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The Letter in PDF format

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The Letter team wishes you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It thanks you for your loyalty and invites you back for its New Year's edition on 12th January 2015.

Lithuania's entry into the euro zone and its impact on the European Central Bank

Author: Sébastien Richard



Since joining the European Union in 2004 Lithuania's main goal was to integrate the Economic and Monetary Union, and this will be happening on 1st January 2015, thereby making it the euro zone's 19th member. This event will be the recompense for the effort made by the country to check the economic and financial crisis and to reform without ever losing sight of its prospects of joining the euro. It will reinforce the European strategy of a country that in part is dependent on the economy of Russia and which is suffering directly the consequences of its support to member countries of the Eastern Partnership and the sanctions policy against Russia. At the same time the new governance method implemented by the European

Central Bank, which was decided in 2003 but whose introduction was postponed until 2009, is now entering into force.

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Front page! :

Europe - and now recovery?



Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Foundation published an editorial on his website on the new institutions, policies and the new strategic context. Will 2015 be the year for Europe's recovery?.. [Read more](#)

Elections :

Greek MPs fail to elect their head of State in the first round



Greek MPs failed on 17th December to elect a new President of the Republic in the first round of voting. A 2/3 majority of 300 MPs was required ie 200 votes to elect Stavros Dimas, former European Commissioner whom the coalition government had put forward as their candidate for the honorary post of President of the Republic. In all 295 MPs of the 300 voted and only 160 stood up when their name was called to pronounce Mr Dimas's name. The other 135 answered "present" when called as required by the Greek procedure. A second round will be organised on 23rd December in the same conditions with the same majority requirement. If the president is not elected a third round will take place on 29th December when the threshold is lowered to 180 votes, otherwise a snap election will be organised by February... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Conclusions of the European Council: investment plan and Ukraine/Russia



On 18th December, the 28 EU leaders focused on Europe's two most important challenges: boosting investment and the situation at its eastern borders. On the first issue, they looked at ways of improving the investment environment in Europe and said that this improvement was needed to reinforce structural reforms and fiscal consolidation carried out by Member States. They backed the creation of the European Fund for Strategic Investment, a €315 billion scheme unveiled by the European Commission in November. They asked for the fund to be up and running by June so that the first investment projects can be rolled out in mid-2015. They also came out in favour of creating an advisory 'hub' that would offer investors and public authorities guidance on investment projects. They called for quick action to improve 'the regulatory environment for investment'. On the second issue, they welcomed the new Ukrainian government and encouraged it to carry out much-needed political and economic reforms. They also discussed financial support to Ukraine's economy. They shared their views on Russia's policy towards its neighbours and how the EU should respond to it. They also welcomed the strengthening of the sanctions on investment, services and trade with Crimea and Sebastopol... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The European Commission's Work Programme 2015



On 16th December the European Commission adopted its work programme for 2015, defining actions that it intends to take over the next twelve months. The work programme includes 23 new initiatives in line with the political guidelines of the Juncker Commission put forward to the European Parliament. It plans to amend or withdraw 80 existing proposals for either political or technical reasons. Amongst the action to be taken over the coming year Jean-Claude Juncker emphasised six main priorities which are the introduction of an investment plan for Europe (315 billion €), the adoption of ambitious measures on the single digital market, the introduction of the first measures in view of creating an Energy Union, the drafting of a fairer approach to taxation to counter fraud and the enhancement of transparency, the adoption of a European migration programme and the deepening of Monetary Union. As stressed by the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and his Vice-President Frans Timmermans to the European Parliament, this work programme is guided by the principle of "political discontinuity" which means the Commission's commitment to legislate better, notably by reducing red tape and by doing away with the regulatory burden that weighs on investment in Europe... [Read more](#)

New rules to improve road traffic information service



On 18th December the European Commission adopted new rules to facilitate information on road traffic for users. They plan to improve access to and the updating of road traffic information (Real Time Traffic Information). This includes information about expected delays, estimated journey times, information on accidents, road-works and road closures, weather warnings and other pertinent information... [Read more](#)

Lafarge-Holcim Merger



On 15th December the European Commission gave the greenlight for the merger between the French cement company Lafarge and its Swiss competitor Holcim, which gave birth to the world's leader in the sector announced Margrethe Vestager, the Commissioner responsible for the project. "Competition is also important in the cement sector. The acquisition of Lafarge by Holcim is subject to certain conditions. "It is good news for

growth," indicated Ms Vestager... [Read more](#)

Edmund Stoiber, appointed Special Adviser for Better Regulation



On 18th December the President of the European Commission J-C Juncker appointed Edmund Stoiber, former Minister-President of Bavaria as Special Adviser for Better Regulation. As for the first Vice-President Frans Timmermans he announced the reform of the Impact Assessment Board which will become a Regulatory Scrutiny Board. This board will help provide advice regarding the means to reduce red tape and to lighten the administrative burden on SMEs in order to stimulate employment, growth and investment in the EU... [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

The European Parliament ratifies the EU/Georgia Association Agreement



On 18th December the European Parliament ratified the association agreement between the European Union and Georgia which includes a free trade agreement, 490 votes in support, 76 against and 57 abstentions. This agreement is the "result of our determination to promote a democratic, stable, prosperous country in a region that is strategically important to us," declared European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, on behalf of the Commission. However he insisted on the road that remained if Georgia was to complete the rule of law and democracy. "Although much work remains to be done, experience shows that Georgians prefer to solve their problems, not to avoid them. I think that Europe should now show its real solidarity with Georgia and its people", he added... [Read more](#)

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Emily O'Reilly, re-elected as European Ombudsman by the European Parliament



On 16th December during plenary MEPs re-elected European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly to her post 569 votes in support, 66 against and 43 abstentions. She was the only candidate running for the post. Elected on 3rd July 2013 she undertakes investigations into any cases of poor administration in the EU's institutions and organisations... [Read more](#)

Appointment of the members of the Single Resolution Board (SRB)



On 16th December the European Parliament approved the appointment of the members of the Single Resolution Board, an independent body responsible for managing the resolution of failing banks in the euro zone, 522 votes in support, 105 against and 67 abstentions. The candidates selected are Elke König (DE) as Chair, Timo Löytyniemi (FIN) as Vice Chair as well as Mauro Grande (IT), Antonio Carrascosa (ES), Joanne Kellermann (NL) and Dominique Laboureix (FR). The Council approved this proposal on 19th December. These appointments which will become effective as of 1st January 2015 comprise a first term of three years - renewable once for the Chair. The other members' mandates extend for a five non-renewable term. The single resolution mechanism will come into force as of 1st January 2016... [Read more](#)

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MEPs approve the EU's 2015 budget



On 17th December MEPs approved the EU's draft budget for 2015 with 145.32 billion euros in commitments and 141.21 billion in payments. It also approved the balancing of the 2014 budget ie 4.25 billion euro to settle the most urgent unpaid bills. Jean Arthuis, Chairman of the European Parliament's Budgets Committee is not satisfied with the negotiations and states "at a time when the Commission is launching its future investment plan of 315 billion €, our budgetary practices must be challenged..." [Read more](#)

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Council :

European Agreement to limit card payment fees



A political agreement was found between the three European institutions regarding a cap on the fees banks can apply on card payments, which could be beneficial to consumers. Negotiators from the Commission, European Parliament and the Council who represent the States came to agreement on 18th December on a compromise that will enable the implementation of a single cap in the EU on the fees paid by a

trader's bank to the bank that issues the credit card payment. The fee will be capped at 0.3% of the value of the transaction on credit card payments, and after a transitory period of five years, this fee will decrease to 0.2% or 5 euro cents on payments made with debit cards... [Read more](#)

Agreement on fishing opportunities



On 15th December the 28 European Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers came to an agreement on fishing opportunities in 2015. This agreement matches a first "successful test" for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reformed in 2013 in order to counter the over use of fishing resources. They also adopted several conclusions on the initiatives submitted by the Italian presidency in support of "young farmers"; ie a loan access plan supported by the EIB for young people who want to start or who have recently started a business, zero-rate mortgage loans and exchange of experience between young European farmers via an exchange programme. Given the recent downturn in the conditions on the dairy market ministers focused on the main challenges encountered in this sector, particularly the importance of price volatility and the tools to be implemented to attenuate this, the role of the European Milk Market Observatory 'EMMO' and the impact of the end of milk quotas next year were also discussed. Finally they adopted an overall policy approach on organic farming prepared by the Italian Presidency and "took note" of the progress achieved in the second half of the 2014 regarding a certain number of legislative proposals (plant health, fruit at school,...).. [Read more](#)

Agreement on the reduction of plastic bags



On 18th December the 28 Environment Ministers came to an agreement on the regulation setting the new European rules for the monitoring, reporting and verification of CO2 emissions from ships. They came to agreement on a draft directive that aims to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic bags, thereby finalising the agreement achieved previously between the other EU institutions. They adopted a general approach to a draft directive on limiting the emissions of certain pollutants into the air by medium combustion plants. They stressed the importance of continuing work on the "circular economy" package and the limiting of waste in particular. They maintained that the transition towards a circular economy was "vital for growth and employment" recalling the "need" to continue all elements of work on "the clean air package". Finally they confirmed a political agreement on the ratification of the Doha amendment package which will enable the technical implementation ie the launch of the second series of commitments of the Kyoto Protocol... [Read more](#)

Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Agreement



On 16th December the 28 European Affairs Ministers adopted conclusions on the overall enlargement, stabilisation and association process. They condemned the arrests of journalists in Turkey which is against one of the EU's "fundamental values" ie freedom of the press. They also adopted conclusions on the respect of the rule of law, the establishment of political dialogue between Member States to "promote and protect the rule of law within the EU". These conclusions complete the infringement procedure that provides for the suspension of voting rights in the event of any serious and continuous infringement of the EU's values (article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty). Finally they discussed the Commission's 2015 work programme. They approved the conclusions on the multi-annual programming and the legislative programme in view of enhancing inter-institutional cooperation and of ensuring a quicker more effective legislative process... [Read more](#)

Appointment of the Chairman of the EU's Military Committee and the EUMM Mission in Georgia



On 15th December the Council appointed General Mikhail Kostarakos as the next Chairman of the EU's Military Committee. The Chairman leads the works of the EU's Military Committee, the highest military body within the Council of the EU. He is also military adviser to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the main point of contact for the commanders of EU military missions and operations. General Mikhail Kostarakos, at present Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, will take office as of 6th November 2015 for a three-year period. He will taking over from Patrick de Rousiers in office since 6th November 2012. Moreover Kęstutis Jankauskas was appointed as head of the EU's observation mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia)... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Crimea and Sebastopol: the European Union steps up sanctions



The Council of the European Union approved further "major" sanctions against investments, services and trade with Crimea and Sebastopol with the aim of re-asserting the EU's non-acknowledgement of their illegal annexation by Russia. This decision follows the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of 17th November 2014. As of 20th December 2014 investments in Crimea and Sebastopol are prohibited. In real terms Europeans and businesses established in the EU can no longer purchase real estate or entities in Crimea, finance businesses in Crimea or provide associated services there. These sanctions also prohibit the export of certain goods and technologies to businesses in Crimea or in view of use there. Finally the EU's tour operators will no longer be able to provide their services in Crimea or Sebastopol... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

The European Court of Justice against the EU's membership of the European Convention for Human Rights



On 18th December the European Court of Justice declared that it was against the EU's membership of the European Convention for Human Rights. The 28 Members of the EU are members of the Council of Europe which brings together 47 countries and therefore belong individually to the European Convention for Human Rights (ECHR), which enables any citizen to refer to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The EU is not a member in its own right. But membership is provided for in the Lisbon Treaty of 2009. An agreement was reached in April 2013 between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The Commission then addressed the Court of Justice in Luxembourg seeking its opinion of the compatibility of the draft agreement with Union law. The Court notably observes that "no measure in the draft agreement provides for the guarantee of "coordination" between the ECHR and the European Charter for Fundamental Rights... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

The European Defence Agency publishes a book for its 10th anniversary



On the occasion of its 10th anniversary the European Defence Agency (EDA) has published a book in partnership with the European College for Security and Defence (ECSD) which reviews the agency's history since its creation in 2004, its main successes as well as independent points of view of government leaders, military staff and some key industrialists. It is the result of "several of months of archive research", of interviews with key actors from the Agency and external contributors and high level experts in European defence", stressed Claude-France Arnould, the Director of the EDA when the book was presented on 17th December... [Read more](#)

The EU provides support of 485 million € to 328 new researchers



The European Research Council (ERC) chose 328 'leading' early-career scientists to receive start-up subsidies to a total of 2 million € each. These subsidies totalling 485 million € will help towards supporting a new generation of high level scientists in Europe, by developing what might be called "blue sky research", in other words, ambitious, high risk projects and/or high gain research projects in any area. The ERC published the list of the selected researchers on 15th December... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Adoption of balanced 2015 budget



On 19th December for the first time since 1969 Germany adopted a balanced budget, i.e. without any further loans or debts in 2015. This will cover the entire period up to 2018, which is an historical success. The Bundesrat, the upper chamber of Parliament gave its final greenlight on 19th December for the 2015 budget after the Bundestag did so on 28th November. It is "a sustainable, reliable, foreseeable policy from a budgetary point of view which will keep its promise of being a strong base for confidence. Confidence is a major asset for sustainable and stable economic development" recalled German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble... [Read more](#)

Austria :

Austrian growth forecasts down



On 18th December the Austrian economic institute WIFO decreased the country's 2015 growth forecasts to 0.5% due to the present state of the world economy and of the euro zone. In its previous estimate in September WIFO was still counting on growth of 1.2% in 2015. At the same time the institution decreased its growth forecast for 2014 to 0.4% after 0.8% in September and 1.7% at the beginning of the year... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

Re-organisation of the Belgian diplomatic network



On 19th December the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Didier Reynders published a list of several Belgian diplomatic and consular posts, mainly in Europe that are to be closed or re-organised. In Europe embassy closures are to occur in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Bratislava, Ljubljana and Nicosia; this will also affect the Consulates General in Cologne, Lille, Strasbourg and Geneva. In Africa the embassy in Tripoli and Brazzaville as well as the Consulates General in Casablanca and Johannesburg are involved. In America the Consulate in Toronto will close at the end of December; the cooperation offices in Quito and La Paz will follow in 2015. Finally as announced mid-November, the Embassy in Kabul will also prepare the end of its work in January 2015... [Read more](#)

Bulgaria :

Meeting between Angela Merkel and Boyko Borissov



On 15th December German Chancellor Angela Merkel received Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov in Berlin. The latter promised his support on energy supply issues in the EU/Russia conflict. Ms Merkel announced that Germany was to provide greater support to Bulgaria, which is experiencing a difficult economic situation at present. They also discussed Bulgaria's request to enter Schengen which will be studied during the European Council in March. Finally the German Chancellor recalled that immigration was a major issue and that Islamophobia had no place in the EU after the demonstrations organised by the anti-Islamic movements of PEGIDA... [Read more](#)

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Draft judicial reform in Bulgaria



The Bulgarian government presented a draft judicial reform on 17th December that has been demanded for a long time by the European Union. Bulgaria's judicial system has been accused by the latter of being slow, inefficient and often corrupt. The project notably plans for the chance attribution of cases, in order to limit judicial clientelism. Moreover the general prosecutor and the leaders of the highest courts in the country, the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Supreme Administrative Court, might be revoked in the event of serious infringements. In addition to this, in line with a recommendation made by Brussels, all of the country's magistrates will be able to take part in the election of 11 of the 25 members of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), the body responsible for appointments. Only a college of magistrates has had the right to vote to date. Finally the SJC will be divided into two colleges - one for the prosecutors and the other for the judges so that the independence of the magistrates can be increased... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Employment plan in Spain



On 19th December the Spanish Council of Ministers approved a royal decree to regulate the Special Programme to Boost Employment which follows the promise signed by the President of the Government and the social partners on 15th December. This policy is based on the "Contract of Proposals for Tripartite Negotiations in view of Strengthening Economic Growth and Employment," of 29th July. The main aim of the scheme is to help the long-term unemployed with family responsibilities to find a job. The beneficiaries will receive aid of 426 euros for six months if they meet certain requirements. The government also approved greater tax breaks for the Canary Islands designed to boost their development and job creation... [Read more](#)

France :

French Parliament adopts the draft 2015 budget



On 18th December French MPs adopted the draft amended finance bill 2014 as well as the 2015 budget. This bill notably provides that the government deficit will be brought down to 4.4% of the GDP in 2014 and 4.1% next year. It also plans for a growth rate of 1%, 7.7 billion euros in savings in State spending and 3.7 billion savings in local community expenditure... [Read more](#)

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Greece :

Moving towards an institutional compromise?



On 21st December Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras presented a political compromise solution to end the crisis that would lead to a snap election within a month. He has called for a consensus over Stavros Dimas as the President and is promising that the presidential election will be followed by the formation of an extended government to include all pro-European parties. He admits that general elections might possibly be held by the end of 2015, ie before June 2016 and the official end of his government's four year mandate... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Will the Italian President Giorgio Napolitano resign?



The President of the Italian Council Matteo Renzi announced on 19th December that he wanted the next President of the Italian Republic to rally support beyond political affiliations. The Italian President Giorgio Napolitano indeed suggested on 16th December that his mission would be coming to an end with the completion of the presidency of the Council of the European Union. One year and eight months after his re-election - since there was no consensus candidate over his succession - the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, 89, qualified the conclusion of his mandate at the Quirinal as "imminent". Visibly tired, he is due to hand in his resignation on 14th January, the day after the official closure of the Italian Semester of the rotating Presidency of the European Union... [Read more](#)

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Romania :

Klaus Johannis, new Romanian president, enters office



Klaus Johannis, the first head of the Romanian State to come from the German minority exhorted the entire political class to work together towards eradicating corruption which is undermining the country, one of the poorest in the EU. "There is no other path possible for Romania", which must become a country "that is rid of all corruption", he said in a speech to the Parliament after having officially taken office as President. This has to be understood "clearly by all of the political class," he warned. "Romania is changing," deemed the 55 year-old former Mayor of Sibiu (Transylvania). He added that corruption would no longer "on the public agenda" when his term in office comes to an end in five years' time... [Read more](#)

UK :

The EU Court of Justice sanctions Britain for impeding the free circulation of citizens



The European Court of Justice reminded the UK on 18th December of the respect of the rules of free circulation deeming that it could not demand a visa from a third country citizen who held a resident permit for another country in the EU. The free movement of people is one of the bones of contention between London and Brussels at present, since the British government maintains that it is determined to impede the influx of immigrants from the EU to the UK. The Court of Justice upheld the case of a Colombian citizen who lives in Spain with her husband who has dual British and Irish nationality, who holds a "resident permit for members of the family of a Union citizen" delivered by the Spanish authorities. The Directive on the Free Movement of the EU's Citizens does not allow measures that impede - by pursuing an overall prevention goal - members of the family from entering the territory of a Member State without a visa," estimates the Court. The Member States can only adopt measures that "aim to reject, cancel, or withdraw a right that is conferred by the directive "after having assessed each individual case.".. [Read more](#)

Transatlantic Trade



The CBI, the British business owners syndicate, stressed during an event in Brussels on 18th December that brought together seven prime Ministers - David Cameron, Matteo Renzi, Mariano Rajoy, Ewa Kopacz, Laimdota Straujuma, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and Alexander Stubb that there is a consensus in the business world about supporting negotiations in the transatlantic partnership agreement. The organisation recalled that this project would be beneficial to SMEs, reduce the administrative burden and be a source of growth and employment... [Read more](#)

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Montenegro :

Montenegro progresses on the path to Europe



On 16th December during the fifth meeting of the association council between the European Union and Montenegro it was decided that four new membership negotiation chapters would be opened: statistics, consumer protection, customs union, financial and budgetary measures. This brings the number of chapters opened for Montenegro to 16 (out of 35)... [Read more](#)

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Serbia :

Construction of a new railway line between Serbia and Hungary and inauguration of the Pupin Bridge



Following the Belgrade Summit of 17th December bringing together China and 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, an agreement was signed between the Chinese, Serb and Hungarian governments on the construction of a 370km railway line between Belgrade and Budapest. The project will be financed by China and construction will start mid-2015. This agreement comes after the recent inauguration of the Pupin Bridge linking Zemun and Borča, built by Serbia and China... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Ukraine no longer wants to be "non-aligned"



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko submitted a bill to Parliament on 18th December asking for the cancellation of the country's non-aligned status, a category given to a country, like Switzerland, which refuses to join in any type of military alliance or to become actively involved in armed conflict. The Ukraine became "non-aligned" in 2010 under pressure from Moscow. This bill - if approved - should enable Kiev to join NATO in the future in order to guarantee its security in the face of the threat posed by Russia... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Drop in inflation rate in the euro zone and the EU



Euro area annual inflation was 0.3% in November 2014, down from 0.4% in October. A year earlier the rate was 0.9%. European Union annual inflation was 0.4% in November 2014, down from 0.5% in October. A year earlier the rate was 1.0%. In November 2014, negative annual rates were observed in Bulgaria (-1.9%), Greece (-1.2%), Spain (-0.5%) and Poland (-0.3%). The highest annual rates were recorded in Romania and Austria (both 1.5%) and Finland (1.1%). These figures were published by Eurostat on 17th December... [Read more](#)

Surplus in euro zone and EU goods trade



In October 2014 the euro zone recorded a surplus of 24 billion € in its international goods trade with the rest of the world, against +16.5 billion in October 2013. The balance recorded in September 2014 lay at 18.1 billion €, against +10.9 billion in September 2013. In October 2014 in comparison with September 2014, exports adjusted to seasonal variations decreased by 0.3% and imports also by 1.3%. The balance of extra-EU goods trade in October 2014 indicates a surplus of 7.6 billion €, against +4.1 billion in October 2013. These estimates were published by Eurostat on 16th December... [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Citizens confidence in the EU is improving



The results of the most recent Eurobarometer survey of autumn 2014 were published on 17th December by the European Commission. They show an overall improvement in the main political indicators since the number of Europeans maintaining that they had a positive image of the EU has increased, rising from 35% in June to 39% in November whilst 37% of those interviewed had a neutral image and 22% a negative one (in comparison with 25% in June). The number of Europeans who say that they trust the European Union has also risen to total 37% (+ 6 percentage points in comparison with June 2014). In the economic area citizens' expectations remain stable, with over one in five (22 %, - 1 point) saying they are optimistic about the next twelve months and 45% who are expecting no change in the situation. Positive opinions about the euro are stable (56 % in the EU, 67 % in the euro zone). EU citizens worry most about the economy and immigration. The survey also shows greater acceptance of the priority themes set by the Juncker Commission. Finally 56 % (stable figure) of Europeans say they are optimistic about the future of the European Union whilst 37 % (-1 point) say they are pessimistic... [Read more](#)

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Studies/Reports :

ECB monthly report



In December 2014 the ECB published its last Monthly Bulletin. This publication will be replaced by a new Economic Bulletin. Given the changes made to the time lapse between two monetary policy meetings with the Council of Governors, brought up to six weeks as of January 2015, the new Economic Bulletin will be published two weeks after each of these meetings... [Read more](#)

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Culture :

Launch of Confluence Museum in Lyon



The Confluence Museum opened its doors on 20th December in Lyon. The museum's collections that have been put together since the 17th century comprise a wealth of curiosities from academics and passionate amateurs and have been added to over time. More than two million objects are part of the permanent and temporary exhibitions, the latter being renewed over the cultural seasons at the pace of 4 to 6 exhibitions per year... [Read more](#)

New Year's Concert in Vienna



The New Year's concerts (Philharmonic Orchestra) traditionally take place on 30th and 31st December as well as on January 1st in the Goldener Saal (Golden Hall) of the Musikverein in Vienna. The concert on January 1st usually starts at 11.15pm and is broadcast across the world to an estimated audience of 50 million people in 72 countries... [Read more](#)

New Year's Concert in Berlin



Come and experience a musical New Year in Berlin; several classical music galas are on offer. The festivities start on 30th December and will continue until the first days in the New Year... [Read more](#)

Ida wins the LUX Prize 2014



On 17th December President Schulz announced the winner of the European Parliament's 2014 LUX Prize for cinema at a ceremony in the Chamber. "Ida" is the story of a young women looking for her identity, an emotional individual story superimposed over the painful past of Europe... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



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Lithuania becomes the 19th euro zone member

Latvia is taking over the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for 6 months

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