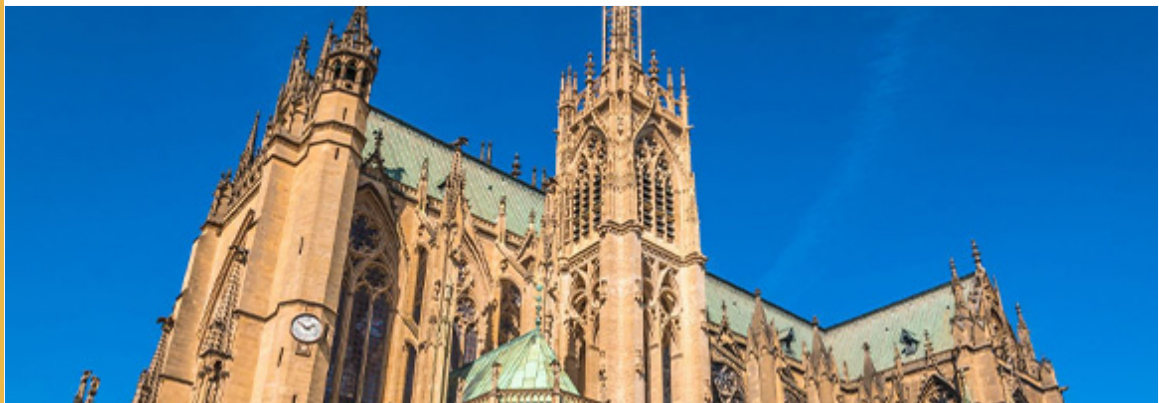


Letter n°1168 of Tuesday 22nd September 2026

The Pope, Europe, and the Role of Religions on the Continent: the Turning Point under Leo XIV

Blandine Chelini-Pont - 22 Sep 2026

Caught between its Christian heritage, the rise of nationalism, and the affirmation of religious pluralism, Europe must adapt and find a new balance. On the occasion of the Pope's visit to France, it is worth recalling the Church's position on European integration. With Pope Leo XIV, the term "Christian roots" could take on a new meaning — no longer serving to exclude, but rather to defend human dignity, the rule of law, and coexistence. His visit to Metz, the birthplace of Robert Schuman, is significant in more ways than one.



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■ Foundation :



New episode of the "Station Schuman" podcast on space-related issues

From meteorology to crisis management on the ground, space-based observation helps us better understand Earth and plays a crucial role in crisis response. In this new episode from Station Schuman, Isabelle Duvaux-Béchon takes a closer look at the European Space Agency (ESA): its role, its missions, and the major challenges it addresses. From space exploration to Earth observation, telecommunications, and science, this episode explains why the ESA is a major player in European space programs and how its activities contribute to a better understanding of our planet. [Read more](#)



"For Europe," Robert Schuman's only book

Today's Europe stems directly from the "Schuman Declaration" of May 9, 1950, and continues to follow its approach and objectives. In the only book that Robert Schuman, the "Father of Europe," devoted to this project, he does not avoid any of the questions that can legitimately be raised about the European venture: the nation, federalism, culture, and the continent's roots. He emphasizes that the states and peoples of Europe complement rather than oppose one another, shaping a political and proactive Europe, rich in its diversity and strong in its unity. Even today, this vision remains essential if we are to properly evaluate the continent's future. "For Europe" is available for purchase on the Robert Schuman Foundation's website. [Read more](#)

■ Defence and Society :



MEPs adopt Measures to strengthen the European Defense Industry

On September 16, Members of the European Parliament adopted a series of measures aimed at strengthening the European defense industry. In particular, they supported three legislative acts from the Omnibus V package: accelerating the issuance of authorizations for defense preparedness projects, simplifying transfers of military goods between Member States, and facilitating defense procurement and investment. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



European Parliament Resolution on Hybrid Warfare

On September 16, Members of the European Parliament adopted a resolution on hybrid warfare and the protection of the Union's territorial integrity. Against a backdrop of increasing Russian hybrid activities and physical attacks targeting Member States, the resolution identifies Russia as "the most dangerous state actor in terms of the hybrid threat." The Parliament is therefore calling on the Commission and the Council to review existing legal frameworks to combat such threats. It proposes the creation of a "black book on hybrid aggression by Russia, China, and other countries." [Read more](#)



Military Incidents Involving Russia

Since September 13, Russia has been escalating hostilities against the European Union with incidents in Poland, Denmark, and Lithuania. On the night of September 13, a train traveling from Kyiv to Warsaw was struck by a Russian drone in Yahodyn, 2 kilometres from the border. The targeted train line had reportedly been used by Western dignitaries shortly before. The next day, a Russian warship in the Baltic Sea fired two flares at a Danish military helicopter conducting a routine reconnaissance mission. Copenhagen described Russia's actions as "irresponsible" and "totally unacceptable." Finally, on September 15, NATO fighter jets shot down a drone flying over Lithuania near Kaunas. According to the National Crisis Management Center, the drone is believed to have come from the east, from Belarus. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Thales Unveils HexaForce, an AI-Enhanced Military System

On September 17, Thales announced the launch of HexaForce, a new AI-enhanced multi-domain command and control system covering land, air, sea, cyber, space, and the information domain. Built on cortAIx, Thales' AI accelerator (800 engineers and data scientists), HexaForce speeds up decision-making for operators at every stage of their mission: faster planning, better understanding of the terrain, real-time information sharing, and optimized resource allocation. The system is designed to be modular and sovereign: governments can integrate the technology partners of their choice while retaining control over their data. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy and Geopolitics :



Speech by the Canadian Prime Minister before the European Parliament

On September 17, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney addressed members of the European Parliament, focusing his speech on sovereignty — not only in the areas of technology and security, but also in energy and finance. In his opinion, the partnership with Canada — to which the European Commission has offered "associated member" status — could take the form of the country's participation in the Erasmus+ program, as well as in the next generation of Horizon Europe. Mark Carney stated that Canada "can supply LNG and hydrogen on a large scale to contribute to Europe's energy security." [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

Emmanuel Macron and Mark Carney in Saint-Pierre and Miquelon

On September 20, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to Saint-Pierre and Miquelon. They called for closer bilateral ties, particularly in the areas of fisheries, security, and energy. [Read more](#)



European Democracy Shield: Protecting Europe from Foreign Interference

On September 15, Members of the European Parliament adopted the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield. They aim to strengthen democracy in the face of hybrid threats, disinformation, and foreign interference, particularly from Russia. Among the proposals is the strengthening of the European Center for Democratic Resilience by establishing it on a binding legal basis and by providing it with a clearly defined mandate, budget, and operational parameters. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Digital, Technologies and Space :



Launch of two European Earth Observation Satellites

On the night of September 14–15, two European Earth observation satellites, Sentinel-3C and FLEX, were launched from the European Space Center in Kourou, French Guiana. They were launched aboard the Vega-C rocket, the European Space Agency's light-lift launch vehicle. Both satellites are now in orbit and will monitor the climate and plant health from space, in particular by measuring photosynthetic activity and collecting long-term environmental data. [Read more](#)



Strengthening Children's Online Safety

On September 17, the European Commission presented the "EU Kids Act" legislative proposal aimed at strengthening children's online safety. In particular, it proposes to ban children under 13 from using social media and to place the accounts of 13- to 15-year-olds under parental control. For users under 18, the relevant platforms and other digital services would be required to demonstrate that they are safe by design and that they offer features appropriate for the age of their users. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Cooperation with South Korea on Secure Satellite Connectivity

On September 17, the European Commission and South Korea signed an agreement to deepen their cooperation on secure satellite connectivity and to explore South Korea's future integration into the European IRIS² program. To date, Norway and Iceland are the only third countries to have joined the program. [Read more](#)

■ Economy and Finance :



Eurogroup Meeting

On September 18, the Eurogroup — comprising the finance ministers of the eurozone member countries — met in Dublin. Based on the work of the Commission, the Parliament, and the ECB, they agreed on the resilience of the European economy, with second-quarter growth exceeding initial forecasts and sovereign spreads remaining relatively under control. They agreed on the best strategies to sustain this resilience in light of pressures on energy prices and the rising cost of capital, namely the pursuit of European energy independence and sustainable fiscal paths. The meeting concluded with a discussion on European productivity. [Read more](#)



MEPs adopt the reform of the Customs Code

On September 16, MEPs adopted a reform of the EU Customs Code that introduces new rules regarding e-commerce. As a result, a new European customs authority will be established in Lille. Its responsibilities will include coordinating customs cooperation among EU member states and managing the new centralized IT system, the EU Data Hub. The reform also introduces processing fees "for each item purchased from online stores in third countries and shipped directly to EU consumers." [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Democracy and Politics :

State of the Union Address

On September 16, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented her priorities for the European Union to members of the European Parliament. Strengthening European independence and security was central to her speech. In particular, she announced a new European Corporation for Critical Raw Materials, as well as a new banking package focused on simplification and combating fragmentation. On climate change, the Commission is proposing a new framework for climate resilience, an alliance for climate risk insurance, and a new European water initiative. It has proposed a new European strategy and a "European Security Council." It aims to pave the way for "associate member" status for Canada, which would become the first country to hold this status. [Read more](#)



Swedish Prime Minister Resigns; Magdalena Andersson tasked with forming a Government

On September 17, the Swedish Election Authority announced that the left-wing bloc led by Social Democrat Magdalena Andersson had won the September 13 parliamentary elections with 176 seats, compared to 173 for the right-wing bloc. As a result, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson submitted his resignation and is handling day-to-day affairs until a new government is appointed. On September 18, Magdalena Andersson was tasked with securing a majority to form a government. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Siegfried Mureșan tasked with forming a Government

On 17 September Romanian President Nicușor Dan offered the position of prime minister to Siegfried Mureșan, a member of the European Parliament. He has ten days to form a government while negotiating with Parliament to secure a majority. This is Nicușor Dan's third attempt to appoint a new prime minister since the fall of the Bolojan government in May. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Signing of the Cardiff Agreement between Scotland and Wales

On September 14, the governments of Scotland and Wales signed an agreement to promote cooperation between the two nations on shared economic, social, and political priorities. Following the Welsh elections last May, pro-independence parties are now in power in both Cardiff and Edinburgh — a first in the history of devolution. As such, the Cardiff Agreement aims, in particular, to revise the British constitutional framework, which is deemed "unfair and unsustainable," and to promote closer ties with the European Union. The First Minister of Northern Ireland, from the Sinn Féin party, was also present. In the 2016 Brexit referendum, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European Union. [Read more](#)



Elections in Berlin and the State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

On September 20, elections were held in the "Lands" of Berlin and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In Berlin, the radical left-wing party Die Linke came in first with 25.7%, followed by the CDU with 18.8% and the far-right AfD with 16.3%. The Greens secured 14.3%, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) 12.1%. In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the AfD came in first with 38.2%. In second place, the SPD garnered 35.5%. Die Linke followed with 6.5%, and the Greens with 5.7%. For the first time since 1949, the CDU failed to clear the 5% threshold required for representation and will therefore not hold any seats in the Landtag. Voter turnout increased in both elections: in Berlin, it rose from 63% to 74.2%, and in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, from 70.8% to 78.1%. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Justice :



Kosovo's Former President Convicted of War Crimes

On September 16, the Kosovo Special Chambers, a special tribunal based in The Hague, sentenced former Kosovar President Hashim Thaçi to twenty-five years in prison for war crimes. These crimes were committed by Kosovar guerrillas in the late 1990s, under the political leadership of Thaçi, then head of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA); they date back to the war waged against Serbian forces as well as the months that followed, in 1998 and 1999. This conflict, which claimed the lives of nearly 13,000 people, ended after a NATO bombing campaign forced Serbian troops to withdraw from the territory. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

Legal Battle Between Ukraine's Prosecutor General and Anti-Corruption Agency

Following the launch of an investigation against him by Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), Ukraine's Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko announced his resignation. On September 14, President Zelensky suspended him, and Parliament removed him from office on the 15th by a vote of 317 to 0. Ruslan Kravchenko, who has left the country, stated that he intends to file a lawsuit against NABU Director Semen Kryvonos, alleging that the agency based its investigation on fabricated documents. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Cézanne at the Grand Palais in Paris

Until 17 January 2027, the Grand Palais is honouring Paul Cézanne and his artistic legacy with the exhibition "Cézanne and Us." Featuring nearly 180 masterpieces, the exhibition invites visitors to explore how the painter's work has been explored, interpreted, and transformed by other artists, from his contemporaries to subsequent generations. [Read more](#)



Mary Magdalene at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt

Until January 17, 2027, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt is presenting an exhibition dedicated to Mary Magdalene. The exhibition features more than 100 paintings, sculptures, and works of graphic art spanning a period from the Middle Ages to the contemporary era. The exhibition features loans from institutions in London, Berlin, New York, Paris, as well as the Vatican and Washington, D.C. This exceptional collection of works offers a broad overview of the depiction of Mary Magdalene throughout the centuries. [Read more](#)



Athens Baroque Music Festival

The Athens Baroque Music Festival will be held from September 24 to 27. Founded in 2017, the festival takes place at the German Evangelical Church in Athens and concludes with a musical tribute to composer Johann Sebastian Bach. [Read more](#)



"Quinzena de Dança" Contemporary Dance Festival in Almada

Until October 11, the Almada dance company (Companhia de Dança de Almada) is hosting its 34th international dance festival, the Quinzena de Dança. Establishing Almada as a true Portuguese hub for contemporary choreographic creation, the festival offers an opportunity to discover one-of-a-kind productions from Spain, Italy, Portugal, and the Portuguese-speaking world (Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Macau, Mozambique). [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :



21-25/09/2026

UN General Assembly (New York)



22/09/2026

"General Affairs" Council (Brussels)



24/09/26

"Competitiveness" Council (Brussels)



25-28/09/2026

Pope Leo XIV's apostolic journey to France (Paris, Lourdes, Metz)



28-29/09/2026

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Brussels)



28/09/26

"Defence" Council (Brussels)



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