

Letter n°1062 of Tuesday 9th April 2024

The European Union enlarged from 27 to 36 members? Towards an "Agenda 2030"

[Pierre Mirel - 09 Apr 2024](#)

If the EU enlargement process is to resume, the challenges it poses must be openly addressed within the framework of an "Agenda 2030". In the Western Balkans, the rule of law remains a source of concern, as do internal tensions and differences between neighbours. In addition, mass immigration and the widening economic gap with the EU threaten stability. As for Ukraine and Moldova, the Union's capacity to integrate them raises questions, as do the security consequences of such an enlargement. The author argues in favour of gradual integration with a period of consolidation. The Commission must put forward a comprehensive proposal, including impact studies.



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■ **Foundation :**



Europe's new frontiers: confronting Russia

The Robert Schuman Foundation was a partner in the first "Paris Defence and Strategy Forum" which took place from 13th to 14th March. You will find the debates during the interparliamentary dialogue moderated by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, President of the Foundation, on "Europe's new borders: confronting Russia" on 14th March. And the panel discussion moderated by Elise Bernard, Head of Research, on "European defence: industry, funding, cooperation instruments, challenges and prospects", on 13 March. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



The Schuman Network

The Schuman Network is an initiative launched in November 2023 by the Robert Schuman Foundation, which works to promote the sharing of ideas on a European scale. With 20 members from 12 European countries, the Schuman Network is a space for pooling research on current European issues. Since its launch, around sixty studies have been published on the network's website. [Read more](#)



A site to find out everything you need to know about the European elections

From 6 to 9 June, Europeans are being invited to elect 720 MEPs for the next five years. The Foundation has set up a website to help you better understand the elections and the issues at stake, and to follow the campaign with the lists of candidates and party programmes in each Member State. [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. On 2 April, the Commission made the second payment of €702 million to the Czech Republic. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to check out the amounts and timetables. [Read more](#)

■ Elections :



Peter Pellegrini elected President of Slovakia

Peter Pellegrini (Hlas-Social Democracy) won the 2nd round of the presidential election in Slovakia on 6 April. The current President of the National Council of the Republic - the single chamber of parliament - and former Prime Minister (2018-2020), supported by Prime Minister Robert Fico's party, Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), won 53.12% of the vote against 46.87% for his opponent Ivan Korcok. Korcok, former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs (2020-2022), was supported by Progressive Slovakia (PS), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), The Democrats (D), European Blue Slovakia (M) and the Civic Conservative Party (OKS). [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Agri-food trade surplus

On 5 April, the Commission published a report showing that the European Union's agri-food trade balance reached a record level in 2023. Exports totalled €228.6 billion, with imports accounting for €158.6 billion, giving a total surplus of €70.1 billion and an increase of 22% compared with 2022. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Investigations into aid to Chinese companies

On 3 April, the Commission launched two investigations to determine whether subsidies have enabled Chinese companies to submit unfair bids for the construction of a solar panel park in Romania. These investigations are being carried out under the Foreign Subsidies Regulation, which allows Brussels to investigate companies bidding for public tenders in the EU for amounts in excess of €250 million. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Funds for the Western Balkans

On 4 April, the Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on a €6 billion fund for the countries of the Western Balkans, which are candidates for accession to the European Union. This new fund includes a number of provisions, notably the alignment of foreign and security policy. The agreement still has to be formally approved by the Council and Parliament. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Support to Armenia

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, High Representative Josep Borrell and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met in Brussels on 5 April to discuss support for Armenia. As part of the resilience and growth plan for Armenia, the European Union has announced €270 million in budgetary aid over the next 4 years. In addition, the European Union and the United States have announced that they will continue to send humanitarian aid, in particular to displaced Armenians from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Trade and Technology Council with the United States

On 5 April, the sixth meeting of the Council for Trade and Technology with the United States (CTT) was held in Leuven. American and European representatives reiterated their shared commitment to a transatlantic approach in the fields of artificial intelligence, 6G, quantum technology and semiconductors. The two sides examined the results of the transatlantic initiative on sustainable trade and agreed to continue the dialogue. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in Europe

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was on a diplomatic visit to France and Belgium from 1 to 5 April. During his trip to Paris on 2 April, he called on the European Union to strengthen its defence industrial capabilities in order to support Ukraine in the long term. There he met President Emmanuel Macron, his French counterpart, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Stéphane Séjourné, and the French Minister for the Armed Forces, Sébastien Lecornu. He discussed with the latter the need to supply ammunition and air defence equipment to the Ukrainians, before travelling to Brussels to celebrate NATO's 75th anniversary and take part in the 6th Trade and Technology Council. [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



Report on the most threatening criminal networks

On 5 April, Europol published a report entitled "Decoding the most threatening criminal networks", which examines the characteristics of the criminal networks representing the greatest threat in Europe. The organisation believes that this report is an essential tool in the fight against organised crime, as it details the organisation of criminal networks, their criminal activities, their modus operandi and their area of activity. [Read more](#)



NextGenerationEU fund fraud

On 4 April, as part of an international investigation, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) announced that it had carried out dozens of searches and seizures. Twenty-two people have been arrested in Italy, Austria, Romania and Slovakia as part of an investigation into an alleged criminal organisation that misappropriated €600 million from the Recovery and Resilience Fund (FRR) intended for Italy. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Restructuring the Bundeswehr

On 4 April, the German Defence Minister, Boris Pistorius, announced a restructuring of the German army. The aim of this reorganisation is to make the armed forces more operational, given the Russian aggression that threatens European security. The reintroduction of military service is also under discussion. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Austria :



Chancellor visits France

President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the Austrian Chancellor, Karl Nehammer, on 4 April. They discussed security, the fight against crime and terrorism, as well as education and higher education. [Read more](#)

■ Cyprus :



Continuation of the "Amalthea" initiative

On 2 April, the President of Cyprus, Níkos Christodoulídis, and the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, confirmed that the maritime humanitarian corridor between Cyprus and Gaza would be maintained, whilst the continuing needs in this region, which is under Israeli fire. [Read more](#)

■ Finland :



Finland extends the closure of its border with Russia

On 4 April, the Finnish government decided to extend the closure of its Russian border, which was initially due to reopen partially on 15 April. Interior Minister Mari Rantanen justified the decision as a measure to deal with the pressure exerted by the Kremlin in gathering "hundreds, if not thousands" of migrants near the border. The government sees this as "instrumental migration" that Russia is using to attack the "security and social stability of Finland and the European Union". The measure has been extended to maritime traffic. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Europe by Peter Sloterdijk at the Collège de France

German historian Peter Sloterdijk is to hold the annual chair in "The Invention of Europe through Languages and Cultures" at the Collège de France for 2023-2024. To mark the occasion, he is organising a series of eight lectures and seminars entitled "Le continent sans qualités: des marque-pages dans le livre de l'Europe" (The continent without qualities: bookmarks in the book of Europe), from 22 April to 17 June. The inaugural lecture took place on 4 April. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Portugal :



New government sworn in

The government, led by Prime Minister Luis Montenegro (PSD), took office on 2 April. It comprises seventeen ministers, including seven women. Having won only 80 of the 230 seats in the Assembly and refusing a coalition with the far-right Chega party, the government will need the support of the Socialist Party to pass new laws. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Georgia :



Foreign Influencers Act

On 3 April, the Georgian government announced the reintroduction of the proposed law concerning agents of foreign influence. This requires organisations receiving foreign funding to declare themselves as "carrying the interests of a foreign power". Already proposed in March 2023, the Georgian government had to abandon the bill due to major opposition demonstrations. The head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, announced that this law would be incompatible with European Union law. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, said she was "concerned by the resurgence of this draft legislation". [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Moldova :



European Peace Facility

On 4 April, the Council adopted assistance under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to support the Moldovan army. The aim of these measures is to strengthen national security, stability and the resilience of the defence sector. The Republic of Moldova will receive €41 million in aid over 40 months. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Security agreement with Finland

On 3 April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hosted his Finnish counterpart, Alexander Stubb, in Kyiv. The two heads of State signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement, which commits Finland to providing Ukraine with military, economic and humanitarian aid, supporting its accession to NATO and the European Union, and working to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty. At the same time, Finland has announced a further €188 million in aid. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



The Prime Minister visits the Baltic States

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Chmyhal was welcomed in Tallinn on 3 April, in Riga on 4 April and in Vilnius on 5 April by his counterparts, Kaja Kallas, Evika Silina and Ingrida Simonyte. Discussions with Kaja Kallas focused on the integration of Ukraine into a Baltic logistics project and the use of frozen Russian funds. In their joint declaration, the two prime ministers emphasised the financial support provided by Estonia to Ukraine for its reconstruction. With Evika Silina, they agreed to set up joint production of drones. Finally, together with Ingrida Simonyte, they announced the purchase of 3,000 drones for Ukraine and a budget of €15 million for rehabilitation programmes for wounded soldiers. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Declaration concerning justice

The Netherlands, Ukraine and the European Commission jointly organised a conference entitled "Restoring Justice in Ukraine" on 2 April in The Hague. Several countries in solidarity with Ukraine participated, as well as representatives of several institutions, including the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Council of Europe. The conference provided an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes since the Russian invasion. Participants also discussed the next steps and measures to be taken to ensure justice for Ukraine. Finally, the day culminated in a political declaration, signed by 44 states, stating that Russia must be held accountable and take responsibility for all its actions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ NATO :



75th anniversary

The foreign ministers of the 32 NATO countries met in Brussels on 3 and 4 April to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. Exceptionally, the Alliance's founding treaty, usually kept in Washington, was on display in Brussels for the first time. During the meeting, the ministers began planning for the NATO summit to be held in Washington from 9 to 11 July. They discussed ways of redirecting aid to Ukraine towards European countries, in the presence of the head of Ukrainian diplomacy, Dmytro Kuleba. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

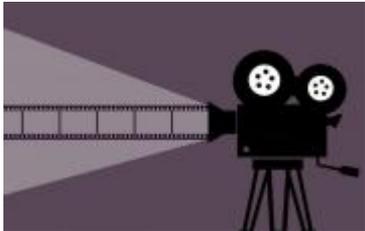
■ Eurostat :



Reduction in inflation

On 3 April, Eurostat released data on annual inflation rates in the eurozone, revealing a decrease. The annual inflation rate for the eurozone is estimated at 2.4% in March 2024, compared with 2.6% in February. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



"Timeless" Film Festival in Warsaw

Until 14 April, the "Timeless" film festival is being held in Warsaw, showcasing the classics of Polish and international cinema. The aim is to (re)discover the multitude of aesthetic revolutions that the 7th art has undergone. The festival also includes a series of concerts, with musicians demonstrating the importance of sound in film. [Read more](#)



"The Worlds of Marco Polo" in Venice

"The Worlds of Marco Polo" is on show at the Doge's Palace in Venice until 29 September. It focuses on the life and travels of the famous explorer Marco Polo, and honours his role as an ambassador for Venetian trade in the 14th century. Various artefacts such as maps, porcelain and fabrics reveal his legacy and the interconnection of different civilisations along the Silk Roads. [Read more](#)

ALBERTINA

"Bruno Gironcoli – Toni Schmale" in Vienna

The "Bruno Gironcoli - Toni Schmale" exhibition will be on show at the Albertina Modern Museum in Vienna until 28 July. The exhibition features 155 previously unpublished coloured pencil drawings by the Austrian artist Bruno Gironcoli. The work of German artist Toni Schmales is represented by sculptures. Both artists call on the viewer's imagination to give meaning to the objects they visualise. [Read more](#)



Subterranean Worlds in Lens

Until 22 July, the Musée Louvre-Lens is staging an exhibition dedicated to the subterranean world. The exhibition features 200 works from all eras and civilisations, answering questions from the general public about underground life, whether dreamt or real. [Read more](#)

COAM

Manga art in Madrid

The "Art of Manga" exhibition is on show at the COAM space in Madrid until 21 July. Through 150 objects and works of art, visitors can discover the world of this Japanese artistic genre. The exhibition highlights the pioneers of manga art and highlights the influence that manga has had on Spanish culture. [Read more](#)



"Mar Aberto" in Lisbon

Nicolas Floc'h's "Mar Aberto" exhibition is on at MAAT in Lisbon until 26 August. The French photographer explores the often little-known underwater realities of various regions, including Brittany, his native region, the Azores and the Mississippi. A centrepiece of the exhibition is an impressive photographic fresco of 408 images depicting the different hues of the River Tagus. The exhibition raises awareness of the diversity and fragility of marine ecosystems. [Read more](#)

WHITE CUBE

Georg Baselitz in London

The exhibition "A confession of my sins" by Georg Baselitz is on at White Cube Bermondsey in London until 16 June. It features works in which the 86-year-old German artist revisits the six and a half decades of his career. He reflects on his life of artistic creation, paying tribute to his sources of inspiration while unearthing sketches made in his youth. [Read more](#)

AMOS Rex

"I feel for now" exhibition in Helsinki

Until 8 September, the Amos Rex Museum in Helsinki is exhibiting a series of works from its collections designed to explore the emotions we experience. The exhibition is entitled "I feel for now". With more than 100 works by 76 artists, ranging from the 1960s to the present day, visitors have the opportunity to be transported from feelings of isolation, empathy and ecstasy to nostalgia. [Read more](#)



Paris Book Festival

The Book Festival is taking place at the ephemeral Grand Palais in Paris from 12 to 14 April. 329 authors will also be on hand at a dozen other venues around Paris for conferences, meetings and book signings. For this third edition, Quebec will be in the spotlight, with some forty authors and over 60 publishing houses from the province on hand to meet the French public. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 10-11 April 2024

European Parliament Session (Brussels)

 11 April 2024

Eurogroup (Luxembourg)

 11 April 2024

ECB Governing Council (Frankfurt/Main)

 12 April 2024

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council (Luxembourg)



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