

# Chronology 2013

## Key events in European policy

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January

**1<sup>st</sup> January:** Ireland takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In its view, the main priority for the Union should be to stimulate job-creating growth. Such growth will only be possible if it is based on economic stability.

**1<sup>st</sup> January:** The ‘Fiscal compact’ comes into force. According to the European Council website, ‘the treaty aims to strengthen fiscal discipline in the euro area through the ‘balanced budget rule’ and the automatic correction mechanism’ (<http://www.european-council.europa.eu/home-page/highlights/fiscal-compact-enters-into-force-on-1-january-2013?lang=en>).

**3 January:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in a document submitted to the annual meeting of the American Economic Association (AEA), examines the link between errors in growth forecasts and fiscal consolidation during the crisis. According to this document, ‘forecasters significantly underestimated the increase in unemployment and the decline in domestic demand associated with fiscal consolidation’ (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2013/wp1301.pdf>).

**8 January:** The European Commission’s report on Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2012 is alarming. In 2012, five years on from the onset of the crisis and the return to recession in Europe, unemployment has reached record highs, household income is declining and there is an increased risk of poverty and exclusion. (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9604&langId=en>).

**11 January:** Implementation of the fiscal compact. Article 13 of this treaty states that: ‘the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Contracting Parties will together determine the organisation and promotion of a conference of representatives of the relevant committees of the European Parliament and representatives of the relevant committees of national Parliaments in order to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by this Treaty’. The Presidents of the national parliaments of the Benelux and three other founding countries (Germany, France and Italy), meet in Luxembourg to begin working on the organisation of this conference.

**23 January:** The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, describes the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, recalling that ‘we have the character of an island nation – independent, forthright, passionate in the defence of our sovereignty. We can no more change this British sensibility than we can drain the English Channel’. In the view of the British Prime Minister, ‘at the core of the European Union must be, as it is now, the single market [...] rather than the single currency’. He announces the organisation of a referendum on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union by the end of 2017, if he is re-elected.

**24 January:** World Economic Forum at Davos. ‘Merkel supports Cameron in asking for a more liberal Europe’. ‘David Cameron has already spoken of competitiveness. This is the key question for Europe’. ‘Europe represents 7% of the world’s population, 25% of the world’s GDP and 50% of the world’s social spending. We will only be able to defend our social system if we are innovative’. ‘Free trade is essential for growth. Germany can agree to the European Union signing bilateral trade agreements with Canada, Japan and the Asean (Association of southeast Asian nations) countries. Despite many failed attempts, it would also be good to start negotiations with the United States. Agriculture is certainly an obstacle, but not an insurmountable one.’ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/conjoncture/2013/01/24/20002-20130124ARTFIG00694-merkel-soutient-cameronpour-une-europe-plus-liberale.php?pagination=4>.

**28 January:** 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), set up on 8-9 February 1973. On its anniversary, the ETUC confirms its strong belief that a Social Contract for Europe would lay

the foundations for a more inter-dependent European Union (<http://www.etuc.org/press/etuc-turns-40-celebrate-past-look-forward-future>).

**29/30 January:** The ‘European Parliamentary Week’ assesses the ‘democratic dimension’ of the European Semester.

## February

**1<sup>st</sup> February:** The European Ombudsman rejects a complaint against the European Central Bank, brought in 2012 by the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO). According to CEO, the ECB President’s membership of the Group of Thirty, a pressure group representing and serving private financial interests, is incompatible with the independence, reputation and integrity of the ECB. CEO therefore called on the ECB to ask its President to withdraw from the group. The Ombudsman rejects the allegation brought by CEO, but indicates that given the inadequate responses given by the ECB to the complainant, the latter was correct to raise concerns about the matter. The Ombudsman makes two suggestions. He advises the ECB to improve its transparency by mentioning the President’s membership of the Group of Thirty on its website. Moreover, taking account of the ECB’s enhanced responsibilities and public visibility, it should take appropriate steps to raise further the quality of its communication with the public. Case: 1339/2012/FOR.

**7-8 February:** The European Council reaches agreement on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2014-2020. This involves an amount of 960 billion euros in commitment appropriations (CA), i.e. a reduction of 3.4% in the global expenditure ceiling compared to the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MAFF) for 2007-2013, and of 908.4 billion euros in payment appropriations (PA), compared with 942.78 billion euros in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2007-2013.

The European Council also adopts a set of trade policy principles – without much publicity, since most attention is focused on the MAFF negotiations. These principles entail the development of many free trade agreements between the Union and its partners. According to the European Council conclusions: ‘It is estimated that an ambitious trade agenda can lead in the medium term to an overall increase of 2% in growth and to the creation of two million jobs’. EUCO 37/13 et EUCO 3/13.

**13 February:** European Union and United States to launch negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), MEMO/13/95 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-95\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-95_en.htm)).

**14 February:** The European Commission presents a proposal for a directive on the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). 11 Member States will proceed with this tax, under enhanced cooperation (France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Slovenia, Portugal, Greece, Slovakia, Italy, Spain and Estonia), IP/13/115 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-115\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-115_en.htm)).

**14 February:** The growth figures published by Eurostat reflect the ever-increasing impact of the crisis on the euro area economy. The euro area and the EU27 have both seen a reduction in growth in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared to the previous quarter (with a drop in GDP of 0.6 and 0.5% respectively). 24/2013

**15 February:** Message from the OECD to the G20: structural reforms are more important than ever if we are to see a return to strong, balanced growth. *Economic Policy Reforms. Going for Growth 2013*, OCDE (<http://www.oecd.org/eco/growth/going-for-growth-2013.htm>).

**19 February:** The European Commission publishes a new version of its guide to Services of general economic interest (SGEI) ([http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state\\_aid/overview/public\\_services\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/overview/public_services_en.html)).

**19 February:** Publication of the Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9760&langId=en>).

**20 February:** The European Commission adopts a 'set of measures on social investment'. This 'package' is intended to modernise social protection systems and prioritise social investment, IP/13/125 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-125\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-125_en.htm)).

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) regretted the lack of specific and additional funding (<http://www.etuc.org/a/10863>).

**22 February:** The Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis announces a formal request to the European Commission to join the euro area.

**25 February:** The European Commission launches, in line with its action plan to combat tax fraud and evasion, two public consultations on specific measures to improve tax collection and to ensure a better respect of tax obligations throughout the Union. The first of these relates to the drawing up of a European taxpayer's code, setting out the rights and obligations of taxpayers and tax administrations. The second concerns an EU Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), which would make it easier to identify taxpayers in the Union ([http://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/common/consultations/tax/2013\\_eutin\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/consultations/tax/2013_eutin_en.htm)).

**28 February:** The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council 'heard a presentation of the work programmes of the Employment Committee and of the Social Protection Committee'. According to its work programme, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) will be working on the financing of social protection systems and the effectiveness and efficacy of social protection expenditure. As part of the European Semester, cooperation will continue between the SPC and the other committees (EMCO, the Employment Committee, the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), and the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC)), in line with the 2012 recommendations of the (General Affairs) Council, Press Release, 6794/13.

## March

**5 March:** A report from the European Court of Auditors questions the effectiveness of European Social Fund (ESF) expenditure in favour of older workers. Basing themselves on 6 of the 117 ESF operational programmes, representing 222 million euros and involving 4 Member States (Germany, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom), the Court's external auditors find that neither the Member States nor the Commission are in a position to establish the specific amount spent on older workers, nor even how many older workers have found a job after having benefited from an action financed by the ESF, ECA/13/7 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_ECA-13-7\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_ECA-13-7_en.htm)).

**13 March:** The European Parliament rejects the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MAFF) adopted by the February European Council. The resolution, however, adopted by 506 votes to 136, gives 'a strong mandate to its negotiating team to conduct negotiations on an

overall package that includes, in addition to the MAFF, a compulsory and comprehensive revision, a maximum overall flexibility and an agreement on own resources, and that ensures the unity of the EU budget', P7\_TA(2013)0078 ([http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/ta/13/O3/2013%20-%200078/p7\\_ta-prov\(2013\)0078\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/ta/13/O3/2013%20-%200078/p7_ta-prov(2013)0078_en.pdf)).

**14 March:** Ahead of the European Summit scheduled for 14 and 15 March, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) organises a European Trade Union action on 14 March against austerity and for jobs for young people (<http://www.etuc.org/14-march-2013-%E2%80%93-european-trade-union-action>).

**14-15 March:** The European Council holds a debate on the economic and social situation in Europe, and sets the orientations for the economic policy of the EU and of the Member States for 2013. The focus should be on the implementation of decisions taken, and on their reflection in the National Reform Programmes and the Stability and Convergence Programmes of the Member States. The latter must reconcile short-term measures, responding to the need for productive public investment, with the pursuit of fiscal discipline, EUCO 2313.

**16 March:** The Government of Cyprus accepts a loan from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund of 10 billion euros, in return for a tax on all deposits in all banks.

**19 March:** The Parliament of Cyprus rejects the plan.

**20 March:** The European Commission presents two new Communications on the next steps towards a deep and genuine Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In the words of Olli Rehn, Commission Vice-President responsible for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Euro, 'With these two Communications, the Commission is building on the major steps forward taken in budgetary policy coordination, by enhancing the framework for better coordinated structural reforms. Our aim is very clear: to help Member States design, decide and implement better, earlier and faster reforms for growth, competitiveness and job creation', IP/13/248 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-248\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-248_en.htm)).

**21 March:** Threatening to cut, on 25 March, the credit line keeping the Cypriot system afloat, the European Central Bank (ECB) puts pressure on the government to agree with the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on implementation of a special programme. (<http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2013/html/pr130321.en.html>).

**21 March:** The Scottish Prime Minister, Alex Salmond, announces a referendum on Scottish independence, to be held on 18 September 2014.

**25 March:** Among the conditions to be met by Cyprus, in order to receive the 10 billion euro loan, the Eurogroup and the IMF require a contribution from uninsured deposits of more than 100,000 euros. This is the first time that savers have been asked to contribute; a 'bail-in'. *Eurogroup Statement* ([http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ecofin/136487.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ecofin/136487.pdf)).

**25 March:** The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, confirms the national preference in the United Kingdom vis-à-vis European workers established in the country, particularly in terms of access to the national health service, to social housing or to unemployment benefits. To respond to the crisis, he wishes to introduce a new system which would give priority to British nationals in the area of social rights. (<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/immigration-speech-cameron/>).

**27 March:** As early as 2011, the British journal *The Lancet* had sounded the alarm, highlighting the disastrous impact on health of the policies followed in Greece, a finding repeated in a new publication. (<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2813%2960102-6/abstract>).

## April

**4 April:** The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has declared its readiness to support the European Commission in its plans to assist Member States in implementing mechanisms favourable to youth guarantees. The ILO sees these systems as a way to reduce youth unemployment, while voicing some uncertainty as to the efficacy of such a measure, the cost of which is said to be between 0.5 and 1.55 of national GDPs, at a time of recession and fiscal restraint. (<http://www.ilo.org/>)

global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\_209283/lang--en/index.htm).

**5 April:** The Portuguese Constitutional Court rejects a number of measures in the State budget for 2013. It rules that abolition of the 14<sup>th</sup> month salary-payment paid to civil servants and retired people, as well as a measure introducing a levy on unemployment and sickness benefit, are incompatible with the Constitution. In the words of the President of the Court ‘Laws should comply with the Constitution, rather than the other way round’.

**7 April:** Following the decision by the Portuguese Constitutional Court, the European Commission publishes a press release taking note of the decision of the Portuguese government and trusting that ‘consensus’ will be reached on these reforms, MEMO/13/307 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-307\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-307_en.htm)).

**10 April:** The European Commission publishes the findings of the in-depth reviews carried out as part of the Alert Mechanism of the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP). It finds that eleven countries have imbalances which are not excessive, i.e. Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In two Member States, however – Spain and Slovenia – it feels that the imbalances are excessive, IP/13/313 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-313\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-313_en.htm)).

**11 April:** According to the European Commission report on industrial relations, published solely in English, ‘the involvement of workers’ and employers’ representatives (the ‘social partners’) in government reforms is vital, as solutions found through social dialogue tend to have wider acceptance in society, to be easier to implement in practice and to be less liable to give rise to conflict. Consensual agreements involving the social partners therefore help to ensure the long-term sustainability of economic and social reforms’, IP/13/321 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-321\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-321_en.htm))

**14 April:** Election in Croatia of the 12 MEPs, prior to the country joining the EU on 1 July 2013. Only 20.79% of the Croatian population voted.



**26 April:** In its annual report, the Court of Justice of the European Union refers to the links between the Treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. According to the Court, when Member States establish a stability mechanism such as the ESM treaty, where the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) do not grant the Union any specific competence for the setting up of such a treaty, they (the Member States) are not implementing Union law, so that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which guarantees effective judicial protection to all individuals, does not apply’.

## May

**13 May:** The EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council adopts unanimously and without discussion the *Two-pack* made up of two European Union regulations (n° 472/2013 et n° 473/2013). PRESSE 187

**23 May:** The Vice-President of the European Central Bank, Vítor Constâncio, refutes the narrative in favour of strengthening fiscal consolidation. According to the ECB Vice-President, ‘this is the “it was mostly fiscal” narrative, which can be easily connected to two of the others: fiscal indiscipline led to economic overheating, wage and price increases implied loss of competitiveness, and this then led to the balance of payment crises’. ‘Although this is an internally coherent narrative’, he continues, ‘it is not correct’ ([http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2013/html/sp130523\\_1.en.html](http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2013/html/sp130523_1.en.html)).

**27 May:** The ‘Two-pack’ enters into force, ‘completing’, according to the European Commission, ‘the budgetary surveillance cycle and further improving economic governance for the euro area’, MEMO/13/457 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-457\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-457_en.htm)).

**28 May:** The OECD announces the setting up of a high level expert group to continue the work of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission on measuring economic performance and social progress. (<http://www.oecd.org/std/statisticsexpertstocontinneworkofstiglitz-sen-fitoussicommissiononmeasuringprogress.htm>).

**29 May:** As part of economic governance, the European Union publishes its country-specific recommendations, as well as a recommendation for the euro area, IP/13/463 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-463\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-463_en.htm)).

## June

**1<sup>st</sup> June:** 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Central Bank (ECB).

**20-21 June:** The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) adopts conclusions (solely available in English) on social investment, and reaffirms that ‘social policy instruments should be responsive to the needs of society and its citizens, adequate to respond to crises, and incentivise active participation in the labour market and society’.

**21 June:** The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin) adopts recommendations addressed to the 23 Member States on the economic employment policies set out in their national reform programmes, as well as opinions on their budgetary policies, as set out in their national stability or convergence programmes.

**21 June:** The Netherlands puts forward a critical analysis of the principle of subsidiarity. The Foreign Affairs Ministry publishes a document setting out points for action, with a view to testing European legislation for subsidiarity and proportionality (<http://www.government.nl/files/documents-and-publications/notes/2013/06/21/testing-european-legislation-for-subsidiarity-and-proportionality-dutch-list-of-points-for-action/eindrapportage-definitief.pdf>).

**27 June:** The Parliament, the Council and the European Commission reach a political agreement on the multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020 amounting to 960 billion euros, less than the 1,000 billion euros made available by the ECB to banks between December 2011 and the end of February 2012.

**27-28 June:** The European Council focuses on youth employment, strengthening competitiveness, growth and employment, and completion of economic and monetary union. The emphasis is placed on youth

unemployment, with confirmation of a budget of 6 billion euros concentrated in the first two years of the budgetary framework (2014-2015). It will be targeted on young people in European regions where the under-25 unemployment rate is higher than 25% of the active population.

Referring to the social dimension of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the conclusions of the European Council state that ‘as a first step, it is important to better monitor and take into account the social and labour market situation within the EMU, notably by using appropriate social and employment indicators within the European semester.’ The recommendations made as part of the European Semester are approved by the European Council, EUCO 23/13.

## July

**1<sup>st</sup> July:** Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Its objectives are focused on the creation of a ‘credible, growing and open Europe’, thanks to the active pursuit of the reforms already undertaken (<http://www.eu2013.lt/en/presidency-and-eu/programme-and-priorities>).

**9 July:** The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin) formally adopts the country-specific recommendations, as well as the recommendation for countries in the euro area (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2013%3A217%3ASOM%3AEN%3AHTML>).

**22 July:** Eurostat reveals that public debt has grown more strongly over the past five years in Member States which have applied the budgetary austerity measures prescribed by the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF)). In Greece, it increased from 136% of GDP in the first quarter of 2012 to 160% of GDP, i.e. to the same level as before the restructuring of public debt. Over the same period, it grew from 73% to 88% of GDP in Spain, and from 112% to 127% of GDP in Portugal. Ireland saw a rise from 106% to 125% of GDP in one year. Italy saw an increase in its public debt from 123% to 130% of GDP. The average debt in the European Union reached 85.9% of GDP in the first quarter of 2013, as opposed to 85.3% in the last quarter of 2012. Newsrelease

114/2013 ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/2-22072013-AP/EN/2-22072013-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/2-22072013-AP/EN/2-22072013-AP-EN.PDF)).

**26 July:** The European Commission releases the results of an evaluation to identify excessive burdens, overlaps, gaps or inconsistencies which may have appeared since the adoption of three EU Directives regarding information and consultation of workers, IP/13/747 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-747\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-747_en.htm)).

## August

**29 August:** The Portuguese Constitutional Court partially condemns the draft law to dismiss civil servants. According to this draft, civil servants who are non-active can re-train and receive 63% of their salary for a six-month period, followed by 50% for the next six months. If they have not been re-assigned at the end of a year, they can be dismissed (<http://www.tribunalconstitucional.pt/tc/imprensa02-bd2301.html>).

**30 August:** Eurostat publishes the unemployment rates for July 2013: 12.1% in the euro area and 11% in the EU 28. Among the Member States, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Austria (4.8%), Germany (5.3%), as well as in Luxembourg (5.7%), and the highest in Greece (27.6% in May 2013) and Spain (26.3%), Newsrelease 126/2013 ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF)).

The annual inflation rate for the euro area is estimated at 1.3% in August 2013, down compared to the month of July, when it stood at 1.6%, Newsrelease 127/2013 ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/2-30082013-BP/EN/2-30082013-BP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/2-30082013-BP/EN/2-30082013-BP-EN.PDF)).

## September

**10 September:** The European Parliament launches its 'Act. React. Impact' information campaign towards the 2014 elections.

**11 September:** President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso delivers his State of the Union address before the European

Parliament and recalls that the EU is a project for peace. SPEECH/13/684 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-13-684\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-684_en.htm)).

**11 September:** On Catalan national day, a human chain of 400,000 people span the region to demand the independence of Catalonia.

**25 September:** A number of International Monetary Fund (IMF) departments publish a study calling for greater fiscal integration in the euro area. According to the study, the creation of an unemployment insurance scheme for the euro area would require a revision of the treaties or the concluding of a fiscal compact-type of international treaty (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2013/CAR092513A.htm>).

**26 September:** The IMF announces that it has made available the sum of 770 million euros for Ireland. This amount falls under the international assistance plan, which began at the end of 2010 and should finish at the end of 2013 (<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2013/pr13361.htm>).

**27 September:** Cyprus receives a payment of 1.5 billion euros from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), as foreseen by the euro area, for recapitalisation of its banking sector. This loan will be repaid in two instalments in 2029 and 2030. Cyprus has now received a total of 4.5 billion euros in ESM financial assistance out of a total amount paid by the euro area of 9 billion euros (<http://www.esm.europa.eu/press/releases/esm-disburses-1.5-billion-to-cyprus.htm>).

**29 September:** The Troika (European Commission, ECB and IMF) announces a 'pause' in its discussions with Greece on the disbursement of another aid payment, IP/13/890 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-890\\_fr.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-890_fr.htm)).

## October

**2 October:** 'REFIT – Fit for growth' – the Commission takes ambitious next steps to make EU law lighter. Basing itself on the outcome of the Eurobarometer 79, the Commission justifies its initiative by asserting that 74% of Europeans believe that the EU

generates too much red tape, IP/13/891 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-891\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-891_en.htm)).

**4 October:** A working group of the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion publishes a document on the 'automatic stabilisers', based on the US model. It examines, in particular, possible arrangements for introducing unemployment insurance at a 'central' European level.

**15 October:** The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council agrees on the need to strengthen the social dimension of EMU. According to the EPSCO Council, the indicators used should be further refined and analysed on the basis of current instruments. The scoreboard should be applicable to all Member States, but without triggering automatic recommendations, Doc. 14693/13 ([http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139022.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139022.pdf)).

**16-17 October:** Implementation of the fiscal compact. As set out in Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG), the Interparliamentary Conference on economic and financial governance of the European Union is organised by the Lithuanian Council Presidency in Vilnius, at the seat of its Parliament (Seimas).

**17 October:** The Dutch Parliament publishes an English version of the document setting out its vision, according to which the legitimacy and support for the EU's decision-making process should follow a bottom-up approach.

**24 October:** Adopted at the Tripartite Social Summit, the joint declaration of the 'European social partners' calls upon the Commission and the Council to better consult the national social partners when drawing up the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) ([http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2014/socjointcontrib\\_ags2014.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2014/socjointcontrib_ags2014.pdf)).

**24/25 October:** The European Council underlines that closer coordination of economic policies should be focused on policy areas where positive effects on competitiveness, employment and the functioning of the EMU are most prominent. The European Commission is asked to provide a first overview of the implementation of country-specific recommendations

and to continue its work on ‘the contractual arrangements’ announced on 20 March 2013, EUCO 169/13 ([http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/139197.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/139197.pdf)).

## November

**4 November:** The European Commission publishes a study which finds that European citizens coming from another Member State do not make greater use of social welfare benefits than nationals of the host country (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=10972&langId=en>).

**12 November:** The Maltese parliament amends its Citizenship Act to allow for the sale of Maltese nationality (and therefore of a European passport) for the sum of 650,000 euros. The revised text states that the names of third country nationals purchasing citizenship in this way will be kept secret, and that they will be under no obligation to reside, set foot in, work or invest in Malta, nor in any other EU Member State.

**13 November:** The European Commission adopts the annual growth survey, thus defining the general economic priorities for 2014. The Commission also publishes its alert mechanism report, which points to any economic imbalances in the Member States, as well as its draft joint employment report, analysing developments and challenges for the labour market and in the field of social affairs. According to the Commission, ‘the biggest challenge now facing Europe’s economy is how to sustain the recovery that is now underway’, IP/13/1064 and MEMO/13/970 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1064\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1064_en.htm) and [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-970\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-970_en.htm)).

**14 November:** The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) provided over €73.5 million to support 15,700 EU workers in 2012, IP/13/1076 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1076\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1076_en.htm)).

**15 November:** The European Commission presents a new package of budgetary surveillance announcements, covering 13 euro area Member States and 3 non-euro Member States, with a special focus also on the euro area as an economic entity in its own right, IP/13/1082 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1082\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1082_en.htm)).

**19-20 November:** The European Parliament adopts without debate all the legislative texts relating to the EU budget programming, including cohesion policy. European Parliament, texts adopted, Part I, plenary session of 19 November and texts adopted, Part III, plenary session of 20 November 2013.

**19 November:** Refocusing EU Cohesion Policy. Following the Parliament's adoption of the cohesion policy, the European Commission declares that: 'Programmes will have to be consistent with National Reform Programmes and should address the relevant reforms identified through country-specific recommendations in the European Semester. If necessary, the Commission can ask Member States – under the so-called 'macro-economic conditionality' clause – to modify programmes to support key structural reforms. As a last resort, it can suspend funds if economic recommendations are repeatedly and seriously breached', MEMO/13/1011 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-1011\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-1011_en.htm)).

**20 November:** The European Parliament adopts a non-legislative resolution in which it calls for a reform of the European treaties in order to bring to an end the migration of MEPs between Brussels and Strasbourg, P7\_TA-PROV(2013)0498.

**20 November:** The Council of Europe's European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) indirectly criticises a judgment of the European Court of Justice. Following the introduction in Sweden of the 'Laval law', named after a ruling of the EU Court of Justice, the ECSR concludes that Sweden is violating the revised European Social Charter in a number of respects, and particularly for posted workers. Complaint No.85/2012 ([http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/news/coeportal/cc85admissmerits\\_EN.asp?](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/news/coeportal/cc85admissmerits_EN.asp?)).

**21 November:** The European Parliament adopts a resolution on 'Strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)'. By 302 votes in favour, 242 against and 6 abstentions, an amendment was introduced at the request of the European People's Party (EPP), declaring that implementation of the social dimension 'is subject to the subsidiarity principle and can be best achieved through the best practice method and the peer review method at European level', P7\_TA-PROV(2013)0515.



**21 November:** According to Eurostat, social protection expenditure in the EU 28 fell slightly, from 29.7% of GDP in 2009 to 29.4% in 2010 and 29.1% in 2011. In 2011, the two main sources of funding of social protection at EU 28 level were general government contributions from taxes, making up 40% of total receipts and social contributions at 56% (Eurostat December 2013), Newsrelease 174/2013 ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-21112013-AP/EN/3-21112013-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-21112013-AP/EN/3-21112013-AP-EN.PDF)).

**26 November:** According to an OECD study on pension reforms, most OECD countries will have a retirement age for both men and women of at least 67 years by 2050. This represents an increase from current levels of about 3.5 years on average for men and 4.5 years for women. In the opinion of the OECD, keeping down the costs of running personal and occupational pension schemes is critical. Governments need to urgently address this as part of their efforts to promote private pension systems (<http://www.oecd.org/pensions/public-pensions/pension-reforms-on-track-but-the-challenges-of-adequacy-and-inequality-in-old-age-remain.htm>).

**26-27 November:** The third Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion focused on the implementation of the Social Investment Package (SIP), IP/13/1150 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1150\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1150_en.htm)).

**27 November:** Grand coalition – CDU-CSU/SPD – agreement in Germany. The agreement calls upon ‘euro states [to]conclude binding and enforceable, democratically authorised, contractual agreements for reform with the European level’ in order to meet, in particular, competitiveness objectives (<http://www.london.diplo.de/contentblob/4101342/Daten/3818068/Coalitionagreement2013.pdf>).

**28 November:** According to a report drawn up at the request of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, the European Commission and the European Central Bank are, due to their involvement in the Troika, breaching the primary law of the EU, since the Treaty of Lisbon also includes the Charter of Fundamental Rights (<http://www.etuc.org/a/11795>).

**29 November:** Following the amendment of the Maltese Citizenship Act (12 November 2013), a parliamentary question asks the European Commission how to explain to EU citizens the huge difference in amounts charged for selling EU citizenship and residence permits in various Member States. It also asks the Commission for its opinion on all the short-term and long-term risks (financial, criminal, security etc.) concerning the sale of citizenship and residence permits, O-000135/2013 (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+OQ+O-2013-000135+o+DOC+XML+Vo//EN>).

## December

**3 December:** According to the most recent Eurostat data, social protection expenditure, after a rise between 2008 and 2009 (as a result of the economic crisis), fell slightly in the EU28, from 29.7% of GDP in 2009 to 29.4% in 2010 and 29.1% in 2011. In 2011, the two main sources of funding of social protection at EU28 level were general government contributions from taxes, making up 40% of general receipts, and social contributions at 56%. The highest ratios of social protection as a percentage of GDP were in Denmark, France and the Netherlands (at least 30%), and expenditure per capita was seven times higher in Luxembourg than in Romania, Newsrelease 174/2013.

**4 December:** The austerity measures adopted in Europe are undermining human rights. A report drawn up by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, emphasises that austerity measures have undermined a series of basic rights: the right to education, to access to health care, but also the right to participation and to collective bargaining. In the course of one year, the European Committee of social rights identified 13 Member States in breach of the European Social Charter, Article 1 of which stipulates that States signing up to the Charter must undertake to adopt policies aiming to attain full employment (<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2407768&SecMode=1&DocId=2088892&Usage=2>).

**4 December:** The European Commission submits a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a quality framework for traineeships for

young people in companies, IP/13/1200 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1200\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1200_en.htm)).

**5 December:** According to Eurostat, in 2012, 124.5 million people in the EU, or 24.8% of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared to 24.3% in 2011 and 23.7% in 2008. Reducing the number of people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion is one of the headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, Newsrelease 184/2013.

**9 December:** Meeting in the Eurogroup, the Finance Ministers of the euro area welcome the return to growth within the area (<http://www.eurozone.europa.eu/newsroom/news/2013/12/imf-confirms-euro-areas-improving-growth-prospects/>).

**10 December:** For 2014-2020, the Members of the European Parliament propose that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) be used to support workers made redundant and self-employed persons whose activity has ceased, P7\_TA(2013)0572.

**9-10 December:** The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council agrees on the changes to be made to the European legislation governing the posting of workers, 17546/13 ([http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lssa/139998.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lssa/139998.pdf)).

**10 December:** International Human Rights Day. With the backing of the European Human Rights Association, the Belgian Human Rights League and the Centrale nationale des employés (CNE), a Belgian trade union, decide to bring an action for annulment against the federal assent law concerning the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) (<http://www.liguedh.be/2012/1891-la-ldh-et-la-cne-deposit-un-recours-contre-le-traite-budgetaire>).

**12 December:** The European Parliament adopts a resolution on the European Central Bank (ECB) annual report. The resolution emphasises the disparity between interest rates and SMEs' access to financing across the euro area, and asks the ECB to address the problem. Finally, the EP asks the ECB to publish the summary minutes of the Governing Council meetings, including arguments and voting records, P7\_TA-PROV(2013)0601.

**19 December:** The Portuguese Constitutional Court unanimously declares the draft budget invalid. This draft foresees cuts of almost 10% in civil servant pensions greater than 600 euros per month. These measures are anti-constitutional and in breach of the ‘principle of legitimate expectations’.

**19-20 December:** The European Council discusses the European defence policy. It also invites the President of the Council, in close cooperation with the President of the Commission, to carry work forward on the ‘contractual arrangements’, and to report to the October 2014 European Council, EUCO 217/13 ([http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf)).

**20 December:** The President of the Eurogroup publishes a statement following the ruling of Portugal’s Constitutional Court. In it, he takes note of the Court’s decision and states that the Portuguese adjustment programme has been successful in ‘improving competitiveness and rebalancing the economy to more export-led growth’ (<http://www.eurozone.europa.eu/media/503048/20131220-EG-statement-PT.pdf>).

**20 December:** The rating agency Standard & Poor’s (S&P) announces the downgrading of the European Union’s long-term rating from AAA to AA+. S&P does not change its medium-term rating, since the outlook for the Union is stable. The agency explains that ‘EU budgetary negotiations have become more contentious, signalling what we consider to be rising risks to the support of the EU from some Member States’.

*Chronology drawn up by Cécile Barbier.*