

Letter n°1092 of Tuesday 17th December 2024

The Foundation is saddened to learn of the death of Professor Alain Pompidou, Member of the European Parliament from 1989 to 1999, President of the European Patent Office from 2004 to 2007 and member of the Scientific Committee of the Robert Schuman Foundation. It sends its heartfelt and very cordial condolences to his wife, as well as its solidarity in her hour of grief. It pays tribute to the life of this exemplary public figure and passionate scientist. His memory remains deep in our hearts.

António Costa, a Socialist from the South, to preside over the European Council

[Elise Bernard, David Fajolles - 17 Dec 2024](#)

The former Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Costa, took over the Presidency of the European Council on 1 December. 'Unlike his three Belgian and Polish predecessors, António Costa comes from the south of the continent. He is also the first Socialist to hold the post, after two members of the EPP and one Liberal. This political choice is explained by the desire to represent the European majority (EPP, S&D, Renew) that already existed in 2019'. This study paints a portrait of the new President and looks back at his past political achievements in an attempt to outline the contours of his forthcoming term of office.



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■ **Front page! :**



Trump, Europe, Ukraine and Russia

'Will Europeans one day understand that our American allies also have their own interests, which do not always coincide with those of Europe?' For Jean-Dominique Giuliani, the return of Donald Trump should encourage Europeans to take more control of their own destiny. Peace in Ukraine must go beyond a possible American-Russian agreement, it must be achieved for and by Europe. [Read more](#)

■ Elections :



Presidential Election in Croatia

On 29 December and 12 January, the Croatian people will go to ballot to elect their president. Zoran Milanovic, the outgoing president and candidate to succeed him, is up against seven other candidates, including Dragan Primorac. Opinion polls show him as the winner in the second round. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



Summary table of pension systems in Europe

The Foundation offers a summary table of all the different pension systems in the 27 Member States of the European Union, updated and available in French and English. [Read more](#)



Buy your copy of the Schuman 2024 report on the state of the Union

The 18th edition of the Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union is an excellent idea for a Christmas present. It includes an interview with the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron as well as contributions from Ursula von der Leyen and Roberta Metsola, respectively President of the European Commission and President of the European Parliament, who were both re-elected in July 2024. This reference work is available for €22 from the Foundation's website. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Publication of the text of the Mercosur Agreement

On 11 December, the European Commission published the official text of the agreement between Mercosur and the European Union in its updated version following negotiations between the two parties, which concluded on 6 December. The Commission has also published an explanatory text of the changes resulting from these negotiations. These texts can be consulted on the Commission website. [Read more](#)



New measures in support of farmers

On 10 December, the European Commission proposed targeted changes to the legal framework of the Common Market Organisation for agricultural products. The aim is to strengthen the position of farmers and restore confidence between players in the agri-food supply chain. The issue of taking account of market developments, particularly in long-term contracts, is one of these changes. Mediation and financial support have been mooted. In this context, the Commission has proposed new rules on the cross-border application of unfair commercial practices in the agricultural and food supply chain. [Read more](#)



Stepping up the fight against the exploitation of migrants

On 11 December, the Commission adopted a communication aimed at supporting Member States in the fight against hybrid attacks resulting from the instrumentalisation of migration by Russia and Belarus, and at reinforcing security at the European Union's external borders. In line with the measures adopted to deal with this instrumentalisation, the Commission has already released additional funds totalling €170 million for several Member States. [Read more](#)



EuroHPC selects 7 consortia to deploy AI

On 10 December, the European Commission announced that the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC) had selected seven proposals aimed at setting up and running the first AI factories in Europe. The strategy is to create an ecosystem conducive to the training of advanced AI models. These factories will represent an investment of €1.5 billion, combining European and national funds, and should double the computing capacity of the EuroHPC. They will be hosted by entities located in Spain, Italy, Finland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Germany and Greece. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Poland presents its programme for the Presidency of the Council

On 11 December, Poland published the website that will host information relating to its six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The country will take over from Hungary on 1 January 2025. The priorities of its programme are to monitor Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, strengthen relations with NATO, develop a new energy security architecture and address the issues of old age and health security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers

The Home Affairs and Justice ministers met on 12 and 13 December to discuss the implementation of asylum and immigration reforms. They formalised the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area. Entry will be effective from 1 January 2025, with the end of land border controls. They agreed to plan a general approach to a future directive aimed at preventing the trafficking of migrants, as well as updating the directive on combating the sexual exploitation of minors. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Meeting of Economics and Finance Ministers

The Ministers for the Economy and Finance, meeting on 10 December, discussed progress on the project to reform European legislation on customs and energy taxation. There were also discussions regarding the excessive deficit procedure for France and seven other Member States, as well as the economic situation in Ukraine. They exchanged views on taxation and financial services. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

The agriculture and fisheries ministers, meeting on 9 and 10 December, adopted conclusions on the Common Agricultural Policy after 2027 and discussed the potential of the bioeconomy, particularly in the context of the European objectives of climate neutrality and rural development. A progress report on forest management was presented. An agreement was reached on fishing quotas for 2025, with a view to ensuring the sustainability of stocks and protecting marine ecosystems. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Eurogroup Meeting

Meeting on 9 December, the Finance Ministers of the eurozone countries held discussions with Rachel Reeves, their British counterpart, with the aim of deepening trade relations between the parties. They discussed the budgetary situation and prospects within the eurozone, particularly in the light of the Commission's opinions on Member States' budgetary plans. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Joint declaration on Syria

On 13 December, the leaders of the G7 countries discussed the situation in Syria. They announced their support for a democratic transition that respects human rights, and called for Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity to be respected, as well as a cessation of hostilities. On the same day, the European Union announced the launch of a humanitarian airlift, its first such aid operation since the fall of the regime. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Calais group home affairs ministers meet in London

The home affairs ministers of the 'Calais group' (France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom), accompanied by representatives of the European Commission and the Frontex and Europol agencies, met in London on 9 and 10 December to strengthen their cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling. They adopted an action plan for 2025, aimed at improving cooperation between states and with countries of origin and transit. The priorities identified include police cooperation and the fight against the financing of smuggling networks. Since the beginning of 2024, cooperation between the States of the Calais group has led to the dismantling of around twenty criminal networks. [Read more](#)



Further sanctions against Russia and Belarus

On 16 December, the Council adopted a fifteenth package of economic and individual restrictive measures aimed at further limiting Russia's ability to wage its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Foreign ministers also adopted new sanctions against 26 individuals and two entities in Belarus. They discussed the situation in Georgia and Syria. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ ECB:



The European Central Bank lowers its key rates

On 12 December, the European Central Bank decided to cut its key interest rates by 25 base points (0.25%) in response to forecasts of declining economic activity. This is the fourth rate cut since June, with the aim of keeping inflation close to its 2% target. The ECB expects inflation to weaken over the next few years: 2.4% in 2024, 2.1% in 2025, 1.9% in 2026 and 2.1% in 2027. It is also revising its growth forecasts downwards compared with September: 0.7% in 2024, 1.1% in 2025, 1.4% in 2026 and 1.3% in 2027. [Read more](#)

■ EIB:



Loan for farmers and the bioeconomy

On 10 December, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank announced that the latter was to provide €3 billion in financing for European agriculture, forestry and fisheries. These loans will be supplemented by other financial institutions, providing up to €8.4 billion of investment and constituting the largest financing initiative for European agriculture supported by the EIB. These loans will be spread over a 3-year period. The activities targeted for financing include soil health, digital tools, water management and resilience to climate change. Another objective is the training of young people and new farmers. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



François Bayrou, new Prime Minister

On 13 December, French President Emmanuel Macron, appointed François Bayrou, President of MoDem, as Prime Minister. He has the task of putting together a government capable of avoiding another censure by the National Assembly and being able to push through the 2025 Finance Bill. The handover of power to Michel Barnier took place on the same day. [Read more](#)

■ Lithuania :



Entry into office of the government

The new government was appointed on 12 December. It comprises Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas and 14 ministers. In keeping with the coalition agreement, 9 ministers are from the Social Democratic Party, 3 from the populist Niemen Dawn party and 2 from the Union of Democrats "For Lithuania". It includes 4 women. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



Visit by the French President

On 12 December, President Emmanuel Macron visited Poland where he met Prime Minister Donald Tusk and the President of the Republic, Andrzej Duda. They discussed European support for Ukraine in a new transatlantic context and the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2025. [Read more](#)



Poland joins the European Public Prosecutor's Office

On 10 December, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced that Poland was joining the European Public Prosecutor's Office. Joining the European Public Prosecutor's Office was one of the election promises of the coalition government that took office in December 2023. To date, 22 European Union member states have joined the European Public Prosecutor's Office. [Read more](#)

■ Georgia :



Presidential "appointment" and continuing mass protests

On 14 December, the Parliament, boycotted by the opposition and widely regarded as 'illegitimate', appointed Mikheil Kavelashvili as President of the country. This is the first time in the country's history that the head of state has not been elected by direct universal suffrage, but by a college of voters controlled by the ruling Georgian Dream party. He was the only candidate and is due to succeed President Salome Zurbishvili on 29 December, who refuses to step down until a fraud-free election is held. Demonstrations are continuing in the country despite the repression by the authorities. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Moldova :



Visit to the Euro-Atlantic institutions by Maia Sandu

The President of Moldova, Maia Sandu, visited the European institutions and NATO in Brussels from 10 to 12 December. At the headquarters of the Atlantic Alliance, she held talks with Secretary General Mark Rutte, underlining her country's efforts to maintain peace and stability in the face of war on its border and to strengthen its resilience to hybrid threats. On 11 and 12 December, she continued her talks with Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, numerous Commissioners such as Kaja Kallas, Dan Jorgensen and Piotr Serafin, as well as the new President of the European Council, Antonio Costa. Moldova has agreed to complete negotiations to join the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) in 2025. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ UK :



Antonio Costa meets Keir Starmer

Antonio Costa, President of the European Council, met British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in London on 12 December to strengthen cooperation with the United Kingdom and invite him to an informal meeting of European leaders in February 2025. He then exchanged views with the Croatian Prime Minister, Andrej Plenković, on the situation in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, and the progress of the Western Balkans towards EU membership, ahead of the Balkans Summit on 18 December. [Read more](#)



Plan with Germany to counter migrant smuggling networks

On 10 December, the United Kingdom and Germany agreed a joint action plan to combat migrant smuggling networks by strengthening the operational capabilities of British and German law enforcement agencies. To implement this action plan, Germany has undertaken to examine German criminal law to check whether certain provisions allow for the prosecution of those who help organise the crossing of migrants to the UK via the English Channel. This agreement will facilitate cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration between these countries, which has been weakened since the Brexit. [Read more](#)

■ Switzerland :



Karin Keller-Sutter elected President of the Swiss Confederation for 2025

On 11 December, the Swiss Federal Assembly elected Liberal Karin Keller-Sutter as President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 2025. She was elected with 168 votes out of 203 valid ballots and will succeed Viola Amherd. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Berlin Declaration

On 12 December, the foreign ministers of six European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom), together with High Representative Kaja Kallas, reiterated their support for Ukraine's "irreversible" path towards NATO membership at a meeting in Berlin. They expressed their commitment to providing Ukraine with solid security guarantees, including long-term military and financial support, while stressing that any peace negotiations must include Ukrainians and Europeans on their side. They discussed preparations for the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House, as well as Syria and Germany's eight-point plan for the country. [Read more](#)



Creative
Europe
MEDIA

Ukraine joins the MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe programme

On 11 December, the Ukrainian government signed an agreement in Brussels with the European Commission, marking a step towards integrating the Ukrainian audiovisual sector into the European ecosystem. With this agreement, Ukraine joins the 'Media' strand of the 'Creative Europe' programme, designed to support the audiovisual sector by funding projects linked to the development and distribution of films, online content and television programmes, as well as the creation of innovative tools and business models. [Read more](#)



Kristen Michal and Friedrich Merz visit Kyiv

During a visit to Kyiv, Estonian Prime Minister Kristen Michal met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 9 December. That same day, Friedrich Merz, leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), was also in Kyiv. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss increased military funding, as well as the victory plan, highlighting the need for Ukraine to acquire long-range military capabilities and to receive an explicit invitation to join NATO. Finally, Volodymyr Zelenskyy supported Merz's proposal to set up a contact group involving Germany, France, the UK, Poland and possibly Denmark, to work on consolidating peace. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Payment of €4.1 billion to Ukraine

On 9 December, the Council of the European Union approved the 2nd payment from the Ukraine facility. This payment of almost €4.1 billion will support macro-financial stability and the functioning of the country's public administration. The Council considered that Ukraine had completed the reforms it had been asked to carry out. [Read more](#)

■ Vatican :



The Pope's visit to Corsica

Pope Francis visited Ajaccio, Corsica, for the first time on 15 December. After the conclusion of the congress on popular religiosity in the Mediterranean and the celebration of a mass attended by almost 15,000 people, the Pontiff met the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron. The two heads of state exchanged views on the war in Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Reports on Croatia, Georgia and Monaco

On 11 December, the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) published progress reports on Croatia, Georgia and Monaco, welcoming the improvements that have been made. The reports assess countries' compliance with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). According to the Committee, Monaco has made significant progress in this area, almost fully complying with the recommendations set out by the FATF, but the Principality still needs to make further efforts to get off the FATF's grey list of countries 'under supervision'. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Increasing defence spending

Mark Rutte gave his first official speech as NATO Secretary General on 12 December at a debate in Brussels. In his speech, he said that it was essential for the Allies to increase their defence spending and production. Indeed, against a backdrop of growing insecurity in Europe, the Allies are being led to think in terms of a 'war economy'. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



The 2024 Round-Up of Reporters without Borders

Reporters Without Borders published its 2024 report on the situation of journalists worldwide on 12 December. The report reveals a critical increase in violence against journalists, particularly in conflict zones, where half the murders recorded are concentrated. The Gaza region stands out as the most dangerous. In addition, 550 journalists are currently imprisoned around the world, an increase of 7% on the previous year. Reporters Without Borders is calling for action to strengthen protection measures for journalists. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



"Le Soulier de Satin" at the Comédie française

Until 13 April 2025, the Comédie-Française will be staging performances of *Le Soulier de Satin*, written by Paul Claudel and directed by Éric Ruf. This monumental seven-hour adaptation is a 'love drama' telling the story of Rodrigue and Doña Prouhèze, wife of the governor Don Pélage, during the era of the conquistadors and the great maritime explorations. [Read more](#)



Women's perspectives in Sète

Until 2 March 2025, the Musée Paul Valéry in Sète is hosting the exhibition "En Regard", featuring works by two contemporary artists, Brigitte Aubignac and Nazarin Pouyandeh. This exhibition offers an exploration of figurative painting through the perspectives of these two women artists living in France. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover around 40 paintings by each artist, reflecting the diversity of their creative worlds. [Read more - Other link](#)

Helen Cammock, Ingrid Pollard and Camara Taylor in Dundee

Until 23 March 2025, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Dundee, Scotland, is staging its "Soft Impressions" exhibition, which brings together the three artists Camara Taylor, Ingrid Pollard and Helen Cammock, exploring the reappropriation of printmaking. Through the presentation of printed works combining subtle gestures, omissions and veiled images, this intergenerational exhibition highlights the technical and expressive possibilities of printmaking to engage in a dialogue about history, memory and social struggles. [Read more](#)



Chiharu Shiota in Paris

The Grand Palais in Paris is presenting the exhibition 'Chiharu Shiota. The Soul Trembles' until March 19 2025. In collaboration with the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, this exhibition reveals the poetic and sensitive work of the Japanese artist. Comprising sculptures, drawings, photographs and archive documents relating to her staging project, this is the most important exhibition dedicated to Chiharu Shiota in France. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :



16-19 December 2024

Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)



16 December

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



17 December 2024

Environment Council General Affairs Council (Brussels)



18 December 2024

.EU-Western Balkans Summit (Brussels)



19 December 2024

European Council (Brussels)



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