

The EU's agenda for greater union – conclusions of the European Council 20 June

The EU is busy trying to fill its senior positions without success yet. They meet again on June 30th to try to reach agreement over who should be President of the Commission.

The EU Council last week revealed its new ambitions to take more control from member states.

The EU wants member states to press ahead more rapidly with plans to decarbonise. Countries are being pressed to lower their CO2 output, to increase their renewable generation of power and raise their fuel efficiency. 2030 targets are being set, but the EU has still not agreed on a zero carbon target for 2050 which some wish to do.

The EU is keen to weed out fake news from social media. It will be interesting to see what they regard as fake news, and to see if they start to cross the line between unacceptable material and censorship of material that is inconvenient to the EU. It is setting out a new “framework for targeted restraint measures” which will include asking social media platforms to prevent material harmful to the EU.

The Euro area needs to consider how much further it should go with a joint budget and whether it will start to borrow money in the name of the EU to spend around the union. The Euro area meeting talked of intensifying the banking union and capital markets union. There is also a wish to have more common taxation under a policy that it should be “fair and effective”.

The EU wishes to take greater responsibility for its own security and defence, pointing the way to more common defence spending.

The EU wants to become more assertive in international affairs. It wants Russia to release the captured sailors from Ukraine and release the vessels, seeks free maritime passage there and wants Russia to reduce her influence in eastern Ukraine. The EU continued its sanctions against Russia. The EU also condemned Turkey for her alleged illegal drilling in the Eastern Med.

The EU is planning a tougher migration policy “to fight illegal migration and human trafficking and to ensure effective returns”. The detail on who they will make go back will be interesting, and what their enforcement mechanisms will be. They want to renegotiate the Dublin Regulation which requires a member state to offer safe haven to a migrant if that state is their first place of arrival in the EU. The southern coastal states resent this obligation on them.

We await the new Commission and new Parliament. The old one goes out with a

set of conclusions that aspire to much more integration but lack real bite in achieving their full stated aims. Nonetheless the process of integration continues, with the EU using its position in international affairs and negotiator of international treaties and commitments to gain more control over member states policies in everything from defence to energy and from economics to media.