ZONE BOOKS
near futures
ONLINE

Europe at a Crossroads

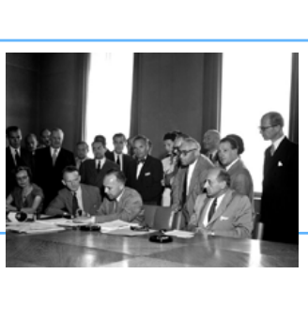
TIMELINE BY AURÉLIE WINDELS

PERENNIAL AUSTERITY

TRIALS OF THE LEFT

MANAGED INHOSPITALITY

1951



28 JULY The "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" is approved by the United Nations in Geneva. The multilateral treaty defines who is a refugee, sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum, and sets the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.

1952

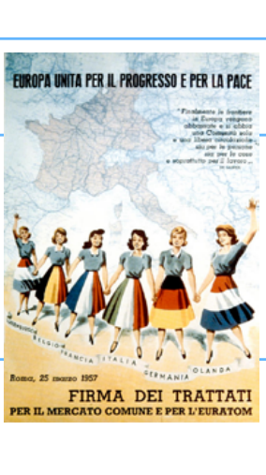
4 DECEMBER Denmark is the first state to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.

1956

31 DECEMBER In one year, more than 200,000 Hungarians flee to Austria in order to escape from Soviet tanks.

1957

25 MARCH The Treaty of Rome, which establishes the European Economic Community (EEC), is signed by the "Inner Six": Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. It proposes to create a common market within the EEC member-states to guarantee the so-called "Four Freedoms": free movement of goods, services, capital, and people.


EUROPA UNITA PER IL PROGRESSO E PER LA PACE
Roma, 25 marzo 1957
FIRMA DEI TRATTATI
PER IL MERCATO COMUNE E PER L'EURATOM

1960

3 MAY Seven non-EEC member-states known as "the Outer Seven"–Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK–sign the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) convention. EFTA establishes an alternative common market that operates in parallel with, and linked to, the European Community.

1969

12 FEBRUARY The Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Raymond Barre, publishes a report in which he appeals to a "greater coordination of economic policies and monetary cooperation." This report will lead to the decision of European heads of states to draw up a plan in order to create an economic and monetary union by the end of the 1970s.

1973

16–17 OCTOBER The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) declares an oil embargo. Also known as the "first oil shock," the embargo impacts the global economy and politics. In Europe, this shock induces the end of the so-called "Golden Age of Social Democracy."

Sorry...
NO GAS
TODAY

1976

19 SEPTEMBER General elections are held in Sweden. For the first time since 1932, the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) has to share power. During its longstanding dominance of Swedish politics, the SAP had implemented the so-called "cradle-to-grave" welfare system with the aim of protecting the Swedish citizens throughout their life. Swedish social reforms of 1945 to 1976 are generally portrayed as social democracy's crowning achievements.

1977

27 OCTOBER The British President of the European Commission, Roy Jenkins, proposes to accelerate the European economic integration by creating a single currency valid in all the member-states of the EEC.

1979

13 MARCH In a period of international monetary instability, Helmut Schmidt, the German Chancellor, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the French President, and Roy Jenkins, the British President of the European Commission, decide to make a concrete first step towards the economic and monetary union of the EEC member-states: the European Monetary System is created, with the aim of stabilizing European currencies and facilitating the fight against inflation.

1981

10 MAY François Mitterrand wins the presidential elections in France: he becomes the first socialist President of the Fifth Republic. The government of Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy will implement ambitious redistributive fiscal programs during the first two years of Mitterrand's first term, along with a wide range of social reforms and a substantial increase in public investments. These policies significantly improved the living standards of the underprivileged populations as well as the rights of trade unions and wage earners.

18 OCTOBER The Greek social democratic party led by Andreas Papandreou wins the general election by a landslide. The PASOK forms the first socialist government in the history of Greece. It will create a national health system, set up reforms in family laws that will improve women's rights, and act to increase low wages.

Mitterrand Président

1982

19 SEPTEMBER After the SAP wins the general election, a new social democratic government is formed in Sweden. However, the reforms passed by the Minister of Finance, Kjell-Olof Feldt, seem to be directly inspired by the Chicago School of Economics. They include the deregulation of financial markets and the privatization of state-owned companies. They result in a considerable redistribution of income from labor to capital. Yet, Feldt's plans to freeze wages and ban trade union strikes will be rejected in the Parliament.

1983

THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE

25 MARCH In France, after two years in office, François Mitterrand makes a U-turn in terms of economic policies: the so-called "turn toward fiscal discipline" ("tournant de la rigueur"). Priority is henceforth given to the fight against inflation in order to remain competitive with regard to France's European partners. The socialists also join the rest of Europe on the path to privatizations and the deregulation of financial markets.

25 MARCH In France, after two years in office, François Mitterrand makes a U-turn in terms of economic policies: the so-called "turn toward fiscal discipline" ("tournant de la rigueur"). Priority is henceforth given to the fight against inflation in order to remain competitive with regard to France's European partners. The socialists also join the rest of Europe on the path to privatizations and the deregulation of financial markets.

6 JULY In his maiden speech in the House of Commons, Tony Blair declares: "I am a socialist not through reading a textbook that has caught my intellectual fancy, nor though an unthinking tradition, but because I believe that, at its best, socialism corresponds most closely to an existence that is both rational and moral. It stands for cooperation, not confrontation; for fellowship, not fear. It stands for equality."

1985

14 JUNE Signature of the Schengen Agreement by five of the ten EEC member-states: Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. This agreement on the gradual abolition of common border controls will lead to the creation of Europe's borderless Schengen Area.

1986

17 FEBRUARY The Single European Act, which set the objective of establishing a single market within the European Community by 31 December 1992, is signed. The Single Act provides for the adoption of about 300 directives that would remove the physical, fiscal and political barriers that impede the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people.

1989

9 NOVEMBER Fall of the Berlin Wall.

9 NOVEMBER Fall of the Berlin Wall.

1990

1 JULY The last fetters to the free movement of capital are removed: exchange controls are abolished.

15 JUNE The Dublin Convention is signed by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. The principal aim of this regulation is to prevent an asylum seeker from submitting applications in multiple member-states within the European Community.

19 JUNE The Schengen Convention proposes the abolition of internal border controls, a common visa policy within the EU and a reinforcement of police and judicial cooperation. Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Austria are the first countries to gradually enter the Schengen Area.

31 DECEMBER After the fall of the Soviet Union, more than one million Eastern Europeans–mainly from Poland, Baltic states and Slovakia–emigrate to Western Europe.

1991

31 MARCH Beginning of the Yugoslav Wars, which will result in the deaths of at least 140,000 people.

26 SEPTEMBER In France, Prime Minister Edith Cresson amends the law on immigration to limit the number of claims for asylum. Asylum seekers no longer have the right to work. Thirty-five years later, it is still one of the reasons why thousands of asylum seekers endure inhumane living conditions in Calais for months with the hope of reaching UK, where they would have the right to work as soon as they make an application for asylum.

1992

7 FEBRUARY The Maastricht Treaty that creates the European Union is signed. It established the completion of the European Monetary Union as a formal objective and provides for the substitution of national currencies by euro. It also defines the convergence criteria–inflation rates, government finance, exchange rate and long-term interest rates–the member-states have to meet for being allowed to adopt euro as their currency. One of the main obligations stated by the treaty is to keep "sound fiscal policies, with debt limited to 60% of GDP and annual deficits no greater than 3% of the GDP."

30 NOVEMBER A Council Resolution on "Manifestly Unfounded Applications for Asylum" is voted in London.

6 DECEMBER After Germany receives about 400,000 refugees in one year (a record up to this point) due to the Balkan Wars, the CDU, the CSU, the SPD, and the FDP reach "a compromise" to amend the law on asylum. Their aim is "to prevent abuse of the right to asylum," while continuing "to provide protection for foreigners who really are victims of political persecution."

1993

26 MAY Huge demonstration in front of the Bundestag in Germany. More than 10,000 people protest against the Amendment of the Basic Law restricting the right of asylum. Nevertheless, the MPs voted to validate the "compromise on asylum" they settled 6 months earlier.

1994

CAPITALISM ISN'T WORKING
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

1 JANUARY The European Monetary Institute (EMI), the forerunner of the European Central Bank (ECB), is created. Its mission is to oversee the creation of the monetary union.

18 SEPTEMBER The SAP once again returns to power in Sweden, but the "Swedish social democratic model" is definitely dead. Ingvar Carlsson's government introduces a new package of neoliberal measures, including the privatization of public services and assets. The welfare state shrinks further: drops in compensation rates for sickness, decreases in unemployment benefits, cuts in benefits for orphans, to name a few.

4 OCTOBER The 50th anniversary of the IMF and the World Bank, celebrated in Madrid, is the scene of a protest by a variety of activist groups that will later go by the name of the "anti-globalization movement."

1995

1 JANUARY Austria, Finland, and Sweden enter the European Union.

29 APRIL In the UK, Tony Blair, who has just taken the helm of the Labour Party, initiates his modernization program with the rewriting of the Labour Constitution. The Clause IV, which expressed the Party's commitment to socialism, is revised to give the Party a new statement of aims and values. Nationalizations are no longer part of the agenda and the "New Labour" vows to be more receptive to the free market and the middle classes.

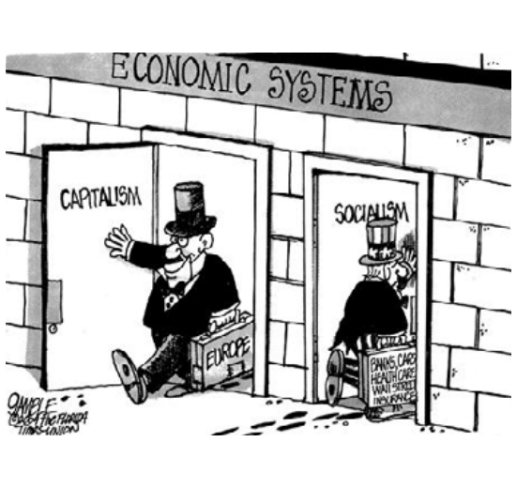
OCTOBER In an article entitled "Power for a Purpose," Tony Blair writes: "There will inevitably be overlap between right and left in politics in the 21st century. The era of the grand ideologies, all-encompassing, all-pervasive, total in their solutions–and often dangerous–is over. In particular, the battle between market and public sector is over. The value systems and the objectives will, of course, be different but there will be some policy convergence and we should be relaxed not tribal about that."

1996

19 SEPTEMBER Tony Blair declares: "Socialism as a rigid form of economic determinism has ended, and rightly. The objective–a modern civic society in which all individuals have the ability to develop their potential–places us firmly within the tradition of social democracy and democratic socialism."

1997

23 SEPTEMBER Under the pressure of the upcoming deregulation of the European telecommunication market, which was decided by the European Commission, the French government opens the capital of the state-owned company France Telecom to the market. This is the first step in a wide program of privatizations undertaken by the Minister of Finance, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. During its term, the Socialist government sold about 35 billion euro of assets, a record in France, and made France the world's second issuer of executive stock-options.



2 MAY After (New) Labour wins the general election by a landslide, putting an end to 18 years of Conservative governments in the UK, Tony Blair becomes the youngest British Prime minister since 1812.

2 JUNE In France, Lionel Jospin, leader of the Socialist Party, becomes Prime Minister. His government focuses on employment, resorting to a number of neo-Keynesian measures, and succeeds in reducing the rate of unemployment from 12.2% to 8.6% in 5 years. Yet, while railing frequently against the ills of an unregulated globalization, the prime minister hardly strays from the European and international neoliberal framework, especially with regard to privatization and deregulation.

23 SEPTEMBER Under the pressure of the upcoming deregulation of the European telecommunication market, which was decided by the European Commission, the French government opens the capital of the state-owned company France Telecom to the market. This is the first step in a wide program of privatizations undertaken by the Minister of Finance, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. During its term, the Socialist government sold about 35 billion euro of assets, a record in France, and made France the world's second issuer of executive stock-options.

11 DECEMBER In the UK, Tony Blair's plan to cut benefits to single parents sparks the first major rebellion within Labour's ranks in the House of Commons.

1 OCTOBER The Dublin Convention comes into force in Austria and Sweden.

2 OCTOBER Signature of the Amsterdam Treaty. The EU becomes responsible for legislating on immigration. The Schengen Agreements are incorporated into its legal system.

1998

1 JUNE The European Central Bank (ECB) officially replaces the European Monetary Institute. The conversion rates between the 11 participating national currencies and the euro are established. The Bank was the final institution needed to settle the European Monetary Union.

1 JULY The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) comes into force. This fiscal monitoring of member-states' budget deficit and debt is created to ensure and enforce budgetary discipline within the European Union after creation of the single currency. This agreement was initially proposed by German Finance Minister Theo Waigel in the mid-1990s.

21 SEPTEMBER Bill Clinton and Tony Blair hold a conference in New York: the Third Way, which aspires to be an alternative to both capitalism and traditional forms of socialism, is officially launched. While they don't embrace the neoliberal claim that everything must be left to free markets, its promoters consider that the old social-democratic faith in state interventionism is now outdated.

OCTOBER The British sociologist and then director of the London School of Economics, Anthony Giddens, publishes *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. He argues that the class-based divisions of left and right are now superfluous and that reformist governments can no longer rely on traditional statist programs in the face of powerful global financial forces.

27 OCTOBER Gerhard Schröder, leader of the SPD, becomes Chancellor of Germany.

1 JANUARY The Dublin Convention comes into force for Finland. Non-member states Norway and Iceland conclude agreements to apply the provisions of the Convention in their territories.

1999

1 JANUARY The euro is officially introduced in Europe. It will be only used for financial dealings until the introduction of its physical form in 2002. The national currencies of the Eurozone member-states cease to exist independently. All bonds and other forms of government debt are, from then onwards, denominated in euro.

Sorry!
The lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock

25 APRIL Along with Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok, and Italian Prime Minister, Massimo D'Allema attend a round-table discussion in Washington DC on "The Third Way: Progressive Governance for the 21st Century."

9 JUNE Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair publish a joint document, "The Way Forward for Europe's Social Democrats," which calls for radical reforms in the organization of welfare state as well as unhindered economic deregulation and liberalization–a process already very much under way in the UK, but not in Germany. "Product, capital and labour markets must all be flexible," write the two social democratic leaders.

13 SEPTEMBER In France, Lionel Jospin is interviewed on an evening TV news program after the Michelin tire company announces that, regardless of record profits, it plans to lay off 7,500 workers. The giant firm justifies the move by claiming that financial markets are asking for better returns on their investments. In response to the outcry provoked by Michelin's statement, the Socialist Prime Minister admits his powerlessness: "The state can't do everything." "I don't think we can regulate the economy with laws anymore," says Jospin.

SEPTEMBER After a growing number of refugees were found in the streets of Calais and surrounding towns–which became the northern border of Schengen Area and the main crossing point to reach the UK–the French socialist government creates a humanitarian emergency shelter in Sangatte. This center, run by the Red Cross, had the capacity to house 700 people.

2000

23 MARCH The European Council introduces the Lisbon Strategy in order to deal with the low productivity and stagnation of economic growth within the European Union. The Lisbon Strategy aims to "make Europe the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world," by 2010.

2001

18–22 JULY About 200,000 people from the anti-globalization movement protest at the Genoa G8 Summit. While social democratic leaders have endorsed the neoliberal doctrine and made their peace with the fact that markets dictate economic policies, within civil society, left-leaning movements refuse to comply with Margaret Thatcher's contention that "there is no alternative." All the future European leaders of the radical left–from Alexis Tsipras to Pablo Iglesias–were among the the demonstrators in Genoa.

25 MARCH The Schengen Area is enlarged to include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

27 DECEMBER 1,470 would-be asylum seekers, mainly Afghans and Iraqi Kurds, are registered in the Sangatte Refugee camp, living in very precarious conditions in a center built to receive a maximum of 700 people. They paid thousands of dollars to smugglers to travel from their home country to the UK, but are stuck at the entrance of the Channel Tunnel.

31 DECEMBER In one year, 7 migrants died when hit by trains during their attempt to reach the UK through the Channel Tunnel.

2002

1 JANUARY Euro becomes the main currency across Europe. The United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden do not participate in the euro regime. The UK and Denmark had asked to opt-out during the negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty. Sweden doesn't meet the convergence criteria. After a referendum in 2003 reveals 55.9% of voter were against membership in the Eurozone, Sweden decides not to adopt the European currency.

21 APRIL Lionel Jospin is severely defeated in the first round of the French presidential election–by Jacques Chirac but also by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the French extreme right.

22 SEPTEMBER Gerhard Schröder wins a second term as German Chancellor with a narrow majority.

23 MAY Marc Gentilini, president of the French Red Cross, denounces "the untenable and inhuman situation" at Sangatte. He recalls that, before the center was opened, "migrants, including women and children, were sleeping out in the streets," and warns that it would start again if the Refugee camp were closed down.

21 JUNE The Seville European Council strengthens the externalization of asylum. The member states' government leaders urge that "any future cooperation, association or equivalent agreement […] concluded with any country should include a clause on joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration."

26 SEPTEMBER Nicolas Sarkozy, French Interior Minister, and his British counterpart, David Blunkett, go to Sangatte to announce the closing of the Refugee Center. Responding to a woman who asked him where the migrants will go, Sarkozy answered: "Back home! The future of an Afghan is to participate in the reconstruction of Afghanistan."

16 DECEMBER The Sangatte humanitarian emergency shelter closes its doors. Thousands of people become homeless with no food, shelter, or care provided by the French authorities.

2003

14 MARCH The German Chancellor, head of a Social Democrat-Greens coalition, announces an in-depth reform of the social welfare system and the labor market. The so-called "Agenda 2010" involves drastic cuts in pensions, unemployment benefits and national health insurance. The new legislation makes it much easier for companies to lay off their employees.

15 JANUARY The automated fingerprint identification system, EURODAC, begins operating in all EU member-states, plus in Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. This database has been created to identify asylum seekers and irregular border-crossers, and to determine whether they have already applied for asylum in another member-state or have illegally transited through another state ("principle of first contact").

18 FEBRUARY Signing of the Dublin II Regulation that aims to rapidly determine the member-state responsible for an asylum claim–the state in which an asylum seeker first enters the EU–and to provide for the transfer of an asylum seeker to that state.

2004

1 MAY The European Union expands to include Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

29 OCTOBER The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe is signed by representatives of the then 25 members-states. Ten countries–Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Luxembourg, Spain, Poland, the UK, Czech Republic, and Portugal–decide to submit the endorsement of this Constitution to their citizens by referendum.

14 MARCH José Luis Zapatero brings the Spanish socialist party to power 8 years after the defeat of the former social democratic Prime Minister Felipe González.

14 OCTOBER At a summit of 13 center-left heads of government in Hungary, Tony Blair warns that a Labour third term in the UK would see a clampdown on people "languishing on benefits."

11 JULY Twenty days after rescuing 37 passengers from a dinghy sinking in international waters between Libya and Lampedusa, Cap Anamur, a ship belonging to a German aid agency, is finally authorized "for humanitarian reasons" to dock in Sicily. During these 3 weeks, Italy, Germany and Malta handed over the responsibility to one another, insisting that it was impossible to meet for fear of creating a "dangerous precedent which would lead to numerous abuses."

26 OCTOBER The European agency Frontex is created to manage the cooperation between national border guards and to secure the external borders of the EU. The main aim of Frontex operations is to detect and stop illegal immigration.

2005

29 MAY French voters reject the EU proposed Constitution sending shockwaves across Europe. The Dutch reject it 3 days later. Although it was ratified by a majority of member-states, the project is hence abandoned.

1 JANUARY Hartz IV, the last of a series of labor market reforms in Germany, takes effect. "Mini-jobs" are created. While these reforms contribute to a gradual reduction in the unemployment rate, they also result in a wide increase of part-time work. They also introduce contractual relations, with economic sanctions, between "job-seekers" and "job-centers"–the idea being that the poor look for work only when they are no longer unconditionally assisted by the state.

22 APRIL Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, talks about "the issue of asylum." He proposes to "tighten the asylum system further" so as to be "fair to those who genuinely need asylum and who use the correct channels."

5 MAY In the UK, the New Labour wins a historic third term at the General Election, albeit with a reduced majority.

7 MAY Spain declares an amnesty for about 700,000 illegal immigrants. On the February 7, Jose Luis Zapatero's government opened a three-months qualification, during which illegal workers and their employers can apply for residency and work permits. "We can feel very satisfied," says the labor minister, Jesús Caldera. "Almost 700,000 jobs brought out of the black economy–that represents 80% to 90% of all such jobs held by immigrants in Spain."

22 NOVEMBER Angela Merkel, leader of the CDU, succeeds Gerhard Schröder. She becomes the first woman Chancellor of Germany.

22 APRIL Tony Blair, British Prime Minister, talks about "the issue of asylum." He proposes to "tighten the asylum system further" in order to be "fair to those who genuinely need asylum and who use the correct channels."

7 OCTOBER In Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in Morocco, the anti-migrant border-fence is assaulted by hundreds of people. Caught between Spanish rubber bullets and Moroccan gunfire, about 15 migrants died and more than 50 are injured. The same day, a group of about 500 men, women and children are found in the Sahara by Doctors Without Borders. After being expelled from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, they had been brought by the Moroccan police to the desert and abandoned there without food or water.

2006

European Council
Conseil européen

15 MARCH Tony Blair's controversial school reform is adopted by MPs, but only because of Tories' support. Schools are encouraged to "acquire a trust" and thus be funded by private sponsors (businesses, charities, faith groups, etc.). With this law, the state vows to become a less important direct provider of services and, instead, calls for more public-private partnerships.

4 JULY In Slovakia, after the social democratic party (SMER-SD) wins the general election with only 29.1% of the votes, its leader, Robert Fico, forms a coalition government with a nationalist and a right-wing populist party to become the Prime Minister. The Assembly of the Party of European Socialists (PES) reacts by suspending temporarily SMER's application to join the PES. During the campaign, Robert Fico pledges to meet the requirements–spending cuts and market deregulations–that would enable his country to quickly enter the Eurozone.

2007

1 JANUARY Bulgaria and Romania enter the EU.

16 JULY In the USA, following a major increase in defaults on mortgage payments, the investment bank Bear Stearns announces that two of its hedge funds have collapsed. The news produces cascading sales of mortgage-related securities that will eventually lead to the so-called "subprime crisis."

13 DECEMBER The Treaty of Lisbon is signed. For the first time, an accord gives member-states the explicit legal right to leave the European Union, and details the procedure to do so. The treaty includes a great number of reforms that appeared in the Constitution rejected by the French and the Dutch two years earlier.

5 JUNE Three weeks before succeeding Tony Blair as British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, then British Chancellor of the Exchequer, gives a speech promising "British Jobs for British Workers."

21 DECEMBER Schengen border-free zone is enlarged to include Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Later they will be joined by Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

2008

15 SEPTEMBER The international investment bank Lehman Brothers goes bankrupt. The ECB releases 125 billion euro in one week in order to prevent the collapse of the European banks hit by the subprime crisis.

29 SEPTEMBER The Irish economy is the first to go in recession. Ireland's deficit reaches 7.2% of the GDP, far above the limit of 3% imposed by the Maastricht Treaty. The Irish government announces that it will provide an unlimited guarantee on all deposits and loans in order to avoid a bank run.

8 OCTOBER Responding to major drops in the stock market during the first week of October, the government of the United Kingdom puts up a 850 billion euro package to rescue British banks.

9 OCTOBER The Icelandic government nationalizes the three main banks of the country and warns of the risk of a national bankruptcy.

CHRISTIE'S
LEHMAN BROTHERS

7 FEBRUARY Because of the violations of the rights of asylum seekers committed by Athens' government, Norway announces it will stop transferring any of them to Greece under the Dublin II Regulation. Finland announces a similar move two months later. Germany and Sweden only stop the transfer of unaccompanied children.

22 SEPTEMBER French authorities dismantle Calais "Jungle" camp. After the closure of Sangatte humanitarian emergency shelter, thousands of asylum seekers remained there, homeless, camping in the woods near the harbor of Calais and waiting for the opportunity to reach the UK.

2009

23 JULY Faced with a major banking, monetary and fiscal crisis, Iceland officially files for EU membership in the hope that joining the Eurozone will stabilize its economy.

4 OCTOBER The PASOK wins with an absolute majority in the Greek general election. George Papandreou, the leader of the social democrats, becomes prime minister. Just eleven days after taking office, however, he publicly announces that the previous government has hidden the actual state of his country's finances: the real deficit amounts to 12.7% of the GDP. This announcement marks the beginning of what will be a downward spiral for the Greek economy, caught in the vicious circle of recession and austerity.

8 DECEMBER Financial markets tumble after Fitch downgrades Greece's credit rating.

4 OCTOBER The PASOK wins with an absolute majority in the Greek general election. George Papandreou, the leader of the social democrats, becomes the Prime Minister. Just eleven days after taking office, however, he publicly announces that the previous government had hidden the actual state of his country's finances: the real deficit amounts to 12.7% of the GDP. This announcement marks the beginning of what will be a downward spiral for the Greek economy, caught in the vicious circle of recession and austerity.

2010

3 FEBRUARY The European Commission backs Greece's Stability and Growth Programme and urges it to cut its overall public sector wage bill.

15 MARCH The financial crisis turns into a European sovereign debt crisis. Two weeks after–and only after–the Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou bows to international pressure and announced a far-reaching austerity program, European Finance Ministers agree to the technicalities of what will be the first rescue package in the history of the monetary union.

18 MARCH George Papandreou warns that Greece will not be able to cut deficit if borrowing costs remain as high as they are–about 10%, and that the country may have to go to the IMF.

15 APRIL Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, says there is no possibility of a Greek default, and no doubt that Germany will participate in the bail-out despite serious objections from parts of German society.

27 APRIL Standard and Poor's downgrades Greece's debt ratings below investment grade to junk bond status. The ratings agency also downgrades the Portuguese's debt and issues a negative outlook warning that further downgrade to junk bond status is likely.

3 MAY The first Greek Memorandum of Understanding is finally signed after it was postponed for about two months because of some European leaders' deep reluctance to bail the Greeks out.

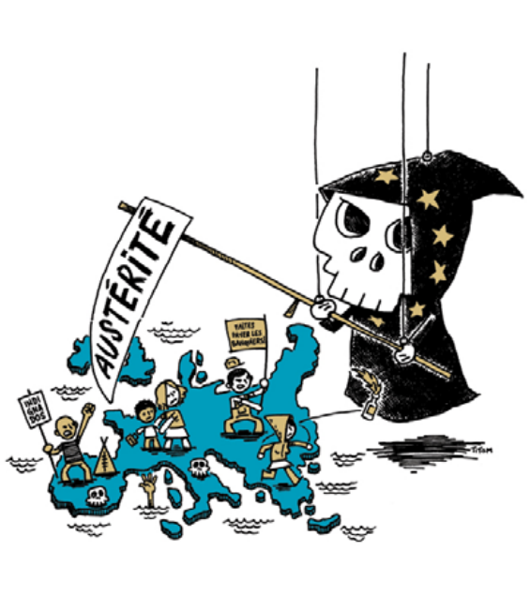
9 MAY The 27 EU member-states approve the creation of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) to "safeguard financial stability in Europe by providing financial assistance" to Eurozone states in economic difficulty. The EFSF is authorized to borrow up to 440 billion euro that may be combined with loans up to 60 billion euro from the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, and up to 250 billion euro from the IMF, to obtain a total crisis fund of up to 750 billion euro.

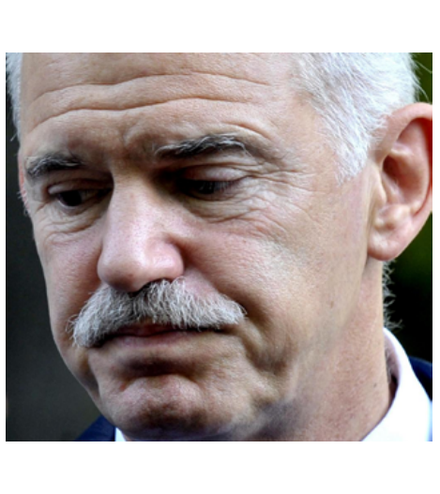
12 MAY After Zapatero had promised he would "not make workers pay for the crisis", his government, under the pressure of the EU and investors, makes a spectacular political U-turn. The Spanish Prime Minister takes drastic austerity measures to reduce the deficit. He announces spending cuts of 15 billion euro over 2 years, including a 5% cut in civil-service pay, stagnant pension benefits, and 6 billion euro reduction in public sector investments. Zapatero expresses his regrets about the "obvious social impact" of such measures, while the other leaders of the Eurozone, anxious to avert a Spanish debt crisis, welcome them with relief.

22 NOVEMBER An emergency session gathering European Finance Ministers, the ECB and the IMF is held. After having put up 110 billion euro to rescue Greece from a sovereign debt default few months earlier, they agree to bail out Ireland up to 90 billion euro in order to "safeguard financial stability in the EU and in the euro area." This rescue package will entail a three-year austerity programme in Ireland.

11 MAY After Labour loses the General Election, Gordon Brown resigns as the Prime Minister. The leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, succeeds him.

12 MAY After Zapatero had promised he would "not make workers pay for the crisis," his government, under the pressure of the EU and investors, makes a spectacular political U-turn. The Spanish Prime Minister takes drastic austerity measures to reduce the deficit. He announces spending cuts of 15 billion euro over 2 years, including a 5% cut in civil-service pay, stagnant pension benefits, and 6 billion euro reduction in public sector investments. Zapatero expresses his regrets about the "obvious social impact" of such measures, while the other leaders of the Eurozone, anxious to avert a Spanish debt crisis, welcome them with relief.





17 DECEMBER 2010 Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old jobless Tunisian, burns himself to death after police brutally seized the fruits and vegetables he was selling in the street. Two days later, hundreds of young Tunisians gather to protest. The Arab spring begins.

2011

6 APRIL José Sócrates, the resigning Prime Minister, announces that Portugal, facing a status of bankruptcy, will request financial assistance from the European Union and the IMF. One year earlier, before the country became a victim of pressure from bond traders, rating agencies, and speculators, Portugal had one of the best rates of economic recovery in the EU.

16 MAY The Eurozone leaders officially approve a three-year 78 billion euro bailout programme for Portugal, which becomes the third country after Greece and Ireland to receive emergency funds. Two months later, the new Prime Minister, Pedro Passos Coelho, will announce a wide package of austerity measures. In the following year, the Portuguese unemployment rate will rise from 12.3% to 17.3%.

6 JULY Moody's downgrades Portugal's credit rating to junk status. It also speculates that the country could request a second bailout just as Greece did, but Portugal will not. It will exit the Troïka's bailout on May 2014.

12 MARCH Portugal is the first European country to develop an "indignant" movement: *Geração a rasca* ("Generation left behind"). The March 12 Movement, organized without political parties or trade unions support, sees more than 300,000 citizens who define themselves as "non-partisan, secular, and peaceful," protest against austerity in the Portuguese streets. This demonstration, the biggest since the 1974 Revolution, further undermines the already shaky legitimacy of the socialist government of José Sócrates who resigns eleven days later.

15 MAY The Indignados movement emerges in Spain. The main motives of the movement are the influence of financial institutions over policy-making and the austerity measures adopted as a response to Spain's worst economic crisis in decades. The so-called 15-M is launched with gatherings of more than 130,000 Spanish citizens throughout the country.

20 NOVEMBER A snap election is held in Spain. Reeling from the austerity measures taken by the Zapatero government, the PSOE endures its worst result ever in a general election since the Spanish transition to democracy. The conservative Popular Party receives an absolute majority of seats and Mariano Rajoy becomes Prime Minister.

JANUARY Uprising in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen and Lebanon.

14 JANUARY President Ben Ali flees Tunisia.

11 FEBRUARY In Egypt, the President Hosni Mubarak stands down and hands power to a military council.

17 FEBRUARY Protest movement spreads to Libya.

13 MARCH Human rights activists warn international media that Iran's Islamic regime is using child soldiers to repress anti-government demonstrations.

18 MARCH Protest movement spreads to Syria. Security forces kill at least five protesters in the city of Daraa.

27 MARCH "Left-to-die boat case": 72 migrants on a rubber boat are left to drift for 14 days in the Mediterranean, although Coast Guards and NATO military forces were informed of their distress. Only 9 passengers survived.

22 APRIL Fearing the incremental arrivals of Libyan and Tunisian migrants from Italy, France looks to restore border controls within the Schengen area.

28 APRIL At least 500 pro-democracy protesters are believed to have been killed by the Assad government security forces since the beginning of the uprising. Thousands of civilians have been arrested and many have gone missing. A divided UN security council fails to agree on a statement condemning the Assad regime's violence.

29 APRIL In Syria, Hamza al-Khatib, 13, is arrested by the security forces. His mutilated corpse will be released to his family one month later.

30 APRIL NATO airstrike kills one of Gaddafi's sons and three of his grandsons in Tripoli.

9 MAY EU imposes an arms embargo on Syria, but doesn't penalize Assad personally. Tanks enter Homs.

10 MAY Syrians start to flee to neighboring countries, especially Lebanon.

19 MAY After two months of brutal repression of pro-democracy protesters and civilians, the USA and the EU impose sanctions on Bashar al-Assad for the first time. President Obama urges Assad to lead the democratic transition "or get out of the way."

17 JUNE The Italian government signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Libyan National Transitional Council. This document focuses on measures to reduce illegal immigration. The two countries commit to cooperate on the repatriation of migrants.

27 JUNE The ICC issues an international arrest warrant for Gaddafi for charges concerning crimes against humanity.

20 OCTOBER After a long manhunt, Muammar Gaddafi is captured by a militia and is beaten and stabbed to death.

2012

9 JUNE After the collapse of an enormous housing bubble that plunged Spain into a severe crisis, the Eurogroup agrees to provide up to 110 billion euro to the Fund for Orderly Bank Restructuring to the Spanish government. Like the rescue packages granted to others member-states facing economic difficulties, this bailout programme will be subject to stringent control from the Troikaeuro austerity measures having to be strictly and rapidly applied.

25 JUNE The Cypriot government requests financial assistance from the EU after the ratings agency Fitch downgrades bonds issued by Cyprus and disqualifies them for being accepted as collateral by the European Central Bank.

27 SEPTEMBER The European Union establishes the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). The objective of this intergovernmental organization is to safeguard Eurozone and provide instant access to financial assistance programs for its member-states burdened with financial difficulties.

6 MAY In France, François Hollande, leader of the Socialist Party, wins the presidential election. Though elected on the promise that he would renegotiate the Lisbon Treaty so as to combine growth with fiscal discipline, he rapidly bows to Angela Merkel's refusal to modify her priorities. Moreover, barely a month after being elected, Hollande visits Athens in order to urge Greek voters to choose the Conservative leader Antónis Samarás over Alexis Tsipras, the candidate of the anti-austerity left. "If the impression is given that the Greeks want to move away from the commitments that were taken […], there will be [European] countries that will want to end the presence of Greece in the Eurozone," warns Hollande.

15 SEPTEMBER In Portugal, after the conservative Prime Minister, Pedro Passos Coelho, announces an increase in workers' social security contributions amounting to a net monthly wage, the movement of angry citizens formed the previous year gathers about one million people in a demonstration throughout the country. Their motto: "The Troïka can go to hell! We want our lives!"

17 DECEMBER Greece completes the three-year-long construction of a ten-kilometer-long wall along its border with Turkey to stop the entrance of migrants. From now on, the only way for migrants to reach Greece is the perilous path across the Aegean Sea.

2013

16 MARCH After tough negotiations between Cyprus and the Troika over the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, a 10 billion euro bailout is officially accepted by the Eurogroup, the European Commission, the ECB and the IMF.

15 DECEMBER Ireland is the first country to exit the Eurozone bailout program. The Minister of Finance Michael Noonan describes the crisis as the "biggest catastrophe" in the country "since The Famine." "The real heroes and heroines are the Irish people," Noonan says.

20 JUNE Amnesty International reports the use of torture on asylum seekers and migrants in Libyan detention camps, partly financed by the EU within its framework against illegal migration policy and border security cooperation with third-countries. Libya holds thousands of migrants, including children, indefinitely, without any hope of release. The NGO decries the deplorable conditions in these so-called "holding centers."

3 OCTOBER A boat with about 500 migrants on board sinks near the island of Lampedusa. 366 people die. This is the first in a long list of tragic shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea.

18 OCTOBER The Italian government launches the *Operation Mare Nostrum*, a search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean. By rapidly detecting boats in distress and bringing help to their passengers, the Operation saved over 170,000 migrants in one year.

2014

17 JANUARY In Spain, Pablo Iglesias officially launches Podemos, a political party that claims to be the political translation of the 15-M movement.

25 MAY With the European Parliamentary election, the radical, or anti-austerity, left becomes visible within the EU political frame. In Spain, Podemos wins 5 seats, getting a much higher score than what polls had predicted. In Greece, Syriza becomes the largest party with 26% of the votes. The same day, Syriza's Réna Doúrou is elected Regional Governor of Attica (the vast metropolitan area of Athens). This victory marks a turning point in Syriza's rise to power.

26 JUNE In Spain, the manifesto entitled Guanyem Barcelona ("Let's Win Barcelona") is published. The first signatories–social activists, university professors, journalists–explain why they decided to move from the ranks of the social movements to the electoral arena: "The hour has come to reclaim the institutions so that they serve the majority of the people and the common good." From Barcelona City Hall, they hope to orchestrate a "democratic rebellion" that would serve as an example for Spain and Europe as a whole.

31 OCTOBER After Italy failed to obtain funds from other EU member-states to continue *Operation Mare Nostrum*, it put an end to the operation. Italy could not handle the cost of *Mare Nostrum* beyond its first year, which proved too expensive (9 millions euros per month) for one country to support by itself.

1 NOVEMBER *Mare Nostrum* is superseded by the *Operation Triton*, a border security operation conducted by the EU agency Frontex. This operation, with a budget four times less than the one dedicated to *Mare Nostrum* by Italy, is far less effective than the one it replaced. Compared to the same period in 2014, the *New York Times* reports that early 2015 saw a 1,600% increase in the number of migrants who drowned while attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

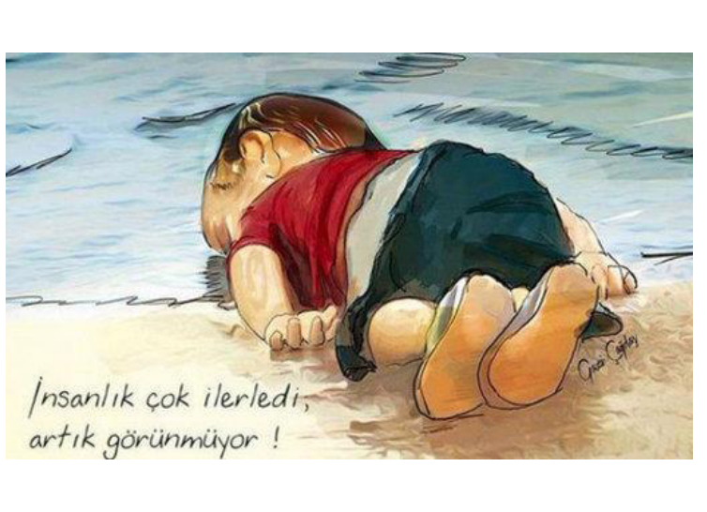
2015

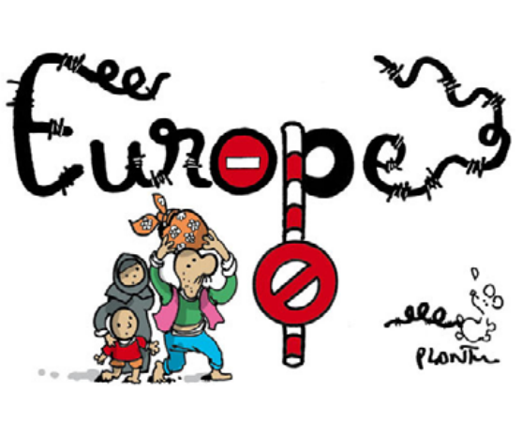
12 MARCH Iceland announces that it has officially dropped its bid to join the European Union. "Iceland's interests are better served outside the European Union," the Foreign Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson writes on his website.

13 MARCH European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker calls on European governments to show solidarity with Greece after the German Minister of Finance, Wolgang Schäuble, warns of "an accidental" Grexit from the Eurozone–a Grexident: "As the responsibility, the possibility to decide what happens only lies with Greece, and because we don't exactly know what those in charge in Greece are doing, we can't rule it out," says Schäuble.

5 JULY The Greek government organizes a referendum to decide whether Greek people have to accept the bailout conditions–a new package of austerity measures–dictated by the country's creditors. More than 60% of the voters answer Oxi ("No"). Describing the vote as a "historic decision," Alexis Tsipras says the rejected package amounted to "blackmail for the acceptance on our part of severe and humiliating austerity without end and without the prospect of ever prospering socially and economically." However, barely a week later, the prime minister will stun his constituents by agreeing to the even harsher program that Athens' European partners have devised in the wake of – and in retaliation against–the referendum.

11 JULY During a meeting of the Eurogroup, Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Minister of Finance, proposes a plan that would require Greece to transfer 50 billion euro state assets into a trust fund in Luxembourg in order to pay down its debt and stay in the Eurozone. The yields of the privatizations should not pass through Athens but directly go to the Greece creditors.





25 JANUARY Syriza, the anti-austerity party of the left wins the General Election in Greece, just short of an outright majority. Alexis Tsipras becomes Prime Minister and vows to end the "vicious cycle of austerity."

24 MAY Ada Colau, the anti-evictions activist, leader of *Barcelona en Comú* ("Barcelona in Common"), wins the municipal election and becomes the Mayor of Barcelona, the second largest city of Spain. Across the country, leftist candidates stemming from the 15-M movement win 5 City Councils elections. Manuela Carmena, a former judge and an indignada leader of the coalition Ahora Madrid, becomes the Mayor of the capital, Madrid.

5 JULY The Greek government organizes a referendum to decide whether Greek people have to accept the bailout conditions–a new package of austerity measures–dictated by the country's creditors. More than 60% of the voters answer Oxi ("No"). Describing the vote as a "historic decision," Alexis Tsipras says the rejected package amounted to "blackmail for the acceptance on our part of severe and humiliating austerity without an end and without the prospect of ever prospering socially and economically." However, barely a week later, the prime minister will stun his constituents by agreeing to the even harsher program that Athens' European partners devised in the wake of–and in a retaliation against–the referendum.

28 AUGUST Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, proposes to create a "network of refuge cities" in Europe. In the first 24 hours after Barcelona's City Hall published an email address for citizens who want to help, about 1,200 offers of assistance will be registered, from housing to language lessons.

12 SEPTEMBER In the UK, Jeremy Corbyn, the candidate of the left wing of the Labour party wins the leadership contest with an overwhelming majority of votes. During the campaign, he has claimed that the party needed to break with the New Labour era of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. People are "fed up with the injustice and the inequality" of Britain, proclaims Corbyn after his victory.

20 SEPTEMBER After Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras agrees to a crushing Eurozone-led austerity program, the so-called Third Memorandum of Agreement, and announces his resignation on the 20th of August, a snap general election is held in Greece. It results in a new and unexpectedly large victory for Syriza.

25 OCTOBER In Poland, the right and the far right win all the parliamentary seats in the General Election. The left totally disappears from the Parliament.

26 NOVEMBER In Portugal, António Costa, leader of the Partido Socialista, becomes the Prime Minister. Although his party came second in the General Election, Costa succeeded, much to everyone's surprise, in forming an alliance with the other parties of the left (the Communist, the Green and the Left Bloc): while these parties did not enter Costa's cabinet, they committed to support the new Prime Minister in the Parliament, and thereby granting his government the majority. As for his agenda, the new Prime Minister has cautiously pledged to tamper with the austerity programs imposed on Portugal by its EU partners.

20 DECEMBER The Spanish General Election marks the end of the hegemony of the two establishment parties over the political landscape. Together, the ruling conservative party, Partido Popular, and the PSOE, its socialist opponent, gather barely 50% of the votes. Podemos ranks third and receives over 5 million votes.

REFUGEES WELCOME

EU - Turkey
Türkiye - AB

12 APRIL More than 400 people died when their boat sank off the coast of Libya.

18 APRIL 800 migrants die in another tragic boat disaster in the Mediterranean Sea between Libya and Italy. Children between the ages of 10 and 12 were on board.

30 APRIL 1,300 migrants die at the external EU borders in the period of only a month.

11 MAY Amnesty International reports abduction, torture and rape of migrants in Libya.

23 JUNE In opposition to the Dublin Regulation, Hungary stops receiving the asylum applicants who were fingerprinted in its territory and later crossed the border to another EU country.

13 JULY Hungary begins erecting a 175-kilometers razor-wire fence along its border with Serbia.

4 AUGUST Bulgaria builds the final part of a large razor-wire fence, begun in November 2013, along its border with Turkey. The country used the 15 millions euros it received from the EU for border protection to erect this wall adorned with watchtowers and thermic cameras, with a total cost of 46 millions euros. Bulgaria is one of the poorest countries in Europe.

5 AUGUST France erects new razor-wire fences and installs extra security cameras at Calais to prevent migrants from trying to reach Britain. More than 3,000 refugees live in the so-called "Jungle."

20 AUGUST Slovakia announces that it will only accept 200 Christian migrants.

24 AUGUST Germany decides to suspend the Dublin Regulation regarding the processing of Syrian refugees' asylum applications, even if this is not the country where they entered the EU.

27 AUGUST The bodies of 71 refugees are found in the back of a truck that was abandoned on a highway in Austria.

28 AUGUST Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, proposes to create a "network of refuge cities" in Europe. In the first 24 hours after Barcelona's city hall published an email address for citizens who want to help, it receives 1,200 offers of assistance, from housing to language lessons.

2 SEPTEMBER The shocking image of a drowned three-year-old Syrian migrant, Aylan Kurdi, upsets Europe. The young boy lying facedown on a Turkish beach brings visibility to the desperate plight of refugees.

3 SEPTEMBER A wave of sympathy for refugees in civil society, triggered by Aylan's picture, compels responses from governments in Western Europe. The slogan "Refugees Welcome" goes viral, especially in Germany.

4 SEPTEMBER The Hungarian government sets a trap for hundreds of refugees stuck in Budapest for days. Police officers make the migrants believe that a train is going to take them to Austria, but the convoy stops a few kilometers further near a refugee camp where all the passengers are locked up by force.

5 SEPTEMBER Hundreds of German citizens welcome–with friendly messages, applause, food, clothes, and gifts–thousands of refugees in Munich and Frankfurt train stations.

6 SEPTEMBER In one weekend, 18,000 refugees arrive in Germany.

7 SEPTEMBER In France, François Hollande agrees to admit an extra 24,000 refugees over two years, but requires a stricter distinction between asylum seekers and economic migrants at the external EU borders. Regarding economic migrants, the socialist French President says: "We can understand them, but not welcome them."

11 SEPTEMBER A video, filmed by an Austrian volunteer, shows migrants being fed "like animals in a pen" in a refugee camp in Hungary. The refugees scramble to grab food thrown above a fence by police officers wearing helmets and hygiene masks.

14 SEPTEMBER Greece and Italy agree to the installation of hotspots on their external borders. The aim of these centers is to identify and fingerprint asylum seekers, and to filter out migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean in search of better economic circumstances.

22 SEPTEMBER EU interior ministers approve a controversial plan to relocate 120,000 migrants across the continent over the next two years. Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic vote against these mandatory quotas. Finland abstains from the vote.

20 OCTOBER The German Bundestag enacts the Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures. This new law substitutes benefits in kind for cash benefits during the asylum process and deportation procedures are sped up for those who have been disallowed. Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo are added to the list of safe countries of origin, which means that their citizens no longer have a chance to obtain asylum in Germany.

11 NOVEMBER Slovenia erects razor-wire fence along its border with Croatia.

15 NOVEMBER Witold Waszczykowski, the foreign minister of the new Poland's right wing government, says that Syrian refugees arriving in Europe should form an army to "liberate" their home country instead of "drinking coffee in the cafes of Berlin" while western soldiers face ISIS.

18 NOVEMBER Macedonia starts to erect a razor-wire fence at its border with Greece.

25 NOVEMBER Following the Paris terror attacks, Poland's new Prime minister announces his country will refuse to take in its EU compulsory quota of 4,500 refugees.

29 NOVEMBER To stem the flow of refugee leaving the Turkish coasts to reach Europe, the EU offers Turkey 3 billion euros and the resumption of negotiations on its membership. In return, Ankara promises to tighten controls on its maritime border.

8 DECEMBER Finland's government announces that it will require asylum seekers to work for free and to acknowledge a "national curriculum" on Finnish culture and society, highlighting women and children's rights. It will also reassess living conditions in the refugees' home countries twice a year and possibly cancel residence permits if it decides that the situation has improved.

15 DECEMBER The European Commission presents its proposal for a new European Border and Coast Guard Agency that would replace Frontex.

24 DECEMBER In Germany, arsonists burn down a brand new asylum hostel that provided for housing 120 people. In 2015, the country witnessed more than 220 far-right attacks against refugees.

31 DECEMBER In her New Year address, Angela Merkel urges Germans to see refugee arrivals as "an opportunity"; "Countries have always benefited from successful immigration, both economically and socially," the German chancellor says. Germany welcomed 1.09 million refugees in one year.

2016

18 FEBRUARY The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calls for its affluent members to ease up on austerity and spend more on public investments to boost growth.

AUSTERIDADE!

17 FEBRUARY While the Portuguese and Spanish socialist respectively govern with popular support and enter into negotiations with the anti-austerity left in their respective countries, in France, Manuel Valls' nominally socialist government presents a blueprint for a labor law reform that proves far more socially regressive than any project ever elaborated by the French right. Coupled with the open-ended state of emergency imposed by François Hollande after the November attacks on Paris – and the suppression of civil liberties that it entails – the French government's new efforts to make the country more "competitive" signal that for some European socialists, breaking with the spirit of the "third way" is not part of the agenda.

1 JANUARY On New Year's Eve, a wave of sex attacks and robberies committed by migrants in Cologne and other German cities shocks Germany. More than 1,000 complaints will be filed.

4 JANUARY Sweden imposes identity controls at its border with Denmark to restrict migrants. Denmark does the same at its border with Germany.

21 JANUARY The Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, warns that the refugee crisis could put a definitive end to Schengen in the short-term.

22 JANUARY Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Foreign Minister, says that refugees who refuse to attend special integration training courses may see their social benefits cut. The day before, the Chancellor said that Austria would take measures to reduce the number of refugees.

25 JANUARY The EU threatens Greece with expulsion from Schengen Area if Athens doesn't do more to halt the influx of refugees from Turkey.

26 JANUARY The Danish Parliament enacts a bill that allows police to seize refugees' assets. The migrants will only be allowed to keep their items of sentimental value and 10,000 kroner ($1,465). Anything above this will be confiscated to cover the cost of asylum seekers' treatment by the state.

28 JANUARY Anders Ygeman, Sweden's Interior Minister, announces that his country is going to expel 80,000 asylum seekers.

1 FEBRUARY In Belgium, for the first time ever, a European government charters a plane with some one hundred asylum seekers on board. The passengers are all volunteers for repatriation to Baghdad. A few days earlier, one of them said on a TV report: "I'd rather die in Iraq than stay in Belgium."

2 FEBRUARY Controversy in Belgium after Carl Decaluwé, governor of West Flanders, fearing that the port of Zeebrugge would become a "new Calais", gave people of good will the warning: "Do not feed the migrants, or more will come."

3 FEBRUARY Germany tightens its immigration laws to harden the reception of asylum seekers, facilitate their deportation, and introduce tougher criminal penalties. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia are added to the list of safe countries of origin.

6 FEBRUARY In Prague, a social center that offered Czech language lessons to refugees is firebombed by about 30 anti-Muslims protesters. More than 20 people were inside the building.

11 FEBRUARY After Germany, Greece and Turkey ask for help, NATO deploys ships in the Aegean Sea together with the EU in order to stem the influx of migrants.

IMAGE CREDITS [1951] Signature of the Geneva Convention: © UN Archives [1957] Poster celebrating the Treaty of Rome: © Europa Grafica – European Commission [1973] No Gas: © David Falconer/U.S. National Archives [1979] European Monetary System: © Plantu [1981] Celebration of François Mitterrand's victory: © MORVANS/SIPA [1997] Economic Systems: © Gamble [1999] 'Sorry! The lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock': © Banksy [2002] Destruction of the Sangatte refugee camp: © Sylvain Lefevre/Getty images [2006] Robert Fico: © European Council [2010] Austerity: © Titom [2011] PSOE flags on the street: AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza [2012] Austeridade: AP Photo/Francisco Seco [2013] Coffins of refugees died off Lampedusa: © Reuters/Antonio Parrinello [2015] Father and son in Lesbos, Greece: © Alessandro Penso; 'Europe': © Plantu; Refugee holding a photo of Angela Merkel: © AFP