

**Letter n°1050 of Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

## European Election: Red Alert!

Pascale Joannin - 16 Jan 2024

Europeans are being called to the polls between 6 and 9 June 2024, depending on the country, to renew the members of the European Parliament, who will now number 720. Pascale Joannin presents a contrasting assessment of the legislature that is drawing to a close, the main pitfalls facing the political parties campaigning and the innovations of the European ballot. She analyses the possible changes in the political balance that could result, and hopes that the campaign will be commensurate with what is at stake.



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### ■ Front page! :



#### Death of Wolfgang Schäuble

The former President of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Schäuble, died on 26 December 2023. He left his mark on almost 50 years of German political life and European progress. The Foundation, of which he was a member of the Board of Directors, received him on several occasions in Paris. He was a friend, probably "the most European German". [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Elections :



### Presidential Election in Finland

On 28 January, in the first round of the presidential election in Finland, 9 candidates are standing for election. If no candidate receives more than half the votes, a second round will be held on 11 February. Long the favourite in the opinion polls, Pekka Haavisto (Green League, VIHR) has been outpaced in recent months by Alexander Stubb (National Coalition Party, KOK). [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



### Schuman Network

The Schuman Network aims to promote debate and reflection on European issues. Numerous contributions from think tanks on the international situation, the forthcoming European elections and the issues and challenges to be faced are available, such as those from IRIS, DGAP and the Centre for European Reform (CER), all of which have recently been put online. Others will follow. [Read more](#)



### A site with everything you need to know about the European elections

From 6 to 9 June 2024, Europeans are invited to elect their MEPs for the next five years. The Foundation has set up a website to help you understand the elections and the issues at stake, and to follow the campaign with the lists of candidates and the programmes of all the parties. [Read more](#)



### European recovery plans - figures and priorities

In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund. Between 19 and 29 December, the Commission made payments to 14 countries and received requests for payments from 8 countries. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to check the amounts and timetables. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Council :



### Charles Michel, candidate in the European Elections

On 6 January, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, announced his candidacy for the European elections in June 2024, as head of the list of the Mouvement Réformateur, the Belgian liberal party that is a member of the Renew Europe group. If elected, he will end his term of office on the European Council prematurely, before taking up his duties in Parliament on 16 July. [Read more](#)

## ■ Commission :



### Approval of state aid

On 8 January, the Commission approved German State aid worth €902 million to support the installation of an electric battery plant by the Swedish company Northvolt. On the same day, it also authorised a €2.9 billion French State aid scheme to support investment in green industries. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



### Entry into force of cybersecurity regulation

The new cybersecurity regulation came into force yesterday, 7 January. It establishes measures for the creation of an internal cybersecurity risk management, governance and control framework for each EU entity, and sets up a new Interinstitutional Cyber Security Board (IICB) to monitor and support its implementation by EU entities. [Read more](#)

## ■ Council :



### Agreement on the reform of budgetary rules

On 21 December, the Council reached agreement on a reform of the European Union's budgetary rules. The aim is for the Commission to adopt a differentiated approach to Member States in its budgetary recommendations, depending on the economic situation. When a State exceeds the targets of 60% of GDP for public debt and 3% of GDP for the public deficit, the Commission could then present it with a medium-term reduction path, based on its specific situation. [Read more](#)



## Integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area

On 30 December, in a unanimous Council decision, the Member States reached an agreement on the abolition of checks at the air and sea borders of the European Union and the other Schengen countries with Bulgaria and Romania. The agreement will come into force on 31 March 2024. A compromise has been reached for partial integration into the Schengen area, since Austria was blocking negotiations. The Member States still have to reach a new agreement in the Council on the date for lifting controls at land borders. [Read more](#)



## Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Policy

The Ministers for Employment and Social Policy met on 11 and 12 January to discuss the future of Social Europe. The issues raised by the ministers were: labour shortages, the resilience of the economy to crises, and the promotion of social rights internationally. [Read more](#)



## Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Belgium took over the six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 January 2024. The College of European Commissioners visited Belgian ministers at the Egmont Palace in Brussels on 5 January. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Agreement on asylum and migration

On 20 December, Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, governing the management of migratory flows and crisis situations. If a Member State is subject to strong migratory pressure, the other States will have to provide their support, either by accepting some of the asylum seekers on their territory, or by making a financial contribution. In addition, a prior control procedure will be established at external borders, to examine asylum applications before they enter European territory. The texts must now be formally adopted by the co-legislators. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Court of Justice :



### Independence of the Polish judicial system

According to a decision by the Court of Justice on 21 December, the Extraordinary Chamber of Control of the Polish Supreme Court is not an independent and impartial court. Consequently, the Court of Justice considers that the issues raised by this judicial body are inadmissible. This chamber was set up in 2017 to deal in particular with electoral issues. Its constitutional and judicial legitimacy has now been called into question by the European courts. [Read more](#)



### Towards a €2.4 billion fine against Google

The Advocate General of the Court of Justice, Juliane Kokott, proposed that the Court confirm on 11 January a fine of €2.4 billion imposed by the Commission on Google, which the company had challenged before the European courts. The Commission accused Google of abusing its dominant position by improperly promoting products on its search engine. The Advocate General considers that the Commission was right to characterise this abuse and to penalise Google under European law. The Court will issue its decision at a later date, informed by this opinion. [Read more](#)

## ■ EIB :



### Nadia Calviño, first female president

Nadia Calviño, former Spanish Minister for Economic Affairs, succeeded Werner Hoyer as President of the European Investment Bank (EIB) on 1 January 2024. She is the first woman to hold this position. [Read more](#)

## ■ Denmark :



### Abdication of Queen Margrethe and proclamation of King Frederik X

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark abdicated on 14 January 2024. She leaves her place to her eldest son Frederik X, after 52 years on the throne. Since the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Margrethe II had been the only woman to hold the office of monarch in a European country. [Read more](#)

## ■ France :



### New government headed by Gabriel Attal

Gabriel Attal, previously Minister for Education, was appointed Prime Minister on 9 January, replacing Élisabeth Borne. A new government was appointed on 11 January. It comprises 14 members, including 7 women. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Italy :



### Non-ratification of the ESM reform and vote on the 2024 budget

On 21 December, Italian MPs voted against ratifying the reform of the eurozone rescue mechanism (ESM), despite the fact that the latter was signed in 2021. Italy thus remains the only country in the eurozone not to have ratified the reform of the ESM, preventing it from being activated. At the same time, Parliament approved the 2024 Finance Act on 29 December. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Poland :



### Public media reform

On 20 December, Culture Minister Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz announced that he had dismissed the management team of the state media, who were considered to be mouthpieces of the outgoing government. This decision is part of a wider parliamentary resolution adopted the previous day on "restoring the rule of law and the impartiality and credibility of the public media". [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



### Andrzej Duda announces plans to pardon arrested former ministers

On 9 January, former Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski and his deputy Maciej Wasik, members of the previous government led by the Law and Justice party (PiS), were arrested at the presidential palace. A court had sentenced them in December to two years in prison for abuse of power in 2007, and an arrest warrant had been issued for them the day before. President Duda had already pardoned the two men when he came to office in 2015, and announced on 11 January that he was initiating a new pardon procedure with a view to releasing them. [Read more](#)

## ■ Slovakia :



### Presidential Election 23 March

The Slovak presidential election will take place on March 23, with a possible run-off on April 6. Outgoing president Zuzana Čaputová of the Progressive Slovakia party will not be standing for re-election. Prime Minister Robert Fico, and his Smer-SD party have announced their support for Peter Pellegrini, leader of the government coalition partner party Hlas-SD. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Kosovo :



### Visa Exemptions

Since 1 January, citizens of Kosovo have been able to travel to the Schengen area without a visa, for stays of up to 90 days over a period of 180 days. Kosovo is the last country in the Western Balkans to benefit from the European Union's visa-free regime. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Serbia :



### OSCE Report on the Elections

According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Serbian elections in December 2023, in which the coalition government was re-elected, did not meet the conditions required for the democratic conduct of this political event. Procedural shortcomings during the vote count and numerous violations of the secrecy of the vote were reported. A number of concerns regarding respect for freedom of expression and media freedom for human rights defenders and journalists remained unresolved. Numerous demonstrations across the country denounced the elections, which were held against a backdrop of electoral fraud. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



## Ukrainian President visits the Baltic States

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the Baltic states on 10 and 11 January. He held talks with Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė, Estonian President Alar Karis and Latvian Prime Minister Evika Siliņa on assistance to Ukraine, defence cooperation and Ukraine's accession to the European Union. During a speech in Vilnius, the Ukrainian President reiterated the importance of defending territorial sovereignty against Russian invasion. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



## Visit from the British Prime Minister and the French Foreign Minister

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visited Kyiv on 12 January to formalise a bilateral strategic cooperation agreement between Ukraine and the UK, confirming the UK's continued military and financial support for Ukraine. The new French Foreign Minister, Stéphane Séjourné, made his first official visit abroad to Kyiv on 13 January, and discussed with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy the deepening of a Defence Europe and French support for Ukraine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## NATO-Ukraine Council

Ambassadors from NATO countries and Ukraine met on 10 January for a NATO-Ukraine Council. The allies condemned the recent Russian air strikes in Ukraine, and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Ukrainian military capabilities in 2024, particularly in the field of anti-aircraft defence. [Read more](#)



## Davos Forum National Security Advisors Meeting

The representatives of 83 countries and international organisations attending the World Economic Forum summit in Davos met their national security advisers on 14 January to discuss solutions for a lasting peace in Ukraine. The head of the Ukrainian presidential administration, Andriy Yermak, expressed his satisfaction at the open and constructive discussion and at the international support for the principles defended by Ukraine. [Read more](#)



## ■ Council of Europe :



### Helsinki Dialogue

On 11 and 12 January, representatives of Belarusian democratic forces in exile took part in the Helsinki Dialogue, a series of round tables organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on the country's political future. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament, Kimmo Kiljunen, will present a report on the country's democratic future to the Council of Europe Assembly on 25 January. [Read more](#)

## ■ UN :



### Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

On 10 January, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution demanding that Yemen's Houthi rebels end their attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The resolution, presented by Japan and the United States, received eleven votes in favour, zero against and four abstentions from Algeria, China, Mozambique and Russia. It comes against a backdrop of growing threats to world maritime trade. [Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



### Global Maritime Security Report

The fifth annual edition of the MICA Center's report on global maritime security was published on 8 January. The report notes an increase in incidents linked to the outbreak of conflicts at sea, an overall stability in the number of incidents of piracy and theft, and a general increase in illegal trafficking. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



### Museum Night in Basel

The city of Basel is organising its Museum Night on 19 January, from 6pm to 2am. Around 41 museums and cultural institutions, not only in Basel but also in the surrounding towns, will be opening their doors for this annual event. [Read more](#)



## Anu Pöder in Susch

The exhibition "Anu Pöder : Space for My Body" at the Susch Museum in Switzerland will be on show until 30 June. The exhibition brings together more than forty works by Estonian visual artist Anu Pöder, known for exploring the human body, highlighting the fragility, impermanence and ephemerality of life in a series of highly evocative sculptures. [Read more](#)



## Erro in Reykjavik

The Reykjavík Art Museum is devoting an exhibition to Icelandic artist Erró until 12 May. Entitled "Gambit", the exhibition highlights the artist's critical view of the world, with paintings evoking geopolitical events such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. Erró's body of work is characterised by its blend of chaos, violence and contradiction. [Read more](#)



## Lacan in Metz

Until 27 May, the Centre Pompidou-Metz is honouring the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan with the exhibition "Quand l'art rencontre la psychanalyse" ("When art meets psychoanalysis"). Lacan's intimate relationship with art is presented through paintings that he himself cited in his writings and that inspired his thinking, as well as through the works of artists who have paid tribute to him. [Read more](#)



## International Documentary Film Festival in Biarritz

The 2024 edition of the International Documentary Film Festival (FIPADOC) takes place in Biarritz from 19 to 27 January. On the programme are documentaries dealing with social issues and international issues. From efforts to combat climate change, to women and the war in Ukraine - the subjects covered will respond to the theme of this year's festival: "Is this how people live?" [Read more](#)



## London Galleries Festival

The Condo Gallery Festival takes place in London from 20 January to 17 February. Taking place in 50 galleries across 23 different venues, this collaborative exhibition offers visitors the opportunity to travel through London's art scene. [Read more](#)



## Change of project at the Venice Biennale

The Polish Pavilion's selection for the 2024 Venice Biennale has been changed, and it is now presenting the multimedia exhibition "Repeat After Me" by the Ukrainian collective Open Group. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Capitals of Culture 2024

For the year 2024, the cities of Bad Ischl in Austria, Tartu in Estonia and Bodø in Norway are the European Capitals of Culture. Created by the European Commission, this label enables cities to showcase their heritage over the course of a year through a wide range of artistic and cultural events. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 15 January 2024

**Eurogroup Meeting** (Brussels)

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 15-16 January 2024

**Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers** (Brussels)

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 15-18 January 2024

**Plenary Session of the European Parliament** (Strasbourg)

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 16 January 2023

**Economic and Financial Affairs Council** (Brussels)

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## The Letter n°1050

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