

The French election

We all mourn the death of a policeman in Paris. I send my condolences to his family.

The untimely death shortened the political campaigning, but could not derail the election.

Last week-end French electors faced plenty of choice. The opinion polls held close to election day correctly predicted that voting intentions were very split, and many were still undecided. One of the most fascinating features of the polls was the collapse of support for the socialist party, the Labour party equivalent, and the difficulty for the Republican candidate, the Conservative equivalent, to catch up three others.

Whoever becomes President of France will not belong to either of the two traditional main parties. He or she did not gain more than one quarter of the votes on the first ballot. This means that the uncertainties created by such a wide open election will continue after we know who the President is. The Presidential election will be followed by an election to the Parliament. If the Parliament votes are more strongly for the more traditional parties the new President will have limited powers and have to get on with a Prime Minister who does not agree on some big matters.

Mr Macron is the front runner to win in round two. A former socialist party Minister, he is now a reborn self styled centrist with a movement, not a political party. He might face a Parliament to his right. There could be clashes on economic reform and security. Were Mrs Le Pen to prove the pollsters wrong and emerge as the overall winner, she would probably face a Parliament to her left, with an inbuilt majority to keep France in the Euro and the EU when she wishes to leave.

It is a fascinating commentary on modern France that two of the top four candidates were outsiders, and one was an insider dressed up as an outsider. The only pure political establishment candidate was damaged by his past use of public money to run his office. It implies that many French voters are unhappy with the terrorist attacks, the high unemployment, the lack of growth in living standards and the lack of control over their borders. Some voted for a more left wing alternative who wants to take back control and go for more socialism in one country. Some voted for the National front to leave the Euro and assert national borders. Some voted for the independent who promises to do politics differently without being too precise how.

If the French people fail to give a decisive mandate to a new President, and then fail to give their President a decent level of support in Parliament, the anger and anguish will continue.

[2 former senior officials indicted for corruption](#)

Wang Baoan, former head of the National Bureau of Statistics, and Li Chengyun, former vice governor of southwest China's Sichuan Province, have been indicted on suspicion of accepting bribes, the Supreme People's Procuratorate announced Tuesday.

Wang was indicted by prosecutors in Zhangjiakou city, Hebei Province.

According to the indictment, Wang is accused of taking advantage of his posts of assistant and vice finance minister as well as head of the NBS to seek benefits for others, and illegally accepting a huge amount of money and property either by himself or through "specially related persons."

Li was indicted by prosecutors in Liupanshui city, Guizhou Province.

He is accused of taking advantage of his posts when he worked as Party chief of Deyang city and as Sichuan's vice governor to seek benefits for others and illegally accepting a huge amount of money and property either by himself or through "specially related persons," according to the indictment.

[Press release – EU plan to tackle root causes of migration should focus on the poor, MEPs say – Committee on Foreign Affairs – Committee on Development – Committee on Budgets](#)

An EU scheme to mobilise €44 billion in private sector investment in Africa and the EU's neighbourhood should focus on the poor, said committee MEPs on Monday.

The MEPs, on the Foreign Affairs, Development and Budget committees, suggested changes to draft operating rules for the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD).

As part of the [European External Investment Plan](#), the EFSD would encourage €44 billion in private investments in fragile states by offering a combination of grants, loans and financial guarantees worth of €3.3 billion to boost jobs, growth and stability, thus addressing the root causes of

migration.

Key points

MEPs propose, inter alia that:

- the EFSD should focus on reducing poverty and supporting micro-, small and medium-sized companies as well as climate change efforts and strengthening the rule of law and human rights,

Quotes

“The EFSD should be an innovative financial instrument that attracts investments into the private sector in least developed countries. I hope this would bring growth and stimulate further development of these countries”, said co-rapporteur Eduard Kukan (EPP, SK).

“We need ensure that the EFSD really improves the lives of people in the least developed countries and helps achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It must help to create decent jobs, and provide additional finance for local companies”, said Doru-Claudian Frunzulica (S&D, RO).

“I believe we can create a powerful tool that helps the poorest and proves that the private sector is a key partner in development”, said co-rapporteur Eider Rubial Gardiazabal (S&D, ES).

The changes to the draft operating rules were backed by 75 votes to 9 with 5 abstentions.

Next steps

Since the Council agreed its negotiating position in December 2016, Parliament will start talks with it on the final shape of the scheme if there is no objection at the April plenary session in Brussels.

Note to editors

EFSD resources come from the mid-term review of the MFF 2014-2020 and the European Development Fund (EDF) reserve. The new fund will be composed of two regional platforms: one for Africa and the other for the EU Neighbourhood (south and east). It will function as a “one stop shop”, offering access to existing EU blending facilities, coupled with a new, additional guarantee for public and private investors. The EFSD Guarantee is expected to have a cash provision of €750 million including €350 million from the EU budget and €400 million from the EDF. The EFSD will also combine resources from two existing blending facilities – €2.6 billion from the Neighbourhood Investment Facility and Africa Investment Facility.

Background – House of European History

Why set up a House of European History?

The decades-long process that has created the European Union has had a profound impact on the way European countries organise and govern themselves, but until now there has been no museum which places this process within a wider historical context, bringing together and juxtaposing the contrasting experiences of different European countries and peoples.

The generation of people who experienced the tragedies of the 20th century and went on to build the European Communities is disappearing. Now is the time, therefore, to present the development of European integration in a comprehensible way for a broader public. And to explain its main historical developments, motivating forces and aims, so as to enable future generations to understand how and why today's Union developed as and when it did. In times of crisis, it is particularly important to develop and sharpen consciousness of cultural heritage and to remember that peaceful cooperation cannot be taken for granted.

The European Parliament has therefore set up the House of European History, which will give citizens an opportunity to reflect on this historical process and on what it means for the present. Parliament believes that the museum can be a place of debate and understanding about contemporary situations from the perspective of their historical roots and in the light of historical experiences.

What are the principles governing the project?

From the outset, the project has been driven by a desire to promote knowledge of Europe's history and to raise awareness of the diversity of memories within Europe in an open and inspiring fashion. The academic independence and international composition of the project team were preconditions and a team of historians and museum professionals from all over Europe were recruited specifically for the project. They have worked to develop the exhibitions, ensuring that the diversity of European history – and of its interpretations – is fairly represented.

A high-level advisory board (Academic Committee) composed of internationally-renowned historians and museologists ensures the academic accuracy and relevance of the content of the exhibitions.

Where is it?

The House of European History is located in the Eastman building in the Parc Léopold, close to the European institutions. The Eastman building was built in 1935 to house a dental clinic for disadvantaged children, financed by a donation from the US businessman George Eastman, the inventor of the Kodak

camera. With a view to transforming this building into a building for exhibition purposes, an architectural competition was held, which was won by a group composed of the architects Chaix & Morel et associés from France, JSWD Architekten from Germany, and TPF from Belgium. Their plans included the renovation of the façades – maintaining the historic aesthetic of the building – as well as adding a modern extension in the original building's courtyard and on its roof.

How did the project develop?

The project to create a House of European History was initiated by the then European Parliament President, Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, in his inaugural speech of 2007. The following year, a committee of distinguished historians and museum experts from various European countries drew up a first concept for the project, entitled the "Conceptual Basis for a House of European History", which envisaged the House of European History as a modern exhibition, documentation and information centre that would reflect the latest in museological thinking.

From January 2011 onwards, an Academic Project Team was recruited. This team, brought together from across Europe, then progressively defined the vision and mission of the new museum, developed the narrative for the permanent exhibition and worked on different fields such as visitor policy, temporary exhibition and collecting policies. The Academic Committee advised the team in this work and agreed on the result. Parliament's Bureau (President and 14 Vice-Presidents) approved all major decisions.

What story does the museum tell?

The permanent exhibition concentrates on the main phenomena and processes which have shaped contemporary Europe throughout history, and emphasizes the diversity of experience, awareness and interpretation related to these developments.

It does not portray the individual histories of Europe's states and regions. Instead, it focuses on European phenomena. The Academic Project Team chose three criteria: the event or idea originated in Europe, expanded across Europe and continues to be relevant today. Based on these criteria, the project team distilled six themes with a large number of topics and sub-topics. Here and there, the permanent exhibition goes beyond the outer borders of the European Union.

European history might be complex, diverse and fragmented, but it has a large number of wide-ranging commonalities and widely-shared experiences; displaying some of these is the purpose of the permanent exhibition. Beginning with the ancient myth of "Europa and the Bull" and its changing interpretations, the exhibition highlights key factors of Europe's heritage, which have shaped it deeply, with effects that are still visible today.

Does the House of European History aim to create a European identity?

The notion of identity is one of the most debated in the field of cultural studies. In association with the activities of museums, it has given rise to a vast ensemble of literature and reflection. There is no commonly agreed definition of what a European identity could be. The term is too reductionist and too static to be used as a basis for the House of European History. If the House were to propose a pre-defined concept of European identity this would only hamper debate, rather than creating a many-voiced discussion on this highly interesting and topical question. Instead of giving fixed answers, the House of European History wants to stimulate public discussion of European memory and consciousness.

Will the House of European History replace national histories?

The House of European History will not be a simple sum of national histories, nor does it seek to replace them. The House of European History will be a reservoir of European memory, containing experiences and interpretations in all their diversity, contrasts and contradictions. Its presentation of history will be complex rather than uniform, more differentiated than homogeneous, critical rather than affirmative, but it will focus on the emergence of the European Community.

At what point does the narrative start?

The permanent exhibition in the House of European History, the centrepiece of the new museum, will focus on European history from the 19th century to the present day. In some parts, the presentation goes further back in history, reaching back to ancient times and the Middle Ages, in order to explain fundamental characteristics of European culture and civilisation, thus enabling visitors to gain a better understanding of the present.

The permanent exhibition starts with a presentation of the myth of Europa, the change of geographical concepts throughout history and a reflection on what European heritage might be. The exhibition concentrates on the European history of the 19th and 20th centuries, with a special focus on the history of European integration.

Is there a risk of overlapping with the Parlamentarium, which also shows the history of European Integration?

The Parlamentarium, or European Parliament's visitors' centre, deals with the role, functioning and the activities of the European Parliament. The House of European History, by contrast, is a museum on European history in a much wider sense. The subject matters of the two are different, defined by very different contexts, goals, missions and tools. The House of European History takes a much broader approach to history and – as a museum – places objects, as testimonies of history, at the centre of interest. The two projects are complementary.

Compliance table on ESMA Guidelines on the enforcement of financial information

[Download PDF](#)