anastasiades came out on top in the legislative elections in Cyprus on 30 May, with 27.77% of the vote and 17 seats. The DISY obtained the lowest result in its history and failed to obtain an absolute majority, forcing the Head of State to form a minority government again. The Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL) remains the largest opposition party, with 22.34% of the vote and 15 elected members, despite the lowest result ever. Turnout was 65.72%, but the results express voter dissatisfaction with the traditional parties... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

The Permanent Atlas of the European Union is available



The new edition of the Permanent Atlas of the European Union has been published by Marie B. This book reflects the latest political and economic changes in the European Union and its Member States. With more than 50 maps, texts and thematic sheets, the Atlas summarises the Union's history and political and statistical realities. It is available in hard copy in French in bookshops and on our website. The digital version is available in French and English... [Read more](#)

Map of Health Measures and Travel Conditions in Europe



European countries continue to phase out health measures. On 27 May, the French Parliament adopted the bill on the end of the state of health emergency, which introduces a health certificate from 9 June for large gatherings. On 26 May, the Austrian Parliament adopted the introduction of a certificate allowing access to restaurants, hotels and cultural venues. In Croatia, since 28 May, restaurants can serve indoors and gatherings of more than 100 people are allowed outdoors. In Sweden, the plan to ease the measures starts on 1 June with some gatherings allowed. To follow the development of the situation, the Foundation offers you a complete map of the sanitary measures in place and the 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

While the democratic movement in Belarus continues despite the repression, the Commission presented on 28 May a €3 billion support plan that will be activated as soon as a democratic transition is underway. In response to the hijacking of a plane on 23 May and the arrest of a journalist who was on board, the EU is also preparing new economic and sectoral sanctions. To follow the crisis since the rigged presidential election of August 2020, the Foundation offers you a timeline of events and links to European responses and initiatives... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Extraordinary European Council



Meeting in Brussels on 24-25 May, EU leaders decided on new sanctions against Belarus, in response to the hijacking of a plane and the arrest of a journalist and his companion who were on board. They held a strategic debate on Russia and condemned "illegal, provocative and destabilising Russian activities" towards the European Union. They took stock of the implementation of the agreements with the UK and called on the UK government to respect them. They asked the Commission for a thorough review of the environmental, economic and social impacts of the climate law at Member State level... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Guidelines for combating disinformation



On 26 May, the Commission published its proposals to strengthen the code of practice against disinformation. It recommends stronger commitments from signatories, as well as a wider involvement of online advertising and private messaging services. It recommends a reduction in financial incentives for disinformation and the establishment of a transparency centre, which indicates the policies adopted to implement the code of practice... [Read more](#)

New recommendations regarding travel in the Union



On 31 May, the Commission presented its new recommendations on the coordination of free movement in the EU. It proposes a gradual easing of restrictions, in particular for holders of the European certificate who are vaccinated, have a certificate of immunity to Covid-19 or a negative PCR or antigenic test. The Commission also proposes to adapt the thresholds of the colour-coded card published by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in line with the epidemiological situation and progress in vaccination... [Read more](#)

SURE: disbursement of 14.1 billion € to 12 Member States



On 25 May, the Commission disbursed €14.1 billion to 12 Member States under the seventh tranche of financial support under the SURE instrument. The loans will be used to help Member States finance their economic and employment support measures in response to the pandemic. Bulgaria and Estonia will receive funding under SURE for the first time. So far, €94.3 billion of the €100 billion programme has been disbursed... [Read more](#)

Economic Support Plan for a future Democratic Belarus



On 28 May, the Commission presented an economic support package for a "future democratic Belarus", worth up to €3 billion, which will be available for implementation once a political transition is underway in the country. The package will comprise a combination of grants and loans mobilising public and private investment to help Belarus stabilise and develop its economy and democratise its institutions... [Read more](#)

Council :

Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers



Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers met on 26-27 May to discuss CAP reform, the UN Food Systems Summit in September, consultations with the UK on fishing opportunities after Brexit, and the WTO fisheries negotiations... [Read more](#)

Meeting of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness



On 27 and 28 May, the ministers responsible for competitiveness discussed Europe's industrial strategy, the future of the tourism sector, the functioning of the single market and the future of research and innovation in the Union. They reached an agreement on the financing of the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC). They discussed the regulation of platforms through the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). On this occasion, France, Germany and the Netherlands presented their proposals to amend the Commission's proposal on the DMA... [Read more](#)

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Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers



At an informal meeting in Lisbon on 28 May, defence ministers discussed considerations regarding the Union's strategic compass, relations with NATO, the partnership with Africa for peace and security, as well as the European military mission in Mozambique, which should be formally approved in June to train Mozambican special forces to contain violence in the Cabo Delgado region... [Read more](#)

Ratification of the own resources decision



The Council announced on 31 May that all Member States have notified it of the ratification of the Own Resources Decision, allowing the EU to make available the €672.5 billion in funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. As a first step, the Commission will start borrowing on the capital markets... [Read more](#)

CAP negotiations to continue in June



Negotiations between the Council and the Parliament on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy under the new multi-annual budget failed to reach an agreement after three days of talks from 25 to 27 May. The Parliament's negotiator, Norbert Lins, called on Member States to be more flexible so as to achieve a "greener, fairer and more forward-looking" agriculture. Portuguese Agriculture Minister Maria do Ceu Antunes, acting on behalf of the Council, expressed her determination to reach an agreement in June to "strengthen the European agri-food system"... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

EU-Japan Summit



The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshihide Suga, met on 27 May at the 27th EU-Japan Summit. They discussed the fight against Covid-19, the digital transition, economic and trade relations, industrial cooperation in research, innovation and the space sector, as well as foreign and security policy. They underlined their wish to work closely together in the framework of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement and the Strategic Partnership Agreement. They announced the signing of a Green Alliance which aims to increase their cooperation in the fight against global warming and the promotion of a green economy... [Read more](#)

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Investment negotiations with Angola



On 26 May, the Council launched negotiations for an investment facilitation agreement with Angola. The aim is to promote sustainable and responsible investment. This is the first agreement negotiated by the EU in connection with the ongoing discussions at the World Trade Organisation on facilitating investment for development... [Read more](#)

Extension of sanctions against the regime in Syria



The Council extended EU sanctions against the Syrian regime for another year on 27 May. 283 individuals are subject to an asset freeze and travel ban, and 70 entities to an asset freeze, because of their role in the "continued repression" of the civilian population in the country. The restrictions also include an oil import ban, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze on Central Bank of Syria assets held in the EU, and restrictions on the export of equipment and technology that could be used for internal repression... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Rejection of procedure against Airbus and Thalès



On 26 May, the European Court of First Instance rejected an application by the German company OHB System to suspend the Commission's award of a contract to Airbus and Thales Alenia Space for 12 satellites of the next generation of the Galileo system. OHB had requested the suspension of the contract on the grounds that Airbus and Thales Alenia had information from a former OHB employee. The judges found that the contract was in the public interest and that OHB lacked objective evidence... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Report on gender equality



In a report published on 26 May, the European Court of Auditors believes that the gender dimension should be better integrated into the policy-making and implementation of the EU budget. The Commission has made limited use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-related indicators. It stresses that it is not enough to fund gender equality initiatives, and that it would be necessary to understand the impact of budgetary and policy decisions on gender equality objectives and to use this information to offset inequalities... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Use of BioNtech/Pfizer vaccination with children aged 12 to 15 years



The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended extending the use of BioNtech/Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine to children aged 12-15 years... [Read more](#)

The European Public Prosecutor's Office will start its activities on 1 June



The Commission confirmed on 26 May that the European Public Prosecutor's Office will be able to start its activities as of 1 June. The aim of the Prosecutor's Office is to conduct criminal investigations and prosecutions in order to protect the Union's budget and prevent fraud and corruption. It is the first independent office and the first supranational prosecutor's office in the EU. It will be able to investigate any illegal activity such as participation in a criminal organisation or money laundering. In a contribution to the Schuman Report on the State of the Union 2020, the head of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, Laura Codruta Kövesi, explained its mission... [Read more](#)

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Croatia :

Purchase of 12 Rafale planes



Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic formalised on 28 May the order for 12 Rafale fighter jets built by the French group Dassault Aviation to modernise the Croatian air force. The €999 million contract is for used aircraft, which will be delivered in 2024 and 2025... [Read more](#)

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France :

Franco-German Ministers' Council



The 22nd Franco-German Council of Ministers took stock of Franco-German cooperation on 31 May and launched new cooperation in the fields of health, culture and youth. A discussion on technology took place with the aim of strengthening the resilience of the medical and pharmaceutical industry... [Read more](#)

Slovenia :

Resignation of the Justice Minister



Slovenian Justice Minister Lilijana Kozlovic resigned on 27 May in protest at her government's decision to cancel the appointment process of two Slovenian prosecutors to the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). The government rejected the two previous candidates, who have in the past investigated allegations of bribery in connection with Prime Minister Janez Jansa. The head of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, Laura Kövesi, deplored the "manifest lack of sincere cooperation from the Slovenian authorities" and said this "seriously undermines confidence in the effective functioning of the management and control systems for EU funds in Slovenia"... [Read more](#)

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Norway :

Nordlink, the huge cable that will help Germany decarbonise its energy mix



A 623-kilometre long cable, Nordlink, was inaugurated on 27 May by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg. It will allow Germany's surplus wind power to be exchanged for some of Norway's hydro power, a way to facilitate the energy transition... [Read more](#)

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Switzerland :

End of negotiations regarding a framework agreement with the European Union



The Swiss Federal Council decided on 26 May to end negotiations with the European Commission on a framework agreement between Switzerland and the European Union. This agreement, which has been in the pipeline since 2010, was to serve as a basis for developing and modernising their trade relations. The Federal Council considers that the conditions for an agreement have not been met for three reasons: state aid, accompanying measures and the directive on the rights of EU citizens. Mitigating measures will be put in place to limit the negative consequences of the absence of an agreement. The Commission regretted this decision and announced that in the absence of a framework agreement, mutual recognition of medicinal products between the EU and Switzerland could no longer apply as of 26 May... [Read more](#)

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OECD :

The economic outlook is brightening, but recovery is uneven



On 31 May, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its new forecasts and expects economic growth to reach 5.8% in 2021 after a contraction of 3.5% in 2020. "Global economic activity has now returned to its pre-pandemic level, but will remain below pre-crisis projections at the end of 2022," the organisation warns... [Read more](#)

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Mathias Cormann takes office as OECD Secretary-General



After 15 years at the helm of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Mexico's Angel Gurría will hand over the reins on 1 June to his successor, Australian Mathias Cormann... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Condemnation of the UK and Sweden for the mass surveillance of communications



The European Court of Human Rights condemned the UK and Sweden on 25 May for failing to ensure "end-to-end" respect for human rights in mass surveillance of communications. It underlined the fact that systems of mass intelligence gathering by States are not in themselves contrary to Article 8 of the Convention. However, the measures must provide safeguards on privacy, must be necessary and their proportionality must be

"assessed at every stage of the process" by independent supervision and review...
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Council of Europe :

Report on the fight to counter laundering and financial terrorism



MONEYVAL, the Council of Europe's monitoring body, published three reports on 25, 26 and 27 May on the monitoring of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism in Hungary, Malta and Albania. MONEYVAL finds no significant improvement in the fight against money laundering in Albania, but notes progress in Malta and Hungary. Malta and Hungary remain under the enhanced monitoring procedure and will have to report on their progress in two years, while Albania remains under the enhanced monitoring procedure and will have to report annually... [Read more](#)

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Eurobarometer :

Survey of Europeans and the Euro



According to a Eurobarometer survey published on 27 May, 80% of Europeans believe that the euro is beneficial for the Union and 70% consider it beneficial for their country. A large majority of those questioned believe that the 1 and 2 cent coins are not useful, and 76% are in favour of abolishing these by obligatorily rounding up or down the total amount of transactions to the nearest 5 cents... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Dance Biennale in Lyon



From 1 to 16 June, the 19th edition of the Lyon Dance Biennial will be held. The event brings together young and experienced artists from the international contemporary scene, from 21 countries in Europe and Africa. For the first time, the festival is offering a new online event: the Fagor experience, a series of artistic performances and video installations... [Read more](#)

Botticelli in the Trento



The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Trento and Rovereto (MART) is devoting an exhibition to Sandro Botticelli until 29 August. The first section of the exhibition presents masterpieces on loan from other Italian museums. The second part shows, through works from the 1960s to the present day, the extent to which the painter remains a source of inspiration... [Read more](#)

Facing Arcimboldo



Until 22 November, the Centre Pompidou-Metz is hosting the exhibition "Face à Arcimboldo" which includes 250 works by 100 artists inspired by the 16th century Italian artist... [Read more](#)

Ancient Egypt in Berlin



Until 12 September, the James Simon Gallery on Berlin's Museum Island is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Akhmim, one of the most important religious, political and cultural centres of ancient Egypt. The exhibition presents a series of archaeological finds from extensive necropolises and tombs dating back six millennia... [Read more](#)

The life of Simone Veil in Paris



Until 21 August, the Hôtel de Ville in Paris is hosting "Nous vous aimons, Madame", an exhibition devoted to Simone Veil. 500 archival documents and photographs retrace the personal and political life of this personality who was the first President of the European Parliament elected by universal suffrage... [Read more](#)

Moroccan Trilogy in Madrid



The Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid is highlighting the artistic production of Morocco in the exhibition "Moroccan Trilogy 1950-2020", open until

27 September, with a special focus on three urban centres: Tetouan, Casablanca and Tangiers... [Read more](#)

Alice at the Victoria & Albert



Until 31 December, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London is offering an immersive and theatrical exhibition on Alice in Wonderland, and the changing representations of the characters created by Lewis Carroll... [Read more](#)

Napoleon's Bicentenary :

Exhibition at La Villette



Until 19 December, the Grande Halle de La Villette in Paris is hosting the "Napoleon" exhibition, which features more than 150 original pieces, masterpieces created under the Empire, exceptional objects that belonged to the emperor and contemporary creations... [Read more](#)

Meeting Napoleon 1st



The Château de Fontainebleau presents "Encountering Napoleon I", an opportunity to explore the daily life of the emperor and to see how he left his mark on the former residence of kings. The exhibition offers visitors the opportunity to view over 700 works related to his life: portraits, busts, swords and bicorns... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



3 June 2021
Luxembourg
Transport Council



4 June 2021
Luxembourg
Telecommunications Council
Videoconference
EU-Kirghizistan Cooperation Council



4-5 June 2021
London
Meeting of G7 Finance Ministers



7 June 2021
Luxembourg
Justice Council

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Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;
Mathieu Moiroud, Anne-Célia Cordier,
Arthur Allier, Eléonore de Saint Sernin, Martin Muller,
Jean-Toussaint Battestini, Alejandra Butcher

Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice

Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

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Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

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