

Letter n°1091 of Tuesday 10th December 2024

The path to "controlled" immigration

Joël Dine - 10 Dec 2024

'Europe must completely change its immigration policy. It must move from a 'fortress Europe' to being a Europe that organises its immigration, so that it is conducive to its economic development'. This study looks at the migration issues facing the European Union and suggests ways of curbing illegal immigration and training people to meet Europe's needs.



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■ Foundation :



Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union

For Christmas, give the 'Schuman Report on the State of the Union in 2024'. It is available on the Robert Schuman Foundation website in French and English. With contributions from leading political figures such as Roberta Metsola and Ursula von der Leyen as well as eminent researchers, the Schuman Report contains the essential analyses of the current and strategic issues surrounding the European Union. [Read more](#)



The Schuman Network, a platform to share European ideas

The Schuman Network, a Foundation initiative, is a platform which offers European think-tanks the opportunity to showcase their research into European issues. Comprising 21 members from 13 European countries, the Schuman Network brings together researchers specialising in European issues to encourage the sharing of ideas, debate and reflection on Europe. Since its launch 145 publications have been shared. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Label Step: promoting projects in the field of strategic technologies

On 9 December, the Commission published the first projects to receive the STEP (Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform) label, a quality label that gives greater visibility to promising projects in clean and resource-efficient technologies, as well as deep and digital technologies. The label aims to attract additional public and private funding and support services from the EU. [Read more](#)



Creation of the European Agriculture and Food Council

On 5 December, the European Commission announced the creation of the European Agriculture and Food Council, as a follow-up to the report on the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture. This consultative body will be chaired by Christophe Hansen, European Commissioner for Food and Agriculture. Its aim will be to support dialogue, trust and multi-stakeholder participation between stakeholders in the food supply chain, civil society and the Commission. The council will be set up for a period of 5 years and will meet between 2 and 6 times a year. A call for candidates has been published to form the Board of Directors. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Legislation on deforestation postponed by one year

Negotiations between the Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on 3 December to postpone the application of the new rules on deforestation. The new rules will apply from 30 December 2025 for large operators and traders, and from 30 June 2026 for micro and small businesses. The agreement remains informal and has yet to be voted on at the Parliament's plenary session from 16 to 19 December. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Hearing of candidates for the post of European Ombudsman

The six candidates (Teresa Anjinho, Julia Laffranque and Claudia Mahler, Emilio de Capitani, Marino Fardelli and Reinier van Zutphen) for the post of European Ombudsman were interviewed by the European Parliament's Petitions Committee on 3 December. The European Ombudsman is elected by Parliament at the beginning of each parliamentary term and is responsible for investigating maladministration within the EU institutions. The election to replace Emily O'Reilly is scheduled for 17 December in Strasbourg. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of the Ministers for transport, telecommunications and energy

The Ministers for Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, meeting on 5 and 6 December, reached agreement on a European position on driving disqualifications for serious road traffic offences and on passenger rights in multimodal journeys. The issue of cybersecurity was addressed with the approval of the conclusions of the cybersecurity agency ENISA and the White Paper on digital infrastructure needs. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Meeting of ministers for social affairs and health

The ministers meeting on 2 and 3 December failed to reach agreement on the draft directive on the working conditions of trainees in the EU. Demographic challenges were addressed, as well as access to the labour market for minorities and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. The health ministers adopted a recommendation aimed at reducing exposure to smoke and aerosols and called for greater efforts to help prevent cardiovascular disease. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



46 investment projects in the Global Gateway strategy for 2025

On 2 December, the Council approved 46 flagship projects of the Global Gateway strategy for 2025 for investment in digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research. [Read more](#)



Signature of the Partnership agreement with the Mercosur countries

Despite the opposition and reluctance of certain Member States, on 6 December the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, signed the partnership agreement between the European Union and Mercosur (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay). This agreement, which has been the subject of more than two decades of negotiations, aims to facilitate trade between Europe and the 4 Latin American countries. It must now be translated into the EU languages before being submitted to the Council and Parliament for ratification. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Meetings with all the leaders of the Western Balkans

António Costa, who took office as President of the European Council on 1 December, hosted the leaders of the countries of the Western Balkans on 3 and 4 December. These meetings were organised ahead of the summit to be held on 18 December. The High Representative, Kaja Kallas, met Aleksandar Vučić and Albin Kurti in her capacity as mediator of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. [Read more](#)

■ ECB :



Hearing of Christine Lagard at the European Parliament

Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank (ECB), appeared before the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs on 4 December. She called for a rapid EU response to geopolitical and structural changes, focusing in particular on investment and innovation. After describing the latest macroeconomic developments in Europe, she announced that the ECB's key rates would be changed again in the next few days. [Read more](#)

■ EIB :



Partnership on batteries

On 3 December, the European Investment Bank and the European Commission announced a partnership to support investment in the European battery production sector. The aim is to establish a circular economy in this sector in Europe and reduce the environmental impact of batteries, particularly in light of the objectives of the Green Deal. [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



Europe's Vega C rocket lifts off from Kourou

The European Vega C rocket lifted off from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou on 5 December, successfully placing the Sentinel-1C satellite into orbit. This success comes two years after the failure of its first commercial launch. The satellite will provide continuous data and services for observing the planet and analysing climate change. It is part of the European Union's Copernicus observation programme. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Re-opening of Notre-Dame de Paris

After five years of restoration since the fire in April 2019, Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral was reopened on 7 December during a ceremony attended by several heads of state and government from around the world. It is once again open to the public, who were able to attend the inaugural mass on 8 December. [Read more](#)



Zelenskyy, Macron and Trump meet in Paris

Before attending the ceremony to reopen Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, Donald Trump, President-elect of the United States, met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, accompanied by his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, at the Élysée Palace on 7 December. This trilateral meeting was the first between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy since the start of the war in Ukraine, and is of key importance given the American President-elect's desire to distance himself strongly from Joe Biden's policy of support for Kyiv. Following closed-door discussions on ways to support Ukraine and establish a just peace, the leaders pledged to continue cooperation and communication. [Read more](#)



Vote of no confidence in government

On 4 December, 331 MPs voted in favour of the motion of no confidence tabled against the government on 2 December. The government had accepted responsibility for the vote on the Social Security Finance Bill, in accordance with article 49 paragraph 3 of the French Constitution. Having exceeded the required majority of 288 deputies, the lower house of parliament toppled a government for the first time in 62 years. Prime Minister Michel Barnier tendered the government's resignation to the President of the Republic on 5 December. In a speech on the same day, Emmanuel Macron announced a special law on the budget and called for the formation of a 'general interest' government. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Italy :



New Minister of European Affairs

Raffaele Fitto, appointed Vice-President for Cohesion and Reform at the European Commission, has handed over his government post to Tommaso Foti. A member of the Italian Brotherhood party and President of the Chamber of Deputies since 2022, he was sworn in by the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, on 2 December and is Minister for European Affairs with responsibility for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Malta :



OSCE inter-ministerial summit in Malta

The 31st inter-ministerial summit of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was held from 5 to 6 December in Valletta, Malta. A consensus was reached on appointments to the posts of Secretary General and other senior positions within the institution. [Read more](#)

■ Romania :



Annulment of the presidential election

On 6 December, the Romanian Constitutional Court decided to annul the presidential election in Romania, the contested first round of which took place on 24 November. The Court cited a number of irregularities, a lack of transparency and a violation of electoral law that distorted equality between candidates. It relies on information from the Romanian secret services, documents that were declassified by the outgoing president. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Georgia :



Protests against the regime in Georgia

The Georgian government, accused of pro-Russian autocratic leanings, is attempting to curb the country's protests by force, with the arrest on December of four opposition members including Nika Gvaramia, leader of the Coalition for Change. The Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidzé, once again accused the protest movement of fomenting revolution and being financed from abroad, without providing any evidence. On December 2, the foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania announced punitive measures against those responsible for suppressing the demonstrations in Georgia. On December 5, Ukraine followed suit by sanctioning the Prime Minister and 17 other officials. Thousands of pro-EU Georgians gathered outside Parliament for a twelfth night of protest against the government. The protests are now spreading to all regions of the country. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Iceland :



Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir appointed to form Icelandic government

Following the parliamentary elections on 30 November, Icelandic President Halla Tómasdóttir mandated Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir, leader of the Social Democrats, to form a new government on 3 December. Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir has already begun negotiations with the Reform Party (liberal) and the People's Party (left-wing) to form this new government. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Olaf Scholz and Alain Berset visit Kyiv

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Kyiv on 2 December to reiterate his support for the Ukrainian people. The visit was an opportunity to announce an additional delivery of military equipment worth €650 million by the end of December, at a conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe Alain Berset visited Ukraine from 4 to 6 December. He met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He reaffirmed the appointment of a special envoy for the children of Ukraine from 2025 and the creation of a Task Force within the Council of Europe to coordinate activities in favour of Ukraine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Less stringent protection for the wolf

On 3 December, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention voted in favour of the EU's proposal to adapt the wolf's protection status. This would change the wolf's status from 'strictly protected' to 'protected' from 7 March 2025, giving Member States greater flexibility in managing local wolf populations. This vote follows a proposal adopted by the European Council in September 2024. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Combating the manipulation of history

The Council of Europe's Observatory for History Teaching in Europe (OEHTE) organised a conference on 5 and 6 December in Strasbourg on the theme of 'History in crisis'. This event attracted over 500 participants, including ministers and deputy ministers of education from several countries, as well as education experts, historians and political decision-makers. This series of conferences explored the role that history teaching can play in meeting the challenges currently facing European societies, in particular the instrumentalisation of history. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Meetings of Ministers for Foreign Affairs

On 3 and 4 December, the foreign ministers of the NATO countries met in Brussels. Two days of intense discussions on Ukraine and the Middle East saw the Atlantic Alliance decide to open a liaison office in Amman, Jordan, in the presence of King Abdullah II. The new EU High Representative, Kaja Kallas, attended the NATO-Ukraine Council. The ministers highlighted Russia's hostile actions, including sabotage, cyber attacks and energy blackmail. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report on the integration of migrants

On 3 December, the European Court of Auditors published a report on the integration of migrants. Migrants accounted for 27.3 million legal residents in 2023, or 6.1% of the population. While the measures financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund have been useful, the Member States do not systematically monitor actions to assist migrants, making it difficult to assess the impact of the Integration Fund. The Court therefore recommends that the Commission identify funding shortfalls and improve the reliability of project data. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Max Ernst in Madrid

Until 4 May 2025, the exhibition "Max Ernst: Surrealism, Art and Cinema" at the Cercle des Beaux-Arts in Madrid offers a unique journey through the life and career of Max Ernst, combining works in a variety of media: paintings, sculptures, collages, rubbings, books, etc. [Read more](#)



Parmigianino in London

Until 9 March 2025, the National Gallery in London is showing the exhibition of Parmigianino's 'Madonna and Child with Saints', also known as 'The Vision of Saint Jerome'. It is being shown to the public again for the first time in 10 years after restoration. [Read more](#)



"Evil Flowers" in Berlin

The 'Evil Flowers' exhibition will be on show at Berlin's State Museums until 4 May 2025. Starting with the charcoal drawing 'Fleur du Mal' by Odilon Redon, held in the Scharf-Gerstenberg collection, the exhibition takes visitors on a journey through art from the 1st modernist period to contemporary works that shed light on different aspects of Baudelaire's aesthetic. [Read more](#)



CITÉ DE LA MUSIQUE
PHILHARMONIE
DE PARIS

The Philharmonie de Paris celebrates Maurice Ravel

To mark the 150^e anniversary of Maurice Ravel's birth, the Philharmonie de Paris is paying tribute to the French composer with a series of cultural events, running until 15 June 2025. An exhibition entitled Ravel/Boléro will be on show, with a striking audiovisual tour bringing together heritage objects from the most prestigious French collections. The programme also includes a series of lectures and concerts. [Read more](#)



Antwerp Art Fair

Organised by Art Brussels, the 4th edition of the Antwerp Art Fair will be held from 12 to 15 December. This is a chance to discover new trends and new faces in contemporary art. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 10 December

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council (Brussels)

 12 and 13 December

"Justice and Home Affairs" Council (Brussels)

 12 December 2024

Meeting of ECB Governors (Frankfurt)

 16 December

"Foreign Affairs" Council "Transport, Telecommunications and Energy" Council (Brussels)



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