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The Letter in PDF format

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The entire Letter team wishes you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your loyalty and look forward to seeing you on 9 January 2023.

Rising Apprehensions

Author: Simon Serfaty



After ten months of war in Ukraine, who knows what lies ahead as Putin's Russia continues to threaten Ukraine and its supporters with escalation. In the light of past experience, it is time, according to Simon Serfaty, to be realistic, i.e. to understand the path we are on and, if necessary, to find an acceptable way out for all parties before it is too late.

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Front page! :

[2023, a year of challenges for Europe](#)



In 2023, the European Union will have to face at least three challenges: that of resilience, that of power and that of performance, writes Jean-Dominique Giuliani, who stresses that traditional European policies are being called into question... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

[European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities](#)



In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has introduced a €672.5 billion recovery fund. On 12 December, the Commission gave a positive assessment of the revised Luxembourg plan. On 16 December, it paid €1.4 billion to Bulgaria and €700 million to Croatia, and the Council adopted Hungary's plan. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to know the amounts and the timetable... [Read more](#)

Energy Crisis, European Measures



Member States and the EU have taken action to tackle rising energy prices. On 13 December, the Irish government mobilised €10 million to combat fuel poverty and €248 million for housing modernisation. Austria and Slovenia decided to tax energy companies' excess profits. In Germany, the Bundestag adopted on 15 December a cap on electricity and gas bills for households and industries. The Foundation provides a regularly updated map of these measures... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Conclusions of the European Council



EU leaders meeting on 15 December agreed to step up aid to Ukraine, support efforts to prosecute Russian war crimes and continue sanctions against Russia. They adopted conclusions on economic resilience and the development of security and defence capabilities. They discussed the situation in Iran. They approved the decision to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina the status of candidate country to the European Union... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine/Russia :

Financial aid to Ukraine



On 14 December, MEPs gave the green light to the amendment of the regulation allowing the payment of an €18 billion loan to Ukraine for 2023, guaranteed by 26 Member States and not by the EU budget. On 16 December, the EU and Ukraine sign a €100 million assistance agreement for the rehabilitation of schools damaged by the war... [Read more](#)

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Ninth set of sanctions against Russia



The Foreign Ministers discussed developments in Ukraine and the new package of sanctions against Russia on 12 December. They also adopted new sanctions against Iran in response to the repression of demonstrations and its military cooperation with Russia. They agreed to deploy a new team to Armenia from 20 December to help plan a possible civilian mission. They agreed on a €2 billion increase in the financial ceiling of the European Peace Facility for 2023. The ninth package of sanctions against Russia was adopted on 16 December, which includes 141 additional individuals and 217 entities... [Read more](#)

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Conference of support to Ukraine



The international conference "In solidarity with the Ukrainian people" was held on 13 December in Paris. Emmanuel Macron pledged to provide Ukraine with an additional €76.5 million in humanitarian aid for electricity and energy, as well as 63 generators donated by EDF. In total, €1.05 billion was pledged at the conference to support the Ukrainian population over the winter... [Read more](#)

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Recognition of the Holodomor genocide by the European Parliament



On 15 December, the European Parliament recognised the Holodomor genocide, the famine created by the Soviet regime in Ukraine between 1932 and 1933, and called on all countries to do the same and raise awareness about it... [Read more](#)

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Survey on support for Ukraine and European values



According to a Eurobarometer published on 14 December, 74% of respondents are in favour of EU support for Ukraine, especially in Sweden (97%), Finland (95%) and the Netherlands (93%). Respondents also believe that the European Parliament should make the defence of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression a priority... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe action plan

On 14 December, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted an action plan on "Resilience, recovery and reconstruction" for Ukraine for the period 2023-



2026, supported by a budget of €50 million. The Council will work directly with the Ukrainian authorities in particular in the areas of combating corruption and money laundering, developing an independent judiciary, promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and strengthening the protection of national minorities' rights... [Read more](#)

Sakharov Prize 2022 and Charlemagne Prize 2023



At a ceremony in Strasbourg on 14 December, Parliament's President Roberta Metsola presented the Sakharov Prize to the Ukrainian people, represented by elected representatives and civil society, who are waging "a war of values". The Charlemagne Prize will be awarded in 2023 to the Ukrainian people and its President Volodymyr Zelensky, the selection committee for this prestigious award announced on 16 December.. [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Launch of the new CAP



After the approval of the 28 national strategic plans - one for each Member State and two for Belgium - the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be launched on 1 January 2023, with €307 billion of funding for the period 2023-2027. Part of this will be dedicated to creating and supporting employment, and almost €20 billion of aid will be available each year directly to eligible farmers. In addition, three of the ten specific objectives are dedicated to the environment and climate... [Read more](#)

Aid programmes to Turkey for border management and refugees



The Commission adopted on 12 December €220 million for border management and refugee assistance in Turkey, bringing the total for 2022 to €1.2 billion. Within this total, €400 million is earmarked for the basic needs of refugees, €234 million for refugee employment projects, and €381 million for assistance to the most vulnerable refugees. In addition, €220 million will be dedicated to support new controls on Turkey's eastern border... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Exchanges with the Slovenian Prime Minister



In a debate in Parliament on 13 December, Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob stressed the importance of European unity, cooperation and solidarity in the face of today's challenges, especially in the areas of green transition and energy policy. He noted the need for a European framework to tackle high energy prices. He supported the granting of candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the stabilisation of the Western Balkans... [Read more](#)

Call for the revision of the Union's budget



On 15 December, MEPs called on the Commission to propose a revision of the 2020-2027 multiannual financial framework to better respond to the current crises. In particular, they called for additional funding for new policy priorities to be included and for the budget to be made more flexible... [Read more](#)

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Call for new rules on transparency in the institutions



MEPs called on 15 December for a reform of the institutions regarding transparency, in the context of suspicions of corruption by some MEPs. They want a system of declarations of assets at the beginning and end of the mandate and a ban on all external funding or donations for the staff of MEPs and political groups. In addition, they called for a committee of enquiry into cases of corruption from third countries, and for the Commission to make a proposal to set up an independent ethics body... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers



On 13 December, the Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers established the fishing possibilities for 2023 in the Atlantic Ocean, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and in the deep sea. Provisional quotas for the first three months of 2023 were set for fish stocks shared with the UK. In addition, the Ministers took stock of the agricultural market situation in the Member States, in particular the impact of the war in Ukraine on prices... [Read more](#)

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Agreement on European funds for Hungary



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

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Agreement on the taxation of multinationals



On 15 December, following a political agreement on 12 December, the Council adopted EU-level legislation to implement the so-called "second pillar" of the OECD's international tax reform. The main measure is a minimum tax rate of 15% on the profits of multinational companies with a combined annual turnover of at least €750 million... [Read more](#)

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Agreement on the gas price capping mechanism



Energy ministers reached agreement on 19 December on a temporary market correction mechanism to combat excessively high gas prices. It can be activated for at least 20 days if the gas price exceeds €180/MWh for three working days and if the monthly price is €35 higher than a reference price. An automatic deactivation of the mechanism is planned in case of unexpected supply disruptions. The mechanism will apply from 15 February 2023... [Read more](#)

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Trilogues :

EU legislative priorities for 2023-2024



On 15 December, the three EU institutions signed a declaration on joint legislative priorities for 2023 and 2024, committing themselves to continue their support for Ukraine, the implementation of the Green Deal and the digital and energy transition, as well as the implementation of the strategic compass and the building of a European defence. A working document accompanies the declaration which lists 164 key legislative proposals... [Read more](#)

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Declaration regarding digital rights and principles



On 15 December, the Presidents of the Commission, Parliament and Council signed a European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles which aims to ensure that the fundamental rights of citizens are respected online, including affordable and high-speed digital connectivity, equipped classrooms and competent teachers, transparent access to online public services, and a safe digital environment for children... [Read more](#)

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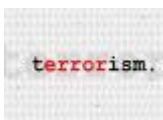
Provisional agreement on judicial cooperation



The Council and the Parliament reached an agreement on 14 December to create a collaboration platform for joint investigation teams between European countries covering operations against fraud, money laundering, drug and human trafficking. The aim is to facilitate the exchange and centralised storage of operational information as well as evidence to improve the fight against criminal networks and security within the European Union... [Read more](#)

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Agreement on the exchange of information in terrorist cases



The Council and the Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 14 December on the exchange of digital information in cases against cross-border terrorist networks. Under the new rules, Member States will have to provide Eurojust with information on any criminal investigation

into terrorist offences so that it can store the information centrally... [Read more](#)

Agreement on reception conditions of asylum seekers



The Parliament and the Council agreed on 15 December on draft legislation on reception conditions for applicants for international protection in order to harmonise reception standards in all Member States with regard to accommodation, health care and an adequate standard of living... [Read more](#)

Provisional agreement on pay for men and women



The Council and the Parliament reached an agreement on 15 December to close the gender pay gap through a set of binding measures on pay transparency. In particular, European companies will be required to disclose information on pay to the competent national authorities so as to expose existing gaps... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

EU-ASEAN Summit



At the summit with ASEAN countries in Brussels on 14 December, the EU announced the mobilisation of €10 billion under the Global Gateway programme to accelerate investment in infrastructure, launched a dialogue on energy. It signed an energy transition partnership with Vietnam, as well as two partnership and cooperation agreements with Malaysia and Thailand, and concluded a new digital partnership with Singapore... [Read more](#)

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EU-USA Meeting regarding Justice and Internal Affairs



At a ministerial meeting on 15 December, the EU and the US pledged to support international initiatives to promote the investigation and prosecution of international crimes committed in Ukraine. Both sides agreed to a project on more systematic information exchange in the fight against terrorism and announced the relaunch of negotiations on an agreement to facilitate access to electronic evidence for criminal justice purposes... [Read more](#)

G7 review under the German Presidency



The G7 leaders met by video conference on 12 December to reiterate their support for Ukraine, the need to condemn Russia, and their commitment to help resolve the conflict and rebuild Ukraine. They expressed their intention to remove oil and gas from their domestic markets from Russia, to contribute to the fight against global food insecurity and global warming, and to contribute to gender equality... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers under the Eastern Partnership



The Foreign Ministers of the Eastern Partnership countries, with the exception of Belarus, confirmed the EU's commitment to the Eastern Partnership and its willingness to make it more flexible and responsive to the needs of the various partners. The EU Ministers suggested strengthening cooperation in the field of cyber security... [Read more](#)

ECB :

ECB announces interest rate hike



The European Central Bank announced on 15 December that it was raising its key rates by 50 basis points to 2.5%. Christine Lagarde told a press conference that they would have to increase at a steady pace to ensure a rapid return to the 2% inflation target. According to current estimates, average inflation is expected to reach 8.4% in 2022 before returning to 6.3% in 2023... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Last mission for Ariane 5

On 13 December, the Ariane 5 rocket successfully completed its last launch from the Kourou base, placing the MTG-11 meteorological satellite and the Galaxy 35 and



Galaxy 36 telecommunications satellites into orbit. On 16 December, the SWOT (Surface Water and Ocean Topography) satellite, designed to study the topography of the oceans and continental surface waters, was put into orbit... [Read more](#)

Energy :

European Carbon Adjustment Mechanism and emission allowances



The Council and the Parliament reached agreement on 13 December on the establishment of a European carbon adjustment mechanism at the borders, which aims to align the carbon price of imported and domestic products in the framework of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

On 18 December, they agreed on a reform of the functioning of the ETS, which will also be extended to the maritime sector... [Read more](#)

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Provisional agreement on the REPowerEU plan



The Council and Parliament reached agreement on 14 December on the REPowerEU proposal, which aims to end dependence on Russian fossil fuels by diversifying and strengthening the EU's security of energy supply. Member States should add a REPowerEU chapter to their

recovery and resilience plans to finance the necessary targets and reforms... [Read more](#)

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Vote on accelerating the deployment of renewable energy



On 14 December, MEPs adopted the proposed legislation on accelerating the deployment of renewable energy by facilitating the procedures for issuing permits for new projects or for the adaptation of existing infrastructure... [Read more](#)

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Cable under the Black Sea to bring electricity from Azerbaijan



On 17 December, Romania, Hungary, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed an agreement in the presence of the European Commission for the construction of a submarine cable to supply Europe with electricity from Azerbaijan, which aims to reduce the Union's dependence on Russian

gas... [Read more](#)

Denmark :

New government



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (Social Democratic Party) unveiled her new government on 15 December, following her victory in the 1 November parliamentary elections. The new coalition brings together the Social Democrats, the Moderate Party led by former Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, and the Venstre Party (liberal right). It has 23 ministers, including 8 women. Lars Lokke Rasmussen has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, leader of Venstre, has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence... [Read more](#)

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Ireland :

New government led by Leo Varadkar



Leo Varadkar, leader of the Fine Gael party, succeeded Micheál Martin (Fianna Fáil) as Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in Ireland on 17 December, as foreseen in the coalition agreement signed in June 2022. Leo Varadkar previously held this position from 2017 to 2020. He presented his new government, which comprises 17 ministers, including 5 women. Michael Martin was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence... [Read more](#)

Slovakia :

Motion of no confidence in the government

The Slovak government lost a no-confidence vote in the National Council (parliament) on 15 December by 78 votes out of 150, initiated by the Freedom and Solidarity party (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS), which left the coalition after unsuccessfully calling for the



resignation of Finance Minister Igor Matovič. There are three scenarios: the parties can try to find a new majority, the president, Zuzana Čaputová, can appoint a caretaker government or she can call new elections... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

Priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union



On 15 December, the Swedish government presented the priorities of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which begins on 1 January. It will focus on four issues: security, in particular aid to Ukraine, EU membership and reconstruction, resilience through European competitiveness, prosperity through an energy and ecological transition, and democratic values and the rule of law... [Read more](#)

Kosovo :

Request to join the European Union



The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, presented his country's official application for EU candidate status in Prague on 15 December. The letter was signed by Kosovo's president, Vjosa Osmani, and the president of the parliament, Glauk Konjufca. Kosovo is the latest Western Balkan country to apply for membership. Five member states (Greece, Spain, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus) still do not recognise its independence... [Read more](#)

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Agreement on visa exemptions for Kosovars



The Council and the Parliament agreed on 14 December on visa-free travel for persons holding passports issued in Kosovo. Holders of this passport will then be able to travel to the EU without a visa for a stay of 90 days over a period of 180 days... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Recommendations on combating violence against women



On 6 December, the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence adopted recommendations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Romania and Switzerland. These recommendations aim to ensure the implementation of provisions of the Istanbul Convention where the Committee considers that urgent action is needed... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Report on the SURE programme



The European Court of Auditors published a report on 14 December on the €100 billion temporary SURE instrument, which was set up to reduce the risk of unemployment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Millions of people benefited from the funding, but the lack of complete data at Member State level limits the Commission's ability to assess the number of jobs saved. It calls on the Commission to better evaluate the instrument to ensure an adequate response to future crises... [Read more](#)

Culture :

The beginnings of Sorolla in Madrid



The exhibition "Sorolla - Origins" runs until 19 March 2023 at the Sorolla Museum in Madrid and explores the beginnings of the painter's artistic career between 1878 and 1884, just before he left for Rome... [Read more](#)

Chanel at the Grand Palais Éphémère



Until January 9 2023, the Grand Palais Éphémère in Paris is devoting an exceptional exhibition to the famous perfumes of the House of Chanel, through an immersive journey to discover the singularity of these fragrances... [Read more](#)

Fattori, humanity translated in painting



The exhibition "Fattori, humanity translated into painting" is being held until 1 May 2023 at Palazzo Fava in Bologna and focuses on the artistic career of the Livornese artist Giovanni Fattori and his participation in the "Macchiaioli" movement (second half of the 19th century)... [Read more](#)

Vilhelm Hammershoj in Poznan



Until 6 February 2023, the National Museum in Poznan is hosting an exhibition entitled "Light and Silence", dedicated to the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershoj and his paintings of atmospheric landscapes, realistic portraits, extraordinary views of architecture and, above all, interiors with a feeling of silence...

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A triptych of contemporary artists in Düsseldorf



Contemporary artists Carina Brandes, Florian Krewer and Raphaela Simon explore the themes of physicality, bodily self-determination and self-realization in three solo exhibitions that run until 19 February 2023 at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf... [Read more](#)

"Interior" exhibition in London



The exhibition "Interior" will run until 4 February 2023 at the Michael Werner Gallery in London and features new paintings, sculptures and ceramics by a group of artists from several generations. In their work they explore the inner life of their subjects in an intimate atmosphere... [Read more](#)

Exhibitions in Brussels



The Patinoire Royale in Brussels is showing the photographs of the Finnish-American artist Arno Rafael Minkkinen, an artist dedicated to self-portraits focusing on the place of man in nature, until 23 February 2023. The Ballroom Gallery is presenting an exhibition until 28 January 2023 entitled "Imaginary Mountains: Remembering Painting", in collaboration with an artists' space in a former textile factory in a small Swiss village, on the exploration of painting strategies in different contexts... [Read more](#)

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Agenda :



19 December 2022

Brussels
Energy Council



20 December 2022

Brussels
Environment Council



January 1 2023

Croatia
Croatia becomes the 20th member of the euro zone

Start of the Swedish Presidency of the Council

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