

Letter n°1123 of Tuesday 16th September 2025

The Four Challenges facing European Defence

16 Sep 2025

The European Union is facing a context marked by renewed geopolitical tensions and a challenge to the global balance established since the end of the Second World War. Between Russia's assertive stance and the uncertainty of American support, it must regain strategic cohesion. Supporting Ukraine appears to be a necessity, while strengthening its position within NATO is becoming essential to guarantee collective security. The objective is clear: to build European strategic autonomy so that it can act independently and defend its interests.



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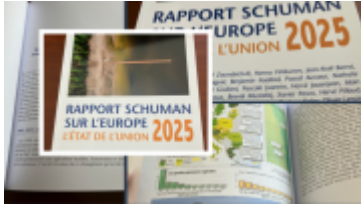
■ Front page! :



For Europe: The economic emergency

'Europe remains a true economic power, with a gross domestic product that still rivals that of China and the United States, but the outlook is much bleaker. Growth is sluggish, and is undermining social peace as well as political stability and fuelling extremism.' For Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Europe must not only think of itself as a geopolitical power: it must also reassert its economic and financial power in order to build and maintain a military force and genuine diplomatic influence. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



'Towards a new Europe! The Schuman Report 2025 available now!

'To overcome the current difficulties, Europe has no choice but to reform, strengthen and assert itself. It seems to have realised this in the face of urgent circumstances.' The Schuman Report 2025 is available in bookshops, on the Foundation's website, and in digital format in French and English. This reference work addresses the major challenges of the new geopolitical era facing the European Union, such as the prospects for enlargement, European competitiveness and investment in the space sector. As every year, it brings together leading contributions, original maps and annotated statistical studies. Order your copy now! [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



'Europe must seize its independence'; State of the Union address

On 10 September, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivered her 'State of the Union' address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In the face of wars, security crises, trade tensions and economic challenges, she called for a united, independent and forward-looking Europe. She reasserted military and diplomatic support for Ukraine, announcing that frozen Russian assets would continue to be used to finance the war effort as part of a 19th round of sanctions. She announced that the Commission plans to suspend its bilateral financial support to Israel due to the violence and economic suffocation in the Gaza Strip, which are jeopardising any prospect of peace. Finally, she defended the trade agreement sealed with the United States on 27 July, which she described as 'crucial stability' in 'the current geopolitical chaos'. [Read more](#)



New European rules on the automotive sector

On 12 September, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen chaired the third strategic dialogue on the future of the European automotive industry in Brussels. Following this meeting, a memorandum of understanding was signed to accelerate research and innovation in the sector and position Europe as a leader in sustainable and smart mobility. The memorandum brings together the '2Zero' partnership focused on zero-emission road transport, the CCAM partnership, which includes connected, cooperative and automated mobility, and the BATT4EU partnership for innovation in the battery value chain, with their main stakeholders. [Read more](#)



Provisional budget for European Union defence

On 9 September, the European Commission decided to allocate a provisional budget of €150 billion to strengthen defence preparedness across the European Union. This step, which is part of the 'Securing Europe's Future' (SAFE) instrument, aims to strengthen the European Union's defence capabilities and help Member States fill critical gaps, as well as to carry out joint acquisitions of defence products. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



The future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2027

On 10 September, MEPs adopted a position on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2027, by 393 votes to 145, with 123 abstentions. Among the measures adopted are the simplification of the CAP in terms of environmental and social objectives, the implementation of innovative and digital solutions such as satellite imagery to inspect agricultural land, investment in the modernisation and development of water retention infrastructure, and tax incentives to encourage generational renewal. [Read more - Other link](#)



New rules to reduce textile and food waste

On 9 September, MEPs adopted new rules to reduce textile and food waste. The updated legislation will introduce binding food waste reduction targets, which must be met by 31 December 2030: 10% at the food processing and manufacturing stage and 30% per capita at the retail and consumption stage (restaurants, food services and households). In addition, producers supplying textiles within the EU will have to bear the costs of their collection, sorting and recycling, through new producer responsibility schemes to be set up by each Member State within 30 months of the directive's entry into force. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Changes to the rules governing the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

On 10 September, MEPs adopted changes to the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). These amendments are an example of simplification efforts aimed at reducing red tape for SMEs and occasional importers as part of the Omnibus simplification package presented on 26 February. The new CBAM threshold exempts the vast majority (90%) of importers from taxation (mainly SMEs and individuals). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Resolution on simplifying single market rules

On 11 September, MEPs adopted a resolution aimed at strengthening the single market by simplifying its rules. Its objectives include reducing red tape by 25% for all businesses and 35% for SMEs by 2029, improving harmonisation to avoid regulatory fragmentation, and providing greater support for SMEs and start-ups through targeted exemptions and the development of digitalisation and artificial intelligence. [Read more](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Rejection of Austria's appeal against the taxonomy regulation

On 10 September, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) rejected Austria's appeal seeking the annulment of the European taxonomy regulation, which aims to direct financial flows towards sustainable activities in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In 2022, the Commission adopted a delegated regulation including certain activities related to nuclear energy and fossil gas as activities that would contribute to climate change mitigation or adaptation. Austria criticised the European Commission for including nuclear and fossil gas in the taxonomy of sustainable investments. [Read more](#)

■ ECB :



Decisions of the Governing Council

On 11 September, the Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) decided to leave the three key interest rates unchanged. Inflation is currently around the medium-term target of 2%. In addition, the portfolios of the asset purchase programme (APP) and the pandemic emergency purchase programme (PEPP) are contracting at a measured and predictable pace. And uncertainties are mounting: France's public debt, rising customs duties, conflicts around the world, and changes in US monetary policy. [Read more](#)

■ EIB :



€17.5 billion in investments for energy efficiency

On 11 September, the European Investment Bank (EIB) announced that it will commit €17.5 billion to support energy efficiency improvements by European small and medium-sized enterprises. This commitment, supported by the European Commission, aims to encourage energy savings in more than 350,000 businesses to reduce their energy bills and strengthen their resilience and competitiveness. The initiative is expected to mobilise a total investment of more than €65 billion by 2027 to support energy savings by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



High financial risks in the eurozone

On 9 September, the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the European Union's financial markets regulator and supervisor, published its second risk monitoring report for 2025. During the first half of 2025, securities markets experienced marked volatility as global uncertainties intensified, particularly with the escalation of trade conflicts. Investor risks also increased in crypto-asset markets, where tension was fuelled by political developments in the United States and the emergence of new high-risk business models. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Germany :



Rheinmetall enters the naval sector

On 15 September, tank and armoured vehicle manufacturer Rheinmetall announced its acquisition of military shipbuilder Naval Vessels Lürssen (NVL), a company belonging to the family-owned Lürssen Group. [Read more](#)

■ Denmark :



Denmark chooses the Franco-Italian SAMP/T

On 12 September, Denmark decided to invest 58 billion Danish kroner (€7.76 billion) in a new air defence system following the Russian attack on Poland on 9-10 September. For long-range systems, Denmark opted for the Franco-Italian SAMP/T developed by MBDA and Thales, rather than the American Patriot, against a backdrop of diplomatic tension between the two countries. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Sébastien Lecornu, new Prime Minister

On 8 September, for the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, French Prime Minister François Bayrou lost a vote of confidence in the National Assembly by 364 votes to 194. He submitted his resignation and that of his government to the Head of State on 9 September. On the same day, President Emmanuel Macron announced the appointment of former Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu as the new Prime Minister. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



Closure of the border with Belarus for security reasons

On 9 September, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced the closure of the Polish border with Belarus. 'For reasons of national security, we will close the border with Belarus, including railway crossings, in connection with the Zapad manoeuvres,' said the head of government, describing the exercise as 'aggressive'. The Russian-Belarusian military exercises Zapad-2025 (West-2025) are taking place from 12 to 16 September. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



Maia Sandu warns European Parliament of Russian threat

On 10 September, Moldovan President Maia Sandu addressed MEPs in Strasbourg. In her speech, she emphasised the threats facing European democracies and said that the upcoming parliamentary elections in Moldova on 28 September would be the most important in the country's history. Russia is waging a hybrid war, notably by interfering in the country's parliamentary elections. The president stressed that, for Moldova, joining the European Union was not just a technocratic process, but 'a race against time' in the face of the Russian threat. On the same day, MPs adopted a resolution to 'strengthen Moldova's resilience to hybrid threats and malicious Russian interference'. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Norway :



Results of the parliamentary elections in Norway

On 8 September, the Labour Party and the Greens won the parliamentary elections with a combined score of 32.9%, closely followed by the Progress Party, a far-right party that won 23.8% of the vote, its best score since its foundation in 1973. Jonas Gahr Store, the outgoing Prime Minister, is expected to return for a second term, but in a more fragile position. His new coalition government is likely to rely on the centrist parties, the Socialists, but also on the far-left Red Party and the Greens, creating what some are calling a 'tutti frutti' coalition. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



First annual report on the facility for Ukraine

On 9 September, the European Commission published its first annual report on the Facility for Ukraine. The report highlights the progress made by the country in implementing its reform programme, which is part of the Ukraine Plan. The Facility has become the main financial lever for structural reforms, enabling Ukraine to accelerate its progress towards European Union membership. In 2024, nearly a quarter of the measures adopted directly contributed to alignment with European law, particularly in areas such as energy market transparency, the fight against industrial pollution, environmental assessments and regional development. [Read more](#)



European Parliament report: prioritising reforms

On 10 September, the report by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee was adopted. MEPs are encouraging the Ukrainian government to continue implementing reforms and reaffirming the European Union's commitment to a just and lasting peace. They are also calling on the European Commission to open negotiation centres to help Ukraine's application for EU membership progress as quickly as possible. [Read more](#)



Visit by Finnish President Alexander Stubb to Kyiv

Finnish President Alexander Stubb visited Kyiv on 11 and 12 September. He held talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky. The discussions focused in particular on the peace process and cooperation between Finland and Ukraine. They discussed the Russian drones shot down in Polish airspace on 10 September. [Read more](#)

■ Vatican :



Three figures of faith honoured: historic canonisations and first beatification in Estonia

On 7 September, Carlo Acutis, nicknamed 'God's Geek', became the first millennial to be canonised by Pope Leo XIV. Passionate about computers, he had created a website listing 136 Eucharistic miracles before his death in 2006. On the same day, Pier Giorgio Frassati was also canonised. An apostle of the poor and a passionate mountaineer, he became involved in the fight against fascism at a very early age, particularly against Mussolini. The day before, on 6 September, Jesuit Archbishop Eduard Profittlich, a martyr of the Soviet regime, was beatified in Estonia by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. He thus became the first person to be beatified in that country. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UN :



New agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency

On 9 September, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreed on 'practical arrangements for resuming inspections in Iran'. Signed in Cairo by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, this agreement ends three months of uncertainty and speculation about the future of cooperation between Tehran and the United Nations nuclear watchdog. It comes just over a month before the expiry date of the Vienna agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



In response to Russian drone intrusions, NATO launches Operation Eastern Sentinel

On 10 September, the Polish Air Force fired on 'hostile objects' after Russia violated its airspace, a first for this NATO country since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. Nineteen drones flew over Polish territory as part of an attack on Ukraine. Another intrusion took place in Romania, another NATO member. As a result, the Organisation's Secretary General, Mark Rutte, announced on 12 September the launch of an operation called 'Eastern Sentinel' to strengthen the Transatlantic Alliance's defences on its eastern flank with air and land elements. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Strategic Foresight Report

On 9 September, the European Commission presented its Strategic Foresight Report 2025, which includes a section entitled 'Resilience 2.0', a proactive approach aimed at ensuring the European Union's prosperity in times of turmoil, enabling it to anticipate new challenges and creating a safe space for citizens and businesses. The report identifies areas of action in which Europe can strengthen its resilience: enhancing internal and external security with a technological approach, strengthening long-term economic resilience to absorb shocks and support growth, harnessing the power of technology and research to support prosperity and values, and preserving democracy, media freedom and social cohesion. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



OECD report on education

On 9 September, the OECD published its report 'Education at a Glance', focusing specifically on higher education. The report analyses educational pathways, disparities in labour market integration by field of study, success rates, and the skills of adults with higher education qualifications. The edition highlights persistent inequalities in access to higher education. Furthermore, despite a general rise in educational attainment, adults' reading and numeracy skills have stagnated or even declined in most OECD countries between 2012 and 2023. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



A more dynamic dialogue between national parliaments

On 8 September, the European Commission published its annual report on relations with national parliaments. It shows that a wider range of legislatures are now engaging in active political dialogue, in particular through their joint contribution to the strategic agenda for the 2024-2029 institutional cycle, provided through the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC). [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



European Heritage Days

The 42nd edition of European Heritage Days, which will take place from 19 to 21 September, will focus on architectural heritage. This year, the emphasis will be on the artistic and technical achievements of architecture, which, beyond their changing functions and uses, remain essential landmarks of local, national and European history, as well as collective memory. [Read more](#)



56th Festival de l'Orangerie in Sceaux

Until 12 October, the Domaine départemental de Sceaux is hosting a new edition of the Festival de l'Orangerie. True to its identity, the event offers an eclectic programme, combining classical music, jazz, contemporary creations and hybrid art forms. The concerts are held in several venues, including the Orangerie, the Château and the church of Sceaux. [Read more](#)



Leica Exhibition: A Century of Photography in Madrid

To celebrate the centenary of the invention of the first portable Leica camera, the Fernán Gómez Cultural Centre in Madrid is hosting an exhibition until 11 January 2026 featuring 170 photographs and an original collection of cameras that tell the story of the evolution of modern photography. [Read more](#)



21st edition of the Dance Biennale in Lyon

The 21st edition of the Dance Biennale is being held until 28 September in Lyon and until 17 October in the surrounding region. The aim is to showcase contemporary dance in all its forms. This year, the focus is on Brazilian culture in honour of 200 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. [Read more](#)



Greuze in Paris

To mark the 300th anniversary of his birth, the Petit Palais in Paris is paying tribute to Jean-Baptiste Greuze until 25 January 2026. The exhibition offers a chance to rediscover the artist's work through the prism of a central theme in his painting: childhood. With empathy, the artist questions the place of children in 18th-century society, their future and their emancipation. He reflects the major issues of his time. [Read more](#)



Picasso in London

To mark the centenary of Picasso's painting 'Les Trois Danseuses' (The Three Dancers), London's Tate Modern is hosting an exhibition until 12 April 2026 featuring 45 works by the artist from the museum's collection and European loans. [Read more](#)



Flowers by Soutine, Chagall and Pisis in Florence

Flowers by Soutine, Chagall and Pisis are on display until 1 November at the Roberto Casamonti Collection in Florence. The exhibition of these three masterpieces is part of the initiative: 'The Return of the Masters of the 20th Century'. [Read more](#)



68th edition of the contemporary music festival in Warsaw

The 68th edition of one of Europe's most important contemporary music festivals, Warsaw Autumn, is being held until 28 September under the theme 'Brilliance', a symbol of hope, renewal and openness in a world of uncertainty. The concerts are taking place at various venues in the Polish capital, including the Philharmonic Hall and several theatres. [Read more](#)

Modernism and Gothic Art in Vienna

Until 11 January 2026, the Albertina Museum in Vienna is hosting the Gothic Art exhibition. Masterpieces ranging from Symbolism to Expressionism, inspired by the emotional power of medieval art, are on display. With some 200 works, this thematic exhibition presents the works of numerous artists. [Read more](#)



Stephan Vanfleteren in Ghent

Until 4 January 2026, the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent is hosting an exhibition by photographer Stephan Vanfleteren. His photography captures the stormy sea, smooth as a mirror, deceptively calm or raging like a washing machine drum, and his works engage in dialogue with European artists who were passionate about the sea, such as Gustave Courbet, James Ensor and Victor Hugo. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 16 September 2025

"General Affairs" Council (Brussels)

 18 September 2025

"Environment" Council (Brussels)

 19 September 2025

Eurogroup Meeting (Copenhagen)

 19-20 September 2025

Informal Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers (Copenhagen)

 22-23 September 2025

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Brussels)



The Letter n°1123

PDF

in English -- Edition of Tuesday 16th September 2025

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The Letter's Editorial Team :

Helen Levy ;

Catherine d'Angelo, Clément Ramey,

Maria Skowronska, Jean Pedurthe

N° ISSN: **2729-6482**

A question, a suggestion ?

Contact us!

info@robert-schuman.eu

Editors-in-chief :

Juliette Bachschmidt

Publishing Director :

Pascale Joannin

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