

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

The entire Letter team wishes you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your loyalty and look forward to 11th January 2016 for our next edition.

The impact of China's economic situation on Europe

Author: Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron



The collapse of the Shanghai stock market at the end of August (a downward correction of 37% since 12th June) has brought back to the fore the inherent weaknesses in China's current economic development. The country's decreasing growth to 7% over the first six months of the year (with an annual forecast of 6.7% for 2015 according to the OECD), thereby falling to its lowest level since 2009, is indeed a source of concern with regard to its impact on global growth as well as its short and midterm consequences for

China's main trading partners, primarily the European Union, the United States and Asia. The country's image has changed and every forecast now inevitably points towards a long-term slowdown of the Chinese economy. But what impact and consequences will this all have on Europe?

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Elections :

No party wins the majority in Spain



The People's Party (PP) of outgoing Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy came out ahead in the elections on 20th December in Spain. With 28.72% of the vote it won 123 seats in Parliament and 124 seats in the Senate. It drew ahead of the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), which won 22.01% of the vote and 90 seats in Parliament and 47 Senators. The two main Spanish parties were challenged by Podemos, a far left party, which won 19.03% of the vote and 63 seats and 14 Senators, along with Ciudadanos (C's), a centrist party, which won 13.93% of the vote and 40 seats in Parliament. Turnout totalled 73.2%. Long talks

undoubtedly lie ahead regarding the formation of a new Spanish government. The new Congress of Deputies will hold session on 13th January next... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Publication of the 3rd edition of the Atlas of the European Union



The third edition of the Atlas of the European Union has just been published in paper and digital form. The work presents the Union, its institutions, its 28 Member States, and a novelty - their overseas territories. An ideal present for Christmas for someone who wants to everything there is to know about Europe... [Read more](#)

Conference on the impact of the Spanish elections



On 13th January the Robert Schuman Foundation is organising a conference with the Hanns Seidel Stiftung in Brussels on the lessons to be learned from the Spanish elections and notably its impact on Europe. It is free of charge but registration is obligatory!.. [Read more](#)

Migration :

The EU improves the protection of its borders



On 15th December the European Commission adopted measures to improve the protection of the Union's external borders with the creation of a European coast and border-guard... [Read more](#)

Migrant Crisis: the EU launches the second phase of its action plan



On 16th December the European Commission launched the second phase of its action plan to counter the in-depth causes of illegal migration... [Read more](#)

Launch of a reception programme for 20,000 asylum seekers in Greece



The European Commission and the High Commissioner for Refugees launched a joint programme in Athens on 14th December that aims to provide 20,000 places to refugees and asylum seekers in Greece... [Read more](#)

Denmark will control its German border as of January 2016



On 14th December the Danish Immigration Minister Inger Støjberg notified that Denmark would be re-introducing controls along its border with Germany if Sweden effectively introduced controls in January 2016... [Read more](#)

Sweden exempt from the migrant relocation programme



On 15th December the European Commission granted an extra year to Sweden for it to implement the emergency migrant relocation mechanism... [Read more](#)

Counter/Terrorism :

First mission for the German airforce in Syria



A German military (Bundeswehr) plane undertook its first mission in the night of 15th and 16th December as part of the coalition against IS, refuelling combat planes said the Bundeswehr... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Privatisation of the Greek airports

On 14th December the privatisation Greece's regional airports was



concluded for 40 years with Fraport, a German airport management company. This privatisation comes under the third rescue plan and will bring Greece 1.2 billion €... [Read more](#)

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The EBRD opens its doors to China and its investments



The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) announced on 14th December that it had approved a membership request on the part of China... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Conclusions of the European Council



During the European Council of 17th and 18th December the heads of State and government stressed the need to continue integration in terms of capital, Energy Union and the digital market, and to step up action against terrorism. Regarding the maintenance of the UK in the Union they promised to come to an agreement during the Council on 17th and 18th February 2016. Finally they stressed the need for Member States to improve the implementation of measures to counter the migratory crisis and the development of the means available to Frontex... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Optimising the contribution of the European Structural and Investment Fund



On 14th December the Commission adopted a communication on the contribution made by the European Structural and Investment Funds to the Union's growth strategy, to the Commission's investment plan and its priorities for the 10 years to come... [Read more](#)

The EU steps airplane safety



On 16th December the Commission adopted new measures to improve safety and airplane tracking... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Committee of Inquiry into anti-pollution test fraud in the automotive sector



MEPs decided, 354 votes in support, 229 against and 35 abstentions, to introduce a committee of inquiry into the infringements of the EU's rules regarding car emissions tests... [Read more](#)

Provisional agreement on trade secrets



MEPs and the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council reached a compromise on 15th December on trade secrets... [Read more](#)

Raïf Badawi receives the Sakharov Prize



On 16th December Ensaf Haidar received the Sakharov Prize on behalf of her husband, Raïf Badawi, who is still in prison in Saudi Arabia for having criticised the regime... [Read more](#)

Council :

Strategy for biodiversity and pollutant reduction



Environment ministers came to an agreement on 16th December on the reduction of emissions of certain pollutants and noted the progress made in terms of biodiversity, which is the EU's goal to be achieved by 2020... [Read more](#)

Adoption of the Better Law-Making programme and the programme for the years to come



On 15th December Ministers responsible for European Affairs adopted measures that aim to simplify European legislation (better law-making), the Commission's work programme for 2016, for the next three Presidencies of the Council, before renewing their commitment to the Balkans... [Read more](#)

Agreement on data protection



On 15th December the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Council reached an informal agreement in trilogue with the European Parliament on the "data protection" package which will define new European rules applicable to private life in the digital era. The Council adopted it on 18th... [Read more](#)

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Programme of the Dutch Presidency of the Council



Amongst the priorities of the Dutch Presidency of the Council, as of January 1st 2016, feature the promotion of a Union focused on what is vital, innovation and the creation of jobs by placing citizens at the heart of its activities... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Failure of trade talks between EU, Ukraine and Russia



Trade negotiations between Moscow, Brussel and Kyiv failed just days before the entry into force of the free-trade agreement between the EU and Ukraine announced the European Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, after a final round of discussion which rapidly came to an end on 21st December in Brussels. "There has been no agreement, therefore the exercise is over," maintained Ms Malmström. "There will be no further tripartite negotiations of this nature," she insisted. "We were close to finding solutions but the Russians were not flexible enough for success to be achieved," deplored the European Commissioner... [Read more](#)

Meeting with countries of Central Asia



On 21st December a meeting took place between the EU and the countries of Central Asia... [Read more](#)

Publication of the free-trade agreement negotiations between the EU and Canada



On 15th December the Council decided to publish the directives communicated to the Commission regarding the free-trade agreement negotiations between the EU and Canada... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Launch into orbit of two new Galileo satellites



A Soyouz launcher lifted off on 17th December from the Spaceport in Kourou in French Guiana with two Galileo satellites... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Germany will achieve budgetary balance in 2016

Germany will achieve budgetary balance in 2016, as in 2015, in spite



of major spending on the refugees, who have been arriving in massive numbers since the start of the year. After the Bundestag, the Bundesrat approved the 2016 budget on 18th December... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Spain: adoption of the last ESF programme



On 21st December the last of the 187 programmes of the European Social Fund was approved by the European Commission. Enjoying a total 11.8 billion €, of which 8.5€ comprise European Funds, it will enable the stimulation of growth in Spain and help counter unemployment, by supporting the long term unemployed in particular... [Read more](#)

France :

The National Assembly adopts the 2016 budget



On 17th December the National Assembly adopted on last reading the draft finance law 2016. European commitments to reduce the deficit have been put on hold due to the fight to counter terrorism... [Read more](#)

UK :

House of Lords vote on the draft British bill organising the referendum on the EU



On 14th December the House of Lords rejected an amendment reducing the minimum voting age (down to 16) in view of participation in the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union... [Read more](#)

Albania :

Albania: adoption of a bill to ban former criminals from politics



On 17th December the Albanian Parliament adopted a bill to ban former criminals from politics, which was welcomed by both the USA and the EU thereby preventing the election of anyone with a criminal past to a government post, likewise those who have been involved in corruption scandals... [Read more](#)

Montenegro :

Montenegro/EU: launch of two new negotiation chapters



On 21st December the EU launched two new negotiation chapters with Montenegro in view of its future membership. These focus on the transport and energy policies; 22 of 35 chapters are now open, with two of them having been concluded... [Read more](#)

Russia :

The EU extends its economic sanctions against Moscow



The EU gave the greenlight on 18th December to the six month extension of economic sanctions against Russia (until 31st July 2016) and made a gesture to Ukraine and Georgia as it lifted visa obligations for short stays in the Union... [Read more](#)

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Suspension of free-trade zone between Russia/Ukraine by Moscow



Russia is to suspend the free-trade zone with Ukraine as of January 1st 2016, the date when the trade agreement to bring Kyiv and the EU closer together is due to come into force... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Ukraine refuses to reimburse the debt of three billion dollars it owes to Russia



Ukraine officially announced on 18th December that it would refuse to reimburse a 3 billion dollar debt owed to Russia, the deadline of which was on 20th December, because an agreement had not been found to restructure it... [Read more](#)



WTO :

WTO Summit: abolition of customs duties on high-tech products



The 24 participants in the WTO's Summit, in which the EU takes part, decided on 16th December to do away with customs duties on more than 200 products... [Read more](#)



Eurostat :

Euro zone annual inflation rate up to 0.2% and that of the EU to 0.1%



Inflation was revised upwards in November in the euro zone at 0.2% over one year and in the Union at 0.1% said Eurostat on 16th December... [Read more](#)



Euro zone trade surplus increases



According to a Eurostat study published on 16th December the euro zone's trade surplus lay at 24.1 billion €, ie an increase of 1% in comparison with 2014... [Read more](#)



Less than 7% of foreigners in the Member States in 2014



Eurostat revealed on 18th December that in 2014 foreigners living in the Member States represented less than 7% of the EU's population... [Read more](#)



Studies/Reports :

SIPRI report on the arms industry



The total amount produced by the sale of arms and military services totalled 401 billion \$ in 2014 according to new data on the world's arms industry put forward on 14th December by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)... [Read more](#)



NASA's air quality map



On 14th December, the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration published a satellite map which shows air quality levels around the world... [Read more](#)



Culture :

New Year's Concert in Vienna



The New Year's Concert by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Vienna traditionally takes place on 30th and 31st December, as well as on 1st January in the Goldener Saal of the Musikverein in Vienna... [Read more](#)



Giselle from 26th to 28th December in Athens

On the occasion of the end of year festivities, Svetlana Sakharova, deemed to be one of the best ballet dancers in the world, will be



performing Giselle on three occasions in Athens... [Read more](#)

The MIAM celebrates its 15 year anniversary in Providence



The International Museum of Modest Art in Sète is running an exhibition until 22nd May 2016 on the town of Providence in the US entitled "Fracas psychédéliques en Nouvelle Angleterre". This exhibition celebrates the 15 year anniversary of this museum of contemporary art... [Read more](#)

Magnasco Exhibition in Paris



An exhibition devoted to Alessandro Magnasco, entitled "The mature years of an anti-conformist" is running at the Canesso Gallery in Paris until 31st January 2016... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



1st January 2016

Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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The Robert Schuman Foundation, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.

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