

"No Member State, big or small, can face the present problems and challenges alone"

Author: Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut



According to Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, Ambassador of Germany to France no Member State, big or small, France and Germany alike can face present problems and challenges alone. We might quote just a few: the climate, notably with the Paris Conference (COP21), at the end of the year or security issues, notably in the Near East and even the refugees most of whom are from the Near East. These external issues are of major importance to us all. In an increasingly cross-border economy the EU and its Member States can but face global competition together. All of these internal and external developments means that for Germany to way to a solution must be opened up by Europe.

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Elections :

Outgoing Prime Minister wins the general elections in Portugal



Forward Portugal, the coalition led by Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho rallying the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the People's Party (PP) easily drew ahead in the general elections that took place on 4th October in Portugal. The two parties won 36.83% of the vote and 99 seats (-9). The Socialist Party (PS) won 32.38% of the vote and 85 seats (+11). The Left Bloc (BE) won 10.22% and 19 seats (+11). It came out ahead of the

United Democratic Coalition (CDU) an alliance of the Communist Party (PCP) and the Ecologist-Green Party (PEV) which won 87.27% of the vote and 17 seats (+1). Turnout totalled 55.23%. The outgoing right-wing coalition won the ballot but did not win an absolute majority in Parliament. It now seems that there will be a minority right-wing government... [Read more](#)

Migration :

1.7 billion € for the refugee crisis



On 30th September the European Commission published a first round of real proposals corresponding to a package of 1.7 billion € that the EU will spend in 2015 and 2016 in response to the refugee crisis. This package will enable the provision of emergency aid to the most affected Member States, support staff increases amongst the EU agencies which are involved first and foremost, and to provide assistance and humanitarian aid to third countries... [Read more](#)

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Frontex wants 775 additional border guards



On 6th October the European border monitoring agency, Frontex, called on the 28 Member States of the European Union to provide 775 more border guards to "manage migratory pressure". "The new border guards are to strengthen the teams in Greece and Sicily responsible for registering new arrivals but some of them will be posted on the EU's land borders"... [Read more](#)

Nearly 535,000 refugees crossed the Mediterranean in 2015



According to figures published on 5th October by the UN's High Commission for Refugees (HCR) nearly 535,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe passing via the Mediterranean in 2015 and around 3000 died or are reported missing. Of the half a million new arrivals nearly 400,000 travelled to Greece, and some 131,000 via Italy. 55% of them were Syrians; 14% Afghans. 69% were men and 13% women - 18% were children... [Read more](#)

A comprehensive, humanitarian and political response to the migration crisis



On 29th September the Council of Europe held a debate on "A comprehensive, humanitarian and political response to the migration crisis" that was inaugurated by Pedro Agramunt (Spain, EPP/DC). In his speech he declared that the crisis was not just a European problem but that a world effort was required. Laura Boldrini, the leader of the Italian Chamber of Deputies also spoke during the debate and explained that no State could rise to the migratory crisis alone. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, drew attention to the situation in 1956 when 200,000 migrants travelled to Austria and that migrants had been managed in numbers. "Europe was much poorer at the time and much less organised. But we did it. Why are we incapable of facing the same problem today?" he added... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Presentation of further budgetary measures to Parliament



On 5th October the government unveiled its draft 2016 budget including further cuts to pensions, a reform of income tax and a tightening up of the taxation of farmers. In exchange international aid of 86 billion € will be given to Greece. The government has committed to adopt 48 structural reform measures before mid-October to secure the rescue plan signed in July with the country's creditors. The draft budget will be studied over the next three days and will be subject to vote in Parliament on 7th October... [Read more](#)

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INSEE reduces its growth forecast for France in 2015



In its economic bulletin published on 1st October INSEE (the French statistics institute) indicated that it was no longer forecasting growth of 1.2% this year but 1.1%. There has been no miracle and INSEE has not revised its second quarter statistics upwards. Between April and June activity stagnated in France... [Read more](#)

Euro zone: net improvement in confidence in September



Economic sentiment clearly improved in September in the euro zone reaching its highest level in over four years in some sectors the European Commission indicated on 29th September. The Economic Sentiment Index lay at 105.6 points ie 1.5 points more than in the previous month. In Italy confidence improved the most (+3.4 in one month), followed by Germany (+1.9 points), Netherlands (+1.2 point) and to a lesser

degree France (+0.9 points). It declined by 0.9 points in Spain... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Action plan for the capital markets union



On 30th September the Commission launched its action plan for the capital markets union to create a truly single capital market covering the 28 Member States of the EU in order to boost the financing of businesses and investments. The plan is based on four main principles: to extend the possibilities open to investors, to put capital at the service of the real economy, to foster the introduction of a stronger more resilient financial system, to deepen financial integration and to intensify competition. A first round of measures - the most urgent of which provided for in the plan such as reviving quality securitization markets, were also published... [Read more](#)

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The Commission publishes its report on tax reform in the Member States



On 28th September the Commission published its report on the tax reforms undertaken by the Member States. According to the latter the Member States have made progress in terms of improving their tax systems but they have to continue work towards this... [Read more](#)

Interim assessment of the biodiversity strategy



On 2nd October 2015 the European Commission published its interim assessment of the EU's strategy in support of biodiversity. The results published note "progress in many areas but they highlight the fact that Member States must step up their work to respect their implementation commitments." In a Eurobarometer survey published on the same day most Europeans say they are "concerned about the effects of biodiversity losses " and are "aware of the negative impact that this will have on human health and human well-being and at the end of the day on our long term economic development.".. [Read more](#)

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Cybersecurity Month



On 29th September the European Commission launched the European Cybersecurity Month. This campaign is taking place in 25 countries and aims to promote cybersecurity with around one hundred events and activities. On this occasion the Chairman of the Single Digital Market Andrus Ansip recalled that "confidence and security are key components to the single digital market." European institutions are also protecting themselves from cyber threats and will soon launch an anti-cyber-attack team"... [Read more](#)

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Jean-Claude Juncker in Paris



On 29th September the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker travelled to Paris. Firstly he attended the 13th European Trade Union Congress together with Commissioner Marianne Thyssen and French President François Hollande. On this occasion JC Juncker spoke of the need for joint action combining the European institutions, national governments, and social partners to stimulate the creation of jobs and growth. He also emphasised the importance of the social dimension in the revival of Europe's economy... [Read more](#)

Council :

Conclusions of the Eurogroup meeting



On 5th October the Eurogroup Ministers met in Luxembourg. During the meeting they backed the first phases that Greece must complete in order to benefit from a disbursement of €2 billion and encouraged Greece to approve a second series of steps put forward by the institutions. At the same time Eurogroup agreed that more work had to be done to stimulate competition in the services sector and that the States had to use the spin-off created by low interest rates on government debt for fiscal consolidation, investment and structural reform... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council



On 1st October 2015 the European Ministers responsible for Competitiveness approved the WTO's protocol establishing an Agreement to Facilitate Trade. This agreement aims to simplify and modernise procedures for the movement of goods, to help SMEs to take advantage of export opportunities, and to help developing countries take part more easily in international trade. They also announced the end of roaming fees by 2017 and indicated that the free trade agreement with Korea that entered into force in 2011 was finally settled... [Read more](#)

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Conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Council



On 5th October the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Council met in Luxembourg. The ministers discussed how to deepen the social dimension of European governance and the Commission's recommendations on how to integrate the long term unemployed into the labour market. Finally the Council backed the conclusions put forward in the Commission's "2015 Report on pension adequacy", as well as a new agenda for health and safety at work; they also supported the negotiation position on regulation issues ensuring that medical appliances and in vitro diagnosis appliances are safe and of high quality... [Read more](#)

The naval operation against smugglers in the Mediterranean named "Sophia"



On 28th September the EU named the naval operation to counter criminal migrant smugglers' networks in the Mediterranean (EU Navfor Med), Sophia, after a baby girl born after the rescue of a sinking vessel. To date the operation, which was restricted to monitoring these networks at a distance, as they operate off the Libyan coast, will move into a more offensive phase as of 7th October said the Council. From this date on "instead of simply gathering information, we shall be able to stop the smugglers' boats, search and seize them," explained the head of European diplomacy, Federica Mogherini, during a visit of the EU Navfor Med HQ in Rome... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Quartet declaration on the Near East



On 30th September UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister, Serguey Lavrov, American Secretary of State, John Kerry and the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini met in New York. After the meeting the Quartet confirmed its "commitment to succeed in terms of creating two States that match the security requirements of Israel and Palestinian aspirations for a State and sovereignty, to bring occupation that started in 1967 to an end and to settle all permanent status issues in order to bring the conflict to an end." It also condemned the violence perpetrated against civilians and encouraged both sides to rebuild confidence and to avoid an escalation in the violence... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Trip by Angela Merkel to India



German Chancellor Angela Merkel started a 48 hour trip to India on 5th October with the aim of boosting German businesses established there in line with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's project to attract foreign investors. The visit will focus in particular on the strengthening of ties between the two countries in the areas of defence, renewable energies and high technologies. Germany is India's main trade partner in Europe and the two leaders hope to strengthen trade between the two countries... [Read more](#)

Celebration of the 25th anniversary of reunification



On 3rd October the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker took part in the official celebrations in Frankfurt-am-Main marking the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Germany. At the end of the morning President Juncker attended the main event at the old Opera House of Frankfurt alongside heads of State and government, including Chancellor Angela Merkel and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Joachim Gauck. At a press conference the government also responded to questions about the reunification, the countries future as well as regarding refugees and political asylum... [Read more](#)

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Germany 25 years after reunification



The German Statistics Office, Destatis, published a study on 29th September on the changes that have occurred in Germany since reunification whose 25th anniversary was celebrated on 3rd October. The report analyses the main developments in the population, the labour market, the economy and housing. Whilst the Länder in the East represented 14.5 million inhabitants, 18% of the German population in 1991, around 12.5 million ie 15% live there now. The labour market has been marked by periods of high unemployment as well as by radical reform which has led to extremely low unemployment rates. Moreover the building programme "Aufbau Ost" led to an unprecedented increase in the building of housing in the years that followed reunification... [Read more](#)

Croatia :

Croatian Prime Minister Miran Milanovic visits the UK



On 1st October British Prime Minister David Cameron met his Croatian counterpart Miran Milanovic in London. He said he supported the renegotiation of the ties linking the UK and the EU. The success of this negotiation is vital to avoid a Brexit he recalled. Miran Milanovic said he understood the UK's reasons on this issue but said that Croatia wanted the UK to stay in the EU. Regarding the migratory crisis the Croatian leader congratulated the work undertaken by the UK to receive refugees. They agreed on the need to settle the migratory issue at its source. Finally the two leaders said they wanted to strengthen their bilateral relations notably via trade, investment and defence cooperation... [Read more](#)

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France :

France's 2016 budget



On 30th September French Finance Minister Michel Sapin unveiled France's 2016 budget. The latter is supposed to bring the government deficit down to 3.3% in 2016 against 3.8% in 2015. Savings total 15 billion € and are shared between the State (5.1 billion), local communities (3.5 billion), social budgets (7.4 billion, of which 3.4 billion from social security). The savings notably reflect a slight refocusing of housing aid, the freezing social benefits and payments involving some State water companies and the financing of transport infrastructures. Income tax reductions will cost 2.1 billion € and will enable 500,000 households to fall outside of the taxable category or at least not to enter it... [Read more](#)

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Successful launch of two satellites by Ariane 5



The Ariane 5 rocket successfully launched two telecommunications satellites from the Kourou launch-pad in French Guiana on 30th September - these were Sky Muster for the Australian operator NBN and ARSAT-2 for the Argentinian ARSAT. This was the 68th successful operation for the European launcher Ariane 5... [Read more](#)

Greece :

Nikos Voutsis, elected leader of the Vouli (Parliament)



On 4th October the Greek Parliament elected Nikos Voutsis, former Home Affairs Minister, as its new leader. He took over from Zoe Constantopoulou who left SYRIZA in opposition to the signature of the third rescue plan. Parliament returned to session on 5th October with the draft 2016 budget that will be laid out in detail by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Presentation of Poland's 2016 budget



On 29th September the Polish government presented the 2016 budget. As planned revenues will total 296.8 billion zlotys (70 billion euro), spending 351.4 billion zlotys (82.8 billion euro) and the deficit will not rise beyond 54.6 billion zlotys (12.8 billion euro)... [Read more](#)

UK :

Lack of qualified labour worsens in the UK



The lack of qualified labour has worsened in the UK for the fourth year running said an annual survey undertaken by the recruitment agency Hays and the consultancy Oxford Economics, published on 28th September. The UK is ranked amongst one of the worst countries from this point of view in Europe. The problem weighs on productivity, a recurrent weakness in the British economy, concludes the 2015 survey. Alistair Cox, the General Manager of Hays notes that "the UK's growth perspectives are better now than they have been for a long time but employers are finding it increasingly difficult to find the skills they need." British employers are sometimes involved in a "skills war" in certain areas like engineering and technology, which increases pressure on salaries states the report... [Read more](#)

Turkey :

G20 Ministerial Energy Meeting



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On 2nd October the G20 Energy Ministers met in Istanbul together with the Turkish President Recep Erdogan. During their meeting they supported energy access for all but were more discreet about the subsidies granted to fossil fuels or work in support of the climate...

Meeting between President Donald Tusk and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan



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On 5th October the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk hosted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in Brussels. During this meeting, with the aim of settling the refugee crisis, the Presidents discussed financial assistance, border management, the fight to counter smugglers, integration policies, visa liberalisation, as well as the introduction of a possible buffer zone in Syria. Donald Tusk also asked Turkey to take action to limit the number of refugees passing via Turkey to the EU. Finally they discussed the urgent need to find a solution to the conflict in Syria and agreed that Russia, which is allied to Assad, should not be allowed to bombard legitimate opposition forces... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Hollande, Putin, Merkel and Poroshenko in Paris to discuss peace



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Russian and Ukrainian Presidents Vladimir Putin and Petro Poroshenko met on 2nd October at the Elysée with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande in the "Normandy Format" to address the Ukrainian crisis and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The four leaders came to agreement over the next steps in the process. Firstly elections that the pro-Russian separatists had unilaterally decided to organise on 18th October in the areas under its control "could not be held" said Mr Hollande. According to the French President an electoral law had to be laid out together with the rebels and then approved in the Ukrainian parliament so that the elections could not be "challenged." The four leaders also adopted a measure to achieve the withdrawal of the armoured vehicles and light arms from the zone of conflict in order to strengthen the ceasefire whose latest version announced on 1st September has almost been respected to the full by the belligerents... [Read more](#)

Economic recovery expected by the end of 2015 in Ukraine



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The World Bank indicated on 5th October that it was expecting economic recovery in Ukraine, at present in deep recession, by the end of this year. It did warn however of the dangers linked to the implementation of the reforms and the situation in the East. In its opinion recovery will start later this year. In 2016 it is forecasting GDP growth of around 1%. However "many threats" are still there, including an excessively slow implementation of reform and a further escalation in the conflict in the East. Future economic forecasts in Ukraine will now depend largely on the authorities and if they continue to implement macro-economic and structural reform. The International Monetary Fund revised forecasts for Ukraine downwards on 3rd October and has said that there will be an 11% contraction of the GDP in 2015. In 2016 it is forecasting growth of 2%... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

[Round up of the human rights situation in Europe](#)



On 28th September the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Anne Brasseur inaugurated the organisation's autumn session in Strasbourg. In her opening speech she assessed progress and challenges in terms of the human rights situation in Europe. She highlighted positive developments, amongst others the launch of the Parliamentary Alliance against hate and the Istanbul Convention to counter violence against women. She also spoke of the challenges, notably the situation in Azerbaijan, where the respect of human rights has worsened over the last few years. As far as the management of the migratory crisis was concerned she advocated a direct, collective, pan-European response... [Read more](#)

Ludmilla Alexeeva, winner of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize



Ludmilla Alexeeva, Russian Human Rights defender has been awarded the 2015 Vaclav Havel Human Rights prize. The ceremony took place in Strasbourg on 28th September on the occasion of the inauguration of the autumn plenary session of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). Ms Alexeeva was one of the founder members of the Moscow Helsinki Group. She returned to Russia in 1989 after 12 years of forced exile in the USA. She became the President of the International Helsinki Foundation and also a member of the Human Rights Committee of the Russian presidency... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

ECHR deems the refusal to pay family allowance to foreign families not discriminatory



On 29th September the seven judges of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) unanimously declared that depriving foreign parents of benefits for their children who have come to France independent of the family reunification procedure was not discriminatory. The final decision was taken following requests made by Congolese families who were fighting in the French courts so that the CAF (the Agency which deals with Family Allowance matters) take into account all of their children in calculating their benefits. According to these families their case was processed differently from that of French families. This difference was acknowledged by the ECHR "as not being exclusively based on nationality, since the complainants had been refused family allowance due to the irregular nature of their children's entry into France, the result of voluntary behaviour that was against the law..." [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Euro zone annual inflation rate down to -0.1%



Inflation fell to -0.1% in September in the euro zone indicated Eurostat on 30th September. Prices declined by 0.1% over a year in September with price decreases of 0.2% in Germany, the region's leading economy, and a fall of 1.2% in Spain. Analysts are counting on price stability in the euro zone... [Read more](#)

Unemployment down to 11% in the euro zone and to 9.5% in the EU



Unemployment remained stable in the euro zone in August at 11% as it did in July, i.e. its lowest level since February 2012 indicated Eurostat on 30th September. In the EU unemployment lay at 9.5% in August 2015, stable in comparison with July 2015 but down in comparison with the August 2014 rate of 10.1%. In August the euro zone had a total of 17.6 million unemployed ie 1000 less than a month previously and 892,000 less than a year ago. A year ago unemployment in the euro zone totalled 11.5%. The lowest unemployment rate amongst the 19 euro zone countries was recorded in Germany (4.5%) and Malta (5.1%), and the highest were in Greece (25.2% in June 2015) and Spain (22.2%)... [Read more](#)

One person in 8 in the EU will be over 80 in 2080



According to a report published on 29th September by Eurostat the share of people aged 80+ amongst the total population is due to more than double, rising from 5% in 2014 to more than 12%, in 2080. The EU is about to face a major challenge, notably in terms of the economic situation and the social inclusion of the elderly. In 2013 18.2% of those over 65 were threatened by poverty or social exclusion in the EU, 13.8% were likely to be exposed to monetary poverty and 6.9% to severe material deprivation... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Conclusion of the 2015 report on the adequacy of retirement pensions



European retirement systems can guarantee adequate pensions for the future generations of pensioners if the Member States resolutely implement policies that enable workers to remain in activity until the legal age of retirement. This is one of the main conclusions of the new report on the adequacy of retirement pensions published on 5th October... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Exhibition Pop Art at the Tate Modern in London



Until 24th January 2016 "The World Goes Pop" exhibition at the Tate Modern aims to relate how the pop art movement came into being in various places around the world including Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe and that it was not just limited to one nation or one group of artists. The exhibition brings together more than 200 major pieces of work from the 1960's and 1970's most of which is on show for the first time in the UK... [Read more](#)

Andy Warhol Exhibition in Paris



The Modern Art Museum of Paris is running a show until 7th February 2016 "Warhol Unlimited". More than 200 of the artist's works are on show including self-portraits, filmed portraits, wall paper, experimental cinema (the famous eight-hour-long film "Empire") not forgetting the spectacular concerts of the Velvet Underground. The exhibition places particular emphasis on the serial side of Warhol's work... [Read more](#)

CAFe Budapest Contemporary Arts Festival



The CAFe Budapest Contemporary Arts Festival is taking place until 18th October in Budapest. It brings contemporary art to the fore offering visitors concerts, fine arts exhibitions, theatre plays and dance and several other shows to illustrate the dynamism of cultural life in Budapest. The shows will take place in the National Theatre of Budapest, the Trafo Art Gallery, as well as in other cultural venues and cafés in the capital... [Read more](#)

Vital Art Nouveau de 1900 Exhibition



The "Vital Art Nouveau of 1900" exhibition is running until 31st December at the Prague Municipal House. It shows Czech and European Art Nouveau of the 19th and 20th centuries. The 400 objects on show include some of the work shown at the Universal Exhibition of 1900 in Paris... [Read more](#)

From Poussin to Monet - Colours of France Exhibition



The exhibition "From Poussin to Monet. The Colours of France" is running from 10th October 2015 to 17th January 2016 At the Bucerus Kunst Forum in Hamburg. The exhibition reveals all of the artistic developments that echo the social upheaval of a time when French painting was a point of reference for the whole of Europe. The path to modernity is illustrated by paintings by Poussin, Delacroix, Courbet, Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Van Gogh, amongst others... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



5th October

Luxembourg
Eurogroup Meeting
Luxembourg
Employment, Social Policy, Healthcare and Consumer Council



5th to 8th October
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



6th October
Luxembourg
Economic and Financial Affairs Council



7th October
Luxembourg
Informal Transport Ministers Meeting



8th October
Luxembourg
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council



8th-9th October
Luxembourg
"Justice and Home Affairs Council"

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