



Interview with Karel de Gucht, European Trade Commissioner



Author: Karel De Gucht

On the occasion of the organisation of the first EU/Korea summit on 19th September next, the Robert Schuman Foundation has published an interview with the European Trade Commissioner, Karel de Gucht. He believes that if "the EU's exports continue to rise at the same pace, this shows that European businesses remain extremely competitive on the world markets."

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Contents

Front page! : Budgetary Pact - EU/Korea **Elections** : Netherlands - Lithuania - Montenegro **Financial Crisis** : Germany/ESM - Youth - Greece - Portugal - Sweden **European Council** : Budgetary Union **Commission** : State/Union - Banking Union - Education **Parliament** : Diplomacy - Victims/Rights - Energy - Stem cells **Diplomacy** : Egypt **Germany** : Worth/Europe **Spain** : Energy **France** : Roma **Poland** : Space **Portugal** : Budgetary Objectives **Kosovo** : Independence **Aviation** : EADS/BAE **Council of Europe** : ECHR **Eurostat** : Inflation - Employment - South Africa **Studies/Reports** : Franco-German - Finance - Education - Informal Economy - Belarus - Transatlantic Relations **Culture** : Bunker/Berlin - Canaletto/Paris - Culture/Capital - Exhibition/London - Exhibition/Berlin - Exhibition/Vienna

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

Front page! :

Everything there is to know about the budgetary pact



To find out all there is to know about the Budgetary Pact the Robert Schuman Foundation has published an explanatory paper on the Stability, Coordination and Governance Treaty. It is also offering its readers a summary table of the ratification procedures ongoing in the various Member States... [Read more](#)

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First EU/Korea Forum



On 19th September 2012 the first EU/Korea forum will be taking place at the European Parliament, organised by the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Korea Foundation and the Yonsei University. On this occasion speakers will be presenting the state of relations between the EU and Korea in various areas one year after the signature of the free trade agreement between these two entities... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Victory for the European Parties in the Netherlands



The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy -VVD - led by outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte won the general elections on 12th September in the Netherlands with 26.5% of the vote and 41 seats (+10 in comparison with the previous election on 9th June 2010). The party is slightly ahead of the Labour Party (PvdA) led by Diederik Samsom which won 24.7% of the vote and 38 seats (+8). Together the liberals and labour have 79 seats i.e. the absolute majority in the States General, the lower chamber of parliament. The populist parties suffered a clear rebuttal. The Freedom Party (PVV) won 10.1% of the vote and 15 seats (-9). The Socialist Party won 9.6% of the vote and 15 seats (=). Turnout totalled 74.13%... [Read more](#)

General elections in Lithuania



On 14th October next 2.5 million Lithuanians will be electing the 141 MPs who sit in the Seimas, the only chamber in parliament. They will also be voting by referendum on the building of a new nuclear power station in Visaginas. The second round of the general election will take place on 28th October. The government comprises the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LK), led by Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, the Liberal and Centre Union (LLC-LSC) and the Liberal Movement (LRLS). The Seimas, comprises 141 members elected every four years according to a mixed voting method. 71 MPs are appointed by the majority system and 70 by proportional representation. A political party has to win 5% of the votes cast to be able to sit in parliament. 10 parties have seats at present. According to the most recent poll by Spinter Tyrimai five political parties are due to win more than the 5% voting threshold necessary to enter parliament.. [Read more](#)

Early general elections in Montenegro



On 14th October next the Montenegrins are being called to ballot to renew the 181 members of Parliament. These general elections are taking place 6 months earlier than planned. Dominating the political arena for the last 20 years, the Democratic and Socialist Union (DPS) led by Prime Minister Igor Luksic and President of the Republic Filip Vujanovic, will, in all likelihood, win the election again... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

The Court in Karlsruhe gives the greenlight to the ESM under certain conditions



On 12th September the German Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe rejected the appeal submitted to it concerning the Budgetary Pact and against the European Stability Mechanism, whilst setting some conditions on the ratification of the ESM. The court rejected the appeal made against the programme to buy bonds as announced by the European Central Bank. The greenlight was given to the ESM on condition that Germany's involvement over 190 billion euros would require the prior approval of the Bundestag. The Court is also asking for decisions concerning the ESM to be submitted to both chambers of Parliament by guaranteeing the right to information on the part of the MPs. German President Joachim Gauck signed the laws approving the European Stability Mechanism and the Budgetary Pact on 13th September... [Read more](#)

Young Europeans hit full on by the crisis



In its report on youth published on 10th September 2012 the EU calls for a priority to be given to policies in support youth and employment, social integration, healthcare and well-being. Indeed the crisis has hit youth full on. The unemployment rate has risen by 50% in the EU since the start of the crisis, rising from 15% on average in February 2008 to 22.5% in July this year. According to the most recent statistics published by Eurostat the highest rates have been noted in Greece (53.8%) and in Spain (52.9%). To counter youth unemployment the report highlights the "Erasmus for all" programme that has been put forward for the period 2014-2020. It aims to enable 5 million young people to benefit from subsidies for study abroad... [Read more](#)

Sharp rise in unemployment in the second quarter of 2012 in Greece



The Greek Statistics Authority (ASE) announced on 13th September that the unemployment rate worsened in the second quarter of 2012, totalling 23.6% against 22.6% in the previous quarter. In the second quarter of 2011 this rate lay at 16.3%. Unemployment is affecting the 15-24 year olds, 53.9% are without work, the rate lying at 62.1% concerning women in this age category. According to the ASE "the highest unemployment rates have been recorded amongst those who have no schooling (35.8%) followed by those who only have secondary education or technical training (26%). The rate of employees in Greece, at 63.2% of the working population, continues to be "lower than the average amongst EU members, where the rate totals 80%.".. [Read more](#)

Satisficet given to Portugal



The Troika (ECB, EU, IMF) said on 11th September 2012 that it was satisfied with Portugal after its fifth assessment of the measures being implemented to overcome the crisis. The goals in terms of growth and exports are being respected, but public revenues as well as employment rates are still too low. Additional consolidation work has to be done but experts believe that Portugal is on "the right path", that the dangers threatening financial stability have been mastered and that reforms in support of competitiveness, employment and growth are moving forwards. On 14th September the 17 Finance Ministers from the euro zone (Eurogroup) confirmed this satisficet saying that the overall aid package would remain unchanged and that Portugal should be able to fund the markets normally in 2013... [Read more](#)

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Rise in unemployment in Sweden



The Swedish Statistics Bureau, Statistiska Centralbyrån said on 13th September 2012 that the unemployment rate had risen by 0.3 points in August, to 7.8% its highest rate in over a year and a half... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Herman Van Rompuy pleads in support of Budgetary Union



Following the proposal made by the European Commission on 12th September to introduce Banking Union, the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy pleaded for the introduction of Budgetary Union in order to complete the structure of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The aim of Budgetary Union would be to enable "the smooth running " of the EMU. It would make it possible to compensate for any asymmetrical shock that a Member State might fall victim to by means of a budgetary transfer that would help it rise to the problem. This central budget would suppose however the issue of a common debt to all of the euro zone member states. According to Mr Van Rompuy the strengthening of budgetary rules applicable to the States is an unavoidable corollary to this Budgetary Union... [Read more](#)

Commission :

José Manuel Barroso pleads for a Federation of Nation States



During his speech on the State of the Union to the European Parliament on 12th September the President of the European Commission, called for a true "federation of Nation States". He explained that the present problems could not be solved simply with national solutions and that the rise of populism has to be warded off. Moreover he said that a new treaty was necessary so that greater economic and monetary union could take place, so that the system could function better. He suggested that the "stakes in the next European elections in June 2014 should be Europeanised. The European political parties might contribute to this by appointing their candidate for the presidency of the European Commission ahead of time... [Read more](#)

The Commission's new proposal on Banking Union



On 12th September 2012 the European Commission put forward a Single Bank Supervisory Mechanism led by the European Central Bank that will aim to strengthen Economic and Monetary Union. The series of proposals is a first step towards integrated "banking union". This includes a regulation that gives the ECB greater powers in view of supervising all euro zone banks and anticipates a mechanism that will enable non-euro zone countries to join in the process if they want to; a regulation that adapts the present ABE regulation with the new banking supervisory measure; a communication which anticipates the introduction of a single regulation (or uniform regulation) and a single supervisory mechanism which announces the following stages including the creation of a single resolution mechanism for defaulting banks... [Read more](#)

Geographical Disparity in terms of Education



According to a new report by the European Commission, published on 14th September 2012, education and future prospects are strongly influenced by the place where one lives in Europe. This document entitled "Mind the Gap - Education Inequality across EU Regions" stresses the major differences in training opportunities and the results that exist between Member States and also points to differences within these. The Commission calls on the competent authorities to introduce specific measures rather than general ones to remedy this problem... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Annual Report on the Common Foreign and Security Policy



On 12th September 2012 the European Parliament adopted the text written by Elmar Brok (EPP, Germany) regarding the Council's report on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, that was published in June 2011. This report reviews the priorities expressed by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton in view of informing the European Parliament on the implementation of the CFSP. The Parliament notes that the "report does not meet the ambitions of the Lisbon Treaty" and indicates a lack of strategic orientation on the part of the CFSP. The parliament also notes the lack of mechanism designed to guarantee "coherence" between all of the institutions responsible for the common policy (Council and Commission, notably the External Action Service). The European Parliament also criticises the lack of adequation between the declared priorities in this report and the resources devoted to them. Finally Parliament expresses its attachment to the financial instruments devoted to the CFSP, as "strategic tools" to stabilise our neighbours in the East and the South. However issues of Defence should be "included in the CFSP's overall framework," it remarks... [Read more](#)

For the adoption of a basic rights for the victims of crime in the EU



On 12th September 2012 MEPs voted in support of a draft directive on harmonising basic individual rights from which victims of crime in the EU might benefit - 611 votes in support, 9 against and 13 abstentions. Hence any EU citizen who is robbed violently, who is attacked, or raped etc... will enjoy a series of basic rights including for example adequate psychological support, access to justice in his country, a penal procedure written in his language or the use of translation services and if need be, compensation after the trial. In virtue of this text the Member States will be obliged to guarantee the implementation of these mechanisms for victims of crime... [Read more](#)

Energy Efficiency



On 11th September 2012 MEPs approved the directive on energy efficiency. Aiming to achieve a 20% reduction in European energy consumption and savings of around 50 billion euros annually, this text follows several paths: energy efficiency in public buildings and energy services; the systemisation of energy audits and finally the introduction of adequate funding mechanisms. The directive was adopted 632 votes

in favour, 25 against and 19 abstentions. It will have to be applied in the Member States within the 18 months following its entry into force... [Read more](#)

Voluntary, free donations of human tissues and cells



On 11th September 2012 MEPs adopted, 551 votes in support, 15 against and 81 abstentions, of a non-binding resolution on public health comprising several chapters. MEPs are notably calling on Member States to cooperate better together in view of cross-border organ donations and stress the medical advantages of using stem cells. They finally asked for organ donations and those of human tissues to be free of charge, voluntary and anonymous. The competent, national authorities will have to define a transparent, strict framework for encouraging and compensating donations... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Mohamed Morsi, Egyptian President, meets European leaders



On 13th September the Egyptian President, Mohamed Morsi met the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative in Brussels. Mr Barroso spoke of financial aid to a total of 500 million euros that the EU would be prepared to devote to Egypt in the shape of donations and loans on condition that the country agrees with the IMF on a 4.8 billion dollar loan that is now being negotiated. A possible additional donation of 150 to 200 million euros was discussed as part of a plan for the recovery of the Egyptian economy. Herman van Rompuy raised the issue of progress towards putting together the Egyptian Constituent Assembly so that the democratic transition could move forwards... [Read more](#)

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Germany :

Europe's Worth



To debate the question "the worth of Europe" there will be a conference at the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Berlin on 18th September 2012. The conference is being organised on the invitation of Guido Westerwelle, Foreign Minister together with the Bertelsmann Foundation, ARTE and Deutschlandfunk. You can take part now, share your ideas on Europe and discuss these in a chat or on twitter... [Read more](#)

Spain :

New taxes on energy



The Spanish government, which is committed to reducing public deficit approved a draft law on 14th September 2012 which will lead to a further series of taxes in the country's energy sector; this is due to bring in 2.7 billion euros. The reform aims to compensate "the tariff deficit, which is the difference between the cost of producing electricity and the profit earned by its sale" explained the government's spokesperson Soraya Saenz de Santamaria to the press after a council of ministers meeting... [Read more](#)

France :

Agreement between France and Romania on the return of the Roma



During a trip to Romania on 12th September Manuel Valls, Interior Minister and Bernard Cazeneuve, Delegate Minister for European Affairs came to agreement with two Romanian Ministries (Labour, Family and Social Protection and Administration and Interior), along with the French Office for Immigration and Integration. This framework agreement, an experimental two year programme aims to establish and follow up 80 reinsertion projects designed for people returning from France. This agreement comes after warnings against France by the European Commission on 10th August and by the UN on 29th August about its policy of dismantling Roma camps and the expulsion of migrants... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Membership of the European Space Agency



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The Polish Economy Minister, Waldemar Pawlak, announced on 13th September 2012 that Poland has become the 20th member of the European Space Agency (ESA). It is also the third of the former Communist countries, after the Czech Republic and Romania to join this organisation. The membership agreement was signed in Warsaw by Mr Pawlak and the ESA's General Director Jean-Jacques Dordain... [Read more](#)

Portugal :

Portugal achieves additional time from its creditors



Portugal's Finance Minister Vitor Gaspar announced on 11th September that he had achieved extra time from the troika to consolidate the country's public accounts. During the fifth assessment of the implementation of reform in exchange for the 78 billion euro rescue plan, the creditors accepted a reduction of the budgetary deficit down to 5% of the GDP in 2013 (against an initial 4.5%) and to 4.5% in 2014 (instead of 3%). Whilst unemployment is over 15% of the working population and that tax revenues are down, the government led by Pedro Passos Coelho also announced further austerity measures in 2013, notably an increase in private sector social security contributions from 11% to 18%, a reduction in social services including unemployment benefits and a drastic reduction in public spending (healthcare, education, state owned businesses)... [Read more](#)

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Kosovo :

Kosovo achieves full sovereignty



On 10th September Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith announced on behalf of the International Steering Group -ISG - that has been responsible for monitoring the independence of this country since 2008, that this organisation's mandate was now over and that it would be dissolved. Kosovo is no longer under international observation and has achieved its full sovereignty... [Read more](#)

Aviation :

EADS and BAE systems discussing a future merger



On 12th September 2012 EADS and BAE Systems confirmed that negotiations were underway regarding a strategic project. Their rapprochement would give rise to a major world aviation group in defence, space and security. The new group would be soundly established in Europe, where more than 70% of its employees are based - but it would be able to enhance its links with the USA. The rapprochement between EADS and BAE Systems would lead to a group that has a combined strength in terms of complementary, leading edge technologies with production centres in France, Germany, UK, Spain and in the USA. It would enable these units to achieve a better position in the face of many challenges. It would show Europe's leadership and competitiveness in terms of its industries... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Luxembourger Dean Spielmann - new ECHR President



On 10th September the European Court of Human Rights elected Luxembourger Dean Spielmann as the new President of the ECHR. Elected by secret ballot by the Court that met in a plenary session, he will replace Briton Nicolas Bratza as of November 1st 2012, since his mandate comes to an end on 31st October 2012. The future President as been a judge within the pan-European judicial body since 24th June 2004, a president of the section since February 1st 2012 and was elected Vice-President of the Court on 2nd July 2012... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Inflation up in the EU



In a press release published on 14th September Eurostat announced that the annual inflation rate in the euro zone lay at 2.6% in August 2012 against 2.4% in July. The EU's annual inflation rate lay at 2.7% in August 2012, against 2.5% in July... [Read more](#)

Employment remains stable in the EU in comparison with 2011



Employment has remained stable in the EU in comparison with 2011 announced Eurostat. Indeed, the unemployment rate in the Union increased slightly (0.1%) in comparison with the first quarter of this year. Employment did however decrease in comparison with the same quarter last year (-0.6% in the euro zone and -0.2% in the EU as a whole). The States that are experiencing biggest decreases in employment in comparison with 2011 are those who are most affected by the crisis : Greece (-9%), Portugal (-4.2%), Spain (-4%) and Cyprus (-3%)... [Read more](#)

EU/South Africa Trade



According to a Eurostat press release on 13th September 2012 the EU recorded a rising trade surplus of goods with South Africa in 2011. Exports totalled 26.6 billion euros and imports 20.5 billion - a level below that of 2007. In the first half of 2012 exports decreased slightly but imports even more so, leading to a surplus of 3.4 billion euros over this period against 2.7 billion in the first half of 2011... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Presentation of the Franco-German Relations Barometer



During a Franco-Germany conference on 12th September 2012 in Versailles, the Secretaries General of the Franco-German Office for Youth (OFAJ) presented the "Franco-German Relations Barometer" that was undertaken with the magazine ParisBerlin. This study was undertaken on line between 12th and 19th July 2012 involving the interview of 750 French and German citizens aged 15 to 34. According to the poll young French people associate Germany firstly with an economic model and the two World Wars whilst young Germans link France to lifestyle and tourism. Only 7% of the German and French would like to live in the respective neighbouring country... [Read more](#)

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Financial Reform will raise bank interest rates



On 11th September two IMF economists, André Oliveira Santos and Douglas Elliott published a report on the ongoing reform of the financial world that resulted from the international Basel III agreement in September 2010 and which is due to enter into force on January 1st 2013. This reform, which notably obliges banks to increase their own funds in order to prevent a repetition of the financial crisis of 2007-2008, will lead to a moderate rise in bank interest rates in Europe, in the USA and in Japan according to these two economists. These interest rates may, long term, increase base points by 17 in Europe, by 28 in the USA and by 8 Japan. However they believe that the banks have the ability to adapt to these changes without taking measures that would damage the economy as a whole... [Read more](#)

OECD Education at a Glance 2012



The OECD's 2012 edition of "Education at a Glance" published on 11th September reveals net differences between countries as far as education is concerned. Amongst the OECD countries Australia, Finland, Ireland and Sweden achieve the best results regarding the numbers of young people whose parents have little education achieving a diploma in higher education. Integrating children at an early age into formal teaching and maintaining a social mix in school are said to be two effective measures to enhance equality. The report stresses that countries benefit from social

and economic advantages long term because of an increase in their investments in education... [Read more](#)

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Reducing the informal economy to counter the economic and financial crisis



Three economists from the World Bank, Truman Packard, Johannes Koetti and Claudio E Montenegro have published a report on the informal economy in the countries of Eastern Europe. They recall that in a context in which these States are heavily affected by the euro zone crisis, they must consolidate their public finances. The informal economy is depriving them of resources they could use to facilitate this consolidation. They insist therefore on the need to make the formal economy "more attractive" to their citizens and put forward measures to be applied in this direction... [Read more](#)

Thinking beyond the general elections in Belarus



On 11th September the Finnish Institute for International Affairs (FIIA) published a study entitled "The electoral trap: why the EU should think beyond Belarus's parliamentary election?" This analysis explains why we should expect nothing of the elections on 23rd September next which will just be an "electoral farce" and advises the EU to place more importance on encouraging and training players in civil society in view of the presidential election 2015, since they might promote democratic values in Belarus... [Read more](#)

Overview of Transatlantic Relations in 2012



On 12th September the German Marshall Fund of the USA (GMF) published its report on the state of Transatlantic relations in 2012. According to polls undertaken in June 2012 in twelve EU countries, in the States, Turkey and Russia by GMF, it is seen that 2/3 of Europeans and Americans believe that "their values and interests" are much closer regarding China, whilst the Russians distinguish themselves from the Westerners on this point and reject all types of European and American leadership. However, in spite of a desire to coordinate on international issues the use of military action (Libya, Syria) is still a source of divergence... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Boros Collection in Berlin/the Bunker



Art collectors, Christian and Karen Boros, are opening their Berlin Second World War bunker again to the public as of 17th September - the latter has been transformed into a gallery to present some of their 700 works by contemporary artists... [Read more](#)

Two exhibitions on Canaletto in Paris



There are two exhibitions devoted to Canaletto in Paris at the moment. The first is at the Jacquemart-André Museum, open until 14th January 2013. It is devoted to the veduta (18th century), for which Canaletto and Guardi are best known. The second is at the Maillol Museum from 19th September 2012 to 10th February 2013, and this is entirely devoted to Antonio Canal, bringing together more than 50 paintings. Canaletto is the most famous of the Venetian vedutisti of the 18th century... [Read more](#)

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Paphos, culture capital 2017



On 14th September 2012 the town of Paphos in Cyprus was selected as European Capital of Culture 2017. It will be sharing the title with the town of Aarhus in Denmark. The Council of the European Union still has to make this choice official and will do so in May 2013. In 2012 the European Culture Capitals are Guimaraes (Portugal) and Maribor (Slovenia), followed in 2013 by Marseilles (France) and Kosice (Slovakia)... [Read](#)

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"Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant Garde"



The Tate Gallery is presenting more than 150 works, paintings, sculptures and furniture until 13th January 2013 by artists from the pre-Raphaelite movement which managed to introduced a different type of audacity into the art world at the end of the 19th century when the Victorian era was in full swing. The exhibition shows the Pre-Raphaelites as the pioneers of the avant-garde movement in painting and in other arts. It has taken five years to put this exhibition together. After London it will travel to the National Gallery of Art in Washington and to the Pushkin Museum in Moscow... [Read more](#)

Karl Friedrich Schinkel, history and poetry



The Kulturforum Museum in Berlin is putting on a major exhibition devoted to the gifted artist Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841). Under the title "Karl Friedrich Schinkel, history and poetry" visitors discover 300 works by this artist who was not only an architect, but also a painter, draughtsman and set designer. The exhibition is open until 6th January 2013... [Read more](#)

"Werkbundsiedlung Vienna 1932 - A demonstration of a new habitat



In 1932 the "Werkbundsiedlung", an international exhibition, devoted to the construction of a modern habitat, was created in Vienna. The Wien Museum is devoting an exhibition to it on the occasion of this anniversary. Four houses (three by Gerrit Rietveld, one by Josef Hoffmann) have been renovated for the exhibition. By 2016, 44 other buildings will be renovated to their original state. The exhibition is open until 13th January 2013... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



17th September
Nicosia
Informal Energy Ministers' Meeting



18th and 19th September
Brussels
EU/South Africa Summit



19th September
First EU-Korea forum organised by the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Korea Foundation and the Yonsei University



19th and 20th September
Brussels
Justice-Internal Affairs Council



20th September
Brussels
EU/China Summit



24th September
General Affairs Council



24th and 25th September
Brussels
Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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