

2024, a European political year - through the eyes of women

Stefanie Buzmaniuk - 05 Mar 2024

Although women have fought hard for the right to vote, they still face many obstacles to participating in political life. Yet their mobilisation can make a difference at the polls, with fewer women than men voting for the far right. On the political scene, however, they suffer from a lack of representation, and when they do get into government, it is often in minor ministries. To achieve equality, women must be prepared to take risks and overcome the mistrust they face. There is a strong awareness of these difficulties at European level, which should encourage progress.



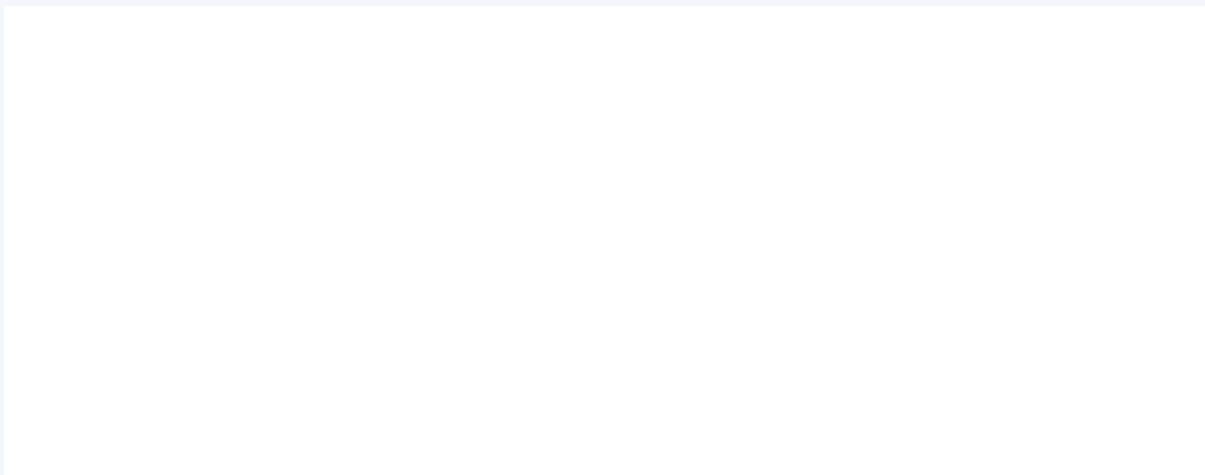
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■ Elections :





Towards a duel between Peter Pellegrini and Ivan Korcok in the Slovak presidential election?

According to opinion polls, Peter Pellegrini (Hlas-Social Democracy), President of the Slovakian Parliament, and Ivan Korcok (PS), former Minister of Foreign Affairs, are the favourites in the presidential elections to be held in Slovakia on 23 March. Polls predict that Peter Pellegrini will win the second round on 6 April. Such a victory would strengthen Prime Minister Robert Fico's power, as Peter Pellegrini is ideologically close to Fico and is unlikely to use his presidency as a counterweight to the current government. His opponent, Ivan Korcok, is a defender of liberal democracy, opposed to the government's plan to reform the penal code, and has warned that this could lead to the suspension of European funds to Bratislava. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



A site to find out everything you need to know about the European elections

From 6 to 9 June, Europeans are being invited to elect 720 Members of the European Parliament for the next five years. The Foundation has set up a website so you can gain a better understanding of the elections and the issues at stake, and follow the campaign with the lists of candidates and the programmes of all the parties in each Member State. [Read more](#)



European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities

In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund. On 29 February, the Commission approved Denmark's second payment request for €422 million, Croatia's fourth payment request for €162.5 million, and Poland's first payment request for €6.3 billion from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to check out the amounts and schedules. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Consultation with farmers on unfair trading practices

On 27 February, the European Commission announced the launch of a consultation with farmers aimed at identifying their experiences of unfair trading practices. An online survey is open until 15 March, and is intended to guide the Commission in its forthcoming proposals on agriculture. [Read more](#)



Recommendation to continue gas saving

On 27 February, the Commission recommended that Member States continue their efforts to reduce gas use. At EU level, this has been reduced by 18% between August 2022 and December 2023. In Ukraine, a 15% reduction on pre-war levels needs to be maintained. These gas savings should help to build up stocks and stabilise world markets. [Read more](#)



Initiatives to boost the European advanced materials industry

On 27 February, the Commission announced a strategy to boost Europe's industrial position in advanced materials, which are crucial to the ecological and digital transition. This initiative aims to align research, innovation and investment to support European competitiveness in the sector and reduce dependence on critical materials. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Protection of quality agricultural products

On 28 February, MEPs voted to strengthen the protection of geographical indications for wines, spirits and agricultural products. The text still has to be formally adopted by the Council. [Read more](#)



Restoration of nature, crimes against the environment and waste transfers

On 27 February, MEPs adopted a European law aimed at restoring degraded ecosystems. It covers 20-30% of land and sea by 2030, 60% by 2040 and 90% by 2050. Priority will be given to Natura 2000 areas until 2030. On the same day, they adopted a directive on the harmonisation of penalties for environmental crimes, including illegal timber trade, depletion of water resources, violations of legislation on chemical substances and maritime pollution. Finally, on 28 February, they voted in favour of a text banning the export of waste to non-OECD countries and restricting the possibility of exporting waste from one EU country to another. These texts now have to be adopted by the Council. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Digital driving licence and wallet

On 28 February, MEPs adopted a reform of European rules on driving licences. They support self-assessment of fitness to drive and leave it to the Member States to introduce a medical examination. They want to harmonise probationary periods by introducing a minimum period of two years. On 29 February, they adopted a regulation establishing a European digital wallet that will enable citizens to authenticate their identity online without going through a private service provider, and to generate electronic signatures with the same value as a handwritten signature. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Transparency of the European electricity market

On 29 February, MEPs adopted legislation aimed at combating manipulation of the electricity market by strengthening the transparency and integrity of the wholesale energy market, as well as the role of the Agency for the Cooperation of Regulators. The text must now be formally approved by the Council. [Read more](#)



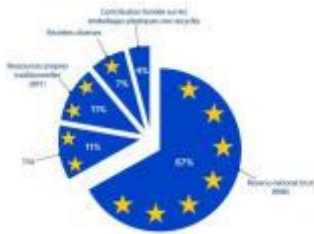
Political advertising and the fight against SLAPP proceedings

On 27 February, Members of the European Parliament adopted new transparency rules for political advertising to combat disinformation and foreign interference in elections, and to strengthen public confidence in electoral campaigns. On the same day, they adopted a directive aimed at protecting people involved in public debate from SLAPP proceedings. These procedures are often aimed at silencing critical voices on issues such as democracy or fundamental rights. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Framework for short-term accommodation rentals

On 29 February, MEPs adopted new rules on data management by short-term rental platforms. The aim is to improve the reliability of information on rentals, which is shared by hosts and made available on the platforms. The national authorities will be responsible for taking action against illegal or non-compliant advertisements. [Read more](#)



Revision of the multiannual financial framework

MEPs have approved long-term funding for Ukraine through the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The "Ukraine Facility" will have a capacity of €50 billion, in the form of grants, loans and guarantees. The revision includes the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), which aims to consolidate and strengthen Europe's position in crucial technologies. The following day, the Council also adopted this revision. The revision has therefore been definitively adopted. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

On 26 February, the agriculture and fisheries ministers discussed solutions to the crisis facing the farming sector. They approved the Commission's proposals, in particular the easing of CAP cross-compliance rules. They welcomed the launch of the strategic dialogue on agriculture and the Commission's consultation on unfair trade practices, both initiatives opening up a debate on the measures to be taken for the future of European agriculture. [Read more](#)



Meeting of ministers responsible for trade

As part of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation, European trade ministers defined European priorities. But the WTO meeting was inconclusive. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Agreement with Chile

On 29 February, Members of the European Parliament approved the Advanced Framework Agreement between the European Union and Chile. The agreement establishes advanced political cooperation and aims to develop trade relations. 99.9% of EU exports to Chile will be duty-free, with the exception of sugar and certain critical products such as meat and olive oil. The agreement will now have to be adopted by the Council, and for certain parts ratified by the Member States, before coming into force. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Emergency aid to the Palestinian population

The Commission has decided to pay €50 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This first payment was made after UNRWA agreed to an audit of its staff over the alleged involvement of some of its members in the 7 October attacks. 68 million will also be allocated by the Commission, through international partners such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. [Read more](#)

■ Denmark :



Closure of the investigation into the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipeline

On 26 February, the Danish police announced the closure of their investigation into the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipeline in 2022. It concludes that the sabotage was intentional, but no one has been identified as being responsible. Denmark thus follows Sweden, which has also closed its investigation. [Read more](#)

■ Finland :



Investiture of the new president, Alexander Stubb

The inauguration of the new President of the Republic of Finland, Alexander Stubb, took place in Helsinki on 1 March, and in his speech he said that Finland's membership of NATO was "the last step towards the community of Western values". He declared that he was ready to take "difficult decisions" to ensure Finnish security. [Read more](#)

■ Portugal :



Opposition ahead in the polls with one week to go

An IPESPE/Duplimetric poll for CNN Portugal reveals that the Democratic Alliance (AD) coalition is leading in voting intentions ahead of the 10 March general elections in Portugal. The poll reveals that the AD and its leader, Luís Montenegro, would garner 28% of voting intentions against 22% for Pedro Nuno Santos and the Socialist Party. The far-right Chega party recorded 14% of voting intentions, and 17% of voters said they were still undecided. [Read more](#)

■ Czech Republic :



Meeting of Visegrád Group

The prime ministers of the Visegrád group (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) met in Prague on 27 February. Discussions focused on Ukraine, immigration, energy and agriculture. At a time when the countries in the group were unable to agree on a common position, Poland reiterated its commitment to the unity of the group, particularly in terms of aid to Ukraine and agriculture. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Slovakia :



Suspension of the reform of the Criminal Code

On 29 February, the Slovak Constitutional Court decided to temporarily suspend part of the justice reform proposed by Prime Minister Robert Fico and his government. This reform of the justice system envisages a number of changes to the Slovak penal system, in particular a reduction in the penalty for corruption and other economic offences. The European Union and the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, have welcomed the suspension of these reforms. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Conference in support of Ukraine in Paris

On 26 February, Emmanuel Macron brought together European heads of state and government in Paris for a conference in support of Ukraine. The conference was an opportunity for European leaders to reassert their determination to defeat Russia's war of aggression, two years after it began. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke by video conference, calling on his allies to step up their support. They agreed on five categories of action: cyber defence; co-production of armaments in Ukraine; defence of countries directly threatened by the Russian offensive in Ukraine, in particular Moldova; and the ability to support Ukraine on its border with Belarus with non-military forces and demining operations. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Security agreement between the Netherlands and Ukraine

Ukraine and the Netherlands signed a security agreement on 1 March. The agreement sets out the Netherlands' long-term support for Ukraine, both in military terms and in financing its reconstruction. In particular, the agreement should improve the interoperability of Ukrainian equipment with that of NATO and support the emergence of a Ukrainian defence industry. It provides for €2 billion in military aid. [Read more](#)



Speech by the Belgian Prime Minister to the Ukrainian Parliament

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo gave a speech to the Ukrainian Parliament on 24 February to mark the 2nd anniversary of the Russian invasion, pledging his support for the Ukrainians and saying that Ukraine was on the frontier of democracy, fighting tyranny, and that its future was European. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Volodymyr Zelensky in the Balkans

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Albania to rally new support in the Balkan countries. On 28 February he took part in the Ukraine-South-East Europe summit. The summit resulted in a joint declaration condemning Russian aggression as the greatest security threat to Europe and the world, and expressing unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for its membership of NATO. The visit provided an opportunity to sign several agreements, including one on cooperation and friendship with Albania and a joint declaration on Euro-Atlantic integration with Northern Macedonia. [Read more](#)

■ Trilogues :



Agreement on Maritime Safety

On 27 February, the European Parliament and the Council reached agreement on a number of texts aimed at strengthening maritime safety. Future legislation must guarantee safer transport, while preserving the environment and the competitiveness of the sector. The texts also bring European laws into line with international standards, in terms of compliance with flag state requirements and port state control. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



European Prosecutor's Office Annual Report

The annual report of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), published on 1 March, shows that 1,927 investigations were open at the end of 2023, representing losses of €19.2 billion for the EU, including €11.5 billion in cross-border VAT fraud. The report shows that fraudsters are now targeting new sources of funding, with losses of €1.8 billion on the first projects financed by NextGenerationEU. [Read more](#)



Asylum Requests Rising

The number of asylum applications has reached its highest level in 7 years, with 1.14 million applications, an increase of 18% compared to 2022. The leading asylum seekers continue to be Syrians, followed by Afghans. Germany continues to receive the highest number of asylum applications in absolute terms - 334,000 - representing a third of the European total. But relative to its population, Cyprus is experiencing the greatest pressure, with 12,000 applications. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Fantastic Cinema in Porto

Fantasporto, an international film festival, is being held in Porto until 10 March. This eclectic film festival presents fantastic feature-length and short films made between 2023 and 2024, which are being screened for the first time. [Read more](#)



Sanna Kannisto in Kuopio

The Kuopio Photographic Centre in Finland is exhibiting photographs by Sanna Kannisto until 26 May. These photos, taken between 2014 and 2023, capture the impressive diversity of natural species, using an approach that blends the worlds of art and science. [Read more](#)



Angelica Kauffman in London

The Angelica Kauffman exhibition is on at the Royal Academy of Arts in London until 30 June. It traces the career of one of the most renowned female painters of the 17th century, from her childhood in Switzerland to her last years in Rome. On display are her self-portraits and portraits of Europe's most famous writers, monarchs and socialites, all in the neoclassical style and inspired by mythological representations. [Read more](#)



James Ensor in Brussels

The "Ensor" exhibition is on until 23 June at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. It offers a unique perspective on the work of this Impressionist artist, who cultivated a satirical style that sometimes included a touch of the grotesque. The exhibition also highlights lesser-known aspects of his art, such as his musical compositions and his graphic creations, demonstrating the diversity of his work. [Read more](#)

KVALITĀR

Michaela Vélová in Prague

Until 6 April, the Kvalitář gallery in Prague is paying tribute to Czech artist Michaela Vélová Maupicová, who died in 2018. In her work, this draughtswoman played with the theme of limits and borders. In particular, she explores the boundary between different disciplines and artistic forms, through a series of drawings and paintings produced between 2012 and 2017. [Read more](#)

G A L E R I A

Arsenal

Exhibition at the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok

Until 28 April, the Arsenal gallery in Białystok, Poland, is exhibiting the works of some twenty Polish, Czech, Ukrainian and Estonian artists who are tackling the Soviet legacy still present in their societies. The exhibition offers an opportunity to revisit and take a different look at the events of this Soviet and post-Soviet period. [Read more](#)



Théodore Rousseau in Paris

Until 7 July, the Petit Palais is presenting an exhibition on the 19th-century painter Théodore Rousseau. Inspired by the village of Barbizon and the forest of Fontainebleau, nature was his main source of inspiration and the focus of his work. Using sketches made during his walks in the forest, the artist painted nature, blending romanticism and realism, and blurring the boundaries between painting and drawing. [Read more](#)

ALBERTINA

Roy Lichtenstein in Vienna

The Albertina in Vienna is honouring Roy Lichtenstein, the American Pop Art master, on the occasion of his 100th birthday. From 8 March to 14 July, the exhibition features 90 paintings, sculptures and prints by the artist. His emblematic paintings of female figures are included in the exhibition, as are his famous black-and-white paintings of objects taken from advertisements. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 4-5 March 2024

Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)

 7 March 2024

Competitiveness Council (Internal Market and Industry) (Brussels)

 7 March 2024

ECB Council of Governors (Frankfurt)

 10 March 2024

General Elections (Portugal)

 11 March 2024

Eurogroup (Brussels)

 11 March 2024

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Council (Brussels)



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