

Letter n°1083 of Tuesday 15th October 2024

What the European Parliament should ask of future Commissioners. The four challenges facing the new European Commission

15 Oct 2024

On the eve of the hearings of the Commissioners-designate before the Members of the European Parliament from 4 to 12 November, 'four major questions challenge the European Union and the von der Leyen II Commission: the governance of the common institutions, their international action, their economic policy and the place given to standards and constraints'. These are the questions parliamentarians should be asking future Commissioners.



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■ Elections :



Results of the first round of the general elections in Lithuania

The day after the first round of parliamentary elections in Lithuania, the Social Democratic Party (LSP), led by Vilija Blinkevičiute, came out ahead with 19.74% of the vote and 18 seats in the Seimas, the single chamber of parliament. It overtook the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the party of outgoing Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte, led by Gabrielius Landsbergis, which obtained 18.32% and 17 seats. The second round will be held on 27 October. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Supporting digital connectivity networks

On 9 October, the European Commission announced that it had adopted the second work programme for the digital strand of the European Interconnection Facility. This digital strand aims to improve digital connectivity infrastructures in Europe and will be allocated €865 million between 2024 and 2027. These infrastructures are essential for achieving the objectives of the digital decade set for 2030. [Read more](#)

Health: first agreement on cross-border threats



On 7 October, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank signed a €20 million agreement with the biopharmaceutical company Fabentech. The agreement is part of HERA Invest, an initiative of the Health Emergency Response and Preparedness Authority. The aim of this initiative is to support research and development activities in Europe, particularly in the health sector. This agreement, the first to be concluded under this initiative, will enable the deployment of broad-spectrum medicines to combat biological threats. [Read more](#)



Project to set up a digital travel application

The European Commission adopted two proposals on 8 October, the aim of which is to digitise passports and identity cards by creating an EU digital travel application. This would facilitate freedom of movement and improve the efficiency of border controls. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Schedule of Commissioners' hearings

On 10 October, the European Parliament adopted the detailed schedule for the hearings of the Commissioners-designate from 4 to 12 November. The six Vice-Presidents will be questioned on the same day, at the end of the process on 12 November. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Viktor Orban before MEPs

The Hungarian Presidency and its priorities were debated in the European Parliament on 9 October. In particular, Viktor Orban criticised the green transition, which in his view is detrimental to productivity and employment, expressed his desire to combat illegal migration and called for the accession of the Balkan countries, in particular Serbia. Ursula von der Leyen reiterated her support for the country during the floods and criticised Hungary's position towards Russia. Many MEPs reminded the Hungarian Prime Minister of what European values are. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers

Ministers meeting on 8 October took stock of the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. 267 billion € has been disbursed, representing more than 41% of the total amount committed, to help Member States meet various economic challenges. They discussed progress in implementing the G7 agreement on a loan of around \$50 billion to Ukraine. They approved conclusions on the financing of climate action in the run-up to the meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Baku from 11 to 22 November (COP 29). [Read more](#)



Meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers

The Justice and Home Affairs ministers, meeting on 10 and 11 October, discussed the fight against sexual violence against children on the internet and the strengthening of the European Union's external borders. They supported the implementation of the European action plan against racism, to be adopted in 2020, and discussed the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime, notably in the light of the European Judicial Network on organised crime inaugurated at the end of September. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

The foreign affairs ministers, meeting on 14 October, adopted restrictive measures against seven Iranian individuals and seven entities in response to the country's transfer of missiles and drones to Russia. The measures concern three Iranian airlines and the Iranian deputy defence minister. [Read more](#)



Attacks on UNIFIL in Lebanon condemned

The attacks against the United Nations Interim Force (UNIFIL) deployed in southern Lebanon are "unacceptable", declared the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, in Luxembourg on 13 October. The leaders of France, Italy and Spain also denounced the attacks on UNIFIL on 11 October. [Read more - Other link](#)



New framework of sanctions against Russia

On 9 October, the Council decided on a new framework of sanctions to allow the European Union to target Russian individuals and entities carrying out destabilising actions on European soil. More specifically, these restrictive measures are designed to target the Russian government's foreign interference actions and policies. More generally, these new measures are part of the Union's response to the hybrid attacks carried out by Russia, which have recently multiplied and threaten the security, independence and integrity of the Member States. [Read more](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Partial renewal of the CJEU and entry into office of new members

On 7 and 8 October, the Court of Justice of the European Union renewed a number of its members and appointed new ones. Belgian Koen Lenaerts was re-elected President of the CJEU and German Thomas von Danwitz succeeded Lars Bay Larsen as Vice-President of the Court. Poland's Maciek Szpunar has been re-elected as the first Advocate General of the CJEU. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ European Agencies :



Launch of the Hera mission

The HERA planetary defence mission set off on 7 October towards an asteroid, the only one whose trajectory has been deflected by human intervention, in 2022. The aim is to better guarantee the safety of the Earth by mastering the technique of asteroid deflection known as kinetic impact. The HERA probe will carry out a detailed study of the deflected asteroid and collect other scientific data. [Read more](#)

■ Cyprus :



MED 9 Summit in Cyprus

The 9 Heads of State and Government of the southern European 'Med9' countries (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Croatia), meeting in Paphos on 11 October, discussed the situation in the Middle East, migration and the EU's Mediterranean policy. They adopted a joint declaration at the end of this 11th summit. [Read more](#)

■ Croatia :



South East Europe Summit in Dubrovnik

Representatives from 12 South Eastern European countries adopted the Dubrovnik Declaration on 9 October, at a third summit in the presence of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The declaration condemns Russian aggression, supports Ukraine's territorial integrity, expresses its support for the peace plan proposed by Ukraine, and its membership of the European Union and NATO. Before the start of the Summit, Croatia and Ukraine signed a bilateral agreement for long-term support and cooperation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



Military support for Ukraine

Since the beginning of September, the French Army has been training and equipping a complete Ukrainian army brigade on French soil. French President Emmanuel Macron, accompanied by French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu and his Ukrainian counterpart Roustem Oumerov, visited Ukrainian troops in eastern France on 9 October. [Read more](#)



Draft Finance Law 2025

The Finance Bill and the Social Security Financing Bill for 2025 were presented to the Council of Ministers on 10 October. With this budget bill, the government hopes to reduce the deficit from 7% to 5% of GDP by the end of 2025, through €60 billion of 'budgetary control' measures. The draft will be examined and discussed by both houses of Parliament. [Read more](#)

■ Czech Republic :



Intergovernmental consultations with Poland

The 9th Polish-Czech intergovernmental consultations took place in Prague on 9 October. The prime ministers of Poland, Donald Tusk, and the Czech Republic, Petr Fiala, adopted a joint position on energy cooperation, including the promotion of nuclear power, support for Ukraine and the reform of EU policies to tackle illegal immigration within the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ Sweden :



Contribution to NATO in 2025

On 7 October, the Swedish government presented to Parliament a bill containing proposals on how Sweden will contribute to NATO's deterrence and overall defence in the North Atlantic area for the year 2025. This historic decision is Sweden's first contribution to NATO's collective defence. [Read more](#)

■ Montenegro :



Brdo-Brioni Summit in Tivat

At their summit in Tivat, Montenegro on 8 October, the leaders of the countries taking part in the Brdo-Brioni initiative underlined in a joint declaration the importance of enlarging the European Union to include the Western Balkans. The Brdo-Brijuni process is a Slovenian-Croatian initiative launched in 2010 with the aim of building confidence and helping the countries of the Western Balkans on their path to membership of the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ Georgia :



European Parliament resolution on threats to political pluralism

In a resolution adopted on 9 October, MEPs believe that the democratic backsliding in Georgia will suspend the country's integration into the EU until the legislation adopted, which violates freedom of expression and censors the media, is repealed. They call on the Member States and the EU to impose personal sanctions on individuals responsible for undermining democracy. They include Bidzina Ivanishvili, honorary chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



European support for Moldova

On 10 October in Chisinau, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced an unprecedented €1.8 billion in aid for Moldova, ahead of presidential elections and a referendum on EU membership on 20 October. At the same time, MEPs adopted a resolution on 9 October on strengthening Moldova's resilience in the face of Russian interference. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



European Financial Assistance of 35 billion €

On 9 October, the Council reached agreement on measures to provide financial assistance to Ukraine. These include an exceptional macro-financial assistance loan of up to €35 billion and a new cooperation mechanism in the form of loans. Repayment will be made with funds from the exceptional revenues generated by the immobilised Russian assets. [Read more](#)



Tour of Ukrainian President to his European Allies

On 9 October, Volodymyr Zelensky embarked on a diplomatic tour of his main European allies in a bid to secure new commitments of support before the winter. After attending the summit with representatives of the Balkan countries in Zagreb, the Ukrainian President met British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Pope Francis in the Vatican. Finally, on 11 October, he met German President Frank Walter Steinmeier and Chancellor Olaf Scholz. [Read more](#)

■ Eurobarometer :



Europeans' trust in the Schengen Area

A Eurobarometer survey published on 8 October shows how Europeans perceive the Schengen area. 55% of those questioned said they had already heard of the Schengen area and knew what it was. A quarter have already heard of it, but are not sure how it works. These figures are a significant increase on the previous survey in 2018, when the figures were 46% and 21%. In addition, 64% of those questioned believe that Schengen area measures are effective in managing external borders. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report on the Union's Budget in 2023

An annual report by the European Court of Auditors published on 10 October highlights a rising level of error in EU spending. These errors will total 5.6% in 2023, compared with 4.2% in 2022 and 3% in 2021. These errors occur in particular when payments are made without all the required conditions being met. They occurred particularly in cohesion expenditure (9.3% of errors). The Court also highlights a growing debt for the Union, which is already twice as high as it was in 2021, a situation exacerbated by inflation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



World merchandise trade on the road to gradual recovery

World trade is gradually picking up despite regional conflicts and political uncertainty, according to forecasts made by the WTO in its report published on October 10. A 2.7% growth in the volume of goods traded worldwide is expected for 2024. However, there were a few deviations from the forecasts: growth in European trade was weaker than anticipated, while growth in Asian trade was higher. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Frankfurt Book Fair

The Frankfurt Book Fair (Frankfurter Buchmesse) is the world's largest publishing fair. It will be held from 16 to 20 October. The event attracts visitors from all over the world who want to learn more about the latest publications and trends in the world of books. [Read more](#)



Stockholm Jazz Festival

The Stockholm Jazz Festival runs until 20 October. The festival brings together more than 50 jazz and blues artists from all over the world at various venues in the Swedish capital. [Read more](#)



Caillebotte at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris

Following the acquisition of two major paintings by Gustave Caillebotte, and to mark the 130th anniversary of his death, the Musée d'Orsay is organising an exhibition of 70 works (paintings, photographs, pastels, drawings and documents) by the Parisian artist, running until 19 January 2025. [Read more](#)



**KUNST
STORISCH
MUSEUM
WIEN**

Rembrandt in Vienna

The Vienna Museum of Art History is organising an exhibition devoted to the Dutch painter Rembrandt, until 12 January 2025. A wide variety of works by the artist and his pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten, ranging from the quest for realism to the creation of illusory effects, are being exhibited for the first time in the Austrian capital's museum. [Read more](#)



MUSEO NACIONAL
DEL PRADO

Rubens at the Prado in Madrid

The Prado Museum in Madrid is presenting an exhibition on the studio of the artist Peter Paul Rubens, until 16 February 2025. A painter of the Baroque period, his paintings and those of his studio assistants are on show, demonstrating the variety and quality of his work. [Read more](#)



Berthe Morisot in Turin

The Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art (GAM) in Turin is presenting the Berthe Morisot exhibition from 16 October to 9 March 2025. The exhibition retraces the life and artistic career of the French painter, the only woman among the pioneers of Impressionism, through a selection of works that highlight one of the pioneers of this artistic movement. [Read more](#)



Liverpool Irish Festival

The Liverpool Irish Festival is taking place from 17 to 27 October, and pays tribute to the city's Irish cultural heritage. Theatre, music and exhibitions of art and literature, emblematic of Irish artistic culture, will be held over 10 days to discover the various aspects of Irish tradition. [Read more](#)

Hilma af Klint in Bilbao

From 18 October to 2 February 2025, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is staging an exhibition tracing the career of the Swedish painter Hilma af Klint. Inspired by the scientific and spiritual currents of her time, the artist is described as a pioneer in the representation of the invisible. [Read more](#)



Restoration of the Cussac cave

Discovered in 2000, the 30,000-year-old Cussac cave was closed because it was so fragile. The site is an archaeological treasure trove, with traces of occupation, panels engraved with animal figures and other abstract signs. Many of the remains have been accessible to the public since 9 October. [Read more](#)



40th Warsaw Film Festival

The Warsaw International Film Festival is celebrating its 40th anniversary until 20 October. It is presenting 84 feature films and 58 shorts from 55 countries. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 14 October 2024

Foreign Affairs Council Environment Council (Luxembourg)

 15 October 2024

Energy Council General Affairs Council (Luxembourg)

 14 October 2024

EU Summit - Gulf Cooperation Council

 14 October 2024

European Council

 17 October 2024

Governing Council of the European Central Bank (Slovenia)

 20 October 2024

Presidential Election (Moldova)



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