

## Letter n°1079 of Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Europe's defence against Russia

[Elina Valtonen - 17 Sep 2024](#)

The large-scale war launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 marked a real turning point in the history of Finland and Europe. For Elina Valtonen, it has radically altered the European security order, and there is probably no turning back. The cooperative, treaty-based security order has been transformed into a system based on a balance of power, deterrence and containment.



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### ■ Front page! :



#### European governance in difficulty

Following the resignation on 16 September of European Commissioner Thierry Breton, Jean Dominique Giuliani sees this decision in a more general context of tensions surrounding the composition of the new European Commission. He calls for "changes in governance" as "European policies appear to be increasingly unbalanced", and for the adoption of new practices. What is at stake is the legitimacy of the common institutions we need most, which seem to be having difficulty coping with change. [Read more](#)

## ■ Elections :



### Legislative elections in Lithuania

Lithuanians are being asked to re-elect 141 members of the Seimas, the single chamber of parliament, on 13 and 27 October. 19 political parties and 18 independent candidates are standing for election. Leading in opinion polls, the Social Democratic Party (LSP) are the favourites, but they only came 2nd in the European elections on 9 June. They will have to find partners with whom to govern, but are already refusing any coalition with the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats, which is likely to come 2nd in the elections, while remaining open to other radical parties, which worries many observers. [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



### The Schuman Network, ideas in Europe

The Schuman Network, a Foundation initiative, works to promote the sharing of ideas on a European scale. With 21 members from 13 European countries the Schuman Network is a place where research on current European issues can be pooled. Since its launch, over 125 studies have been published. [Read more](#)

## ■ Commission :



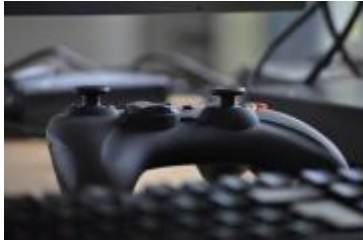
### Thierry Breton resigns from his post

Thierry Breton announced his resignation from his post as European Commissioner in a letter published on 16 September, claiming to have learned that Ursula von der Leyen had put pressure on France to put forward another candidate to replace him. The Frenchman was expected to continue to hold an important portfolio, or even the post of Vice-President. France put forward the name of its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stéphane Séjourné. [Read more](#)



### Call to create AI factories

On 10 September, the European Commission launched a call for the creation of artificial intelligence factories. The aim is to increase Europe's capacity in terms of computing power and attracting talent. The network of factories will be linked to initiatives in the Member States, creating an ecosystem that encourages investment and innovation. [Read more](#)



## Video game publishers targeted for misleading practices

On 12 September, consumer protection organisations lodged a complaint with the European Commission against several video game publishers. The organisations accuse them of using unfair practices such as virtual currencies in their games. In their view, these currencies deliberately conceal the real cost to users, particularly minors. They are asking the Commission to ensure that the prices of items sold in games are expressed in real currency. [Read more](#)

## ■ Council :



## Sanctions against Russia extended for a further 6 months

On 12 September, the Council decided to extend restrictive measures against Russia for a period of 6 months. These measures are being taken in response to the threat posed by Russia to the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The measures include travel restrictions for Russian nationals and asset freezes. They currently affect more than 2,200 people as part of the military aggression carried out since 24 February 2022. [Read more](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



## Western sanctions against Iran for its aid to Russia

On 10 September, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany announced new sanctions against Tehran. Iran is accused of delivering ballistic missiles to Moscow to strike Ukraine. The head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, decided to propose new sanctions to the Member States. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Court of Justice :



## Google condemned to pay a fine of 2.4 billion € for abuse of dominant position

The Court of Justice of the European Union has found Google guilty of abusing its dominant position and upheld the €2.4 billion fine imposed by the European Commission in 2017. The company was found guilty of favouring its own product comparison service to the detriment of its competitors by displaying its own results first. The Court also made it clear that it was not penalising the existence of a dominant position but "the abusive exploitation of that position". [Read more](#)



## Court verdict in dispute with Apple

Two months before the end of her term of office, Margrethe Vestager has won a significant victory against the American intermediary Apple. On 10 September, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled in her favour, confirming the decision handed down by the European Commission in 2016. The favourable financial treatment enjoyed by Apple in Ireland is considered to be illegal, and Apple is therefore required to repay the illegal advantages it received. These advantages amount to €13 billion. [Read more](#)

## ■ ECB :



## Reduction in rates and outlook

On 12 September, the European Central Bank cut its deposit rate by a further 0.25 points, following an identical cut in June, as well as its refinancing and marginal lending rates. Inflation has in fact returned to its 2% target. The declining trend in inflation observed by the institution chaired by Christine Lagarde should not, however, be taken for granted, and we should remain vigilant. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ European Agencies :



## A brilliant end for Cluster satellites

The first of the four Cluster satellites made a successful targeted re-entry on 9 September. These satellites had been used for more than 20 years to gather information on the Sun's interaction with the Earth's magnetic field, which is very useful for understanding space weather. This re-entry also shows that sustainable space exploration is possible and that the accumulation of waste in Earth's orbit is not inevitable. [Read more](#)

## ■ Germany :



### Measures to strengthen security

Following the attack in Solingen at the end of August, for which responsibility was claimed by the Islamic State, the Ministry of the Interior announced measures on 10 September to strengthen the country's security, including measures on the possession of weapons, the fight against Islamism and the fight against illegal immigration. There will also be tighter border controls from 16 September. This measure is of great concern to neighbouring countries and challenges the principle of free movement. [Read more](#)

## ■ Spain :



### Supreme Court rejects application of amnesty law to Carles Puigdemont

The former president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, will not be eligible for the amnesty law, according to a ruling by the Spanish Supreme Court on 10 September. This decision comes more than three months after the adoption of an amnesty law for Catalan independence fighters by Spanish deputies. The Spanish Supreme Court considers that the embezzlement of public funds of which the former Catalan president is accused does not fall within the scope of the amnesty law. [Read more](#)

## ■ Finland :



### Visit by the new Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs

The new Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maria Malmer Stenergard, made her traditional first official visit to Helsinki on 13 September. She met her Finnish counterpart Elina Valtonen. Discussions focused on regional cooperation, NATO and support for Ukraine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ France :

## General Information Forum

On 12 September, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) hosted the restitution of the Etats généraux de l'information. Over the last nine months, citizens, journalists, publishers, researchers, senior civil servants, associations and young people have been reflecting on the future of information. Five working groups, each comprising around fifty people, have been reflecting on the future of information. The report concludes that information is under threat. [Read more](#)

### ■ Latvia :



#### Russian drones violate Latvian and Romanian airspace

Violations of NATO airspace are on the increase. The Latvian Defence Minister, Andris Spruds, said that a drone penetrated his airspace from Belarus on 8 September before crashing into the town of Rezekne. At the same time, a Russian drone deployed on a mission targeting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure was spotted entering Romanian airspace. [Read more](#)

### ■ Poland :



#### Controversial Constitutional Court to be reformed

On 13 September, the lower house of the Polish Parliament approved the Senate's amendments and passed two laws strengthening the independence of Constitutional Court judges from political power. This reform is a step forward as it comes at a time of tension with European institutions over the last ten years or so regarding respect for the rule of law in the country. These laws still need to be signed by the Polish President. [Read more](#)

### ■ Sweden :



#### Government reshuffle

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson announced a reshuffle in his government on 10 September. Maria Malmer Stenergard has been appointed to the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs, succeeding Tobias Billstrom who resigned on 4 September after contributing to his country's accession to NATO. [Read more](#)

### ■ Ukraine :



## Diplomatic Waltz in Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was visited by the US Secretary of State, the UK Foreign Secretary, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, the Croatian Prime Minister and the Baltic Heads of State (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). The fourth summit of the International Platform for Crimea on 11 September 2024 was an opportunity for many leaders and countries to express their support for the integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



## Further Swedish help for Ukraine

On 9 September, Sweden pledged €402 million to Kyiv. Half of this sum is earmarked for the purchase of spare parts for Gripen fighter aircraft. Stockholm therefore appears to be preparing for the transfer of new aircraft to Ukraine. [Read more](#)

## ■ Armenia :



## Launch of dialogue with Armenia regarding the liberalisation of visas

Negotiations on the revision of the visa regime between Armenia and the European Union began on 9 September. The aim of this process is to help Armenia conclude an agreement with the EU granting visa-free travel for short stays, provided that the necessary conditions for well-managed mobility and security are put in place. [Read more](#)

## ■ Georgia :



## Georgian Dream chooses Ivanishvili as candidate

On 10 September, Georgia's ruling party, the Georgian Dream, chose Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire and former prime minister, as its main candidate in the 26 October parliamentary elections. He has played a major role in the political crisis surrounding the law on 'foreign agents' and has criticised the West for dragging Georgia into a war with Russia. President Salome Zurbishvili has warned that the parliamentary elections will be 'a referendum on the country's European future'. [Read more](#)

## ■ NATO :



## Resignation of NATO's Deputy Secretary General

NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana stepped down from his position within the Atlantic Alliance on 10 September. He has decided to stand in the Romanian presidential elections to be held in November. Current President Klaus Iohannis is constitutionally barred from standing for a third term. [Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



### Annual Report on the state of the Energy Union

On 11 September, the European Commission published its 2024 report on the state of the Energy Union. It highlights the way in which the European Union has overcome a number of challenges, notably in relation to security of supply, the progress made in renewable energies and the reduced dependence on Russian gas. The report recalls Member States' obligation to provide a definitive national energy and climate plan to meet the 2030 targets. The plans submitted by the Member States are encouraging, but not yet sufficient. [Read more](#)



### Facilitating Chinese trade with European companies

On 11 September, the EU Chamber of Commerce published a paper urging China to implement its 2023 reform promises. It warns its Chinese partner that rising costs and falling profits are leading European companies to rethink their strategy in China. Despite some positive signals, progress remains limited. This paper therefore provides over a thousand recommendations that China can implement to facilitate trade relations with European companies. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



Musée Jacquemart-André

### Cooperation between the Jacquemart-André Museum and the Borghese Gallery

The Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris is hosting some forty masterpieces from the Galerie Borghèse in Rome until 5 January 2025. This partnership between the two institutions offers an opportunity to admire the great painters, from Caravaggio to Rubens, via Botticelli, Raphael and Titian. [Read more](#)



**MUSEUM BARBERINI**  
**POTSDAM**

## Maurice de Vlaminck at the Barberini Museum

The Barberini Museum in Potsdam is presenting an exhibition of the work of French painter Maurice de Vlaminck until 12 January 2025. Entitled 'Rebel of Modern Art', this exhibition is the first posthumous retrospective devoted to the French avant-garde artist in a German museum. It features 73 works. [Read more](#)



## Michael Craig-Martin in London

The Royal Academy in London is presenting a retrospective of artist Michael Craig-Martin's 60-year career from 21 September to 10 December. It includes sculptures, paintings, drawings, prints and digital works. [Read more](#)



## Barcelona Gallery Weekend

From 19 to 22 September, the Barcelona Gallery Weekend celebrates its 10th anniversary in 27 of the city's contemporary and modern art galleries, showcasing the work of over 30 national and international artists. [Read more](#)



## 41st European Heritage Days

The 41st European Heritage Days are being held on 21 and 22 September. Created in 1984 by the French Ministry of Culture, these days are an opportunity for the public to discover Europe's rich heritage. Some fifty European countries take part in this event, which attracts almost 30 million visitors every year. [Read more](#)



## Lyon Biennial of Contemporary Art

The 17th Lyon Biennial takes place from 21 September to 5 January 2025. Entitled 'Les voix des fleuves - Crossing the water', this new show invites artists to reflect on, question and pursue the subject of the relationship between human beings and their environment. [Read more](#)



## Henri Matisse at the Beyeler Foundation

The Fondation Beyeler in Riehen is presenting an exhibition devoted to the French painter Henri Matisse, the first in the German-speaking world for almost two decades. From 22 September to 26 January 2025, more than 70 works by the artist, from European and American museums as well as private collections, will be on show. The exhibition takes as its starting point Charles Baudelaire's poem 'Invitation au voyage'. [Read more](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 16-19 September

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

 23 September 2023

**Agriculture and Fisheries Council** (Brussels)



## The Letter n°1079

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