

The European Union in 2017: key events

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January

1 January: Malta takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) from Slovakia. Its programme prioritises migration, security, social inclusion, the Single Market, as well as the EU's maritime and neighbourhood policies.

5 January: evaluation of the European Social Fund (ESF). The European Commission publishes an evaluation report of investments under the European Social Fund (ESF) over the period 2007-2013, as well as specific reports for each Member State, IP-16-3984.

10 January: single market/services. As part of the roadmap laid out in the Single Market strategy, the European Commission presents proposals to 'unleash the full potential of the Single Market and make it the launchpad for European companies to thrive in the global economy', IP-17-23.

10 January: citizens' initiative/ban on glyphosate. The European Commission decides to register a European citizens' initiative (ECI) inviting it 'to propose to Member States a ban on glyphosate, to reform the pesticide approval procedure and to set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use, IP-17-28.

10 January: health and safety of workers. Within its work to establish a European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), the European Commission proposes a review of EU occupational health and safety legislation, proposing changes to the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive. The Communication is also linked to the general evaluation of the existing 'acquis', as part of the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT), IP-17-2.

12 January: foreign direct investment. According to figures published by Eurostat, the EU is still a net investor in the rest of the world, with a balance of 1,000 billion euros. Net foreign investment stocks held by the EU in the rest of the world amounted to 6,894 billion euros at the end of 2015, while those held by the rest of the world in the EU amounted to 5,842 billion euros. 6/2017. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7788281/2-12012017-BP-EN.pdf/684f355f-8fa6-4e75-9353-0505fa27f54f>

17 January: EU financing. Mario Monti presents the report from the high-level group on own resources to the College of European Commissioners, meeting in Strasbourg. The report calls for an ‘overhaul’ of the European budget, particularly giving ‘Europe’ new own resources so that it is no longer dependent on direct contributions from the Member States. <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/hlgor/library/reports-communication/hlgor-press-release-20170113.pdf>

17 January: Brexit. UK Prime Minister Theresa May sets out the UK’s plans for leaving the EU, seven months after the Brexit referendum of 23 June 2016. The 12-point plan is for a ‘hard Brexit’. According to Theresa May, the UK is not seeking ‘partial membership of the European Union, associate membership of the European Union, or anything that leaves us half-in, half-out’. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-38641208>

17 January: presidency of the European Parliament. The Members of the European Parliament elect Antonio Tajani (EPP, IT) to the position of President of the European Parliament, with 351 votes, defeating Gianni Pittella (S&D, IT) with 282.

18 January: Davos World Economic Forum. According to Italian Minister of Finance Pier Carlo Padoan, ‘Le problème de l’Europe c’est l’Euro’. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2017/01/18/97002-20170118FILWWW00196-le-probleme-de-l-europe-c-est-l-euro-italie.php>

19 January: European Parliament/Pillar of Social Rights. The European Parliament adopts a non-legislative resolution on a European Pillar of Social Rights. The resolution is adopted with 396 votes in favour, 180 against and 68 abstentions. <https://bit.ly/2ID2bpg>

23 January: towards a European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Commission organises a high-level conference to set out in detail its future proposals. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

24 January: European citizenship. The European Commission publishes its third EU Citizenship report. This report emphasises four areas for action: 1) promoting EU citizenship rights and EU common values; 2) promoting and increasing citizens’ participation in the democratic life of the EU; 3) simplifying EU citizens’ daily lives; 4) strengthening security and promoting equality, IP-17-118.

27 January: European Semester/growth prospects. The Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Council adopts conclusions on the annual growth survey and the alert mechanism report, the starting point for the annual macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure. It endorses a draft recommendation on economic policy for the eurozone. This recommendation covers fiscal policy, competitiveness and productivity, labour market and social issues, EU banking union and the further development of economic and monetary union (EMU). <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/st-5194-2017-init/en/pdf>

February

3 February: informal summit on migration. The EU Heads of State and Government meet in Malta for an informal summit on the external dimension of migration. A more general discussion on the future of the Union, with a view to the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, is held between 27 Member States, not 28, since by the time this anniversary is celebrated, the UK should already have triggered the Article 50 procedure to leave the EU (see 29 March 2017).

3 February: European citizens' initiative/protection of national and linguistic minorities. The EU General Court annuls Commission decision C(2013) 5969 final, of 13 September 2013, refusing registration of the proposed European citizens' initiative, entitled 'Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe', T-646/13.

15 February: trade policy. The European Parliament approves the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), with 408 votes in favour, 254 votes against and 33 abstentions. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170209IPR61728/ceta-meps-back-eu-canada-trade-agreement>

22 February: European Semester/ 'winter package'. The European Commission publishes its annual analysis of the economic and social situation in the Member States, as well as a report on implementation of the fiscal compact. According to the Commission, the Member States are making progress in implementing the various political guidelines issued in 2016 on the 'virtuous triangle' (investment, structural reform and responsible public finances), IP-17-308. Communication and report on the fiscal compact: COM (2017) 1200 and COM (2017) 1201. https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/fiscal-compact-taking-stock_en

22 February: France/Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) between Canada and the EU and its Member States. In France, more than 150 elected politicians have brought a case to the Constitutional Court, asking it to verify whether the agreement is compatible with the French Constitution. The General Secretariat of the Constitutional Court registers the referral – which, to be registered, had to be submitted by at least 60 elected politicians. *Affaire 2017-749 DC*. <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/actualites/2017/instruction-de-l-affaire-2017-749-dc.148838.html>

March

1 March: the future of 'Europe'. The President of the European Commission presents his 'White paper on the future of Europe'. It sets out five possible scenarios, as a contribution to a summit to be held in Rome on 25 March, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, IP-17-385 and COM (2017) 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/white-paper-future-europe_en

9 March: non-standard monetary policy. The European Central Bank (ECB) announces a reduction in the amounts of its purchase programme. The ECB Governing Council ‘confirms that it will continue to make purchases under the Asset Purchase Programme (APP), at the current monthly pace of €80 billion until the end of this month’. From April 2017, the programme will continue at a monthly pace of €60 billion until the end of December 2017, or beyond if necessary, and at any case until the Governing Council sees a sustained adjustment in inflation consistent with its inflation aim. <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2017/html/pr170309.en.html>

9 March: European Council/Donald Tusk reappointed to a second 2.5-year term as President of the European Council. Re-election of the President of the European Council is an act separate from the European Council Conclusions (which must be adopted unanimously), and only requires 21 votes in favour. Donald Tusk obtained 27 out of 28 votes, with the Polish government opposing the decision.

10 March: preparation for marking the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. The European Council meets without the United Kingdom: the 27 insist on their resolve to strengthen mutual trust and to preserve political unity between them.

15 March: general election/Netherlands. The results of the parliamentary elections held in the Netherlands on 15 March 2017 reassure the European elite as to the ability of Dutch voters to resist the ‘populist’ temptation. The VVD party (liberal right-wing) of Prime Minister Mark Rutte is still the strongest political party in the country (with 21.3% of the votes, down on 2012). The PvdA, the Dutch Labour party, has its worst election result ever: down from 24.8% in 2012 to 5.7%. The rise of Geert Wilders’ PVV, the racist and xenophobic party calling for ‘Nexit’ (exit by the Netherlands from the EU) seemed to have peaked, with 13.1% of votes.

25 March: adoption of the Rome Declaration. The 27 EU leaders meet to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome. The ‘Rome Declaration’ recalls the EU’s past achievements, presents the challenges to come and contains an undertaking to work for unity among the 27 Member States, and to strengthen joint action in key areas. The Declaration envisages ‘a Union which, based on sustainable growth, promotes economic and social progress as well as cohesion and convergence, while upholding the integrity of the internal market’, Doc. 149/17. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration/pdf>

29 March: Brexit. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, notifies the European Council of the UK’s intention to leave the EU. Following the referendum of 23 June 2016, the triggering of Article 50 of the TEU launches the exit procedure for the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Letter to the President of The European Council, 29 March 2017. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604079/Prime_Ministers_letter_to_European_Council_President_Donald_Tusk.pdf

April

18 April: United Kingdom/general election called early. In a surprise move, and despite her promise not to hold an early election, Theresa May announces her decision to call a general election on 8 June 2017, with a view to strengthening her ‘hard Brexit’ position after the voting.

17-23 April: spring meeting of the international financial institutions in Washington. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank restate their worries concerning protectionist trends harmful to growth. Leaders of the world financial institutions again condemn protectionism and make a strong plea in favour of international trade, weakened by criticism from the Trump administration and by the impact of Brexit. On 18 April, the IMF publishes its growth forecasts for the world economy in 2017. FMI, *World Economic Outlook April 2017: Gaining Momentum?*, 17 April 2017.

26 April: the social dimension of Europe. The European Commission publishes a reflection document on the ‘social dimension of Europe by 2025’. The document is intended to mark the start of a reflection process with citizens, the social partners, the European institutions and governments, IP-17-1008 and COM (2017) 206.

26 April: European Pillar of Social Rights. One year after the launch of the consultation on the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’ (March 2016), the European Commission presents its proposals, in the form of 20 fundamental principles and one recommendation, as well as a proposal for joint proclamation of the Pillar by the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. According to the Commission, the principles place the focus on how to deliver on the promise in the Treaties of a ‘highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress’, MEMO 17-1004 and COM (2017) 0250.

26 April: work-life balance. On the same day, as part of the ‘Pillar package’, the European Commission presents a proposal for a directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. This proposal is intended to repeal and replace Council directive 2010/18/EU, COM (2017)253 final.

27 April: Structural Reform Support Programme. The European Commission welcomes the vote of the European Parliament, backing the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) set up by the Union to provide technical support to the Member States. The programme has a budget of 142.8 million euros for the period 2017-2020, and will not require co-financing from the Member States, IP 17/1122.

27 April: the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) wishes to ‘fix’ globalisation. An OECD report, published at the height of the French Presidential election campaign, is intended to ‘support national governments and the international policy dialogue to advance a fairer and more inclusive globalisation, to ensure that the benefits are more widely shared, and that the rules of the game are more ambitious, economically, socially and environmentally, and are also more enforceable’.

27 April: Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU)/social security. The CJEU hands down a judgment in favour of the German cruise ship company A-Rosa, which (via its Swiss branch) employed around 90 seasonal workers between 2005 and 2007, with a Swiss contract, on two ships sailing on French rivers. These employees were not therefore subject to the French social security system, pursuant to European Regulation 1408/71. The low-cost company Ryanair welcomed this judgment in a press release, stating that it plans to seek a full refund of €15 million from the French authorities. The judgment highlights the severe challenges involved in revising the Posting of Workers' Directive to combat social dumping and unfair competition between EU countries, and those of the European Economic Area, C-620/15.

29 April: Brexit. Guidelines from the EU27 European Council (Article 50), following the United Kingdom's notification under Article 50 TEU. EUCO XT 20004/17. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21763/29-euco-art50-guidelinesen.pdf>

May

3 May: Brexit. The European Commission transmits to the Council its Recommendation for a Council decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal from the European Union, COM (2017) 218.

7 May: France/presidential election. Emmanuel Macron is elected 25th President of the French Republic, with a majority of 66.1% of the votes, as against 33.9% for Marine Le Pen. Nevertheless, the election also sees a record level of abstentions (25.38% of those registered to vote), and a record number (4 million electors) turning up at the polling station but leaving their ballot papers blank or spoiled. Moreover, for the first time since 1969, turn-out for the second round (74.6%) is lower than for the first (77.8%). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/may/07/french-presidential-election-results-latest>

11 May: structural reform support programme. The Agriculture and Fisheries Council adopts, without discussion, the regulation establishing a structural reform support programme, with a budget of 142.8 million euros, OJ L 129 of 19 May 2017.

16 May: trade policy/opinion of the CJEU. Following the Commission's request for an opinion on the free trade agreement between the EU and Singapore, the Advocate General of the Court, on 21 December 2016, had ruled that some parts of the agreement do not fall under the sole competence of the Union, and should be ratified by all national parliaments. In its opinion, the CJEU finds that the agreement in question is a mixed agreement, requiring ratification by national parliaments in respect of the areas not falling under the exclusive competence of the Member States, i.e. non-direct foreign investment and dispute settlement between investors and States. In this opinion, the Court considerably extends the areas falling under the sole competence of the EU, contrary to the Advocate General's conclusions of 21 December 2016. The December

conclusions had included provisions setting basic labour and environmental standards among those forming part of a mixed agreement, since, in her view, they were elements of social or of environmental policy, Opinion 2/15.

22 May: Brexit. The European Council authorises the opening of Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom and appoints the Commission to negotiate on behalf of the Union. The European Commission welcomes the adoption of the first set of negotiating directives, giving it the political and legal mandate it requires to negotiate with the United Kingdom on behalf of the EU-27.

22 May: European Semester. The European Commission presents its Country-specific Recommendations for 2017, setting out its economic policy guidance to the Member States for the next 12-18 months. Particular attention is paid to the priorities of and challenges facing the eurozone, IP-17-1311.

24 May: EU/US summit. At a summit organised in Brussels, the EU leaders and the President of the United States, Donald Trump, discuss foreign policy, security, tackling climate change and trade relations.

31 May: European Commission/deepening of the EMU. The Commission sets out possible ways forward for deepening Europe's Economic and Monetary Union. This document, taking due account of the discussions underway in the Member States and of the opinion of the other EU institutions, describes specific measures which could be taken up to the 2019 European elections, as well as a series of options for the years after that, once the EMU structure is completed, IP-17-2401. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-paper-emu_en.pdf

June

14 June: Relocation of asylum seekers. The European Commission announces the launching of infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary due to their refusal to participate in the relocation programme decided on in September 2015, for the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers who entered the EU through Italy and Greece, IP-17-1607.

15 June: Greece/EU. The Eurogroup releases another tranche of financial assistance for Greece. After the Greek Parliament adopted new austerity measures in May, the Eurogroup, meeting in Luxembourg, approves the release of an €8.5 billion tranche of the loan to Greece. This should, particularly, enable Athens to make the scheduled repayments to the European Central Bank (ECB) by the due date in July. The Eurozone ministers also undertake to consider debt relief measures to reduce the Greek public debt – 320 billion euros – with a view to applying this assistance plan, should the debt turn out to be 'unsustainable'.

15-16 June: recommendations on the national reform programmes (NRPs). The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council adopts the employment and social policy aspects of the draft recommendations on the 2017 national reform programmes (NRPs) of each Member State, for the European Council meeting on 22 and 23 June. According to the press release, the overall objective of the 2017-2018 recommendations is to ‘deliver more jobs and faster growth, whilst taking better account of social fairness.’ This year, ‘special emphasis was put on the recognition of the crucial role of the social partners, notably in collective bargaining, in line with national practices’, Doc. 10376/17.

16 June: Death of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, declares that ‘Helmut Kohl was not only the architect of German unity. He contributed fundamentally – more than others – to reconciling European history and European geography’.

19 June: Brexit. Launch of the first round of Article 50 negotiations between the European Commission and the United Kingdom.

28 June: an EU budget fit for tomorrow. The Commission opens the debate on the post-2020 multiannual financial framework. The issues raised in this fifth and final document in the series on the future of the EU are at the core of the discussion launched on 1 March with the Commission’s White Paper on the Future of Europe. This reflection document sets out the possible budgetary consequences of the choices we could make, IP-17-1795.

July

1 July: Estonia takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from Malta. The Presidency motto is ‘unity though balance’, and its four priorities are: an open and innovative European economy, a safe and secure Europe, a digital Europe and the free movement of data, and an inclusive and sustainable Europe.
<https://www.eu2017.ee/priorities-estonian-presidency>

4 July: trade policy/Commission registers the citizens’ initiative to repeal the TTIP negotiating mandate. The European Commission decides to proceed with registration of a European citizens’ initiative (ECI) inviting it ‘to recommend to the Council to repeal the negotiating mandate for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)’, and ‘not to conclude the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)’ (‘Stop TTIP’ initiative). The formal registration of this initiative, on 10 July 2017, will start a one year-process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. This registration follows the annulment by the EU General Court, on 10 May 2017, of the Commission’s initial decision to refuse to register the ‘Stop TTIP’ initiative’, IP-17-1872.

6 July: external trade/ EU/Japan relations. European and Japanese leaders announce the reaching of political agreement on the Japan-EU Free Trade Agreement (JEFTA). According to the Commission, this will be the most important bilateral trade agreement

ever concluded by the EU, and the first to include a specific commitment to the Paris climate agreement, IP-17-1902.

7/8 July: the G20 leaders meet in Hamburg. The theme of this year's summit is 'Shaping an interconnected world'. The G20 also adopts an action plan to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation. In the margins of the G20, the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announce the date of provisional application of the CETA treaty, i.e. application of all its provisions except for the controversial investor-State dispute settlement mechanism: 21 September 2017. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2017/07/07-08/>

11 July: economy/euro. The Council adopts an action plan to resolve the problem of non-performing loans (NPL) in the banking sector. The ministers also adopted conclusions on the European Commission review of the EU capital markets union action plan.

11 July: economy/regional development. The group of independent cohesion policy experts, chaired by Siim Kallas, the former European Commission Vice-President (2004-2014), presents its report on a simplified EU funds framework after 2020, IP-17-1921.

11 July: EU/Ukraine association agreement. The EU announces the definitive adoption of the association agreement signed in March 2014 with Ukraine, which will enter into force on 1 September 2017. In April 2016, the law authorising ratification of the agreement was rejected by Dutch voters in a referendum. In December 2016, The Hague obtained assurances from its European partners that the agreement would not grant Ukrainian workers freedom of establishment in the EU, would not guarantee military or financial assistance to Kyiv, nor would it automatically give Ukraine the status of candidate country for EU membership. In May, the Dutch parliament ratified the agreement.

12/13 July: enlargement, external relations and trade. Meeting in Kyiv, European and Ukrainian leaders celebrate the ratification of the association agreement and the recent entry into force of the visa exemption for Ukrainians travelling in the EU.

13 July: budgetary rules/transposition of Directive 2011/85/EU. The European Commission decides to refer Slovenia to the Court of Justice for failing to fully notify its measures to transpose Directive 2011/85/EU, which sets requirements for Member States' budgets. It is the only directive in the 'Six-Pack', as the other five measures are regulations, directly applicable in the Member States, IP-17-1956.

13 July: posting of workers/infringement proceedings against Croatia. The European Commission refers Croatia to the CJEU for failing to notify national measures transposing EU rules to enforce the Posting of Workers Directive (Directive 2014/67/EU), (also known as the 'enforcement directive'), almost one year after its transposition deadline, IP-17-1947.

17 July: employment and social rights. The Commission publishes the 2017 edition of its annual review 'Employment and Social Developments in Europe' – ESDE. The 2017 review shows positive trends but highlights the heavy burden on the young, IP-17-1988.

18 July: globalisation/regional development. According to the European Commission, globalisation has brought enormous benefits to the less-developed economies of the world, and many opportunities for Europeans. Nevertheless, while the benefits are widely spread, the costs are often borne unevenly, as is highlighted in the Commission's reflection paper on harnessing globalisation, IP-17-1995 and COM (2017) 376.

25 July: consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Eurozone policies. According to the IMF, 'Euro area recovery has strengthened over the last year, bringing with it more jobs and opportunities'. On institutional matters, the IMF states that 'developing a central fiscal capacity for the Euro area would help struggling economies cope with shocks when their own budgets are stretched. This could also go hand in hand with a reform of the fiscal framework to simplify the rules and make enforcement more automatic'. <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/07/25/pr17297-imf-executive-board-concludes-2017-article-iv-consultation-on-euro-area-policies>

26 July: rule of law/Poland. In its recommendation on the rule of law addressed to the Polish authorities, the European Commission considers that 'the planned reform of the judiciary in Poland amplifies the systemic threat to the rule of law in Poland already identified in the rule of law procedure started by the Commission in January 2016 [...]'. The Commission calls on the Polish authorities to address these problems within one month. It also asks them not to take any measure to dismiss or force the retirement of Supreme Court judges. If such a measure is taken, the Commission stands ready to immediately trigger the Article 7(1) procedure – a formal warning by the EU that can be issued by four fifths of the Member States in the Council of Ministers, IP-17-2161.

26 July: EU/Canada. CJEU declares that the agreement on air passenger data may not be concluded in its present form. The Court, in an opinion requested by the European Parliament, gives a negative opinion on the agreement signed in June 2014 between the EU and Canada, concerning the transfer of passenger name record data, with a view to tackling terrorism and transnational crime. The Court is of the opinion that these procedures 'entail an interference with the fundamental right to respect for private life', Opinion 1/15.

31 July: compatibility of CETA with the French Constitution. The French Constitutional Court finds that the CETA is compatible with the French Constitution. A large part of the agreement 'falls under the exclusive competence of the EU', and 'does not imply a revision of the Constitution'. Although it still needs to be ratified by the 38 national and regional parliaments of the Member States to enter fully into force, the Constitutional Council does not oppose partial application of the CETA as of 21 September 2017. However, it considers that the agreement is not 'irrevocable' and that the provisional application may be interrupted if a party is unable to ratify it. Decision No.2017-749 DC.

August

9 August: back to recovery after the crisis. Ten years after the start of the world financial crisis, the European Commission considers that a recovery is taking place ‘thanks to decisive EU action’. This action, according to the Commission, has made it possible to ‘address the shortcomings of the initial set-up of the Economic and Monetary Union’, IP-17-2401.

31 August: Unemployment/statistics. In July, the unemployment rate is 9.1% in the eurozone and 7.7% in the EU28.

September

6 September: CJEU judgment/migrant relocation plan. The Court finds that Hungary and Slovakia, which brought the actions, must not refuse to apply the plan, adopted by the European Commission in 2015, to relocate 120,000 migrants arriving in Italy and Greece. This plan, to be implemented over two years, has resulted in the relocation of fewer than 28,000 migrants. The migration agreement concluded with Turkey in March 2016 has stemmed the influx of migrants, and there have been fewer applications for relocation than expected, Joined cases C-643/15 and C-647/15.

6 September: Spain/Catalan independence. After a tumultuous debate, the Catalan parliament adopts a law authorising the organisation of a referendum, on 1 October, on independence for the region. Supporters of independence argue that Catalonia, which has its own language and culture, is a ‘nation’, rather than a ‘nationality’, as stated in the 1978 Spanish Constitution. They also condemn the fact that the ‘Estatut’, the autonomy agreement concluded in 2006 between Madrid and Barcelona, was ‘struck down’ four years later by the Spanish Constitutional Court.

13 September: European Commission/State of the Union address. The European Commission President, in an address to the European Parliament, describes how the EU could evolve between now and 2025. The top priorities are continued deployment of EU trade policy, strengthening the competitiveness of European industry, the fight against climate change, better protection of citizens in the digital age, and more effective management of the external borders and of migratory flows.

14 September: state of the Union 2017/‘trade package’. The European Commission unveils initiatives for a ‘balanced and progressive’ trade policy, IP-17-3182.

21 September: provisional entry into force of the CETA. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada enters into force provisionally: it will only enter into force fully and definitively once it has been ratified by all EU Member States.

23 September: federal elections in Germany. Following the federal elections, the German authorities claim that the real victors are the voters themselves, due to the rise

in turn-out (76.2%, five percentage points higher than in 2013, when the abstention rate reached nearly 30%). The alliance between Angela Merkel's CDU and its Bavarian coalition partner, the CSU, wins the elections with 33% of the votes, the SPD has its worst election result ever with 20.5%, and AfD ('Alternative for Germany', a Eurosceptic political party) sees a historic surge in support and becomes the third strongest political force in the country, with more than 12.6% of the votes. http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/06__Foreign__Policy__State/02__Foreign__Policy/00/Elections2017.html

27 September: asylum and migration/security and defence. The European Commission proposes to update the Schengen borders code, to adapt the rules for the reintroduction of temporary internal border controls to the need to respond to evolving and persistent serious threats to public policy or internal security, IP-17-3407 and COM (2017) 570.

October

1 October: Spain/self-determination referendum in Catalonia. The self-determination referendum takes place in an atmosphere of considerable tension, and results in a victory for the 'yes' vote, with 90.18% of the votes cast, and 7.83% voting 'no'. Turn-out is 2.3 million voters, i.e. around 43% of those registered, according to the Generalitat (Catalonian Government). Almost 850 people are injured by the law enforcement authorities, according to the report from the regional government.

2 October: Spain/self-determination referendum in Catalonia. Carles Puigdemont calls for international mediation, suggesting the EU. Brussels is of the view that this is an internal Spanish issue and should be dealt with in line with the Spanish constitutional order.

4 October: moves towards incorporating the Treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG or the 'Fiscal Compact'), into Union law. The European Commission Vice-President, Valdis Dombrovskis, speaking at the European Parliament, supports the incorporation of the ESM and TSCG treaties into Union law. He believes that 'their incorporation into Union law would bring greater democratic accountability and legitimacy across the Union'. <https://bit.ly/2kkz81b>

5 October: employment/social situation. According to the Autumn 2017 ESDE Quarterly Review on Employment and Social Developments in Europe, 'the EU remains on a firm path towards more employment and growth', IP-17-3664.

10 October: Spain/self-determination referendum in Catalonia. Speaking before the Catalan Parliament, Carles Puigdemont declares the region's right to become an independent State, while suspending implementation of the process to allow for dialogue with Madrid: 'I assume', he says, 'the mandate of the people for Catalonia to become an independent State in the form of a Republic'. 'We propose to suspend

the effect of the independence declaration in order to begin discussions and reach a negotiated solution’.

16 October: Eurostat/poverty. The EU statistics office highlights a downward trend in the percentage of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. In 2016, 117.5 million people, i.e. 23.4 % of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. Such a reduction is one of the key targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, STAT-17-3963.

18 October: Tripartite social summit. The main theme of this meeting of the tripartite social summit for growth and employment was ‘Shaping Europe’s future: strengthening resilience and promoting economic and social progress for all’. According to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, ‘Today, we discussed how the social partners can be better involved in national policy-making. I remain convinced that only by taking their views into account can we make real progress. This is especially important in today’s digital age, where citizens, young and old, need to be equipped with the right skills to prosper’. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/10/18/>

19/20 October: European Council. The European leaders agree to consolidate the current strategy for controlling migration. They also declare that they are ‘ready to do what it takes for Europe to go digital’. On 20 October, they endorse the leaders’ Programme and agree to make the necessary internal preparations for the second phase of the Brexit talks. European Council Conclusions (Article 50), EUCO XT 2001 4 /17. <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/XT-20014-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

21 October: Spain/self-determination referendum in Catalonia. Following an extraordinary ministerial council meeting in Madrid, the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, under Article 155 of the Constitution, announces that the regional government will be stripped of its powers and the Catalan parliament dissolved. He also supports the holding, as soon as possible, of early regional elections. Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. <https://www.boe.es/legislacion/documentos/ConstitucionINGLES.pdf>

23 October: agreement on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive. The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council reaches agreement on the revision of the December 1996 Posting of Workers Directive. The new proposal limits the posting to 12 months, which can be extended by a further 6 months. It sets a principle of equal pay for the same job at the same place – whereas, in the 1996 directive, the reference remuneration is the host country’s minimum rates of pay. Under this agreement, the revised directive need not apply to the transport sector, which will require a specific text. On the basis of this agreement, the Council can begin negotiations with the European Parliament. The revised directive will enter into force four years after its adoption by the EU bodies. The Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian and Latvian ministers were against the agreement. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/10/23/epsco-posting-of-workers/>

26 October: monetary policy: confirmation of the reduction in the level of the Asset Purchase Programme (APP). The ECB Governing Council decides that ‘purchases under the Asset Purchase Programme will continue at the current monthly pace of €60 billion until the end of December 2017.’ From January 2018, purchases will continue at a monthly pace of €30 billion, until the end of September 2018. The Governing Council may increase the APP in terms of size and/or duration if it assesses the inflation prospects as unfavourable. <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2017/html/ecb.mp171026.en.html>

27 October: Spain/Catalan independence. The Barcelona Parliament adopts a unilateral declaration of independence, and votes to begin a ‘constituent process’ to separate Catalonia from the rest of Spain. With the agreement of the Spanish Senate, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announces the dismissal of the autonomous Catalan government, the dissolution of the regional Parliament and the holding of early elections on 21 December.

27 October: Spain/Catalan self-determination referendum. The President of the European Council declares on Twitter that: ‘Spain remains our only interlocutor. I hope the Spanish government favours force of argument, not argument of force’.

November

2 November: Spain/Catalan self-determination referendum. A European arrest warrant is issued for Carles Puigdemont, the Catalan President dismissed by Madrid, who reached Belgium on 30 October, with a view to ‘putting the Catalan problem at the heart of the European Union’.

13 November: Defence/permanent structured cooperation. Representatives of 25 EU Member States sign a document establishing ‘permanent structured cooperation’ (PESCO) between them in the field of defence. Initially, the PESCO foresees the joint development of military equipment. Its purpose is to act as a framework for other types of project: European crisis centre, network of logistic hubs, joint training, even joint external operations. The signatories also make a commitment to increase their defence budgets.

17 November: Social rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights is proclaimed and signed by the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and the European Commission at the Gothenburg social summit for fair jobs and growth. It will be the driving force behind the European Semester’s social dimension, Press release 673/17.

22 November: European Semester. The European Commission presents its ‘autumn package’, launching the 2018 European Semester cycle of economic, fiscal and social policy coordination. The package is made up of: the 2018 annual growth survey; the 2018 alert mechanism report; the 2018 recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area; the 2018 joint employment report; the proposal to amend the employment guidelines, and the opinions on the euro area draft budgetary plans, IP-17-4681.

30 November: unemployment rate – Eurostat. In the eurozone (ZE19), the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate is 8.8% in October 2017, down from 8.9% in September 2017 and from 9.8% in October 2016. This is the lowest rate recorded in the eurozone since January 2009. In the EU28, the unemployment rate is 7.4% in October 2017, down from 7.5% in September 2017 and 8.3% in October 2016. This is the lowest rate recorded in the EU28 since November 2008, STAT-17-5043.

December

4 December: new Eurogroup President. The eurozone finance ministers elect their Portuguese colleague Mário Centeno as the new President of the Eurogroup. He will replace the Dutch minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem in January 2018.

5 December: Spain/Catalan self-determination. The Spanish Supreme Court announces the withdrawal of the international arrest warrant issued for the former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and four members of his former government. The Court explains that they have expressed their intention to return to Spain and take part in the Catalan elections on 21 December. The five Catalan leaders face charges of sedition, rebellion and misuse of public funds.

6 December: the European Commission presents a ‘package’ on EMU. The package includes a) the conversion of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM Treaty) into a European Monetary Fund; b) a new dedicated euro area budget line in the EU budget with four functions: structural reform assistance, a stabilisation function, a backstop for the Banking Union and an instrument to give pre-accession assistance to Member States on their way to euro membership; c) incorporation of the ‘substance’ of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) into the Economic and Monetary Union in Union law; and the creation of a European Minister of economy and finance, with two functions. Article 352 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) would be used to incorporate the ESM Treaty into Union law, Article 126.14 TFEU for the TSCG. These two solutions would obviate the need to revise the European Treaties and would involve the European Parliament, which would need to give its approval in the first case and would be consulted in the second, MEMO-17-5006.

11 December: permanent structured cooperation in the field of defence. The Council adopts a decision establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) in the field of defence. The Council adopts a decision establishing PESCO in defence less than a month after receiving a joint notification from the Member States expressing their intention to take part. The 25 Member States participating in PESCO are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, OJ L 331 of 14 December 2017.

12 December: glyphosate/citizens’ initiative. In response to the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) ‘Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides’, the European Commission commits to proposing a legislative proposal in

2018 and announces measures to further increase the transparency of the process for authorising, restricting or banning the use of pesticides, IP-17-5191.

13 December: migration policy. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) call for a migration policy which respects human rights. More than 30 civil society associations, including the European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AEDH), call on the Council to establish a mechanism for responsibility-sharing as part of EU migration policy, respecting the rights and dignity of all asylum-seekers. <http://www.aedh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Statement-EU-Council-Migration-December-FINAL.pdf?x51973>

13 December: rearmament/Germany. In the face of a dangerous external and internal policy of rearmament and militarisation announced by the German federal government, the International League of Human Rights (ILHR) launches an urgent appeal for disarmament. The League calls, in particular, for an end to German arms exports to crisis areas. <http://www.aedh.eu/en/international-league-for-human-rights-ilmr-germany-call-for-disarmament/>

14 December: joint declaration by the European institutions on the EU's legislative priorities for 2018-2019. The declaration, signed by the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the rotating Council Presidency, lists 31 new legislative proposals presented by the Commission, which will be given priority treatment by the Parliament and Council for adoption or substantial progress by the time of the European Parliament elections in 2019, IP-17-5266. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/joint-declaration-eus-legislative-priorities-2018_en

14 December: European Council/defence/social rights. The European Council examines the 'progress' made in the areas of security and defence. With regard to the social dimension, education and culture, the leaders highlight their importance in bringing 'Europeans' together and building 'our common future'. Under the treaties, Member States are still primarily responsible for these areas, 'but much can be achieved by working together, while fully respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality', EUCO 19/1/17 REV 1.

15 December: Brexit/confirmation of progress made. The European Council, in its 'Article 50' formation (leaders of the EU27), confirms that sufficient progress has been made on the issues of citizens' rights, Ireland and the financial regulation. The leaders adopt guidelines for moving on to the second phase of negotiations, EUCO 19/1/17 REV 1.

15 December: the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), on the Summit and the Social Pillar. The Secretary General of the ETUC, Luca Visentini, declares: 'The European Pillar of Social Rights now has to be implemented. It was adopted in November and is now endorsed by national leaders. Working people are crying out for a better future. Far too many are struggling to make ends meet. Working poverty is the scandal of our era, and a blot on rising employment'. According to Luca Visentini, 'There is nothing more certain to disillusion citizens – and boost populism and Euroscepticism – than empty, broken EU promises. There is a duty on all leaders to ensure the European

Pillar of Social Rights delivers real improvements in the lives of working people in the EU'. <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/etuc-summit-social-pillar>

20 December: CJEU/Uber. The intermediation service to connect non-professional drivers provided by Uber with potential passengers is a service in the field of transport. Member States can therefore regulate the conditions applying to the provision of this service, C-434/15.

20 December: rule of law/Poland. The European Commission takes measures to defend judicial independence in Poland, IP-17-5367.

21 December: working conditions. The Commission presents a proposal for a directive revising directive 91/533/EEC on an employer's obligation to inform employees of the conditions applicable to the contract or employment relationship (the 'Written Statement Directive'). The European Commission, linking this initiative to the European Pillar of Social Rights, proposes new minimum standards, to apply to all workers, including those on atypical contracts, IP-17-5285 and COM (2017) 797.

21 December: Spain/elections in Catalonia. The separatist parties retain their majority in the regional elections. After almost all the votes have been counted, the three lists in favour of independence have gained 70 out of 135 seats, i.e. two more than an absolute majority.

All links were checked on 23.10.2018.

