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The Letter in PDF format

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## The defeat of Russia in Ukraine will herald the defeat of the Lukashenko regime.

Author: Svetlana Tikhanovskaia



In a unique interview, the leader of the Belarusian democratic opposition, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, explains how the links between the Russian and Belarusian regimes have enabled the war in Ukraine and are a threat to Europe. She also recalls the European aspirations of her country's population.

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#### Elections :

##### First round of the Czech Presidential election: three candidates running neck and neck



Nine candidates are vying to succeed Czech President Milos Zeman in the election, the first round of which takes place on 13 and 14 January. According to the latest opinion poll, economist and independent candidate Danuse Nerudova is leading with 28% of the vote, followed by former prime minister Andrej Babis with 26.5% and former NATO military committee chairman Petr Pavel with 23.5%... [Read more](#)

#### Foundation :

##### Energy Crisis, European Measures



Member States and the EU have taken action to tackle rising energy prices. In Slovenia, the government unveiled a €1.2 billion plan to support businesses on 6 December. On 7 December, the Bulgarian parliament adopted a 33% tax on windfall profits made by oil, gas and coal companies in the years 2022 and 2023. The Foundation offers you a regularly updated map to help you understand the situation... [Read more](#)

## Ukraine/Russia :

### 18 billion € aid in support of Ukraine in 2023



On 10 December, the Council approved an €18 billion loan to Ukraine for 2023, guaranteed by the Member States and not by the EU budget. This legal solution enabled a twenty-six member agreement after Hungary vetoed the initial project on 6 December. This financial aid will be used to rehabilitate critical infrastructure, help the Ukrainian population and support post-war reconstruction... [Read more](#)

### Proposal for further sanctions against Russia



On 7 December, the Commission presented a ninth round of sanctions against Russia, adding 200 individuals to the sanctions list, including military officers, the armed forces and ministers. The proposal also includes new export controls and restrictions on various products, including the direct export of drones to Russia as well as exports to any third country, such as Iran, and a ban on new mining investments in Russia. Member States must now agree unanimously... [Read more](#)

### Norway's financial support to the Ukraine support mission



The European Union and Norway signed an agreement on 6 December formalising Norway's financial contribution to the EU Mission to assist in the training and equipping of the Ukrainian armed forces (EUMAM Ukraine). On 31 October, Norway had announced its intention to contribute approximately €14.5 million to the EU Peace Facility... [Read more](#)

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### Military support by Bulgaria to Ukraine



On 9 December, the Bulgarian Parliament approved military and technical assistance to Ukraine, the form and details of which have not yet been made public... [Read more](#)

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### Colossal torment endured by the Ukrainian people



On 6 December, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths noted that 70% of all attacks on medical facilities worldwide in 2022 took place in Ukraine. On 7 December, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Völker Türk, announced that reports continue to emerge of summary executions, and stated that the suffering of millions of civilians across Ukraine must not become the new normal... [Read more](#)

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### The President and "Spirit of Ukraine", Time Personalities of the Year 2022



On 7 December, the American magazine Time named Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as its Person of the Year 2022, as well as the "spirit of Ukraine". In a speech at the event organised by the magazine, he said he was honoured to "represent the struggle of Ukrainians and the spirit of Ukraine", a spirit of freedom and justice... [Read more](#)

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### Rejection of Russian passports delivered in Ukraine and Georgia



On 8 December, the Council finally adopted the decision not to accept Russian documents issued in Ukraine and Georgia. They will not be recognised as valid travel documents for obtaining a visa or crossing the borders of the Schengen area... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### 13.5 billion € for research and innovation



On 6 December, the Commission adopted the Horizon Europe 2023-2024 work programme, which provides for the investment of €13.5 billion in research and innovation, almost half of which will be devoted to climate objectives and biodiversity. The programme includes targeted support for Ukraine, in particular to ensure access for Ukrainian researchers to European research infrastructures and support for Ukrainian scientists... [Read more](#)

### Investment of 1.2 billion € in defence capacities



On 6 December, the Commission pledged to invest €1.2 billion in 61 cutting-edge defence industry projects supported by the European Defence Fund aimed at research and capability development on a European scale. Overall, SMEs represent 43% of the entities participating in the selected projects... [Read more](#)

### New proposals regarding the Capital Markets Unions



On 6 December, the Commission presented six legislative proposals to improve the functioning and attractiveness of the Capital Markets Union. These include a review of the clearing system, harmonisation of corporate insolvency regimes and administrative simplification for the listing of companies while reducing their costs... [Read more](#)

### Proposed measure to counter discrimination



On 7 December, the Commission presented measures on equality, including the adoption of rules for the recognition of parentage from one Member State to another, so that children in a cross-border situation can access their rights. It also puts forward two proposals to improve the prevention and protection of the victims of discrimination in the EU... [Read more](#)

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### Parliament :

#### Corruption inquiry by Qatar



Belgian police arrested six people on 9 December, four of whom have been detained, in connection with an investigation into suspected corruption by Qatar in the European Parliament. The home of another MEP, Marc Tarabella (S&D, Belgium), was searched. Eva Kaili, Vice-President of the European Parliament (S&D, Greece), who was indicted and jailed for corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation, was suspended from her position as Vice-President of the Parliament and expelled from the Greek Socialist Party (Pasok). Parliament President Roberta Metsola said that "European democracy is under attack" and that the Parliament will help the investigators "as long as it takes"... [Read more](#)

### Council :

#### Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers



On 8 December, the Home Affairs Ministers took stock of asylum and migration, in particular return policy, progress on legislative proposals under the Pact on Immigration and Asylum and agreed on measures to tackle the instrumentalisation of migrants. On 9 December, the Justice Ministers called on the Member States to take measures to combat impunity for crimes committed by Russia... [Read more](#)

#### Economy and Finance Ministers' Meeting



The Finance Ministers held a debate on 6 December on the €18 billion financial support to Ukraine in 2023. They discussed, among other things, the economic governance framework proposed by the Commission and the corrective measures taken by Hungary under the conditionality mechanism... [Read more](#)

#### Meeting of Healthcare Ministers



On 9 December, Health Ministers called on Member States to cooperate on disease prevention and to strengthen the fight against vaccine resistance. They presented a new recommendation for cancer screening. They took stock of the proposal for a European Health Data Space and the draft regulation on quality and safety standards for substances of human origin... [Read more](#)

#### Transport Ministers' Meeting



On 5 December, Transport Ministers adopted a general approach on the draft legislation for the construction of a comprehensive trans-European transport network (TEN-T) by 2050. They approved conclusions on the

further development of inland waterway transport. They discussed the transport situation in the context of the war in Ukraine... [Read more](#)



#### Telecommunications Ministers' Meeting



On 6 December, the ministers responsible for telecommunications approved a general approach to the law on artificial intelligence, which aims to ensure that AI systems respect fundamental rights and European values. They adopted a position on the establishment of a European digital identity for citizens and businesses. In addition, they took stock of the proposals of the Cyber Resilience Act... [Read more](#)



#### Employment and Social Affairs Ministers' Meeting



Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs discussed draft legislation on 8 December to improve the working conditions of people employed through digital platforms. They reached political agreement on a recommendation for an adequate minimum income... [Read more](#)



#### Eurogroup Meeting



Eurozone finance ministers took stock of Member States' draft budget plans for 2023 on 5 December and discussed the Commission's recommendations on economic policy in the euro area. They re-elected the president of the Eurogroup, Paschal Donohoe, for a second term of two and a half years... [Read more](#)



#### Critical entities, standardisation and the digital decade



On 8 December, the Council adopted legislation aimed at introducing harmonised standards to facilitate the placing of products on the single market and to strengthen the Union's competitiveness, particularly in digital technologies. It also adopted an action plan for digital transformation. It approved a directive and a recommendation to strengthen the resilience of critical entities... [Read more](#)



#### Agreement on EU funds for Hungary



Member States' ambassadors agreed on 12 December to suspend the payment of €6.3 billion of cohesion funds to Hungary due to insufficient measures taken by the Hungarian authorities. This is the first application of the budgetary conditionality mechanism linked to the rule of law. At the same time, the ambassadors approved Hungary's €5.8 billion recovery plan. The funds will only be disbursed if Hungary meets the EU 's 27 rule of law targets... [Read more](#)



### Diplomacy :

#### Summit with the Western Balkans



At the summit between the EU and the Western Balkan countries on 6 December, leaders reiterated their commitment to speeding up the accession process and pursuing reforms. To tackle the energy crisis, the EU announced €1bn in grants and the opening of joint gas purchases for the Western Balkans. On 5 December, the Commission proposed an action plan for cooperation with the Western Balkans along the migration routes. The plan is based on five pillars to strengthen border management, facilitate asylum procedures and support reception capacity, fight smuggling of migrants, better cooperate on returns, and achieve visa policy alignment... [Read more](#)



#### Political and Trade Agreement with Chile



The EU and Chile concluded negotiations on a framework agreement on 9 December to strengthen their political dialogue, deepen cooperation and increase trade and investment opportunities... [Read more](#)



#### Aid programme for democracy in Belarus

On 7 December, the Commission pledged €25 million to help the people of Belarus strengthen democracy. The aid programme launched following the fraudulent elections



of August 2020 is intended for civil society fighting for the respect of human rights... [Read more](#)

### EU-US Trade and Technology Council



At the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) ministerial meeting on 5 December, the EU expressed its concerns about the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which includes discriminatory provisions and provides for subsidies that could lead to distortions of competition... [Read more](#)

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### WTO referral against Chinese trade restrictions



On 6 December, the EU referred China's trade restrictions against Lithuania to the WTO. It is requesting the opening of two WTO panels, one on the legality of these restrictions and the other on the legality of China's "anti-litigation" measures, which prevent high-tech patent holders from accessing EU courts... [Read more](#)

## Trilogues :

### Provisional agreement against deforestation and degradation of forests



The Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 6 December on new rules to ensure that products sold in the EU are not linked to the destruction or degradation of forests. Fines for breaching the rules will be at least 4% of operators' annual turnover. The agreement also provides for the right to prior consent of indigenous peoples to be taken into account... [Read more](#)

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### Agreement on the market of aviation emissions



The Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 7 December on revising the rules of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme which applies to intra-European flights. The aim is to phase out free emission allowances for the aviation sector with 25% in 2024, 50% in 2025 and full auctioning from 2026... [Read more](#)

### Provisional agreement on the safety of ro-ro ships



The Council and Parliament agreed on 6 December on new rules to improve the stability and safety of ro-ro ships. The revision of the rules aims to comply with international standards, in particular with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).. [Read more](#)

### Provisional agreement on the European border carbon adjustment mechanism



The Council and the Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 13 December on the establishment of an EU border carbon adjustment mechanism that aims to align the carbon price paid for EU products operating under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) with that of imported goods. It will apply from 1 October 2023, with a transition period... [Read more](#)

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### Agreement on battery sustainability



The Parliament and the Council reached a provisional political agreement on 9 December on the draft reinforced sustainability rules for batteries and battery waste. The whole life cycle of a battery, from production to reuse and recycling, will be regulated... [Read more](#)

## Court of Justice :

### Order regarding the right to be forgotten and data protection



On 7 December, the Court of Justice ruled that WhatsApp's action for annulment of the European Data Protection Council's decision to impose a fine of €225 million for violating the provisions of the Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is inadmissible. Furthermore, the Court ruled on 8 December that search engines are obliged to delete allegedly false information. It stated that, given the ability of images to convey highly sensitive information about an individual, the protection of the right to privacy should be of particular importance... [Read more](#)

**European Agencies :****Artemis Mission: the Orion capsule lands successfully**

The Artemis I lunar mission ended with the return to Earth of the Orion spacecraft on 11 December. NASA's 25-day unmanned test flight took Orion around the Moon and further than any other spacecraft designed to carry humans back to Earth... [Read more](#)

**Germany :****German Constitutional Court approves European recovery plan**

On 6 December, the German Constitutional Court approved the €750 billion European recovery plan launched by the European Union in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The judges found that the plan does not "violate the democratic right to self-determination" established by the Basic Law, being "limited to the exceptional need to deal with the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, and thus assigned to a specific purpose"... [Read more](#)

**Croatia :****Croatia is to join the Schengen Area**

On 8 December, the Council definitively adopted the decision that allows the European Union to lift controls on persons at the internal land and sea borders with Croatia from 1 January, which will thus become part of the Schengen area of free movement... [Read more](#)

**Spain :****Summit of the southern countries of the European Union**

The leaders of the southern countries of the European Union (EU MED), meeting in Alicante on 9 December, discussed strategic autonomy and economic governance, with a particular focus on energy issues. Debates focused in particular on the issue of the market correction mechanism and the Commission's proposal for tax reforms. Emphasis was placed on the pioneering and innovative role of the countries of the South in providing solutions to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine... [Read more](#)

**Launch of the hydrogen corridor project between Barcelona and Marseilles**

French President Emmanuel Macron and Spanish and Portuguese Prime Ministers Pedro Sanchez and António Costa launched the H2Med energy corridor project in Alicante on 9 December. The corridor will link Portugal to Spain and Barcelona to Marseille to promote the EU's energy security and autonomy. It is expected to be operational by 2030 and will be able to transport 10% of the EU's hydrogen consumption. The Foundation has published a study on this subject... [Read more](#)

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**Latvia :****Meeting between the three Baltic Prime Ministers**

On 9 December, the leaders of the three Baltic states met in Riga to discuss energy security and support for Ukraine. Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Kariņš and his Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts, Kaja Kallas and Ingrida Simonyte, said that if needed, their countries could connect to the Central European electricity system. An agreement between the three states on security of supply is also being considered... [Read more](#)

**Council of Europe :****CEB Strategic Framework 2023-2027**

The Governing Board of the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) has given the green light to the adoption of the CEB's Strategic Framework 2023-2027, and to a capital increase of € 4.25 billion. The investments will be earmarked for activities in Ukraine... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Increase in GDP and employment



According to figures published by Eurostat on 7 December, GDP increased by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.4% in the European Union in the third quarter compared to the previous quarter. Employment rose by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.2% in the EU. Ireland recorded the highest increase in GDP with 2.3% and Estonia the sharpest decrease (-1.8%)... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### Report by the European Defence Agency



According to the European Defence Agency's report published on 8 December, total defence spending by Member States, with the exception of Denmark, increased in 2021 to €214 billion. In addition, defence investment has increased by 16% compared to 2020, 82% of which was spent on new equipment... [Read more](#)

### Report regarding follow-up to the visa waiver scheme



In a report on visa waiver agreements presented on 5 December, the Commission found that measures by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia, as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, are needed for alignment with EU visa policy. It stressed that further efforts should be made to avoid an increase in irregular arrivals at European borders and to better combat organised crime... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Lux Audience Prize 2023



Our Suns, Burning Days, Close, Unfiltered and Willow's Fire are the finalists for the LUX Audience Award 2023. All five films will be subtitled in the 24 official languages and screened in cinemas across the EU. European citizens will be able to rate them from 11 December to 12 June 2023. The winner will be selected together with Members of the European Parliament and will be announced on 14 June... [Read more](#)

### Festival of Saint Lucia in Sweden



On 13 December, Sweden will be celebrating Saint Lucia, one of the most beautiful Swedish traditions dating back four centuries. This "festival of light" is an opportunity to congregate outdoors, attend concerts and share ginger or saffron biscuits with a spiced wine called Glögg... [Read more](#)

### Christmas Festival of Early Music in York



Until 17 December, the city of York in the United Kingdom is hosting the Christmas Festival of Early Music, created in 1997, which aims to introduce the public to the extraordinary wealth of music associated with Advent, Christmas and the Epiphany, from the Middle Ages to the Baroque... [Read more](#)

### Ice Sculpture Festival




The city of Zwolle in the Netherlands is presenting its ice sculpture festival from 17 December to 5 March 2023. The world's best ice carvers will take part in the event, which will be held under the theme "What a wonderful world"... [Read more](#)

### International Art Fair in Rome and Venice



The fifth edition of the International Art Fair of Rome will run until 30 December, presenting collective and individual projects by leading and emerging international contemporary artists. The 16th edition of the same festival will run until 23 December at Palazzo Bembo in Venice, focusing on the relationship between body and space in the contemporary era... [Read more](#)

### Tilla Durieux in Vienna

 An exhibition dedicated to Tilla Durieux, the famous Austrian film and theatre actress of the 1920s, is being held at the Leopold Museum in Vienna until 27 February 2023. It explores the charisma and fascination exerted by the actress, notably through numerous media portraits... [Read more](#)

### Mickalene Thomas exhibition at the Orangerie



Until 6 February 2023, the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris is dedicating an exhibition to Mickalene Thomas. This multifaceted artist creates works of various kinds: paintings, collages, photographs, videos, performances..... [Read more](#)

### Nordic painting in Warsaw



Until 5 March 2023, the National Museum in Warsaw is presenting the exhibition "Solstice", which includes works by some of the greatest Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Finnish artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries... [Read more](#)

### Mummies of Egypt in Barcelona



The CaixaForum in Barcelona is showing the exhibition "Mummies of Egypt. Rediscovering Six Lives" until 26 March 2023. A collection of objects on loan from the British Museum and six mummies are presented to the public... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



12-15 December 2022  
Strasbourg  
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



13 December 2022  
Paris Conference in support of Ukraine Brussels Energy Council General Affairs Council



14 December 2022  
Brussels  
EU-ASEAN Summit



15 December 2022  
Frankfurt  
Meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank  
Brussels  
European Council



19 December 2022  
Brussels  
Energy Council



20 December  
Brussels  
Environment Council

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