

A glance at:

- **The Brussels Conference on Afghanistan**

On Wednesday (5/10) the European Union (EU) and the government of Afghanistan co-hosted the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, which brought together 75 countries and 26 international organizations and agencies. They undertook the commitment of continued political and financial support of Afghanistan over the next four years. The agreed sum would be enough to ensure that the country remains on the path to political and economical stability. The opening session of the conference included speeches by President of the European Council Donald Tusk, President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and US Secretary of State John Kerry. The NATO Secretary General also attended the Conference.

The communiqué of the participants, the High Representative's remarks at the closing session expressing her satisfaction for the successful act of teamwork demonstrated, and President Tusk's remarks are enclosed below, along with the ALDE Group's support for the renewed commitment to support Afghanistan.

Links:

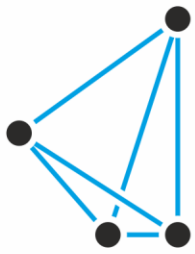
- [Brussels Conference on Afghanistan: main results](#)
- [Afghanistan Conference, partnership for prosperity and peace: communiqué of the participants](#)
- [Federica Mogherini's remarks at the closing session of the conference](#)
- [ALDE welcomes the international community's renewed commitment to support Afghanistan](#)
- [Remarks by President Tusk on the Conference](#)
- [NATO Secretary General attends Conference](#)

- **President Juncker's Speech at the European Parliament Plenary Session**

On Wednesday, 5/10, The President of the European Commission gave a speech before the European Parliament addressing the Bratislava declaration, resultant from the Bratislava Summit (16/09). President Juncker claimed the declaration had disappointed him because of the lack of concreteness it displayed, although it still remained a good platform on which to build concrete actions. For this reason, the President called for concrete results from the Member States during the forthcoming European Council meeting (20-21/10). He specifically addressed the different topics to be discussed during the latter, prominent amongst which was migration: seeing as the Hungarian population has expressed itself in the referendum, the President confides that there will be no particular difficulties in adopting the measures upon which the EU has previously agreed. President Juncker also cited the V4's principle of 'flexible solidarity', announced during the Bratislava Summit, stating that future agreements should distinguish themselves from previous ones in this 'solidarity' dimension.

Links:

- [President Juncker's speech at the European Parliament plenary session](#)



- **Appointment of the United Nations Secretary-General**

On Thursday, 13/10, The General Assembly appointed by acclamation the former Prime Minister of Portugal, António Guterres, as the next United Nations Secretary-General, to succeed Ban Ki-moon when he steps down on 31 December. President Donald Tusk expressed his congratulations and satisfaction for the appointment of a European to the post and assured that the European Union will do its utmost to support him. A warm welcome was also extended from the NATO Secretary General on the same day.

Links:

- [Antonio Guterres appointed next UN Secretary General](#)
- [Letter from President Donald Tusk to Antonio Guterres](#)
- [Statement by the NATO Secretary General](#)

Monitored Policy Areas:

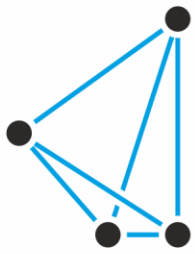
1. Security and Foreign Policy

- **News**

The British government was forced to release its legal arguments for refusing to let the Parliament decide when and how to trigger article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. Prime Minister May assured during her speech that the two-year negotiations will be launched no later than March 2017. Said speech not only delivered clarity on the timetable of the negotiations, but also laid out focal points regarding the very same that might foresee difficulty in achieving a 'soft Brexit' (6/10).

The Hungarian referendum, which took place on Sunday (2/10), was declared invalid thereby provoking a major setback in the Prime Minister Orban's fight against the European Union (EU) migration policy: even though 98.3% of the Hungarians voted against allowing Brussels to decide over migration policy, only 39.8% of Hungarians validly voted. Even though Orban needed at least half of the voters to cast a valid ballot for the result to be legally binding, the government still parades the outcome as a victory (2/10). In fact, Orban stated that the referendum (even if invalid) cannot go ignored by the government, who is to propose constitutional amendments banning mass resettlement of migrants by the EU without the parliament's approval (5/10). On the same day, Sweden threatened it would challenge Hungary in court unless it does not start taking back asylum seekers from other EU countries.

During a debate with Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, President Juncker stated that it was not the EU who was failing on refugees, but some Member States. President Schulz tuned in by saying that Orban should stop dividing the EU and misleading voters (28/09).



On Saturday, 8/10, Hungary's largest newspaper was unexpectedly shut down. Although the owner placed a statement on the website explaining the reason, i.e. that it needed to "*reshape the business model*", employees, civil rights groups and opposition parties suspect pressure from the government in an attempt to hush up critical voices and fully dominate the media landscape. On its part, the European Commission has said that it has no legal power to help journalists in Hungary (10/10).

Links:

- [Brexit: UK releases legal arguments on article 50](#)
- [Is Europe drifting towards a hard Brexit?](#)
- [Orban suffers setback in migration referendum](#)
- [Orban would ban mass resettlement in constitution](#)
- [Sweden threatens to sue Hungary over asylum refusals](#)
- [Learn to love migrant quotas, Junker tells eastern EU](#)
- [Journalists furious as Hungary's largest newspaper closes](#)
- [EU washes hands of Hungarian media](#)

• Legislative Developments

The European Commission (EC) started negotiations with Tunisia for an agreement to facilitate the process of issuing short-stay visas and an agreement to establish procedures for the readmission of irregular migrants (12/10).

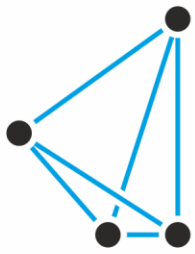
The EC formally launched a Mobility Partnership with the Republic of Belarus to ensure better management of migration flows (13/10).

Links:

- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3394_en.htm
- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3426_en.htm

• Publications

A study was released by the European Parliament think tank regarding the workshop organized on June 15 by the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, with the aim of assessing the Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership countries. A further study was released by the same on the allegations made by Russia on being the object of bad propaganda from the US and its allies and how, in reaction to it, the country has shut down internally to exclude external influences, whilst internationally it responds launching media weapons to compete with the western ones (3/10). Studying the hostile 'strategic communications' with which the EU has been hit by Russia in the east and by Daesh in the south is the object of the third study by the European Union Institute for Security studies. The same propaganda pressure moved by ISIS and Russia against the EU was the objective of a resolution voted by the European Parliament calling for effective countermeasures, such as positive messaging, raising awareness and education (10/10).



CEPS think tank's study focuses on the post-Brexit EU and, in particular, on the reasons of accession of the UK to the EU in 1973, i.e. that of preventing the EU from becoming too strong. The study reveals that the UK strategy is still the same today: by obtaining a special deal with the EU, the UK aims at sharing the benefits of the union without having to bear the costs. If this deal were to be concluded, a message would be sent to all other members saying that they, too, could secure the same deal and, as a result, the EU would be weakened (6/10). On the topic of the EU and UK's future after Brexit, the Bruegel and the Financial Times brought together a panel to discuss what Brexit will mean for business and politics. The video and audio recordings of the event are available at the link below (10/10).

The European Parliament think tank has published a note offering links to recent commentaries and studies on migration from major international think tanks, covering all aspects from the refugee crisis, to renewed EU asylum policies, up to the link between migration and terrorism.

The final Study coming from the European Parliament think tank consists of a briefing of the Bratislava Summit, which took place in September. The study looks at the most important topics and content resulting from the Summit (3/10).

Links:

- [Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership countries](#)
- [Russia's information war: Propaganda or counter-propaganda?](#)
- [Strategic communications – East and South](#)
- [Be aware of Russian and ISIS propaganda, warn foreign affairs MEPs](#)
- [What future for the EU after Brexit?](#)
- [Where now for the UK and the EU after the vote for Brexit?](#)
- [The EU and migration: what think tanks are thinking](#)
- [Outcome of the informal Bratislava meeting on 16 September 2016](#)

● Events coming up:

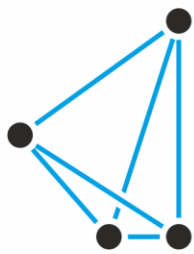
Monday, 17/10: Foreign affairs Council on Syria, migration, the EU global strategy and Tunisia;

- http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2016/10/17/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Agenda+highlights+-+Foreign+Affairs+Council%2c+17%2f10%2f2016

Tuesday, 18/10: Council of Foreign affairs will meet to adopt a package of decisions on the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Canada (CETA);

- http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2016/10/18/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Foreign+Affairs+Council%2c+18%2f10%2f2016

Thursday, 20/10 and Friday, 21/10: Meeting of Heads of State or Governments in Brussels; TTIP, CETA, EU-Russia relations and migration will be on top of the agenda



- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160930IPR44577/meps-to-debate-eu-russia-relations-ceta-ttip-and-migration-ahead-of-eu-summit>

Wednesday, 9/11 and Thursday 10/11: next Security and Defence meeting;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/sede/home.html>

2. Economic Issues

• News

The 15th round of negotiations on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement (TTIP) were concluded on Friday, 7/10. At the concluding press conference, the US and EU chief negotiators Dan Mullaney and Ignacio Bercero, spoke about the general rationale of a transatlantic free-trade agreement, rather than reporting on the round's results. The previous round was concluded in July with the prospect of reaching an agreement by the end of the year, a goal which has been lowered at this round of negotiations.

President Dijsselbloem's remarks on the EuroGroup meeting (10/10) and the results stemming from it are enclosed below, during which the Greek situation was discussed, along with thematic discussions on growth and jobs, healthcare and long-term care and public expenditures.

Links:

- [TTIP negotiators lower expectations](#)
- [Remarks by J. Dijsselbloem following the Eurogroup meeting of 10 October 2016](#)
- [Main results of the EuroGroup](#)
- [EuroGroup statements on Greece](#)

• Legislative developments

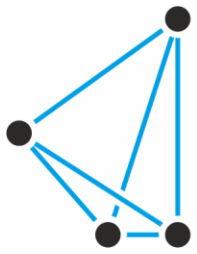
The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Agrár-Vállalkozási Hitelgarancia Alapítvány (AVHGA) have signed a COSME agreement to enhance access to finance to up to 2,000 SMEs primarily in the agricultural sectors in Hungary. The transaction is supported by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and is expected to facilitate up to €160 million in several forms (3/10).

Links:

- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEX-16-3282_en.htm

• Publications

The European Parliament think tank has published a study on the negotiations on an EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that was officially launched in March 2013. The analysis focuses on the potential benefits and facilitations said agreement would



produce for the EU and shows that the FTA and the TTIP are estimated to producing similar levels of economic gains for Europe (7/10).

Links:

- [International Agreements in progress: Prospective EU-Japan free trade agreement](#)

3. Energy Issues

• **Legislative developments**

The European Parliament approved the ratification of the Paris Agreement by the European Union (EU) (4/10). With said approval the Council can formally adopt the Decision, whilst in parallel, the Member States will proceed in ratifying the Agreement individually, in accordance with their parliamentary processes.

The European Liberals and Democrats welcomed the ratification along with the Socialists and Democrats, who stated that the approval is “*the demonstration that the EU can deliver*”. The final vote of the European Parliament approving the ratification was attended by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon.

Following the ratification, the European Parliament voted a resolution on Thursday (6/10) focusing on the tools that need to be adopted to achieve the goals set out in the Paris Agreement. This resolution comes ahead of the next round of talks that will take place in Marrakesh next month.

Links:

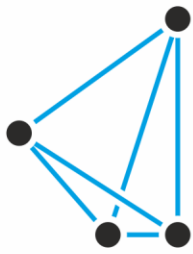
- [ALDE welcomes EP ratification of Paris agreement](#)
- [Socialists and Democrats' comments to the ratification of Paris agreement](#)
- [Ban Ki-moon to address EP plenary for vote on Paris agreement](#)
- [Paris Agreement parties need to pledge more emission cuts](#)

• **Publications**

The European Parliament think-tank released a study on the EU cohesion policy, which is deemed to be the EU investment policy with the highest potential of helping it achieve sustainable development by protecting and improving the quality of the environment. The study provides the assessment of the cohesion policy programmes between 2007 and 2013 in order to give an insight of its contribution.

Links:

- [sustainability and EU cohesion policy](#)



4. Digital Agenda

- **Legislative developments**

The ninth meeting of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Working Group on Digital Single market took place on Wednesday (12/10) to assess the new Commission proposals on Telecoms and their impact for European consumers and the Internal Market.

Links:

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/imco/events-other.html?id=20161012CHE00121>

- **Publications**

The European Commission supported study “*Identification and quantification of key socio-economic data to support strategic planning for the introduction of 5G in Europe*” assesses the benefits deriving from the introduction of 5G in Europe. The study itself focuses, in particular, on what 5G might mean for users, industries, operators and other stakeholders in four significant areas that are most likely to take advantage from its introduction: automotive, healthcare, transport and utilities. The study estimates that the ultimate effect deriving from this innovation will be beneficial both for the creation of jobs (with up to 2.3 million jobs directly and indirectly created) and for European economy (€62.5 billion will arise from first order benefits).

Links:

- [5G deployment could bring millions of jobs and billions of euros benefits, study finds](#)

- **Events coming up:**

From Saturday, 15/10 to Sunday 23/10: EU Code Week, supported by the European Commission, where hundreds of thousands of people across Europe can improve their digital knowhow in coding events. <http://events.codeweek.eu/>



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