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The Letter in PDF format

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The Black Sea, the spectre of a new Iron Curtain?

Author: Radu Magdin



As the meeting point between Europe, Russia, Turkey and the United States through NATO, the Black Sea is a crucial stake in the war in Ukraine. A compromise in favour of Russia would be the final blow to the world order that the EU hopes to build.

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Contents

Front page! : Editorial **Foundation** : Publication - Digital - Recovery **Ukraine/Russia** : Session/Europe - Finance - VAT - Regions - Visit/Kyiv - Sanctions **Council** : Environment - Presidency/Czech - Competition - Space - Health - Resilience - Laundering/Fight - Crypto-assets **Diplomacy** : New Zealand - Takuba **Court of Justice** : Asylum **European Agencies** : Committee/Regions **Germany** : Summit/G7 **Bulgaria** : Government? **France** : Government - National Assembly **UK** : Brexit/Ulster **Council of Europe** : Bulgaria **UN** : Oceans **NATO** : Summit **OECD** : Agriculture - Estonia **IMF** : Portugal - Slovakia **Studies/Reports** : Outlook - Asylum **Eurostat** : Inflation - Unemployment **Culture** : Culture/Ukraine - Exhibition/Budapest - Jazz/Montreux - Festival/Aix - Festival/Warsaw - Festival/Verona - Festival/Galway - Festival/Riga - BBK/Bilbao - Festival/Avignon - Festival/Berlin

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

Front page! :

Can totalitarianism be dissolved by diplomacy?



Twenty-five years ago, the UK handed over Hong Kong to China. Jean-Dominique Giuliani, who was on the spot, stresses that China has not respected its commitment to maintain the democratic system in the former colony. China, like Russia, represents a challenge to democratic Europe. Faced with Putin on their own continent, Europeans must have the will to use force in defence of the law... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

The Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2022



The 2022 edition of the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union" has just been published by Marie B. With contributions from leading personalities and experts, original maps and commented statistics, the Schuman Report analyses the challenges facing Europe and offers a complete view of the European Union. It is available in paper format on our website and in bookshops in French, as well as in digital version in French and English. Order it here... [Read more](#)

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Europe's Digital Progress



On 30 June, the Foundation organised an online debate on the European Union's digital policy, between regulation and technological ambition, with Laure Chapuis, from the European Commission, Brunessen Bertrand, lecturer at the University of Rennes, and Victor Storchan, artificial intelligence engineer. This videoconference, which took place during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, is available online... [Read more](#)



European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities



In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU has set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund, called the Recovery and Resilience Facility, for Member States in the form of grants and loans. 25 plans have so far been adopted by the Council, and Poland's plan has been conditionally approved by the Commission. 21 countries have received the planned pre-financing and 5 countries have received a first instalment after meeting a series of targets. On 30 June, the Commission proposed an updated allocation of grants to Member States, taking into account the evolution of their GDP since 2020. The Commission has not yet approved Hungary's plan because of infringements of the rule of law. The Foundation proposes an interactive map of the plans country by country, to learn about the amounts, timetables and priorities... [Read more](#)



Ukraine/Russia :

Ukrainian Parliamentary Session on Europe



On 1 July, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Speaker of the Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) Ruslan Stefanchuk and Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal signed a joint declaration on the strategic goal of full membership of Ukraine in the European Union. The European flag was installed in the Parliament and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, gave a speech on this occasion... [Read more](#)



Proposal to release the first tranche of 1 billion euro



The Commission proposed on 1 July a new €1 billion macro-financial assistance (MFA) operation for Ukraine, the first part of the €9 billion package announced by the Commission in May 2022 and endorsed by the European Council on 23-24 June. The proposal must be approved by the Parliament and the Council... [Read more](#)



Exemption from customs duties and VAT on imports



On 1 July, the Commission adopted a decision authorising Member States to grant temporary exemption from customs duties and VAT on imports from third countries for Ukrainians. This exemption applies to foodstuffs, electrical generators and other vital equipment imported by state organisations and by organisations of a "charitable or philanthropic" nature approved by the competent authorities in the Member States... [Read more](#)



Assistance to regions facing the consequences of the war



On 29 June, the Commission presented "Flexible Territorial Assistance" to help deal with the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This measure is part of the cohesion policy and offers additional funding support. Improvements include increased support for those hosting displaced persons (Member States, local authorities and civil society organisations), proper distribution and reception of investments and practical support to overcome delays in project implementation... [Read more](#)



Group on the international security guarantees and visits to Kyiv



Former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen was in Kyiv on 1 July to chair the first meeting of the Group on International Security Guarantees for Ukraine. On the same day, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre met the Ukrainian President. On 28 June, the day of the celebration of the Ukrainian Constitution, a 10-member cross-party delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe visited Kyiv. It expressed shock at the evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the same day, a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) visited Kyiv. Moldovan President Maia Sandu met her counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv on 27 June... [Read more](#)

30 billion € in Russian assets frozen or seized



Since the beginning of the war, the "Russian Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs (REPO)" task force, in which the EU is collaborating with the G7 countries and Australia, has frozen €30 billion of Russian-owned assets, and frozen or seized luxury real estate and ships. At the start of the war, the countries concerned also froze Russian Central Bank assets worth around \$300 billion... [Read more](#)

Council :

Meeting of Environment Ministers



On 28 June, the environment ministers adopted five texts from the "Fit for 55" package: the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS); effort sharing; the Social Climate Fund; CO2 emission performance standards for new cars; and the regulation on greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). They adopted a text aimed at ensuring that products consumed in the EU do not contribute to deforestation and forest degradation worldwide, and discussed the proposal to tighten the rules on waste shipments... [Read more](#)

Start of the Czech Presidency



The Czech Republic took over the six-month presidency of the Council on 1 July. Its agenda includes managing the refugee crisis, reconstruction of Ukraine, energy security, defence capacity building, strategic economic resilience and democratic institutions. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, visited Prague on 30 June for talks with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala. The Commission's College met with the Czech government on 1 July in Litomyšl... [Read more](#)

Agreement on a regulation for foreign subsidies that distort the internal market



The Council and the Parliament reached an agreement on 30 June on the Regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market. It will allow the Commission to investigate any economic activity benefiting from a third country subsidy in the internal market using 3 tools: two prior authorisation tools and a general market investigation tool. If a company fails to notify a subsidised concentration or financial contribution in the context of public procurement, the Commission may impose fines. The notification thresholds will be €500 million for mergers and €250 million for public procurement... [Read more](#)

Agreement regarding the Union's programme for secure connectivity



The Council adopted its position on 29 June on the regulation on the European Union's secure connectivity programme for the period 2023-2027. It aims to establish a "sovereign space system for secure connectivity" to ensure the provision of satellite communication services ("satcom") and to provide governmental and commercial services for the protection of critical infrastructure. The Council also clarifies the role of the EU Space Programme Agency (EUSPA) and encourages "support for an innovative and competitive space sector"... [Read more](#)

Extension of COVID certificate



On 28 June, the Council gave the final green light to the extension of the EU's digital COVID certificate for another year, until 30 June 2023. This extension will allow travellers connected to the European system to continue to use their Covid certificate. The certificate is currently only required to enter France, Malta and Portugal... [Read more](#)

Agree on the strengthening of the resilience of critical entities



The Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on 28 June on the directive on the resilience of critical entities aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening the physical resilience of critical entities. Sectors such as energy, transport, health, drinking water, waste water or space will be covered by the directive... [Read more](#)

Agreement regarding the fight to counter capital laundering



On 29 June, the Council adopted the creation of a new Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) authority. The authority will have the power to supervise certain types of financial and credit institutions, including 40 groups and entities and providers of services on crypto-assets that are deemed risky. The Council has yet to decide where the new authority will be based... [Read more](#)

Agreement on crypto-assets



The Council and the Parliament reached agreement on 30 June on the proposed Regulation on crypto-assets (MiCA) aimed at protecting investors, preserving financial stability and encouraging innovation. On 29 June, they reached agreement on the proposal to update the rules on information accompanying fund transfers by extending their scope to transfers of crypto-assets... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

Trade Agreement with New Zealand



The European Union and New Zealand reached an agreement on 30 June to increase their bilateral trade by 30%. The agreement, which includes the Commission's new plan for Sustainable Trade Agreements (STA), provides for the elimination of customs duties on European exports and the opening of the New Zealand market in financial services, telecommunications and maritime transport. It provides for better protection of personal data and an alignment of New Zealand with European intellectual property standards. It must be formally signed and ratified by the Member States. The two sides also signed an agreement on combating terrorism and crime, providing for the exchange of personal data between Europol and New Zealand authorities. The European Parliament still has to approve the deal... [Read more](#)

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End of the Takuba Task Force



The Takuba Task Force, which operated in Mali against jihadist groups as part of Operation Barkhane, ended on 30 June. Launched in March 2020 under French leadership, it involved 800 soldiers from 10 EU Member States... [Read more](#)

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Court of Justice :

Condemnation of a Lithuanian law on asylum



In a ruling on 30 June, the European Court of Justice objected to Lithuanian legislation according to which, in the event of a mass influx of foreigners, an asylum seeker can be detained without being able to make an application for international protection, solely on the grounds that he or she is illegally present on Lithuanian soil. The Court recalled that "any third-country national or stateless person has the right to make such an application on the territory of a Member State" and that it is up to the Member State to demonstrate that, due to specific circumstances, the individual conduct of the illegal asylum seeker constitutes a "real, present and sufficiently serious" threat to national security or public order justifying detention... [Read more](#)

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European Agencies :

Vasco Alves Cordeiro elected head of the Committee of the Regions



Vasco Alves Cordeiro of Portugal, formerly president of the government of the autonomous region of the Azores, was elected president of the Committee of the Regions for a two-and-a-half-year term on 29 June. He will focus on strengthening democracy, defending cohesion policy, achieving the objectives of the Green Deal and improving regional support for Ukraine... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Conclusions of the G7 Summit

At the end of the summit held from 26 to 28 June in Elmau, the G7 leaders strongly condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine and reasserted their commitment to



democratic values, human rights and multilateralism. They pledged \$29.5 billion for reconstruction in Ukraine, \$4.5 billion for the Global Alliance for Resilience (GAIR) to combat food vulnerability and \$600 billion over 5 years for the Global Infrastructure and Investment Partnership. Leaders say they want to launch a "climate club" by the end of 2022 and strengthen action on decarbonisation... [Read more](#)



Bulgaria :

Attempt to form government



Bulgarian President Rumen Radev tasked Asen Vassilev with forming a new government on 1 July. Finance Minister in the government of Kiril Petkov, which was overthrown by parliament on 22 June, Vassilev has seven days to find a majority... [Read more](#)



France :

New government



The composition of the new French government, headed by Elisabeth Borne, was announced on 4 July. The government has 41 ministers, deputy ministers and secretaries of state, including 20 women in addition to the Prime Minister. The economist Laurence Boone is the new Secretary of State for European Affairs... [Read more](#)



Yaël Braun-Pivet elected Chair of the National Assembly



Yaël Braun-Pivet, MP for Yvelines since 2017, former president of the National Assembly's law commission, (2017-2022), was elected chairwoman of the National Assembly on 28 June in the second ballot by 242 votes. She succeeds Richard Ferrand, who was defeated in the legislative elections of 12 and 19 June. A 51-year-old lawyer, she is the first woman to be elected to this position, becoming the fourth highest-ranking member of the state. The following day, 6 vice presidents, 3 quaestors and 12 secretaries were appointed... [Read more](#)



UK :

First vote on the reform of the Northern Irish Protocol



On 27 June, British MPs adopted a unilateral review of customs arrangements in Northern Ireland at first reading by 295 votes to 221. These provisions, which stemmed from the Northern Ireland Protocol, were intended to protect the European single market without re-establishing a border between the British province and the Republic of Ireland. Under the draft, goods destined to remain in Northern Ireland would benefit from a "green" channel, avoiding controls. The EU has already reactivated an infringement procedure for violation of the protocol... [Read more](#)



Council of Europe :

Moneyval Report on Bulgaria

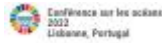


Moneyval, the Council of Europe's anti-money laundering body, finds in a report published on 27 June that Bulgaria has achieved a moderate level of effectiveness in assessing money laundering and terrorist financing risks. It calls on the authorities to improve the use of financial intelligence, investigation and prosecution, the confiscation regime and other measures... [Read more](#)



UN :

UN Ocean Conference



The UN Oceans Conference took place from 27 June to 1 July in Lisbon. Jointly organised by Kenya and Portugal, it brought together 140 countries to strengthen action for the oceans. The conference concluded with the adoption of a political declaration entitled "Our Ocean, Our Future, Our Responsibility"... [Read more](#)



NATO :

Conclusions of the Madrid Summit

The NATO Summit concluded on 30 June in Madrid. Allied leaders adopted the Alliance's new Strategic Concept and decided on increased funding, high-readiness forces and battle groups in the eastern part of the Alliance. Finland and Sweden were invited to join the Alliance, which reiterated its support for Ukraine through an enhanced assistance package. Leaders adopted measures to combat climate change and established an innovation fund to strengthen the Alliance's technological advances...



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OECD :

Agricultural Outlook



On 29 June, the OECD and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) released their Agricultural Outlook for the Decade 2022-2031. It highlights the impact of the war in Ukraine on food security, and stresses the importance of peace and transformation of food systems to address food security problems and increase agricultural productivity. The outlook projects an increase in agricultural production of 1.1% per year and an increase in food consumption of 1.4% per year over the next decade... [Read more](#)

Economic Study of Estonia



On 28 June, the OECD published its "Economic Survey of Estonia". In it, the organisation focuses on structural reforms to accelerate the country's recovery and mitigate the impact of crises such as the war in Ukraine. According to the OECD, with a general inflation rate of 20% in May 2022 and labour shortages, Estonia needs to take action and can use fiscal reforms to prepare for future challenges. The organisation predicts a GDP of 1.3% in 2022 and 1.8% in 2023 for Estonia, which recorded a GDP of 8.2% in 2021... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Report on the Portuguese Economy



In a report published on 30 June, the IMF estimates that the war in Ukraine is likely to slow the recovery of growth in Portugal to an average of 5.8% in 2022 and 1.9% in 2023. Inflation has accelerated and is expected to reach 6.1% in 2022 before falling to 3.5% in 2023. The overall budget deficit is on track to decline to 2.2% of GDP and public debt is expected to fall below 100% in the medium term. On the other hand, the IMF notes a deterioration in credit quality. It stresses the need to strike the right balance between supporting the recovery and pursuing structural reforms to improve growth... [Read more](#)

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Report on the Slovakian Economy



The IMF estimated in a report published on 30 June that the Slovak economy will slow down in 2022 due to the country's proximity to the war in Ukraine, its dependence on Russian energy and its high level of integration into global value chains. Growth is expected to be 2.2% in 2022 and 3.5% in 2023, with inflation averaging 10% in both years... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Strategic Outlook Report 2022



In its Strategic Outlook 2022 report published on 29 June, the Commission sets out 10 areas of action to ensure that the two transitions - climate and digital - are linked. It recommends, among other things, "strategically managing the supply of critical materials and commodities", strengthening investment in new technologies and infrastructure in the field of research, promoting a robust framework for cyber security and secure data sharing, and supporting labour mobility between the energy, transport, industry, construction and agriculture sectors... [Read more](#)

Report on Asylum in 2022



According to the Asylum Situation Report 2022 published by the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) on 28 June, the number of asylum applications to EU countries has increased again since 2021. Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis were the most numerous asylum seekers in 2021. Also, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU has introduced temporary

protection for people fleeing war and since its entry into force, 3.4 million people have benefited from it... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Increase in annual inflation



The annual inflation rate in the euro zone is estimated at 8.6% in June, compared with 8.1% in May, according to a study published on 1 July by Eurostat, the European Union's statistical office... [Read more](#)

Decrease in unemployment in May



In May, the unemployment rate in the European Union stood at 6.1% and in the euro area at 6.6% in April, according to data published by Eurostat on 30 June. Youth unemployment decreased from 13.8% in April to 13.3% in the EU and 13.1% in the euro area... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Culture rallies for Ukraine



On 6 July, the concert "On stage for Ukraine" with music from Eastern Europe will be held in Besançon. Throughout the summer, the Polish Institute in Vienna, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Embassy in Austria, is presenting the exhibition "Broken Dreams. War diary from the Ukrainian shelter" by the artist Hélène Litorelle. On 13 July at the Pump House Gallery Battersea Park, London, a charity evening is being organised to support Ukrainian children. In Poland, the National Institute of Music and Dance is implementing the project "New Voice: Ukraine - Let's make an opera together", offering artistic workshops for children and young war refugees. Until 31 October at the Misiones Salesianas Museum in Madrid, the photo exhibition "Life in a suitcase: stories of an armed conflict" bears witness to the consequences of war... [Read more](#)

Henri Matisse in Budapest



Until 16 October, the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts is presenting the exhibition "The Colour of Ideas" on the works of Henri Matisse. The selection of over 150 paintings in the exhibition is drawn from the collection belonging to the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Matisse's 60 years of artistic development are honoured in the first exhibition dedicated to him in Hungary... [Read more](#)

Montreux Jazz Festival



The 56th edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival will run until 16 July. More than 500 concerts and activities await you on 13 stages, reflecting the Festival's incredible musical diversity... [Read more](#)

International Lyrical Art Festival in Provence



Until 23 July, the Aix-en-Provence International Festival of Lyrical Art offers performances of operas and concerts. This year, the theme of resurrection is in the spotlight and two operas will be created. The festival is also committed to sustainable development and has been emphasising the eco-design of its sets since 2014... [Read more](#)

Garden Music Festival in Warsaw



Until 31 July, the Musical Gardens festival in Warsaw offers classical music and jazz concerts in the Grand Court of the Royal Palace. It welcomes musicians from all over the world... [Read more](#)

Verona Arena Festival

Until 4 September, the world's most beautiful voices are performing at the 99th season of the Verona Arena Opera Festival. The repertoire includes some of the great opera classics, including Bizet's famous Carmen and Verdi's Aida, accompanied by ballets and orchestral concerts... [Read more](#)



International Art Festival in Galway



Galway International Arts Festival: From 11 to 24 July, Galway's historic city centre will host an international arts festival featuring internationally renowned artists. Dance, theatre, music concerts, visual arts exhibitions and other artistic activities are on the programme...

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Early Music Festival in Riga



From 6 to 9 July, the city of Riga is hosting the International Early Music Festival, which offers classical music concerts in prestigious churches and concert halls in the city as well as in the Rundale Palace. Performances of Purcell, Vivaldi, Telemann, Gluck or Handel will be given and the final concert will take place in the palace gardens... [Read more](#)

BBK Festival Live in Bilbao



From the 7th to the 9th of July, the BBK Live festival will take place in Bilbao with concerts by Spanish and international musicians such as LCD Soundsystem, Stromae, The Killers and Pet Shop Boys... [Read more](#)

Avignon Theatre Festival



The 76th edition of the Avignon Theatre Festival will be taking place from 7 to 26 July. The programme includes Chekov's The Black Monk, directed by Kirill Serebrennikov, Shakespeare's Richard II, directed by Christophe Rauck, and Ma Jeunesse exaltée, by Olivier Py, who is directing the festival for the last year. The Off Festival will run from 7 to 30 July... [Read more](#)

Music in the open air in Berlin



From 7 to 11 July, five evenings of open-air concerts will enliven Berlin's Gendarmenmarkt. A wide range of musical genres, from Verdi's opera to Benny Goodman's jazz, offers a programme suitable for all audiences... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



4-5 July 2022
Lugano
Conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine



4-7 July 2022
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



11 July 2022
Brussels
Eurogroup Meeting



11-12 July 2022
Prague
Informal Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs



 I love the Robert Schuman Foundation's Letter

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