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The Letter in PDF format

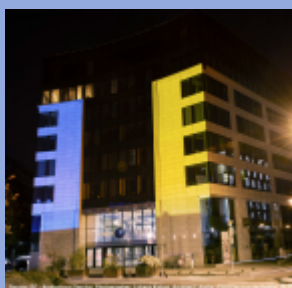
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Geopolitical and Technocratic: EU International Actorness and Russia's War Against Ukraine

Authors: Anne Pintsch, Maryna Rabinovych



In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Union has experienced a "geopolitical awakening". To achieve its strategic objectives, however, it must continue to use its technical know-how and expertise.

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Front page! :

From Munich to Munich - 1938-2023



The Munich Security Conference, held on 17-18 February, contrasted with the one in September 1938, when the UK and France allowed Hitler to conquer the Sudetenland, notes Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Today, the West has understood that only a hard line can avoid bellicose escalation provoked by Putin's Russia... [Read more](#)

Elections :

General elections in Estonia on 5 March



Prime Minister Kaja Kallas' Reform Party is the favourite in the Estonian parliamentary elections on 5 March. It is expected to win 31.9% of the vote. The Conservative People's Party is expected to come next with 22.8% and the Centre Party 18.1%. Eesti 200, the Social Democratic Party and Isamaa are running neck and neck with 8.4%, 7.1% and 7% respectively... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Rule of law: appeal against Poland at the Court of Justice



On 15 February, the Commission referred Poland to the Court of Justice following two decisions of the Polish Constitutional Court in 2021, which consider certain provisions of the EU Treaties to be contrary to the Polish Constitution. The Commission considers that these decisions call into question the primacy of EU law and the right to effective judicial protection, and that the Court cannot be considered independent in terms of its composition. An infringement procedure was opened in December 2021... [Read more](#)

New emission reduction targets for trucks and buses



On 14 February the Commission proposed new emission reduction targets for lorries and buses. In 2030, their CO2 emission levels will have to be 45% lower than in 2019, 65% in 2035 and 90% in 2040. City buses will have to achieve zero emissions by 2030... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities



In response to the economic and social fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has established a €672.5 billion recovery fund. On 17 February, the Commission gave a positive preliminary assessment of Spain's third payment claim for €6 billion. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to check the amounts and timeframes... [Read more](#)

Ukraine/Russia :

Proposed new sanctions against Russia



On 15 February, the Commission President presented a draft of new sanctions against Russia that will ban the export of technological and industrial goods worth €11 billion. It includes an extension of the sanctions regime to seven Iranian entities for the sale of goods for civilian and military use, including drones... [Read more](#)

European Parliament Resolutions



On 16 February, MEPs adopted a resolution to increase military support to Ukraine, including the delivery of ammunition. They also urged Member States to approve the Commission's proposed tenth sanctions package which will ban the export of industrial technology goods to Russia. In another resolution, they called for the release of Alexei Navalny and other political prisoners in Russia... [Read more](#)

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Free access to roaming for Ukrainians



On 14 February, the Commission proposed to include Ukraine in the EU roaming zone. Ukrainians will no longer have to pay extra to use their mobile phones when travelling in the EU, and Europeans will enjoy the same rights when travelling to Ukraine. The measure must now be approved by the Council... [Read more](#)

Towards IMF financial support



The IMF conducted a mission with the Ukrainian authorities to decide on potential economic support to Ukraine. "IMF staff and the Ukrainian authorities have reached an agreement" that "paves the way for the opening of discussions on a fully-fledged IMF-supported programme," the institution said. The agreement must now be approved by the IMF's executive... [Read more](#)

Call for donations by the UN

The UN estimates that \$5.6 billion is needed to meet humanitarian needs in Ukraine. 3.9 billion is needed to help 11 million people in Ukraine and the UN refugee agency is seeking \$1.7 billion to help 4.2 million refugees... [Read more](#)



Visit by American, Swedish and Dutch leaders to Kyiv



On 20 February, US President Joe Biden made a surprise visit to Kyiv and expressed his support for Volodymyr Zelensky. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson visited Kyiv on 15 February to reaffirm Sweden's support for Ukraine and to discuss Ukraine's application for membership of the European Union and the reconstruction of the country. On 17 February, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte was also in Kyiv to discuss, among other things, future arms deliveries to Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

Speech by the Latvian President



On 14 February, Latvian President Egils Levits addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He called on Europe to judge Russia's crimes and to give Ukraine a European future. He also called for a "political solution" to the challenges to the rule of law in Europe which could lead to "the weakening, if not the complete loss of democracy itself"... [Read more](#)

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End of internal combustion engines for cars and vans in 2035



On 14 February, MEPs adopted legislation to cut CO2 emissions from new cars and vans by 100% by 2035 by ending the use of internal combustion engines, by 340 votes to 279 with 21 abstentions. An interim emissions reduction target is set at 55% for cars and 50% for vans by 2030. The text must be adopted by the Council. They also voted in favour of including energy targets in national recovery plans... [Read more](#)

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Developing industry, notably semi-conductors



MEPs adopted a position on 15 February on the Chips Act regulation and support the establishment of a shortage intervention mechanism to secure the supply of semiconductors. On 16 February, they adopted a resolution calling on the Commission to prepare plans for the relocation of industries in Europe, particularly in the field of strategic technologies... [Read more](#)

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Towards reforms to fight corruption



In response to allegations of corruption, MEPs on 16 February called for further transparency and integrity reforms, in particular the establishment of an independent ethics body. They voted in favour of financial penalties for infringements, a ban on paid activities that could create a conflict of interest, controls on travel paid for by the institution or working meetings with diplomats from third countries. They also gave the Special Committee on Foreign Interference the task of identifying shortcomings in the rules on transparency, integrity and the fight against corruption... [Read more](#)

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Deployment of new satellites



On 14 February, MEPs approved the establishment of the new European telecommunications satellite network IRIS². This "infrastructure promoting resilience, interconnectivity and security by satellite" will be active in 2024 with a budget of €2.4 billion. It is expected to provide greater autonomy for secure government communications but also for civil society satellite communications. The project has to be approved by the Council... [Read more](#)

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Proposals for participation in elections



On 14 February, MEPs adopted two proposals to simplify participation in European and local elections for EU citizens living in another Member State... [Read more](#)

Call for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Union



MEPs called on the EU on 15 February to ratify the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and urged the six Member States that have not done so (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) to ratify it. They adopted the Union's priorities for the next session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



On 14 February, the Ministers of Economy and Finance discussed the state of play of legislative proposals on financial services and the impact of sanctions against Russia. They adopted their position for the G20 ministerial meeting on 24 and 25 February. They also revised the list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions to include Costa Rica, the Marshall Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Russia, and renewed the restrictive measures against Zimbabwe until 20 February 2024... [Read more](#)

Eurogroup Meeting



Euro area finance ministers discussed developments in the energy markets on 13 February and committed to continuing efforts to diversify sources and reduce consumption. They reviewed labour market developments and exchanged views on the macroeconomic and financial outlook and policy coordination... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Presentation of the trade agreement with New Zealand



On 17 February, the Commission sent to the Council the draft decisions on the signature and conclusion of a trade agreement between the European Union and New Zealand. It will remove tariffs on most EU exports to New Zealand and protect over 2,000 sensitive EU agricultural products... [Read more](#)

ECB :

ECB's annual recommendations



MEPs adopted their annual recommendations to the ECB on 16 February, calling on it to coordinate fiscal and monetary policies more closely to combat inflation and stressing the need to integrate climate change objectives into monetary policy. ECB President Christine Lagarde confirmed that the institution will raise its key interest rates by another 50 basis points in March in light of price pressures... [Read more](#)

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Monetary Policy after the Energy Shock



At a conference in London on 16 February, ECB Executive Board member Fabio Panetta gave an update on monetary policy after the energy shock, indicating that energy inflation slowed more than expected in December. He argued for an easing of monetary policy and a small step increase in interest rates to fight inflation without stifling economic activity... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Purchase of 250 Airbuses by Air India



On 14 February, European aircraft manufacturer Airbus signed an order with Tata Sons, owner of the airline Air India, for 250 aircraft: 140 A320neo, 70 A321neo and 40 long-range A350... [Read more](#)

Launch of the European Technology Champions Fund



The European Investment Bank, together with Spain, Germany, France, Italy and Belgium, pledged on 13 February to mobilise €3.75 billion in a new European fund to provide European high-tech start-ups with the capital they need... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Munich Security Conference



The 59th Munich Security Conference took place from 17 to 19 February. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for an acceleration of military support to his country. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz recalled that Germany's support was designed to last and called on countries that could deliver tanks to Ukraine. French President Emmanuel Macron said that this is not the time for dialogue with Moscow and that France is ready for a prolonged conflict. Polish President Andrzej Duda called for stronger transatlantic ties. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stressed the need to strengthen Ukraine's long-term defences and recalled that the security of the European continent was a priority for his country... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

Belgian-German Summit on energy



On 14 February, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met in Zeebrugge for a bilateral energy summit. The two countries plan to interconnect their hydrogen networks by 2028, double the transit of gas to Germany and launch a study for the construction of a second electricity interconnection... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Preparation of the Spanish Presidency of the Council



On 16 February, the President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sanchez, began his series of meetings to prepare for the Spanish Presidency of the Council, which begins on 1 July. He visited the Austrian Chancellor, Karl Nehammer, the Croatian Prime Minister, Andrej Plenkovic, and the Slovenian Prime Minister, Robert Golob. Discussions focused on enlargement, energy transition and migration.. [Read more](#)

France :

Elisabeth Borne's visit to Brussels



On 16 February, French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne was hosted by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Executive Vice-Presidents Frans Timmermans and Valdis Dombrovskis. Discussions focused on the war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, climate change, energy and electricity market reform, as well as the industrial plan proposed by the Commission... [Read more](#)

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Macedonia :

Green light to the agreement between Frontex and North Macedonia



On 15 February, MEPs approved an agreement between North Macedonia and Frontex that will provide operational support to national authorities in managing migration flows at the borders... [Read more](#)

UK :

Resignation of the Scottish First Minister



On 15 February, the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced her resignation after eight years in office. She said she would remain as head of government until her successor is elected as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in March... [Read more](#)

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Moldova :

New government led by Dorin Recean



On 16 February, the new Moldovan government, headed by Dorin Recean and comprising 15 ministers, including 6 women, was sworn in after the parliament gave it a vote of confidence. The reshuffle comes after the resignation of Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita on 11 February... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :**Action Plan for Armenia 2023-2026**

On 16 February, the Council of Europe launched a new Action Plan for Armenia 2023-2026 which aims to improve the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, respect for the rule of law and democracy in the country. It also aims to strengthen the protection of the rights of displaced persons and to ensure freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Armenia... [Read more](#)

NATO :**Meeting of Defence Ministers**

On 14 and 15 February, NATO Defence Ministers agreed to intensify support to Ukraine, strengthen deterrence and increase the Alliance's stockpile of weapons and ammunition. They discussed the protection of critical submarine infrastructure, with the establishment of a coordination cell for this purpose... [Read more](#)

Culture :**Cultural solidarity with Ukraine**

One year after the invasion of Ukraine, cultural events are being organised all over Europe. Several solidarity concerts are taking place on 24 and 25 February: in Lille, France; in Duisburg, Kiel and Cologne, Germany; in Zielona Gora, Poland; on Polish television; in St Helier, UK; and on the evening of 26 February in Edinburgh. On 24 February, in Kyiv, a theatrical performance will be staged, based on documentary facts and plays by playwrights who survived the war. Until 28 February, the World Heritage Centre in Bamberg is devoting an exhibition to the seven Ukrainian UNESCO World Heritage sites... [Read more](#)

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First international exhibition since the invasion in Kyiv

The first international exhibition in Kyiv since the beginning of the Russian invasion is being held until 14 May at the Module of Temporality, an ephemeral space located in the capital's historic district. Works by 28 artists from 10 countries, including Ukraine, are on display. The project aims to raise funds for the restoration of destroyed cultural institutions... [Read more](#)

BAFTA winners

"All Quiet on the Western Front", a German production, won seven Bafta awards on 19 February, including best film and best director for German director Edward Berger. "The Banshees of Inisherin" won four awards, including best supporting actor for Barry Keoghan and Kerry Condon. The best documentary award went to Navalny, about the Russian opponent Alexei Navalny... [Read more](#)

Opening of the festivities in Timisoara

Timisoara, Romania, has been designated European Capital of Culture 2023. The cultural festivities kicked off on 17 February with three days of performances and various activities throughout the city. An exhibition on Victor Brauner will be held until 28 May... [Read more](#)

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Joan Miro in Bilbao

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is hosting an exhibition devoted to the painter Joan Miro until May 28. It explores a key period in his career, from 1920, the date of his first trip to Paris, to 1945, a year marked by creative effervescence... [Read more](#)

Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in Padua

Until 4 June, the Altinate San Gaetano cultural centre in Padua is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. About twenty works by Frida Kahlo, including some of her most famous self-portraits, a dozen works by Diego Rivera and photographs of the couple taken by some of the most renowned photographers are on display... [Read more](#)

Gabriele Münter in Hamburg



Until 21 May, the Bucerius Kunst Forum in Hamburg is hosting an exhibition devoted to the Expressionist painter Gabriele Münter. While she is best known for her landscapes, the exhibition focuses on her portraits from 1900 to 1940, with around 80 paintings, prints, drawings and photographs... [Read more](#)

Exhibition of photographs by Krzysztof Ligęza in Gorlice



Until 8 March, the Karwacjan and Gladyszow Manor Museum in Gorlice is hosting an exhibition dedicated to photographer Krzysztof Ligęza and telling the story of a couple struck by tragic fate... [Read more](#)

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Mummies in Manchester



The Manchester Museum is hosting the exhibition "Golden Mummies of Egypt" until 31 December. Drawing on the museum's extensive Egyptology collections, it questions preconceptions about the purposes of mummification in ancient Egypt and the role of this practice in beliefs about life after death... [Read more](#)

Poster Art in Prague



Until 30 April, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague is presenting an exhibition entitled "The Language of Posters, 1890-1938". The works are divided into three themes, "Art", "Advertising" and "Ideology". It brings together a collection of famous artists, such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Jules Chéret and Howard Chandler Christy, as well as some Czech artists... [Read more](#)

"Other Worlds" exhibitions by Escher in the Hague



Until 10 September, the Hague Art Museum is hosting an exhibition devoted to Escher. Entitled 'Other Worlds', it aims to present the artist's work in combination with that of the Belgian architectural duo Gijs Van Vaerenbergh... [Read more](#)

"Avant l'orage" in Paris



Until 11 September, the Bourse de Commerce in Paris is presenting an exhibition entitled " Avant l'orage " (Before the storm) exploring the relationship between man and nature. Against the backdrop of climate change, some twenty artists address our relationship with a living world in mutation... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



21 February 2023
Brussels
General Affairs Council



27-28 February 2023
Stockholm
Informal Meeting of Ministers for Telecommunications, Transport and Energy

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