



## SPECIAL EDITORIAL - The Letter - No.500

On its 500th anniversary the Foundation's Letter is undergoing a make-over to offer you a better service.

A unique publication, the Letter has been providing its 200,000 readers with a panorama of European news in five different languages for the past 11 years; it is necessary now more than ever before.... [Read more](#)



Today we are pleased to present you with the

# 500

edition of the Letter

**"Either Europeans continue to submit to developments decided by others for the benefit of others or they will decide to try and influence the future development of the world together."**



Author: Nicole Gnesotto

This week the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a European Interview with Nicole Gnesotto, Professor at the CNAM and author of the book "L'Europe a-t-elle un avenir stratégique?" (Paris, Armand Collin 2011). She analyses the new geopolitical stage and Europe's position in the world. In her opinion "Either Europeans continue to submit to developments decided by others for the benefit of others or they will decide to try and influence the future development of the world together."

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**Front page!** :

**Citizens' Initiative/Women's Voice**



Zita Gurmai (S&D HU) was the co-rapporteur of the legislative resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative. She will be present at the conference "Women & Europe and the Citizens' Initiative" that the Robert Schuman Foundation, in partnership with the European Commission's DG Education and Culture, the Karamanlis Institute for Democracy and the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation are organising on 21st September at the European Parliament. This conference will endeavour to show how the European Citizens' Initiative can be used to enhance equality and parity in Europe. Women take the floor! Enrol on-line now. The number of places is limited... [Read more](#)

**Elections** :

**Denmark**



Economic issues, notably the recovery of growth, increasing the number of jobs, protecting the Welfare State; this is the focus of the Danish general election campaign. The election will take place on 15th September next. The present economic crisis has relegated immigration to the bottom of the list; this was the central theme of the previous elections in 2001, 2005 and 2007, years in which the Danish economy was flourishing. According to the polls the so-called "red" coalition that rallies the opposition parties (Social Democratic Party, People's Socialist Party (SF), the Social Liberal Party (RV) and the Unity List (E)), is due to win the general elections on 15th September. In a poll published in the daily Jyllands-Posten, Ramboell credits the "red" coalition with 53.8% of the vote (95 MPs in parliament) against 46% for the so-called "blue" coalition (80 seats) which rallies the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the Danish People's Party... [Read more](#)

**Latvia**



13 political parties are running in the general elections on 17th September next in Latvia. Whilst the country is holding a general election for the second time in under a year, the political arena is undergoing profound change. Parties are consolidating, new leaders are emerging on the political scene and above all, the ethnic criterion is no longer an essential factor in the vote and the electorate is increasingly motivated by the parties' economic programmes. According to the latest polls only five political parties will rise above the 5% voting threshold necessary to be represented in parliament. Harmony Center is due to win, followed by the Zatler's Reform Party, Unity, the National Alliance and the Greens' and Farmers' Union... [Read more](#)

**Poland**



More than 30 million Poles are being called to ballot on 9th October next to renew the entire Parliament ie the 460 members of the Diet (Sejm) and the 100 members of the Senate, elected for four years by proportional representation. Four parties are represented at present in

the Diet: the Civic Platform of outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk (209 seats), Law and Justice (PiS) led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski (166 seats), the Left and Democrats (LiD) 53 seats, and the People's Party (PSL), a member of the outgoing government coalition (31 seats). Only two parties, the PO and the PiS are represented in the Senate (60 and 39 seats). Seven political parties are standing in the elections on 9th October: the Civic Platform, Law and Justice, the Democratic Left Alliance, the People's Party, Poland First (PjN), the Palikot Movement (RPP), the Labour Party (PPP). The Civic Platform seems to be well positioned to win the election... [Read more](#)

## Financial Crisis :

### ECB



The European Central Bank announced on 8th September the upkeep of its main interest rate at 1.5%; it reduced its growth forecast for the euro area in 2012 from 1.7% to 1.3%. During a press conference the President of the ECB Jean-Claude Trichet explained and defended the results of his institution's interventions during the crisis: "In the worst crisis since the Second World War, we have maintained confidence in the currency and our ability to guarantee price stability." He recalled that the ECB has re-initiated its programme to re-purchase government bonds since August, in an attempt to relieve the weakest countries in the euro area in expectation that the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) will assume this role... [Read more](#)

### Greece



Just as the IMF's "emergency meeting" on Greece is to take place on 14th September, the Greek statistics office has published data on the growth of Greece's GDP. Over one year the GDP contracted by 7.3% in the second quarter, after -8.1% in the first quarter of 2011. On 11th September the Greek Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos announced additional savings measures in 2011 of around "2 billion euros" to make good the decline of public accounts, as demanded by the EU and the IMF if they are to continue helping the country financially. "The only effective measure is a special tax on real estate," announced the Minister on TV. He believes that this "new national effort" is vital given the damage being done to Greece abroad, where rumours have started up again on the dangers of bankruptcy and even over the hypothesis of the country's departure from the euro area... [Read more](#)

### Portugal



The Portuguese Statistics Institute published a report on 8th September on the situation in the 2nd quarter of 2011: the Portuguese GDP decreased by 0.9% in comparison with the same period in 2010 but remained stable in comparison with the first quarter of 2011; and domestic demand fell whilst net foreign trade increased... [Read more](#)

## Tax/Financial Transactions



In line with the request made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the occasion of their meeting on 16th August, the French and German Finance Ministers, François Baroin and Wolfgang Schäuble addressed a detailed project on the taxation of financial transactions to Michel Barnier, European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services and to Algirdas Semeta, European Commissioner for Fiscality. They believe that Europe must move forwards with regard to establishing a tax on financial transactions in spite of a lack of international consensus on this. They say they firmly believe that the implementation of this tax Europe wide would be a vital stage in coming to a world consensus... [Read more](#)

## Africa/North

During the G8 summit that took place in Deauville in May 2011 a partnership with Egypt and Tunisia was launched to help the countries of the Middle East and North Africa with regard to the historic changes



that are now taking place there. On 10th September the international, financial institutions presented the base of this partnership in a joint declaration: a political process to support the democratic transition in this country, and an economic pillar of transparent governance, sustainable growth and responsible government. The donor countries and international financial institutions will support and aid the region financially to achieve these goals; new countries have joined the partnership... [Read more](#)

#### OECD/Forecasts



The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has published its Interim Economic Outlook for the G7 countries and reviews its growth forecasts downwards for the end of the year. The OECD is now forecasting growth of 1.1% and then 0.4% over one year in the third and fourth quarters for the US and 0.9% and then 0.4% for France; as for Germany its growth in the third quarter will be +2.6% and then -1.4% in the fourth, whilst Italy may experience at least one quarter of GDP contraction like Germany. Japan is still rebuilding six months after the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear accident that affected it... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### G7/Finances



On 9th September the Finance and Governors of the Central Banks of the 7 most industrialised countries (US, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, UK) met in Marseilles. They recalled that strong measures would continue to be taken "to protect financial stability, to find confidence and maintain growth", these goals will also be achieved thanks to a concerted effort internationally and the upkeep of common interest in a strong, stable international, monetary system... [Read more](#)

#### European Council :

##### Lessons/Crisis



In a speech at the London School of Economics on 7th September the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy recalled the seriousness of the present economic and financial crisis. He stressed the need for national governments to stand by one another in spite of the difficulties they faced. He also insisted on the need for States to be more responsible by limiting unnecessary debt... [Read more](#)

#### Serbia



On 9th September the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, attended the first EU-Serbia forum in Belgrade. He stressed the benefits of European integration, notably peace, which now reigns across the entire European continent. He also congratulated the Serbian authorities for their determination to normalise their international relations and encouraged them to continue their work to draw closer to the EU, which, in spite of the crisis, remains a main beacon of attraction... [Read more](#)

#### Commission :

##### Energy



On 7th September the European Commission presented a communication on "the security of energy supplies and international cooperation" that defines a strategy for the EU's external relations with regard to energy as requested by the European Council. One of the 43 proposals suggests that energy agreements with third countries might be negotiated by the Commission when it comes to achieving the Union's goals as in the case of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline. The communication includes a proposal to extend the information exchange mechanism to all intergovernmental energy agreements that have been adopted or that are being negotiated between Member States and

third countries. This will enable the Commission to participate as an observer in the negotiations and to ensure the latter are in line with internal energy market rules before they are signed. The President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek, who is promoting a European Energy Community, welcomed these proposals... [Read more](#)

### Road Safety



On 8th September the European Commission adopted an initial measure to foster the installation of an eCall system by 2015 on all new models of car. The eCall system enables immediate contact with the emergency services in the event of an accident even if the driver is unable to make the call personally. The Commission adopted a recommendation requesting that all Member States ensure that mobile telephone operators adapt their infrastructure to enable eCalls to be transferred effectively to the emergency services. The voluntary deployment of this measure has not been enough since 2005, hence the Commission has opted for a legislative approach and it is suggesting that a regulation soon be made that makes the installation of the eCall facility obligatory. MEPs of the Transport Committee welcomed this project positively... [Read more](#)

### Council :

#### Eurovignette



On 12th September Ministers adopted the "Eurovignette" directive that is applicable to HGV vehicles with the aim of reducing pollution emanating from freight transport companies' vehicles; it also aims to fluidify traffic and establish diversified tariffications; the taxation rate will be proportional to the vehicles' emissions, the distance travelled, the place and time of road use. The new European framework law is fostering the transfer over to modes of transport that are more respectful of the environment. The directive that will have to be transposed by Member States into their national legislation within the next two years, allows dispensation from the tax for certain categories of vehicles and proposes that the revenues from this be used by Member States for projects in the transport sector and notably for the improvement of the trans-European transport network... [Read more](#)

### Diplomacy :

#### Counter-Terrorism



Ten years after the attacks of 11th September Gilles de Kerchove, coordinator of the EU's campaign to counter terrorism reviewed the results of a decade work during a press conference on 5th September. He recalled that the origins of terrorism in Europe were diverse: political, religious, anarchist, and secessionist. Although al-Qaeda is clearly in decline its operations in Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) and in the Arab Peninsula (AQPA) are on the rise. Another threat is the enrolment into the jihad of European citizens who are not well known or unknown to the security services. However over the last few years the EU has established some effective tools: the arrest warrant, agencies (Europol, Eurojust, Frontex), the sharing of information. Gilles de Kerchove insisted on the importance of greater cooperation with all third countries, the USA and Pakistan... [Read more](#)

#### Kosovo



On 6th and 7th September the President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, travelled to Brussels to meet the President of the Council Herman Van Rompuy, the High Representative Catherine Ashton, the President of the European Council, Jerzy Buzek and MEPs of the "Foreign Affairs" Committee. She pleaded in support of Kosovo's territorial integrity, stressed her country's desire to become an EU Member State and asked that the non-recognition of Kosovo by 5 member states should not prevent the prospect of liberalising visas. Her European partners supported Kosovo's "European perspective" since reforms are moving in this direction and said they were pleased with recent agreements made with Serbia. Mr Van Rompuy and Mr Buzek supported the idea of dialogue over visas... [Read more](#)

## Court of Justice :

### GMO



On 8th September the EU's Court of Justice delivered a decision with regard to the residual presence of GMO's in foodstuffs. In another decision delivered on 8th September the Court also detailed the conditions of the emergency ban on GMO crops. It targets more particularly the moratorium implemented by France... [Read more](#)

### Sound Pollution



In a decision dated 8th September the EU's Court of Justice gave the greenlight to EU Member States to limit the threshold of sound tolerated when planes fly over inhabited areas. However these measures should not be used as a pretext to restrict access to airports: it will only be possible to implement a ban on flying over an area only when it has been demonstrated that it is the only solution possible to reduce noise... [Read more](#)

## ECB :

### Resignation



German Jürgen Stark, member of the ECB's Executive Board, resigned from office on 9th September, officially for personal reasons. His opposition to the purchase of bonds by the ECB from indebted countries in the Euro Area seems however to have been a key element in this decision. The German government indicated on 10th September that Jörg Asmussen would replace Jürgen Stark as chief economist at the ECB... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### Justice/Aid to Greece



On 7th September the German Constitutional Court of Karlsruhe authorised the principle of aid promised by Berlin to counter the crisis in the euro area. But the constitutional judges demand that the government should involve parliament more. The guardians of the German constitution believe that the Chancellor did not infringe the German Fundamental Law by granting tens of billions of euros in loans to countries in distress in the euro area. But they demand however that the government should ask for the Bundestag's greenlight (Budgets Committee) before granting any further loans to states in financial difficulty... [Read more](#)

## Spain :

### Deficit Prohibited



The Spanish Senate adopted the text on the "golden rule" on budgetary stability on 7th September, 233 votes in favour 3 against. Spain is therefore the second country after Germany to introduce this rule into its constitution in the hope of becoming the model of rigour in the eyes of the markets that have been unnerved by the debt. The reform will be included in the fundamental law within the next 15 days. This ratification took place to the backdrop of demonstrations on the part of the public... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Vote/Greece/Austerity



On 8th September the Senate approved the revised draft finance law for 2011 that includes new aid to Greece and the austerity plan. This draft law was adopted the previous evening by the National Assembly. The plan is split into two: a rescue plan for Greece and the enhancement of the euro area and then a plan to reduce deficits," said French Budget Minister and the government's spokesperson, Valérie Pécresse. France thereby became the first European country to approve the rescue plan for Greece

which includes an initial aid package of 159 billion euros... [Read more](#)

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## Italy :

### Budget/Balance



September... [Read more](#)

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On 7th September Italian Senators adopted the government's austerity plan that will total 54.2 billion euros by 2013. The next day Silvio Berlusconi's government adopted a draft constitutional law during a council meeting that plans for the introduction of the "golden rule" into the Constitution; this aims to bring public deficits under control. This plan should be finally approved by MPs during the vote on 12th

## Latvia :

### Award



September... [Read more](#)

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The former President of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga was given the Truman-Reagan Freedom Medal on 8th September, delivered by the Foundation for the Memory of the Victims of Communism. The other recipient is Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a member of the American Congress...

## UK :

### Russia



September... [Read more](#)

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On 11th and 12th September British Prime Minister David Cameron travelled to Moscow. It was the first visit by a British leader to Russia since the assassination of the former Russian agent Aleksandr Litvinenko in 2006 in London which led bilateral relations into a period of disruption. Hoping to rekindle relations between the two countries,

## Montenegro :

### Electoral Law



December last year... [Read more](#)

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On 8th September the Montenegrin Parliament adopted an electoral law which was one of the main conditions set by Brussels to establish the date to launch EU accession negotiations. This law was unanimously approved by the 71 MPs present out of a total of 81. Montenegro obtained the status of candidate country to the EU in

## Russia :

### Gas Pipeline/Nord Stream



The gas pipeline make it possible to transport most of Russian gas without it having to transit through countries neighbouring Russia on its route for Europe, a major task for Moscow, which is again in conflict with Ukraine over gas prices... [Read more](#)

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Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin inaugurated the gas pipeline Nord Stream on 6th September; this is a strategic project that will supply Western Europe by passing via the Baltic Sea. During his trip to activate the compression station in Portovaia, near Vyborg on the shores of the Baltic Sea he was accompanied by former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who chairs the Nord Stream consortium.

### Security/France



The Franco-Russian cooperation council on security issues met for its 10th session in Moscow on 7th September. President Dmitri Medvedev met the French Foreign and Defence Ministers, Alain Juppé and Gérard Longuet at the Kremlin on this occasion together with their Russian counterparts Serguey Lavrov and Anatoli Serdyukov. The ministers

discussed major issues related to European and international security, notably NATO-Russian cooperation in terms of anti-missile defence, the control of conventional arms, regional conflicts, the fight to counter proliferation and even the stabilisation of Afghanistan... [Read more](#)

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## Switzerland :

### Departure



On 7th September the President of the Helvetic Confederation Micheline Calmy-Rey decided to leave the Collège at the end of this year. She told the Federal Council that she was not going to stand in the election of the government on 14th December next... [Read more](#)

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## OSCE :

### Moldova



Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Audrionus Azubalis, the current president of the OSCE, chaired a bilateral meeting on 8th and 9th September between Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat and the head of the region of Transnistria Igor Smirnov in Bad Reichenhall, Germany. Mr Azubalis believes that the "meeting will lead to progress towards resuming official negotiations in a 5+2 format". The head of the OSCE mission in Moldova, Philip Remler, believes that "differences have to be depoliticized and settled by focusing specifically on the population." The 5+2 format is a negotiation plan including the interested parties, the OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, the US and the EU... [Read more](#)

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## Eurostat :

### Croissance



According to the most recent estimates published by Eurostat on 6th September the Euro Area's GDP and that of the EU increased by 0.2% in the second quarter of 2011. In comparison the GDP of the USA also increased by 0.2% and that of Japan decreased by 0.3%... [Read more](#)

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### External Trade



According to the first Eurostat estimate published on 9th September in the second quarter of 2011 the EU's current account recorded a deficit (goods and services of 43.2 billion euros, a deficit in the goods trade of 37.4 billion euros and a surplus in the trade of services of 22.9 billion euros... [Read more](#)

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## Studies/Reports :

### Public Finances



On 12th September the European Commission published a report on public finances. The public debt in the euro area is due to lie at 88.7% of the GDP in 2012. The economic crisis has caused a significant worsening in public finances in the Member States making the viability of the debt a major stake in the entire EU. Simultaneously, budgetary surveillance in the EU is the focus of major reform. The 2011 report on public finances in the Economic and Monetary Union reviews recent developments in this domain, analyses the new assessment methods with regard to the viability of the debt and describes changes with regard to budgetary surveillance in the EU. These reforms, which are the result of the lessons learned during the crisis, place prevention and the reduction of the debt at the heart of budgetary surveillance in the EU... [Read more](#)

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### Governance/Economy

Jean-François Jamet, Werner Mussler and Stefaan De Corte have published an article on the economic governance of the European Union for the European Study Centre; they look more particularly into





the German and French views... [Read more](#)

### Governance/Social



The Bertelsmann Foundation has published a paper by Thomas Fischer and Sarah Hoffmann entitled "European Economic Governance. And what about the Social Dimension? The authors analyse the mechanisms that have been set up recently to improve economic governance across Europe and note that not enough attention has been paid to the social dimension. Given the dangers of a social crisis they suggest a "social investment pact" to complete the Euro Plus Pact and a simpler approach in terms of the attribution of structural funds to countries in distress... [Read more](#)

### G20



The French Economic, Social and Environmental Committee has published an opinion of the G20. It insists on the legitimacy and the effectiveness of this instance in the face of present challenges, and stresses two principles that should guide its action: growth is worth nothing if it does not lead to positive outcomes in the social and environmental areas; States and international organisations should take their responsibilities and regulate markets that have been free from any constraint for far too long... [Read more](#)

### Culture :

#### Heritage Days



In September and October the European Heritage Days are being organised in 50 European States with the support of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Germany, the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, UK and Poland organised their events between 9th and 11th September. Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Romania, Lithuania are organising them on 17th to 19th September. Some countries are working on the same theme: for example France, Ukraine, Cyprus and Finland are highlighting their "cultural routes" to raise public awareness of the heritage as the paths of art, science and trade cross. In 2011 the fourth forum of European Heritage Days will end this year's events between 10th to 12th October in Wroclaw in Poland... [Read more](#)

#### Exhibition/Paris



From 13th September to 15th January the Orsay Museum is putting on an exhibition devoted to "the aesthetic movement" that dominated England in the second half of the 19th century and that aimed to escape the ugliness and materialism of the time via a new idealisation of beauty. The exhibition presents work (photography, decorative art, literature, fashion ...) by Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James McNeill Whistler, Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde, who all tried to associate artistic creation with lifestyle... [Read more](#)

#### Exhibition/Basel



The "Kunstmuseum Basel" is putting on an exhibition presenting the work of Max Beckmann until 22nd January. The exhibition "Landscapes" comprises 70 pictures, works of arts and unique paintings from private collections. Believed to be a classical master of modernity Beckmann reveals all of his artistic qualities in his landscapes. The exhibition provides an overview of the German painter's development, who spent his life as an emigré in the USA... [Read more](#)

#### Biennale/Lyon



The 11th Biennale in Lyon was designed by Argentinian curator Victoria Nothroom, who took her inspiration from the poem by W.B. Yeats "A Terrible Beauty is Born". This artistic festival brings together 78 artists from around the world from 15th September to 31st December (John Cage, Ulla Von Brandenburg, Marlène Dumas, Cildo Meireles) who are exhibiting their work over 14,000m2 spread across four venues... [Read more](#)

#### Agenda :



12th September  
"General Affairs" and "Foreign Affairs" Council



12th-15th September  
Plenary Session of European Parliament (Strasbourg)



15th September  
General Elections in Denmark  
EU-South Africa Summit



16th-17th September  
Informal "Economy, Finance" Council



17th September  
General Elections in Latvia



19th-20th September  
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



21st September  
Women and Europe & the Citizens' Initiative in the European Parliament in Brussels

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