

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

The Letter team wishes you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your loyalty and look forward to our first issue on 9th January 2018.

## Regional Elections in Catalonia: questions and answers

Author: Angel Sanchez Navarro



Without any doubt the Catalan regional elections on 21st December 2017 are the focus of particular interest, not only in Spain but also abroad, because of the exceptional circumstances that surround them. As a result, it seems pertinent to clarify certain issues that this election raises in some fundamental areas concerning their scope and meaning; the exceptional circumstances in which they have been convened and regarding the political movements standing for election.

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#### Elections :

##### 1st round of the presidential election on 12th and 13th January



On 12th and 13th January next 8.3 million Czechs are being called to ballot to appoint the President of the Republic. This vote is being held exactly three months after the legislative vote which took place on 20th and 21st October which witnessed victory on the part of ANO (Yes), led by Andrej Babis. The result of this elections remains extremely uncertain... [Read more](#)

#### European Council :

##### Conclusions on Defence, Education, Culture and the Climate



On 14th December the 28 heads of State and government adopted conclusions on security, defence, the Union's social dimension, education and culture as well as climate change. Although the European Council welcomed the progress achieved in terms of defence and security it stresses that it is important to implement rapidly the first projects... [Read](#)

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### Launch of negotiations on future EU-UK relations



On 15th December the heads of State and government published their recommendations on the future negotiations between the EU and the UK. They noted the British proposal to have a 2 year transition period, during which time the Union's law will continue to apply in full to the UK which will by that time be a third country... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities 2018-2019



On 14th December the Presidents of the Commission, the European Parliament and the rotating Presidency of the Council presented the EU's legislative priorities for the period 2018-2019: citizen security, migratory policy, employment, growth and investment, the EU's social dimension, the digital connected single market, energy union and democratic legitimacy... [Read more](#)

#### Security Union: improving the interoperability of information systems



On 12th December the Commission presented measures that aim to strengthen the interoperability of the EU's information systems, to facilitate the work of border guards and police officers. To do this the European executive hopes for an improved use of existing data, to enable faster and effective controls, and to detect the usurpation of identity more easily... [Read more](#)

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#### Modernisation of the partnership with the ACP countries



On 12th December the Commission presented the modernisation of the partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The new partnership is to focus on democracy and human rights, growth and investment, climate change, poverty and migration and even peace and security... [Read more](#)

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#### France: One Planet Summit



On the occasion of the One Planet Summit organised on 12th December in Paris, the Commission presented 10 initiatives to modernise the economy and to make a fairer society. It hopes to invest in urban spaces of European towns, in the countries neighbouring the Union and in Africa. The investment will focus on clean industrial technologies, energy efficacy of buildings, clean energy for the Union's islands and clean, connected, competitive mobility... [Read more](#)

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#### Taxation: measures for cross-border investors



On 11th December the Commission presented a code of conduct that puts forward solutions for investors who are taxed twice on the revenues that they draw from their cross-border investments. It includes a one-stop-shop in the tax administrations of the Member States and measures providing aid to small investors who are overcome by the complexity of reimbursement rules... [Read more](#)

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### Parliament :

#### The simplification of the CAP



On 12th December the European Parliament adopted the new common agricultural policy (CAP) which will enter into force in 2018. This is notably typified by simplified rules, which have been designed to strengthen the negotiating power of farmers against large supermarkets. The text was adopted 503 votes in support, 87 votes against and 13 abstentions... [Read more](#)

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#### Extension of the investment plan until 2020

The European Parliament and the Council decided on 12th December on the extension and increase in the European Fund for Strategic



Investments (EFSI), started in 2015, and which will be extended until 2020. This investment plan will mobilise 500 billion €... [Read more](#)

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#### MEPs back sweeping recommendations to combat tax fraud



On 13th December MEPs voted in support of radical recommendations by its special committee on capital laundering, tax evasion and tax fraud (PANA). They are calling for the introduction of publicly accessible registers of effective beneficiaries, of rules on sanctions against intermediaries who facilitate aggressive planning, and an investigative committee based on the American Congress model... [Read more](#)

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#### For a stronger European foreign and defence policy



On 13th December MEPs called for the creation of a DG Defence at the European Commission and the introduction of a European Defence Budget as part of the next budget. They also insisted on the need to accelerate the decision-making process in terms of the common foreign and security policy at the Council, via a unanimous qualified majority vote... [Read more](#)

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#### Towards a strategy for digital trade



MEPs adopted a resolution on 12th December that aims to establish a "strategy for digital trade". This pursues three goals: 1) guaranteeing access to the market for digital goods and services in third countries, 2) guaranteeing that trade rules provide real advantages to consumers and 3) guaranteeing and promoting the respect of fundamental rights... [Read more](#)

#### Resolution on the state of progress in the negotiations with the UK



On 13th December MEPs welcomed the evidence of "sufficient progress" contained in the joint 15 page report that should lead to the passage over to the second phase of Brexit negotiations. They did however deplore the declarations made by David Davis who qualified the results of the first round of negotiations as a simple "declaration of intent". They also recalled that there remained some "major issues" still to settle... [Read more](#)

#### Award of Sakharov Prize 2017



After having made the announcement in October the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize 2017 to the Democratic Opposition in Venezuela on Wednesday 13th December comprising the National Assembly as well as all of the political prisoners for the action and their fight for freedom... [Read more](#)

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#### Council :

##### Agreement on fishing in the Atlantic and the North Sea



On 11th and 12th December the Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers met in Brussels and agreed on the fishing quotas in the Atlantic and the North Sea after an entire night of negotiations bearing witness to the increasing difficulty of respecting sustainable fishing goals by 2020... [Read more](#)

##### Conclusions of the "General Affairs" Council



On 12th December the European Affairs Ministers defined a position regarding the programme devoted to research in the area of defence and adopted an action plan on cybersecurity. The EU's priorities for 2018-2019 are security and migration, employment, growth and investment, the digital single market, climate, energy and democratic legitimacy... [Read more](#)

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##### Membership conferences of Serbia and Montenegro

The membership Conferences of Serbia and Montenegro took place on



11th December in Brussels. Regarding Serbia two new chapters were opened: the sixth on corporate law, and the 30th on external relations. Regarding Montenegro, the second and third chapters were opened addressing respectively the freedom of movement of workers, the freedom of establishment and service provision... [Read more](#)

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#### Conclusions of the "Transport, Telecommunications and Energy" Council



The "Transport, Telecommunications and Energy" Council gave its conclusions on 18th December. The Council decided on its negotiation positions on four legislative proposals in the "clean energy" package. This is a step towards the implementation of the Union's energy strategy and towards the achievement of the EU's energy and climate goals on the horizon of 2030... [Read more](#)

#### ECB :

##### The ECB optimistic about European growth, prudent about inflation



On 14th December the ECB's Council of Governors forecast a net growth for the euro zone in 2017 to 2019 without envisaging that inflation would rise towards its goal by 2020. It also said that interest rates would remain unchanged. "We are certainly more confident than we were two months ago," declared Mario Draghi, who unveiled the first growth forecast for 2020 at 1.7%. He believes that this "sound cyclical dynamic" gives "reasons to be confident in the fact that inflation will reach our goal", ie a figure "lower but close" to 2%... [Read more](#)

#### Austria :

##### Agreement on a government coalition between the ÖVP and the FPÖ



On 17th December two months after the general elections, Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) and Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ) came to a coalition agreement. Sebastian Kurz will be Chancellor and Heinz-Christian Strache, Vice-Chancellor. The government comprises 14 ministers, five of whom are women... [Read more](#)

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#### France :

##### G5 Sahel Summit in Paris



On 13th December France organised a summit bringing together the leaders of the G5 Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad). The aim of the summit was to "increase mobilisation to the benefit of G5 Sahel from the military, political and financial points of view. The various countries and organisations taking part in the summit promised significant aid (100 million \$ on the part of Saudi Arabia and 30 million from the United Arab Emirates, 80 million € on the part of the EU)... [Read more](#)

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##### One Planet Summit



The One Planet summit devoted to global warming that took place on 12th December in Paris led to the adoption of around 12 commitments to finance the fight to counter global warming. These 12 "Clim'acts" range from response strategies to extreme events, the protection of natural resources and measures in support of electric vehicles and initiatives in the financial sector to foster a decarbonised economy... [Read more](#)

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#### Poland :

##### Investiture of Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki



Mateusz Morawiecki, the new Polish Prime Minister, was sworn in on 11th December and approved by Parliament on 12th. He remains as Finance Minister and replaces Beata Szydlo who becomes Deputy Prime Minister... [Read more](#)

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#### Czech Republic :

##### New Czech Government

Andrej Babis was sworn in as head of the Czech government on 13th



December by Milos Zeman. The new Prime Minister will head a minority government of 14 ministers, four of whom are women... [Read more](#)

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UK :

#### Brexit: the House of Commons approves the right of veto over the final agreement



On 13th December the House of Commons approved an amendment that gives the Parliament the right of veto over the final Brexit agreement. Approved by 309 MPs against 305 amendment 7 stipulates that any agreement negotiated with Brussels will have to be passed by Parliament before it enters into force... [Read more](#)

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Norway :

#### Signature of a memorandum of understanding between Norway and Latvia



Norway and Latvia signed a memorandum of understanding on 14th December 2017 which will enable an increase in Norwegian subsidies given to its close Baltic neighbour. A member of the European Economic Area, Norway takes part in subsidies that aim to reduce economic disparities between the Member States (known as the Norway Grants)... [Read more](#)

WTO :

#### WTO Ministerial Conference



During the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference that took place from 10th to 13th December in Buenos Aires the EU approved several declarations regarding e-commerce, the facilitation of investments in support development and the rules internal to the services sector. The Council did however express its disappointment at the results achieved... [Read more](#)

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OECD :

#### Unemployment rates recover pre-crisis levels



On 12th December the OECD published unemployment figures for the OECD countries in October 2017. Unemployment was down by 0.1% in October 2017, to 5.6%, recovering its pre-crisis level noted in April 2008. However at 35.1 million the total number of unemployed remains 2.5 million higher than in April 2008... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

#### Employment up by 0.3% in the EU and by 0.4% in the euro zone



The number of people in work increased by 0.3% in the EU and by 0.4% in the euro zone in the third quarter 2017 in comparison with the previous quarter according to Eurostat figures published on 13th December... [Read more](#)

#### International Goods Trade



According to a Eurostat survey published on 15th December the euro zone registered a surplus of 18.9 billion € in its international goods trade with the rest of the world in October 2017. However the EU registered a deficit of 0.3 billion €... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

#### Increase in arms sales since 2010



According to a press release by the Stockholm International Peace Studies Institute on 11th December, the sales of arms and military services totalled 374.8 billion \$ worldwide in 2016, 1.9% more than in 2015 and 38% more than 2002... [Read more](#)

Features of trade and investments in Europe



On 11th December Eurostat published facts and figures about the globalisation of the economy and notably regarding the EU's trade and investments. The greatest surplus of the international trade in goods and services was recorded by the Union in 2016 (+304 billion €), ahead of China (+226 billion €). Moreover the main FDI stocks in the Union are held by the USA, and a greater share of the Union's FDIs are in the USA... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### New Year's Concert



For decades the Philharmonic Orchestra of Vienna has been presenting its traditional New Year's Day concert. Broadcast on TV in over 90 countries, this concert is popular the world over... [Read more](#)

### Retrospective of César at the Georges Pompidou Centre Paris



The Georges Pompidou Centre is hosting a retrospective of the sculptor César until 26th March 2018. César was one of the most illustrious and most misunderstood artists of his time and always remained attached to the idea of sculpture hosting a bestiary and human figures... [Read more](#)

### Yves Tanguy and Surrealism



The Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection is running an exhibition devoted to one of the pioneers of Surrealism, Yves Tanguy. Until 8th April 2018 the exhibition takes the visitor into the artist's surreal, abstract world whose workshop was one of the movement's most important meeting places... [Read more](#)

### Ventura Rodriguez, the architect of illustration



On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Ventura Rodriguez, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid is devoting an exhibition to him from 20th December to 28th April 2018. A central figure of 18th century Spanish architecture the exhibition illustrates his major influence over the Enlightenment in Spain... [Read more](#)

## Agenda :



18th December 2017  
Brussels  
"Energy Council"

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## The Letter's Editorial Team :

Charles de Marcilly, Helen Levy ;  
Vincent Le Méau, Aurélien Pastouret, Félicia Schröder,  
Romain Vadans, Jean-Baptiste Welschinger  
**Editor-in-chief: Charles de Marcilly**  
**Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin**

Contact/Suggestions  
[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

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