

Letter n°1096 of Tuesday 28th January 2025

Polish Presidency of the Council - A paradigm shift in Poland's European policy

Piotr Buras, Michał Matlak - 28 Jan 2025

Since 1 January, Poland has held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This comes at a time when the European Union is facing major existential challenges, particularly with the war in Ukraine, which resonate particularly strongly in Poland. Indeed, the country is in a unique position to shape the future of the continent, and its leadership is at a turning point. This is not the first time that the history of Europe has been decided in Central Europe, but it is perhaps the first time that it has had the opportunity to significantly influence its course.



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■ Elections :



Snap election in Germany 23 February

German voters are being asked to renew the 630-member Bundestag on 23 February, 7 months before the end of the legislature, following the implosion of the tripartite coalition (SPD, Greens, FDP) in November and the vote of no-confidence in December. According to the latest opinion polls, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) led by Friedrich Merz is expected to come out ahead with 30% of the vote. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), the far-right party led by Alice Weidel, is projected to take second place with 21%, ahead of the SPD with 16%. The Greens stand to gain 12% and the radical left-wing Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) 7%. The FDP and Die Linke are unlikely to pass the 5% threshold for representation in the Bundestag. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



Schuman Network, exchanging ideas for Europe

A Robert Schuman Foundation initiative, the Schuman Network platform comprises 21 think tanks from 13 European countries. This network encourages collaboration between researchers specialising in European issues, enabling the sharing of studies on a variety of themes: social issues, economic integration, European neighbourhood policy and relations between the European Union and the rest of the world. Since its launch, the Schuman Network has enabled the publication and distribution of 153 articles. [Read more](#)



Follow the progress of the recovery plans on the Foundation's website

On 21 January, France submitted its 4th payment claim under the European Union's recovery plan. It is requesting €3.26 billion in return for achieving the 17 milestones and targets of the plan that it had to meet under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. All the progress made by all the Member States is monitored by the Foundation and can be consulted on its website. [Read more](#)

■ European Council :



Antonio Costa addresses the European Parliament

On 22 January, the President of the European Council, António Costa, held his first plenary debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg to discuss the European Council meeting of 19 December. The former Portuguese Prime Minister reaffirmed the Union's support for Ukraine, while confirming the full commitment of European leaders to enlargement. As far as transatlantic relations were concerned, the EU was ready to negotiate with the United States while defending European principles. [Read more](#)



Meeting with the presidents of the outermost regions

The President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, attended the meeting of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions in Strasbourg on 21 January. He gave a speech in which he began by reiterating his support for Mayotte, calling for greater cohesion in European action and recalling the importance of the outermost regions. He acknowledged the Union's duty to support the development of its 9 outermost regions and the need to include them in cohesion policy and the competitiveness compass. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Implementation of the code of conduct on illegal hate speech within the DSA

On 20 January, the European Commission announced that it had incorporated the revised code of conduct on combating illegal hate speech online into the DSA. The code has been signed by companies such as X, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube, and aims to strengthen the way in which online platforms deal with content considered illegal. Among other things, the signatories have committed to structured cooperation with experts and civil society organisations, who can report trends and developments in hate speech. [Read more](#)



WTO proceedings against China

On 20 January, the European Commission asked the WTO to conduct consultations with a view to putting an end to China's unfair and illegal trade practices in the field of intellectual property. China sets binding royalty rates for EU patents without the consent of the patent holder. This forces European companies to lower their worldwide rates, giving Chinese manufacturers cheaper access to European technologies. No satisfactory solution has been proposed by China, justifying the launch of WTO dispute settlement proceedings. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Parliament :



Donald Tusk presents the priorities of the Polish Presidency

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk addressed the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 22 January. He presented the priorities of the Polish Presidency of the Council, highlighting European security, as well as the reduction of illegal immigration and energy independence as a sine qua non for lowering prices and controlling inflation. He also emphasised Ukraine's accession to the European Union and European regulation of digital content. [Read more](#)



Establishment of two new parliamentary committees

On 23 January, the European Parliament announced the names of the members of its two new parliamentary committees. These were made official by a vote on 18 December 2024, when the Security and Defence and Public Health sub-committees became full committees. This vote also saw the creation of two new special sub-committees, one on the European democracy shield and the other on the housing crisis. The constituent meetings of the two committees are scheduled for 27 and 29 January, during which their respective bureaux will be elected. You can find these updates on the Foundation's website dedicated to the European Parliament. [Read more - Other link](#)



European Parliament and Council of Europe condemn Belarus 'election'

On 22 January, MEPs adopted a resolution calling on the EU to reject the result of the presidential 'election' in Belarus on 26 January. The election is described as a sham, and the leader Alexander Lukashenko as a dictator. MEPs are also concerned about the situation of political prisoners and human rights violations in the country, as well as the country's complicity with Russia. This resolution echoes statements made by the rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 22 January, in which the same concerns were expressed. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Resolution in support of Boualem Sansal

On 23 January, MEPs adopted a resolution on the case of Boualem Sansal. The French-Algerian writer was arrested in November 2024 after speaking out against the Algerian regime. The European Parliament condemns his arrest and detention, and calls for his immediate and unconditional release. It also calls on the Algerian authorities to review all repressive laws restricting freedoms, particularly within the Penal Code, in order to guarantee the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Economic and Financial Affairs Ministers' meeting

The 20 economy and finance ministers of the eurozone (Eurogroup) met on 20 January to discuss the use of innovative technologies and the digital euro project. The 27 ministers met on 21 January to discuss administrative simplification, particularly for businesses. They also discussed support for Ukraine, in the presence of their Ukrainian counterpart. Finally, they adopted recommendations in the context of the excessive deficit procedure against seven Member States. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Regulation on access to health data

On 21 January, the Council adopted a regulation aimed at facilitating the exchange of health data at European level. This regulation aims to shape a data environment specific to health, enabling secure cross-border access to digital health services and products. The digital transformation of healthcare is one of the priorities of the Polish Presidency of the Council. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Negotiations for a free trade agreement with Malaysia

On 20 January, the President of the European Commission announced the joint intention of the European Union and Malaysia to resume negotiations with a view to concluding a free trade agreement. This development is part of a drive to institutionalise an annual trade relationship estimated at around €45 billion. The two parties have agreed on clauses to promote the defence of shared values intended to govern the future of bilateral trade, such as the protection of human rights and the environment, as well as respect for international order and economic cooperation. [Read more](#)



Journey to Turkey by Kaja Kallas

On 24 January, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, Kaja Kallas, travelled to Turkey for a meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan. Discussions focused on Turkish-European relations, migration issues, developments in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine. Despite differences between Turkey and the European Union over Cyprus and sanctions against Russia, dialogue and cooperation must be maintained if possible. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

On 27 January, the foreign affairs ministers renewed the restrictive measures against Russia's continued destabilising actions in Ukraine for a further period of six months, until 31 July 2025. They also decided to suspend certain parts of the agreement aimed at facilitating the issue of visas between the European Union and Georgia for Georgian diplomats and civil servants. [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



European leaders call for more investment in defence

At the European Defence Agency's annual conference on 22 January, the High Representative, Kaja Kallas, and the Commissioner for Defence and Space, Andrius Kubilius, called on Europeans to spend more on defence and to strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base (DTIB). [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Defence Minister visits Paris

On the occasion of the meeting between Sébastien Lecornu, the French Minister for the Armed Forces, and Boris Pistorius, the German Minister for Defence, three new agreements were signed between France and Germany on 23 January. Firstly, the main manufacturers involved in the Franco-German tank project signed a shareholders' agreement to ensure the effective launch of their cooperation. Secondly, the two ministers signed a declaration of intent to integrate the Franco-German Brigade into the NATO force model. Finally, the third agreement, of a technical nature, aims to consolidate the operation of the Franco-German transport squadron in Évreux. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Meeting with Olaf Scholz at the Élysée Palace

French President Emmanuel Macron met German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Élysée Palace on 22 January. To mark the 62nd anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty, the two leaders reiterated the importance of the Franco-German partnership in consolidating Europe. They also called for the EU to speed up its action on competitiveness, before discussing international issues such as the war in Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East. [Read more](#)



Senate vote on the 2025 budget

On 23 January, the Senate adopted the Finance Bill presented by the government led by François Bayrou, which had been rejected by the National Assembly on first reading. The text will be submitted to the Joint Committee for examination, starting on 30 January, before its final adoption. This Finance Act forms part of the French budget plan, presented to the European Commission and validated by the EU finance ministers. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Greece :



Presidential election: new ballot on 31 January

On 25 January, the Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, announced his candidate, Konstantinos Tasoulas, an MP affiliated to the ruling New Democracy Party, for the presidential election. After a first round of voting by indirect universal suffrage, Tasoulas received only 160 of the 200 votes needed for Parliament to ratify his nomination. The next ballot has therefore been scheduled for 31 January, to elect a President for the next five years. [Read more](#)

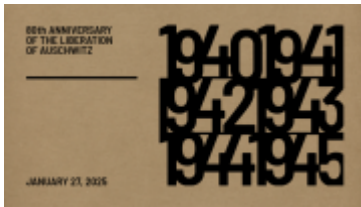
■ Ireland :



Micheál Martin elected Prime Minister

On 23 January, Micheál Martin was elected Prime Minister (Taoiseach) by Parliament, before being officially appointed by Irish President Michael D. Higgins. However, his appointment was marked by heated debate. Tensions erupted over disagreements about the speaking rights of independent MPs supporting the government. Micheál Martin, who previously held the post between 2020 and 2022, leads a centre-right coalition government. The outgoing Prime Minister, Simon Harris, leader of Fine Gael, will take on the role of Deputy Prime Minister. Micheál Martin is due to hand over the Taoiseach's post to him during the course of the legislature, in November 2027. The government is expected to comprise 23 ministers [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Poland :



80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp

On 27 January, Poland and the world commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, where the Nazis exterminated 1.1 million people, including 1 million Jews. Many heads of state are taking part in the ceremonies, which are being held in the presence of former prisoners who survived the Holocaust. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Kosovo :



European preparations for the legislative elections

An election observation mission has been set up by the European Union to supervise the legislative elections in Kosovo scheduled for 9 February. 100 observers will monitor the poll, underlining 'the Union's continued support for Kosovo in strengthening its democratic governance', said Nathalie Loiseau, who has been appointed head of the mission. On 22 January, a pre-electoral visit to Pristina by a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) welcomed the good preparation of the elections. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Switzerland :



Davos Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF) was held in Davos from 20 to 24 January. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, criticised the protectionist stance of the United States. She pointed out that more than 4.5 million American jobs depended on European foreign trade, and called on China to restore the balance of trade between the two economic areas. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez urged the EU to regulate social networks. In a video conference, US President Donald Trump threatened to impose new customs duties on any country that did not align itself with US positions, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the public to be aware of the extent of the war crimes committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ ECHR :



Rejection of Calin Georgescu's appeal against the annulment of the presidential election

On 21 January, the European Court of Human Rights rejected the application lodged by Calin Georgescu, the candidate who had qualified for the 2nd round of the Romanian presidential election. The far-right candidate had challenged before the ECHR the Romanian Constitutional Court's decision to annul the election last December. The judges accused Calin Georgescu of having benefited from an illegal support campaign via the social network Tik Tok. Calin Georgescu then lodged an application with the ECHR against the decision to annul the election, claiming the right to free elections. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Meeting with Andrius Kubilius

On 20 January, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte welcomed the European Commissioner for Defence and Space, Andrius Kubilius, to NATO HQ for a meeting with the Allies in the framework of the North Atlantic Council. The aim is to promote transparency and political dialogue between NATO and the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Support for 134 research projects

On 23 January, the European Research Council and the European Commission announced that 134 projects will be funded as part of the 'Proof of Concept' competition. Each grant amounts to €150,000 per project, for a total of €20 million. Germany, Italy and the Netherlands are each home to 15 of these winners, followed by Spain and the UK with 14 recipients. The aim is to explore the commercial and social innovation potential of the research carried out. [Read more](#)



European Court of Auditors report on geographical blocking

The European Court of Auditors issued a report on 20 January on the issue of unjustified geographical blocking. This practice consists of denying Internet users in Member States access to online goods and services in other Member States, thereby infringing their freedoms. A 2018 regulation was supposed to provide a solution and a fairer framework, but the Court notes the practical obstacles hindering its proper implementation. The Court is therefore calling for national enforcement mechanisms to be standardised and for consumers to be better informed about the protection of their rights. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Auschwitz at the Shoah Museum in Paris

The exhibition "How the Nazis photographed their crimes. Auschwitz 1944" runs until 13 November at the Shoah Memorial in Paris. It provides new insights into the main body of photographs showing the process that led to the mass slaughter at Auschwitz-Birkenau. These photographs, known since the early 1950s, were used as evidence in the trials of some of those responsible for the 'Final Solution'. Since the rediscovery of the complete album in the 1980s, and thanks to the work recently undertaken by the historian Tal Bruttman, the exhibition's scientific curator, a new reading has emerged. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

museo
PICASSO
málaga

Picasso's Royan sketchbooks in Malaga

The Picasso Museum in Malaga is presenting an exhibition devoted to the sketchbooks kept by the artist Pablo Picasso during his stay in Royan, France, between 1939 and 1940. Until 30 April, the Andalusian museum is exhibiting a collection of drawings, paintings, gouaches and poems to illustrate the personal and artistic influence of the Second World War on the painter's methods and work. [Read more](#)

Odessa Berlin - European painting from the 16th to the 19th century in Berlin

Until 22 June, the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin is exhibiting some sixty works produced between the 16th and 19th centuries, and paintings from the Museum of Western and Oriental Art in Odessa, a war-torn port city in southern Ukraine. The works of art in question were evacuated from the city before the outbreak of war and transferred to a safe place in Berlin, where they are displayed alongside paintings from the collections of Berlin's museums. [Read more](#)



Julie Manet in Deauville

Until 11 May, the Franciscaines de Deauville are presenting an exhibition devoted to Julie Manet, daughter of Berthe Morisot and Édouard Manet, renowned 19th-century artists. The exhibition describes the French painter's freedom of movement and artistic expression, through a collection of works (paintings, watercolours, letters and photographs) that evoke moments in her formative years and her family roots. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

Alexej Jawlensky at Humlebæk

The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, is presenting the exhibition 'Alexej Jawlensky' until 1 June. Alexej Jawlensky, the Russian expressionist painter, developed a unique artistic style late in life, notably through his famous 'meditations'. This exhibition offers a retrospective of his career as a painter, highlighting his development towards a singular artistic expression. [Read more](#)

Brazil, the birth of modernism in London

Until 21 April, London's Royal Academy is presenting an exhibition of over 130 works by ten twentieth-century Brazilian artists. From the 1910s to the 1970s, these Brazilian artists adapted contemporary trends, international influences and artistic traditions to create a new type of modern art, nourished by the cultures, identities and landscapes of Brazil. [Read more](#)



Launch of the Six Nations tournament

January 31 marks the launch of the 25^e edition of the Six Nations rugby tournament, with an opening match in Paris pitting the French team against Wales. Every year, the Six Nations Tournament brings together France, Ireland, Wales, England, Scotland and Italy. The competition showcases Europe's best teams and players on the international stage. By 2024, it had captivated nearly 185 million spectators in 64 countries. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 27 January

Foreign Affairs Council Agriculture and Fisheries Council (Brussels)

 27-30 January

Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg)

 28 January

General Affairs Council (Brussels)

 30 January

Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank (Frankfurt/Main)



The Letter n°1096

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N° ISSN: **2729-6482**

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