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The Letter in PDF format

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## Catalonia: the lie of the land after the battle

Author: Angel Sanchez Navarro



On 21st December the Catalans voted. Nearly a month later we can put forward the first ideas about the results, their meaning and the impact these might have. Whilst in society and the Spanish Parliament there is a very wide majority in support of the respect of the rules of the game, the ballot boxes have revealed a deeply divided society in two quantitatively similar blocks, although one of them has been in government for nearly forty years.

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### Elections :

Milo Zeman and Jiri Drahos will face each other in the second round of the Czech Presidential election



Outgoing President of the Czech Republic, Milos Zeman (Citizens Rights Party - SPOZ) came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 12th and 13th January 38.56% of the vote. In the 2nd round on 26th and 27th January, he will face Jiri Drahos (independent), the former President of the Academy of Science who has the support of the People's Christian-Democratic Union (KDU-CSL), (a centrist party led by Pavel Belobradek), and the movement Mayors and Independents (STAN), (a party led by Petr Gazdik, who won 26.60% of the vote). Turnout lay at 61.92%... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

**Commission: institutional priorities for 2018**



For its first meeting of the year the College of Commissioners agreed on 10th January on the institutional priorities for 2018. They cover the following issues: the reform of the economic and monetary union, making safe the EU's borders, the revision of the asylum system, reform of Schengen, the completion of the single digital market and the rapprochement of the Western Balkans with the EU. There was also a debate on the

EU budget after 2020... [Read more](#)



#### Launch of work on the post-Brexit budget



"We are getting to the end of our possibilities" warned the President of the European Commission, J-C Juncker during a conference in Brussels on 8th January, thereby marking the start of debate over the next "multi-annual financial framework" 2021-2027... [Read more](#)



#### 1 billion € investment plan for supercomputers



On 11th January the European Commission unveiled an investment plan targeting the introduction of a European world-scale supercomputer infrastructure. The total investment will be 1 billion € and will be jointly supported by the European Commission and the Member States... [Read more](#)



#### The revised directive on payment services (DSP2) enters into force



The revised directive on payment services (DSP2) entered into force on 13th January and aims to modernise payment services in Europe to the benefit of both consumers and businesses... [Read more](#)



#### Approach to sustainable development



The multi-stakeholder high level platform launched by the Commission responsible at EU level of the UN's sustainable development goals met for the first time on 10th January. These balance out the three dimensions - economic, social and environmental - of sustainable development and are defined for the next 15 years... [Read more](#)



### Council :

#### Launch of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council



On 11th January the President of the European Commission gave a speech in Sofia during the ceremony marking the launch of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council. J-C Juncker took the opportunity to recall that Bulgaria must be a "bridge between the EU and its neighbours", notably the Western Balkans. Finally he indicated that "Bulgaria's place is in Schengen and in the euro zone..." [Read more](#)



#### Mario Centeno - new president



The new Eurogroup president, Portuguese Mario Centeno, promised on 12th January to continue the reform of the euro zone. He took office on 13th January... [Read more](#)



#### Freezing of assets and travel bans against North Korea



On 8th January the Council announced that it was aligning its lists of people and entities from North Korea which were the focus of sanctions with the most recent UN Security Council resolution. On 22nd December the latter was adopted in response to uninterrupted activity by North Korea in the area of nuclear arms and ballistic missiles... [Read more](#)



### Diplomacy :

#### Iran: the EU commits to introducing the nuclear agreement



French, German and British Foreign Affairs Ministers met in Brussels on 11th January with High Representative Federica Mogherini and their Iranian counterpart to recall the importance of the introduction of the Iranian nuclear agreement... [Read more](#)



#### A new strategy to rebuild Iraq

In a joint declaration published on 8th January Federica Mogherini, Christos Stylianides and Neven Mimica supported a new political strategy for the reconstruction of Iraq. It would mainly take the shape



of humanitarian aid to Iraqis by stabilising areas that have liberated of Daesh, as well as the promotion of a stable government model... [Read more](#)

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**Court of Justice :**

**Agreement on Fishing with Morocco**



In 2006 the European Union and Morocco signed an agreement on fishing - however the independent, voluntary organisation Western Sahara Campaign complained because this agreement which applies to the territory and waters of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. On 10th January the Advocate General of the Union's Court of Justice published his conclusions in which he challenges the legality of the fishing agreement in breach of the respect of the rights of people in the Western Sahara for self-rule as well as the illegal situation that is a result of this... [Read more](#)

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**Court of Auditors :**

**Assistance provided to European regions must be better targeted**



The European Court of Auditors published a special report focusing on "the joint assistance in preparation of projects in European regions" (Jaspers initiative). Auditors at the Court notably recommend that the "Commission should intervene more in the strategic planning of the Jaspers initiative to be able to abandon it if its main objectives are achieved."... [Read more](#)

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**Germany :**

**Agreement to form another grand coalition**



On 12th January the leaders of the CDU-CSU and the SPD came to agreement in negotiations in view of forming a German government. However the members of the SPD still have to vote on this in Bonn on 21st January, to validate the presence of their party in the future "grand coalition"... [Read more](#)

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**Austria :**

**Meeting between Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and French President Emmanuel Macron**



For his first official trip abroad Chancellor of the Austrian Republic Sebastian Kurz travelled to Paris on 12th January for a working lunch with President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron. This meeting provided an opportunity to address the issues of the Union's migratory policy, security in Europe, the economic policy and the need to make the EU more democratic... [Read more](#)

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**Bulgaria :**

**The Bulgarian Parliament rejects the presidential veto of the anti-corruption law**



On 12th January the Bulgarian Parliament rejected a veto set by the President of the Republic against the anti-corruption law recommended by the European Commission. According to the Constitution, with his veto rejected the President is now obliged to promulgate the law to enable its entry into force... [Read more](#)

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**France :**

**France and Italy want a Transalpine Treaty, the Quirinal**



The President of the Italian Council and the President of the French Republic want to go further in terms of cooperation between the two countries. The "Quirinal Treaty" would be transalpine counterpart of the one linking Paris and Berlin. France and Italy are to work towards the drafting of a bilateral treaty to strengthen their cooperation said the head of the Italian government, Paolo Gentiloni... [Read more](#)

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## Trip by Emmanuel Macron to China



For his first official visit in 2018 Emmanuel Macron travelled to China from 8th to 10th January. During his speech at the Grand Palace in China, the French President said that "China and France were meant to rise together to world challenges" such as the fight to counter climate change and to counter terrorism. He hoped that the new silk road would not be hegemonic and that reciprocity would be its hallmark... [Read more](#)

## Italy :

### 4th Summit of the countries of the South of the EU



The heads State and government of the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Malta and Portugal met in Rome on Wednesday 10th January for the 4th Summit of the Countries of the South of the EU. They agreed on a common policy to manage the crisis and migratory flows. They also provided their support to the drafting of transnational lists during the elections of the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

## Poland :

### Meeting between Jean-Claude Juncker and Mateusz Morawiecki



The President of the European Commission and Polish Prime Minister dined in Brussels on 9th January. In a joint declaration they indicated that they had discussed many issues including the rule of law in Poland to the backdrop of the triggering of article 7 against Warsaw. It was admitted that both leaders will meet again at the end of February to "continue their talks"... [Read more](#)

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### Ministerial reshuffle in Poland



On 9th January Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki dismissed his Defence, Foreign Affairs, Environment, Healthcare and Digital Affairs Ministers. Antoni Macierewicz and Witold Waszczykowski were replaced by Mariusz Blaszczak and Jacek Czaputowicz. This reshuffle comes just as Mr Morawiecki in office for a month is trying to improve the tense relations between Warsaw and Brussels... [Read more](#)

## Romania :

### Resignation of Prime Minister Mihai Tudose



Romanian Prime Minister Mihai Tudose presented his resignation on 15th January following disagreement with the leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), Liviu Dragnea. "I am leaving in dignity" he declared after a meeting of the PSD leaders who withdrew their support of him. This resignation still has to be approved however by the centre right president Klaus Iohannis... [Read more](#)

## UK :

### Ministerial reshuffle



On 8th January the Prime Minister Theresa May went ahead with a ministerial reshuffle following the resignation of Damian Green, Deputy Prime Minister at the end of December. David Lidington - to date Justice Minister will take over his post. The Education, Justice and Northern Ireland Ministers are now respectively Damian Hinds, David Gauke and Karen Bradley... [Read more](#)

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## Slovenia :

### Land dispute between Croatia and Slovenia: towards European mediation



The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker proposed mediation on 8th January between Slovenia and Croatia which rejected international arbitration granting Ljubljana sovereignty over the small bay of Piran on the Adriatic Sea. In June the permanent arbitration court of The Hague attributed more than two thirds of the Piran Bay to Slovenia with the aim of ending a dispute that dates back to the dismantling of Yugoslavia 25 years ago... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

Visit by NATO Secretary General to Sweden



The NATO Secretary General travelled to Sälen in Sweden on 14th January as part of a conference on international security. Sweden took advantage of the event to announce a major contribution to NATO's budget. In his speech Jens Stoltenberg recalled that NATO was in transition given the present security challenges, and that this required closer cooperation between the countries in the north... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Unemployment down in Europe



On 9th January Eurostat published unemployment figures for November 2017. This lay at 7.3% in the EU. This is the lowest rate recorded since October 2008. It totalled 8.7% in the euro zone. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro zone since January 2009... [Read more](#)

Current account surplus 69.4 billion €



In a press release published on 11th January Eurostat presented a surplus in the EU's current account totalling 69.4 billion €, i.e. 1.8% of the GDP in the third quarter of 2017. The services balance lies at 46.5 billion € in surplus... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Brexit: no deal would lead to the loss of 500,000 jobs in the UK



A report published on 11 January by the Cambridge Econometrics Institute ordered by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, analysed five possible scenarios for the Brexit. In the event of a "no-deal", the UK might lose nearly 54 billion € in investments and 500,000 jobs by 2030... [Read more](#)

Culture :

"Vienna 1900 Klimt-Moser-Gerstl-Kokoschka" Exhibition at the Leopold Museum



The Leopold Museum of Vienna is running an exhibition from 18th January to 10th June "Vienna 1900" devoted to Klimt, Schiele, Moser, Gerstl and Kokoschka and the artistic changes that occurred at the end of the 19th century and until after the First World War. It was notably during this period that there was a smooth transition from Symbolism over to Expressionism... [Read more](#)

Prints by Antoni Clavé



The National Library of France (BnF) is hosting an exhibition until 25th February devoted to the prints by painter Antoni Clavé. These large scale red, black and white prints illustrate all of Clavé's talent both from the technical and stylistic points of view... [Read more](#)

International Interior Design and Architecture Fair in Cologne



Until 21st January the International Interior Design and Architecture Fair in Cologne (IMM) unveiled new innovations. 1,200 exhibitors are offering original ideas regarding the creative development of internal space... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



15th-18th January

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Jan

Strasbourg  
Plenary Session of the European Parliament

22  
Jan

22nd January  
Brussels  
"Foreign Affairs" Council  
Eurogroup Meeting

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