

Letter n°1089 of Tuesday 26th November 2024

Central Asia: a player still largely unknown in Europe

Pierre Andrieu - 26 Nov 2024

Since the break-up of the USSR in 1991, the five former Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), which have now become independent, have been tactfully trying to free themselves from the dual grip of Russia and China and to apply a specific diplomacy to attract outside powers.



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■ Elections :



Results of the first round of the presidential election in Romania

Calin Georgescu, who according to opinion polls was expected to win a maximum of 9% of the vote, came out ahead in the 1st round of the presidential election held on 24 November in Romania, with 22.95% of the vote. He was followed by Elena-Valeria Lasconi (Save Romania, USR), who obtained 19.17%. The Liberal candidate narrowly beat outgoing Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu (Social Democratic Party, PSD), who won 19.15%. George-Nicolae Simion (Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, AUR) came 4th with 13.87%. The unexpected 2nd round will pit Calin Georgescu against Elena-Valeria Lasconi on 8 December. Between the two rounds, Romania holds its parliamentary elections on 1 December. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Impact and allocation of green bonds

On 20 November, the Commission published an annual report on the impact and allocation of NextGenerationEU green bonds. It highlights the leading role that the European Union has played globally in the field of sustainable green financing. The full deployment of investments financed by green bonds is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55 million tonnes per year. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Erasmus+ programme for 2025

On 19 November, the European Commission published the call for proposals for the Erasmus+ 2025 programme. These proposals will be funded to the tune of €5 billion, an increase of 6.5% compared with 2023. This programme supports exchanges abroad as part of cooperation partnerships in the fields of education, youth and sport. Erasmus+ funds the Ukrainian education system, with the Commission recalling its funding of 500,000 Ukrainian school textbooks printed and delivered in 2023. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :

Agreement reached on Commissioners-designate

The Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, meeting on 20 November, carried out a final evaluation of the 7 Commissioners who had not yet received confirmation, i.e. the 6 Vice-Presidents, as well as the Hungarian Commissioner Olivér Varhelyi, who did not entirely convince the MEPs at his hearing. The final vote is due to take place on 27 November, and the College of Commissioners should then be able to take up its duties on 1 December. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

The Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries met on 18 November to examine the situation on the European market, in the presence of the Ukrainian Minister for Agrarian Policy. They acknowledged the positive signs of recovery in agri-food markets, but pointed out that many challenges remain: climate change, the geopolitical situation, the spread of animal diseases, etc. Discussions took place on fishing possibilities for 2025, with a view to setting catch limits while respecting the balance between the social, economic and environmental viability of the sector. [Read more](#)



Meeting of trade ministers

The trade ministers met on 21 November to discuss the trade situation and the future of the EU's trade policy. The meeting took place against a backdrop of negotiations with a number of third parties, including the Mercosur countries. The future state of trade relations with the United States was discussed in the light of the outcome of the presidential election and the statements made by the President-elect. [Read more](#)



Meeting of European Affairs Ministers

At their meeting on 19 November, the European Affairs ministers discussed cohesion policy and strengthening competitiveness within the Union, and began work on preparations for the European Council on 19 and 20 December. During the annual dialogue on the rule of law, particular attention was paid to the situation in Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Poland. An update was also given on the ongoing Article 7 TEU procedure against Hungary. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

Meeting on 18 and 19 November, the foreign and defence ministers took stock of the situation in Ukraine and reiterated their support for the country. The situation in the Middle East and Georgia were also discussed. They approved conclusions on the strategic review of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Confirmation that the law on deforestation has been postponed for a year

On 20 November, the Council reaffirmed its support for the proposed targeted amendment of the regulation on deforestation, postponing its application date by 12 months, which is the best way of guaranteeing legal certainty for all stakeholders. [Read more](#)



G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro

On 18 and 19 November, the Group of Twenty (G20), comprising the world's most developed economies, the European Union and the African Union, met in Rio de Janeiro. The leaders adopted a joint declaration focusing on the fight against poverty and hunger, global governance reform, sustainable and inclusive growth, and global challenges such as armed conflict and climate change. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Citizenship and the right to stand in municipal and European elections

In a judgment issued on 19 November, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that a nationality requirement for membership of a political party in a Member State constitutes a breach of the equal treatment of European nationals. European nationals must be able to fully exercise their effective right to stand as candidates in municipal and European elections, even if they reside in a Member State of which they are not nationals. The Court therefore considers that the Czech and Polish legislation is in breach of the obligations arising from the European Treaties. [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



Member States' defence spending reaches 1.9% of GDP

On 19 November, the European Defence Agency (EDA) announced that EU Member States had spent a total of €326 billion on defence in 2024. This record represents 1.9% of the Union's GDP. Most of the money was spent on research and development of new technologies and the purchase of new equipment, as European countries replenish their stocks, build up reserves and continue deliveries to Ukraine. [Read more](#)

■ Spain :



New Ecological Transition Minister

Teresa Ribera, former Minister for Ecological Transition and now Vice-President of the European Commission, has been replaced by the Secretary of State for Energy, Sara Aagesen. She was sworn in by King Felipe VI on 25 November and is the government's third vice-president. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Joint statement by BDI/Confindustria/Medef

The presidents of Medef, BDI and Confindustria, bodies representing French, German and Italian companies, met in Paris on 21 and 22 November for the 6th Trilateral Business Forum to discuss European growth and competitiveness, in particular the Draghi and Letta reports. At the end of the discussions, they called on the European Union and its Member States to take 4 immediate measures: boost the competitiveness of European industry, reduce bureaucratic and compliance costs, accelerate innovation and increase investment in research and development, and facilitate European investment. [Read more](#)

■ Ireland :



Polls just four days from the legislative election in Ireland

In the run-up to the general election on 29 November, the Sunday Independent published an Ireland Thinks poll on 24 November, based on an online sample of 1,420 people. It shows that the gap between Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin has narrowed considerably since the start of the campaign. Fine Gael is expected to win between 21 and 24.5% of the vote, Fianna Fáil between 19 and 22.5%, the independents between 18 and 22%, and Sinn Féin between 18.5 and 20.5%. [Read more](#)

■ Lithuania :



Gintautas Paluckas appointed Prime Minister

Gintautas Paluckas, of the Social Democratic Party, was appointed Prime Minister of Lithuania in a parliamentary vote on 21 November by 88 votes to 34, with 6 abstentions. He now has 15 days to present his coalition government to Parliament, which would include not only his own party, the ecologist Democrats 'For Lithuania', but also the populist Nemunas Dawn party. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Poland :



Meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Warsaw

Foreign ministers Radosław Sikorski (Poland), Jean-Noël Barrot (France) Annalena Baerbock (Germany) and Antonio Tajani (Italy) attended a meeting with Kaja Kallas, the future head of EU diplomacy, in Warsaw on 19 November. Their Spanish and British counterparts participated via videoconference. They adopted a joint declaration highlighting the growing threats to European security and reaffirming their commitment to strengthening collective defence and deepening transatlantic cooperation. The Weimar Triangle+ format is expected to meet more frequently in the future. [Read more](#)

■ Sweden :



Submarine cable breaches in the Baltic Sea

The Swedish authorities have opened an investigation following the damage to two submarine communications cables in the Baltic Sea, one linking Finland to Germany and the other linking Sweden to Lithuania. In a joint declaration on 22 November, the Nordic and Baltic ministers responsible for digital issues stressed the importance of enhanced cooperation on submarine infrastructures for electronic communications, given the strategic importance of these systems. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Moldova :



The United Kingdom strengthens its cooperation

On 20 November, the UK and Moldova signed new agreements on migration, defence and security. The two countries signed a readmission agreement designed to strengthen international cooperation on irregular migration, by putting in place faster, safer and more effective procedures. They also signed an agreement establishing a new defence and security partnership. This agreement aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation and increase Moldova's resilience to external threats, particularly hybrid threats emanating from Russia. [Read more](#)



Swedish financial aid

On 21 November, the government announced additional aid of SEK 129 million for Moldova, with the aim of strengthening the country's democracy and social resilience. The aim is to help the country improve its resistance to cyber attacks, fight corruption and increase transparency in its judicial system. [Read more](#)



The Council of Europe adopts a new action plan

On 20 November, the Committee of Ministers, which brings together the 46 members of the Council of Europe, voted on the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028, the fourth since 2013. The aim is to help the country bring its legislation, institutions and practices into line with Council of Europe standards. The areas covered include human rights, democracy and the rule of law. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Zelensky addresses the European Parliament

The European Parliament held an extraordinary session on 19 November, attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, to mark 1,000 days of war in Ukraine. In his speech, the Ukrainian head of state thanked the European Union and its international partners for their support in the face of Russian aggression, saying that this cooperation had made it possible to counter the Russian President's ambitions. He urged that this unity be maintained in order to achieve a just peace, an objective that he considers to be a priority. He insisted on the importance of stronger sanctions against Russia, in particular over its 'phantom fleet'. The majority of political groups reiterated their full support for Ukraine, calling on European leaders to increase arms deliveries, which are essential for victory. [Read more](#)



Additional aid from Denmark

During her visit to Kyiv on 19 November, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced that Denmark would provide a further €130 million in aid to develop Ukraine's defence industry. Denmark has been one of the main contributors of military aid to Ukraine since the start of the conflict. During their talks, Mette Frederiksen and Volodymyr Zelensky discussed the need for joint efforts at European institutional level, with a view to the Danish Presidency of the Council in the second half of 2025. [Read more](#)

■ UN :



Conclusions of COP29

On 24 November, after more than 10 days of negotiations, COP 29 in Baku reached an agreement focusing on financial issues. The agreement aims to triple funding for developing countries to tackle the climate crisis. At the same time, an agreement was reached on the carbon markets, centralised under the aegis of the United Nations, to speed up the implementation of climate action plans by governments. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Radmila Šekerinska, NATO's new Deputy Secretary General

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte appointed Radmila Šekerinska as Deputy Secretary General on 19 November, replacing Mircea Geoană. This reflects a commitment to increasing the number of women in the organisation, as well as its geographical representativeness. Radmila Šekerinska was Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and Minister of Defence of Northern Macedonia, contributing to her country's accession to NATO in 2020. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



2023, a devastating year for forest fires

On 19 November, the European Commission's Research Centre published its 2023 report on forest fires. No fewer than 500,000 hectares of natural land were affected. It points out that 96% of forest fires are caused by human activity, and calls for more preventive measures. [Read more](#)



Report on digital health

On 20 November, the European Court of Auditors published a report on the digital transformation of healthcare systems in Europe. The report recognises effective guidelines, but problems remain, including obstacles to the use of European funds. There are also shortcomings in the comparative evaluation of the digital transition of different healthcare systems, including the accuracy of the information provided. The auditors therefore call for these points to be improved by 2026. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Christmas Markets in Europe

Christmas markets are opening their doors this Advent. In many towns and cities, they offer local crafts, themed decorations, culinary specialities and a variety of entertainment. These emblematic events are held all over Europe. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



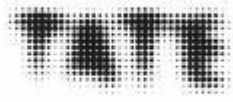
Reopening of the Matisse Museum in Cateau-Cambrésis

The Musée Matisse in Le Cateau-Cambrésis reopened its doors on 23 November after an 18-month closure for works. Admission is free until December 1. The artist's collection will be showcased in a new museum display area and three rooms devoted to his various techniques: engraving, sculpture and paper cut-outs. Finally, the inaugural exhibition, 'Comment j'ai fait mes livres' (How I made my books), showcases books illustrated by Matisse until 13 April 2025. [Read more](#)



Janus la Cour in Alkersum/Föhr

An exhibition on the Danish painter Janus la Cour is being held at the Museum Kunst der Westküste until 22 June 2025. The exhibition presents the painter's artistic career, which ranged from illustrations of a disappearing natural world threatened by the continuing industrialisation of Europe in the 19th century. [Read more](#)



Art and technology" exhibition in London

The exhibition "Electric Dreams, Art and Technology before the Internet" is being held at the Tate Modern in London until 1 June 2025. It shows how artists used machines and algorithms to create works of art between the 1950s and the early 1990s. [Read more](#)

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Paul Pfeiffer in Bilbao

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is hosting an exhibition of works by sculptor and video artist Paul Pfeiffer from 30 November to 16 March 2025. Using a variety of media (video, photos, sculptures, installations, etc.), he explores the varied and complex ways in which images shape our perception and experience of reality. [Read more](#)



The history of migration on show in Paris

Until 8 June 2025, the Musée de l'Homme in Paris is presenting the exhibition 'Migrations, a human odyssey'. This exhibition explores the phenomenon of migration from various scientific angles (anthropology, sociology, linguistics), with a view to shedding light on its many dimensions. Thanks to an interactive scenography, it retraces the history of migration from prehistoric times to the present day, highlighting testimonies, objects and works of art. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 25-26 November 2024

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (Brussels)

 25-28 November 2024

Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)

 28 November 2024

Cohesion Council (Brussels)

 28 & 29 November

 29 November 2024

Legislative Elections (Ireland)

 December 1st

Parliamentary Elections (Romania)

 2-3 December 2024

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Brussels)



The Letter n°1089

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in English -- Edition of Tuesday 26th November 2024

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N° ISSN: **2729-6482**

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