I.

European leaders cannot agree on contributions to the EU budget. Northern European countries do not want to pay more to fill the budget hole that will be left by Brexit.

And Italy is less than a week away from the elections. Racism, immigration and violence dominate the electoral campaign.

Also, in this issue: Members of the European Parliament ask China to release Swedish bookseller from Hong Kong.

II.

Welcome to the Europe Magazine.

Brexit will mean less money for the European Union.
A cut in the budget for agricultural and cohesion policies is inevitable. The words of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, during the summit that brought together heads of state and government of the countries of the European Union last Friday.

Jean-Claude Juncker, Pres. European Commission
We will have to cut back on agricultural and cohesion spending. I do not like it very much, but it's the reality.

Portugal, represented by the prime minister António Costa, was against.

António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal
It cannot be at the expense of these policies that the new policies will be financed. It would, moreover, be wrong to make the new spoil what is already there.

António Costa said he was available to increase the national contribution to the Community budget. It is that with the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union it is necessary to fill this hole in the budget.
One of the chances is that countries will give a green light to the rise of the current ceiling of 1% of Gross National Income, as António Tajani, President of the European Parliament, explained.

Antonio Tajani, Pres. European Parliament
1.3 is the European Parliament's proposal, 1.3% of the European Union's GDP to 27, of course. And we also want our own resources.

And with us from Brussels, is Victor Ângelo, a resident commentator of Magazine Europe and an international consultant based in the Belgian capital.

Victor, it will not be easy to reach a consensus on this proposal of the European Parliament to raise the European contributions with the exit from the Kingdom. Especially the Northern European countries that do not want to pay more. Are we here in an impasse?

Budgetary issues in Europe are very difficult issues. It is not easy to approve a budget as vast as the European budget. We are talking about 140 billion euros for the period 2021-2027. It is an amount that is not very easy to distribute by rubrics. So, there is not only the issue of contributions, but there is also the issue of the distribution of budget funds across the different lines of use. And on the other hand, there is also the very important question of who is contributing, who are the net contributors and who are the beneficiaries, so to speak, of European budgetary issues. On the other hand, leaving the UK creates a huge hole in European Union revenue. We are probably talking about a loss of contribution of around 28 billion euros a year.

And how will that missing contribution be restored?

There are several hypotheses. One of the chances is to increase the contributions of the richest countries and some of them have already said that they would be willing to do so. This possibility, however, is heavily opposed by other net contributor countries, notably the smaller countries, which are rich countries and therefore contribute to the European budget without receiving counterparts for this contribution. This is the case, for example, in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is ahead of a group of small rich countries that would not like to see the European budget grow. Another option would be the reduction of expenditure and, in particular, expenditure in areas which have received large sums over the years, and agriculture in particular.

And what other moments would you highlight at this informal summit of leaders of the European Union?

Several aspects were discussed, and I would say one of them was certainly a discussion on priorities. The emphasis will certainly be on defense, security and development support in Africa in the coming years - not because of the issue of development, but above all with the control of immigration and prevent African immigrants from coming to the continent European. And I would also say that during the discussions on budgetary matters it was quite clear that France, for example, will take advantage of these difficulties that are currently in the process of leaving the UK to try to gain a greater voice and a stronger voice within the EU. President Emmanuel Macron will mobilize the budgetary issue to say fundamentally that: We are willing to increase our contribution, but we want certain countries of the European Union, which are at present diverging from the political and from the point of view of the democratic values vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, we want these countries to be back in line with the democratic principles that Europe stands for.

Victor, it was also clear that heads of state and government have doubts about the method of choosing the next President of the European Commission.

Government leaders want them to decide next time to choose the candidate for the

presidency of the European Commission, that is, the person who will replace Jean-Claude Juncker, and then the European Parliament to vote the name that the leaders of Have proposed. And there will certainly be a conflict between this way of doing things and the way it was proposed to do the previous week by the European Parliament.
It has also become clear that European government leaders do not want Brussels to be a super-president of Europe. Here for some time, Jean-Claude Juncker had proposed that the posts of President of the European Council and President of the European Commission be brought together in one person and it was evident at last week's meeting that heads of state and government are not in a none willing to have a personality that has powers as vast as would be the powers that would result from the joining of these two positions.

III.

In Italy, one week after the elections, acts of violence and xenophobia mark campaigns. Speech of the Northern League, a far-right party, is dominated by anti-immigration words, as Antena 1 journalist Raquel Morão Lopes tells us.

[It was heralded as the moment of now or never. Fifty thousand supporters of the Northern League responded to the call and occupied the square at the foot of the Milan Cathedral to hear a speech in which the immigrant theme was chorus.
"Who instead of fleeing from war brings the war to our cities with the Salvini Government wins a one-way ticket to the place from which it came."
Matteo Salvini, leader of the Northern League, has lived up to what has been the motto of the campaign: first, the Italians.
"With five million Italians in poverty and three million in unemployment, I open the doors of my house, but whoever chooses the League chooses a clear concept: First the Italians."
Salvini left a word to rivals in these elections. To the 5-star movement, the anti-system party: "There are those who talk and there are those who do".
To the leader of the left-center democratic party: "I cannot wait to get the 4th of March to send Matteo Renzi and his friends home."
And as for Silvio Berlusconi, not even a reference. Express at least.
The leader of the Italian Forces party has said that he will choose the next prime minister.
Matteo Salvino is standing on the ground, he is confident that among the right-center coalition countries, the Northern League will be the most voted and thus, with one third, one gospel and one Italian constitution in hand, he anticipated the oath of office.]

Victor, we have witnessed a series of violent demonstrations, campaigns of extreme right-wing parties, but also of antifascism demonstrations. Students chanting words of order against these groups go out into the streets. What hope can the young Italians have in the future of the country?
If young Italians come from the south of the country, they have very little chance of

finding jobs and they have very little chance of forming a family and preparing their future. If they come from northern Italy, they have far more possibilities. In other words, Italy continues to be an extremely divided country between the north, where the industries are concentrated, where the creation is concentrated, so to speak, economic and where wealth is concentrated, and on the other hand, the south, which is still paralyzed and continues to have immense Difficulties in attracting capital and attracting investments that modernize that part of the country. And this kind of dichotomy needs to be solved, it's not currently on the agenda...

And what else can we say about this campaign?
It is an extremely violent campaign, deeply inspired by racism and it is also a tragedy because it shows that Europe has failed to solve the problem of the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants to Italy and at this moment this lack of capacity European Union to solve the problem of immigration translates into a campaign and a political climate in Italy which is extremely unpleasant and even more so, which is deeply inspired by ideas that do not correspond to European values.

What do the polls say just under a week from the election?
They leave a big question on the air. Will there be a clear winner of these elections? Most likely the winner will be Silvio Berlusconi to begin with. Silvio Berlusconi is a political phenomenon in Italy, it is a political phenomenon in Europe. It's the result of a lot of things. It is the result of the control he has of the media in Italy, notably television chains. It's a very recognizable name. Silvio Berlusconi knows that he will not be able to obtain the power alone and therefore he competes in coalition and that coalition is a coalition that makes us extremely concerned. We currently have a situation in which the coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi's party will win the elections and may be invited to form government, but this coalition also brings together two other parties that are of the far right and that They are deeply inspired by the ideology of authoritarianism, fascism.

How does the European Union look at this coalition of Italy's right-wing force?
Contrary to what we might think, the leaders of the European Union in Brussels have a great political closeness and a certain friendship that comes from decades towards Silvio Berlusconi. Silvio Berlusconi was in Brussels at the end of January, was received by President Jean-Claude Juncker, received by several leaders of the Commission and the European Parliament and, in fact, was treated as a European leader of the greatest credibility, when In fact we know that Silvio Berlusconi is an individual who was convicted by the Italian courts for tax fraud; It is an individual who has a political past, a criminal past and a past also to some extent extremely dubious morals, but in reality, he has a lot of prestige, still has a lot of strength in Brussels, particularly the fact that Italy's strength is one of Large parties that constitutes the right-wing family that currently controls Parliament

IV.

Members of the European Parliament have asked China to release the Hong Kong bookseller immediately. Gui Myi, who is a Swedish national, was detained when traveling by train in the country, as the journalist Lina Ferreira tells us.

37 Members of the European Parliament asked on Thursday to the Chinese president Xi Jinping the immediate release of the Hong Kong bookseller Gui myi.
In the letter, the members express a strong condemnation to the continued detention of the citizen, who has dual nationality, Swedish and Chinese.
The missive also calls for the protection of the Bookseller of acts of torture or ill-treatment. It should be provided, they say, access to diplomatic support, family, lawyers of your choice and appropriate medical treatment.
Gui Myi was on a train with two Swedish diplomats in January of this year when he was detained. The bookseller made the trip between Ningbo, Zhejiang province, and Beijing, where he would receive medical treatment.
The Swede disappeared for the first time in 2015. I was on vacation in Thailand and was responsible for a Hong Kong publisher who published critical books for communist leadership. Gui would appear later on Chinese state television to confess to the hit and kill of a woman in 2004.

Victor, there is an important and rather delicate issue here that is dual nationality. How should the European Union proceed in these cases?
To Brussels, to Sweden, to the other EU countries, Gui Myi is a Swedish citizen and must be protected as a Swedish citizen. On the other hand, the European Union is seeing some concern about what is happening from the standpoint of human rightsand the interpretation of democratic life made by China and the Chinese leadership. To some extent, there are those who think that at this time in China we are witnessing a totalitarian drift, that is, a drift that would not be considered in Europe as a way for democracy and for strengthening democracy, but rather a pathway to strengthening the Autorida of the staff of the Chinese leaders and in particular of President Xi.

With regard to this same question, how does Brussels look at this recently announced proposal to remove from the Constitution the clause that determines the mandate limit of President and Vice-Chairman of the People's Republic of China?
The European Union thinks it is good democratic practice for the number of mandates to be limited. And the European Union has also very much appreciated the fact that Deng Xiaoping 40 years ago has adopted the limitation of presidential mandates. If this is to be amended now it is to some extent a return to the Chinese democratic clock 40 years ago and this is evidently seen with some concerns, especially given that the European Union would like China to be an example of democracy for Other countries where China is seen as a model. And the fact that it eliminates or eliminates this limit of mandates, then weakens the European Union's ability to dialogue with other countries where such problems also exist.

Still going back to Gui myi. In cases like these, should the European Union be more impositive?
The European Union and in particular Sweden, in this case, will continue to make diplomatic pressures and consular pressures in order to guarantee the rights of Gui Myi and also to allow it to be or judged quickly but judged in a correct way, Or even freed. The European Union does not see this as an isolated case. There have been other cases. And yet about two weeks ago the Financial times had a long history of a British citizen who was also arrested for 23 months in China for absolutely obscure reasons, and that counts, let's say, in the Financial Times, everything he's been through and that It clearly shows that the Chinese prison regime still needs major reforms to respect human rights and in particular to abide by the rules that must preside over the management of prisoners.

V.

And almost at the end of the Europe Magazine time still for our cultural moment.
It ended on Sunday in Madrid the arc, the largest international contemporary art fair.
Dedicated to the theme "Future", the event was attended by 208 galleries from 29 countries and was marked by the controversial withdrawal of the pictures of Santiago Sierra.
As soon as the fair opened, the organization withdrew the series of 24 photographs of Catalan detainees, the act by which he later apologized.
The press said "censorship," The art world criticized the decision.
We'll stay here until next week.

[Technical Sheet]

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