

Letter n°1059 of Tuesday 19th March 2024

Some little-known effects of global warming

Louis Caudron - 19 Mar 2024

The effects of climate change are more diverse than they appear. In some parts of the world, rainfall will increase, while in others droughts will pose problems of access to water and how to store it. Major shipping routes will develop, such as the Northern Sea Route, which could be ice-free all year round from 2035. This will generate new revenue for Russia, which will also benefit from climate change near the poles, as will Canada and Greenland.



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■ Foundation :



The Schuman Network

The Schuman Network is an initiative launched in November 2023 by the Robert Schuman Foundation, which works to promote the sharing of ideas on a European scale. With 19 members from 11 European countries, the Schuman Network is a space for pooling research on current European issues. Since its launch, around sixty studies have been published on the network's website. [Read more](#)



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

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



European recovery plan: 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 12 March, the Commission approved a preliminary assessment of Estonia's second request for payment of €122.3 million. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to learn about the amounts and timetables. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Targeted review of the Common Agricultural Policy

On 15 March, the Commission proposed a revision of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In particular, the text removes the obligation not to cultivate part of the land. However, farmers who set aside part of their land will be entitled to a premium. In addition, farmers will be able to choose between crop rotation or diversification, which will help those affected by drought or flooding to comply with CAP obligations. Farmers will also have greater flexibility to implement soil cover obligations during sensitive periods. And farms of less than 10 hectares will be exempt from controls and penalties linked to their environmental obligations. [Read more](#)



Increase in ammunition production

On 15 March, the Commission allocated the €500 million earmarked for ammunition production (ASAP). The aim of this scheme is to help the European defence industry reach a production capacity of 2 million munitions per year by 2025. The Commission is also encouraging Member States to jointly acquire defence capabilities with the €310 million from the European Defence Industry Joint Procurement Instrument (EDIRPA) and will spend €1.1 billion on research and development through the European Defence Fund (EDF). [Read more](#)



Proposal to open negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina

On 12 March, the Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its report describes the progress made by the country in carrying out reforms, in particular concerning the rule of law, and considers that Bosnia-Herzegovina has reached a satisfactory level of compliance with the criteria for accession to the Union. The Commission has also proposed negotiating frameworks - guidelines and principles - for the accession of Ukraine and Moldova, which will be presented to the Council. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Artificial Intelligence

On 13 March, MEPs approved an agreement reached with the Council on the Regulation on Artificial Intelligence (AI Act). The regulation bans applications based on the use of facial images on the Internet or video surveillance, as well as social rating in companies and schools through the recognition of emotions. AI that manipulates human behaviour is banned, and biometric identification may only be used under strict conditions, notably to prevent terrorist attacks. Finally, high-risk AI systems will have to remain strictly transparent and under human supervision, because of the damage they could cause to vital infrastructures and services. [Read more](#)



Motor vehicle emissions and lorry weights

On 13 March, MEPs adopted the agreement reached with the Council on the Euro 7 regulation. This regulation aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road transport. On 12 March, they supported facilitating the circulation of "mega-trucks" measuring up to 25 metres in length and weighing up to 60 tonnes, despite fears about their impact on the environment, safety and competition with rail freight. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Toy safety and defective products

On 13 March, MEPs voted in favour of banning harmful chemicals in toys, in particular endocrine disruptors. On 12 March, they adopted the trialogue agreement on product liability. The text aims to help European consumers obtain compensation when damage has been caused by defective products. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Reform of the European Customs Code

On 13 March, MEPs adopted a reform of the European Customs Code. The aim of this reform is to modernise the code to adapt it to the growth of online trade, as well as to the new standards, bans, obligations and penalties introduced by the Union in recent years, such as the stricter rules to combat 'fast fashion'. [Read more](#)



Industrial Pollution

On 12 March, MEPs adopted the agreements reached in trialogue on the directive and regulation on industrial emissions. The industries and livestock farms concerned will have environmental performance targets to meet, such as water consumption and waste management. In the event of serious infringements, penalties of at least 3% of the turnover of the organisations concerned will be imposed by the EU. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Media Freedom Act

On 13 March, MEPs adopted a law designed to protect the media and journalists from political and economic interference. The rules prohibit any form of intervention by Member States in the editorial decisions of the media, as well as any form of pressure on journalists. In addition, Member States must now guarantee transparent and non-discriminatory selection of public media managers, to ensure that they are not used for political purposes. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Economics and Finance Ministers

The 27 economy and finance ministers, meeting on 12 March, discussed the positive effects of reforms and social investment on economic growth and fiscal sustainability, as well as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to which they wish to give fresh political impetus for the remainder of its implementation period. They discussed the economic and financial consequences of Russia's aggression in Ukraine and approved the guidelines for the 2025 budget. [Read more](#)



Meeting of employment and social affairs ministers

The ministers for employment and social affairs, meeting on 11 March, validated the agreement reached in trilogue on the directive on platform workers. The text should enable the requalification as employees of pseudo self-employed people working for services such as Uber or Deliveroo. They debated the implementation and approved the political priorities concerning the "European social rights pillar" as part of the European Semester and the future social agenda. They reviewed progress on the directives concerning the European disability card and the European parking card for people with disabilities. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Visit to Greenland and the Faroe Islands

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, visited the Faroe Islands on 14 March and Greenland on 15 March, accompanied by the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen. She signed a memorandum of understanding with the Faroe Islands for closer cooperation, particularly on the green transition. In Greenland, the President inaugurated an EU office in Nuuk, and signed agreements establishing cooperation in favour of green growth and funding for the EU's supply of rare earths. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



7.4 billion € for Egypt

On 17 March, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, accompanied by Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Cypriot President Kyriakos Christodoulides, Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi. The visit resulted in a partnership that will see European funding of €7.4 billion over the next four years. The aim of this initiative is to support the Egyptian economy, particularly against a backdrop of increasing migration, and to avert the risk of a migratory crisis from Palestine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Energy Council with the USA

The 11th Energy Council with the United States was held in Washington on 15 March. The meeting provided an opportunity to recognise the important work carried out by the Task Force to secure European energy supplies and move away from dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The Council also undertook to pursue the decarbonisation of energy sources, emphasising the need to move away from fossil fuels by 2050. The Council also reiterated its support for Ukraine, determined to protect its energy infrastructure in the context of the war with Russia. [Read more](#)



Relations with Switzerland

On 12 March, the Council adopted a negotiating mandate authorising the Commission to negotiate with Switzerland, on behalf of the EU, on their future relationship. The mandate has three objectives: to revise existing agreements on the internal market to incorporate new regulations on state aid and institutional provisions to align with the *acquis communautaire*; to sign agreements on Swiss participation in European programmes such as Horizon Europe, and on Switzerland's financial contribution to the EU as a result of its access to the internal market; and to relaunch negotiations to conclude agreements on electricity, food safety and health. On 18 March, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, received the President of the Swiss Confederation, Viola Amherd, to open negotiations. [Read more](#)

■ Denmark :



Military Spending and Conscription

On 13 March, the Danish government announced an increase in its military spending of €5.4 billion between now and 2028. By 2024, it will have spent more than 2% of GDP on defence. Conscription will also be reformed, with its duration extended from 4 to 11 months and the number of conscripts increased to 5,000 a year. Denmark is also one of the few countries to introduce conscription for women. [Read more](#)

■ Spain :



Amnesty law for Catalan separatists

On 14 March, the Spanish Congress of Deputies approved the amnesty law for Catalan separatists for their attempt to secede from Catalonia in 2017 by 178 votes to 172. This law, the result of a compromise between the government and the pro-independence parties, must now be voted on by the Senate. [Read more](#)

■ The Netherlands :



Geert Wilders gives up on becoming Prime Minister

The four parties involved in the negotiations to form a government in the Netherlands have yet to reach agreement. The differences with Geert Wilders' PVV party, which came first in the elections, concern the management of public finances, the climate, Islam and the European Union. Geert Wilders announced on 13 March that he was relinquishing the post of Prime Minister. Discussions will continue between the parties. [Read more](#)

■ Slovakia :



Poll just one week from the Presidential election

According to a poll carried out by Ipsos for Denník N on 16 and 17 March, in the first round of the presidential election the President of the National Council of the Republic, Peter Pellegrini (Votes-SD), would win 37.4% of the vote. Ivan Korčok would follow with 36.6%. Štefan Harabin would be in third place (11.3%), followed by Igor Matovič (4.3%), Krisztián Forró (2.8%), Ján Kubiš (2.4%), Marian Kotleba (1.8%) and Milan Náhlík (1.1%). The other candidates would not even obtain 1%. [Read more](#)



Plan to abolish the public broadcaster

On 12 March, the Minister of Culture, Martina Šimkovičová, announced a bill to abolish the public broadcaster RTVS and replace it with a new body called STaR, which will be run by direct political appointees. This bill has been strongly criticised by the opposition, which denounces it as an autocratic move and is concerned about press freedom. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Weimar Triangle :



Emmanuel Macron and Donald Tusk travel to Berlin

French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk travelled to Berlin on 15 March, where they were met by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Together, they declared their intention to raise more arms for Ukraine on the world market and to develop arms production in collaboration with their Ukrainian partners. They announced the formation of a new long-range artillery coalition in the Ramstein format. They stated their intention to step up training aid for the Ukrainian army and to use frozen Russian funds to finance Ukraine's defence. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



The French Parliament supports the security agreement between Paris and Kyiv

On 12 and 13 March, French MPs and senators voted in favour of the security agreement signed by Emmanuel Macron and Volodymyr Zelensky on 16 February. With 372 votes in favour in the National Assembly and 293 in the Senate, Parliament broadly approved the text. The agreement provides for enhanced cooperation between Paris and Kyiv over the next ten years, as well as France's support for Ukraine's integration into the European Union and NATO. [Read more](#)



UN Commission of Inquiry

In a report published on 15 March, the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission on Ukraine expressed its concern about the multiple violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. The Commission has found new evidence accusing the Russian authorities of war crimes against Ukrainian civilians, and is particularly concerned about the continued use of explosives in civilian areas. It strongly condemns these acts and reiterates the need to bring the perpetrators to justice. [Read more](#)



Trade support for Moldova and Ukraine

On 14 March, MEPs voted in favour of the Commission's proposal to suspend import duties and quotas on Ukrainian agricultural exports to the EU for a further year until 5 June 2025. This legislation will allow the Commission to take action more quickly to protect the European market in the event of major disruptions caused by Ukrainian imports. In a separate vote, MEPs also renewed the suspension of the remaining duties on imports from Moldova. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Russia :



European Sanctions

On 12 March, the Council extended by six months the sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for actions undermining the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The sanctions, which already target more than 2,100 individuals and entities, include travel restrictions for these individuals, as well as the freezing of financial assets and a ban on access to economic resources. On the same day, MEPs approved the law on criminalising violations and circumventions of sanctions imposed by the Union. And on 13 March, they voted in favour of the proposal for a directive on the recovery and confiscation of assets. [Read more - Other link - Other link](#)

■ Trilogues :



Firearms trafficking

On 14 March, Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on the Regulation on the import, export and transit of firearms for civil uses. This will involve increased monitoring of all imports and most exports of firearms for civilian use. The regulation will establish a European Electronic Licence System (ELS) to replace the current national systems, most of which are paper-based. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



NATO Annual Report

On 14 March, the Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, presented the organisation's annual report, which reviews the strengthening of NATO through its enlargement to include Finland in 2023 and Sweden in 2024, and the increase in its Response Force to 300,000 soldiers. Military spending has increased and should enable two-thirds of the Alliance's members to pass the mark of 2% of GDP devoted to defence. NATO has also increased its ammunition production, with the Defence Production Action Plan, and has given long-term support to Ukraine with the creation, in July, of the NATO-Ukraine Council, designed to take decisions on security issues common to the countries of the Alliance and Ukraine. [Read more](#)



Imports and exports of arms

On 11 March, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) revealed that European states almost doubled their imports of major weapons between 2014/2018 and 2019/2023. European imports from the United States rose from 35% to 55% of total imports. US exports increased by 17%, maintaining their number one position. France became the world's second largest exporter, with an increase of 47%, while Russia fell to third place, its exports dropping by 53%. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :

MUSEO NACIONAL
DEL PRADO

Masterpieces from the Frick Collection at the Prado

The exhibition "Obras maestras españolas de la Frick Collection" is on show at the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid until 2 July. It highlights nine works by master painters, including El Greco, Velázquez, Goya and Murillo. These exceptional pieces, usually exhibited in New York, are returning to Spain for the first time in 100 years. [Read more](#)

National Portrait Gallery

Francesca Woodman and Julia Margaret Cameron in London

The exhibition "Portraits to Dream In" by Francesca Woodman and Julia Margaret Cameron is running from 21 March to 16 June at the National Portrait Gallery in London. A century separates the two photographers: Cameron lived in the 1860s in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka, and Woodman in the 1970s in the United States and Italy. But they share an approach to portraiture that goes beyond simply capturing appearance and explores concepts of identity, gender and beauty. [Read more](#)



FONDAZIONE
PALAZZO
STROZZI

Anselm Kiefer in Florence

Anselm Kiefer's exhibition 'Fallen Angels' will be on show from 22 March to 21 July at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. This contemporary German artist, renowned for his exploration of post-war German identity, offers in this exhibition an in-depth reflection on the human condition. The works on show deal with themes of identity, memory and philosophy, exploring the link between present, past and future. [Read more](#)

Bozar

Surrealists in Brussels

The exhibition "Histoire de ne pas rire. Surrealism in Belgium" is running until 16 June at Bozar in Brussels. The museum is celebrating the centenary of the Belgian Surrealist movement, by placing the works in their historical and political context. On display are works by some of the best-known painters, including René Magritte, Paul Delvaux and Max Ernst. [Read more](#)

EMΣT

National Museum
of Contemporary Art Athens

Malvina Panagiotidi in Athens

Malvina Panagiotidi's exhibition 'All Dreams Are Vexing' is on show at the Athens Museum of Contemporary Art until 2 June. The Greek artist drew inspiration from her own experience in the residence where the famous Greek painter Eleni Boukoura-Altamura lived after the tragic death of her children. This exhibition explores the modern occult, the power of the imagination and the symbolism of this residence, which is both a refuge and a prison. [Read more](#)



The Kroples Art Collection in Ljubljana

Until 14 July, the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana is exhibiting "The Kroples Art Collection". This private collection blends symbolism, expressionism and new objectivity. Exhibiting 30 local artists, the museum offers a chance to discover the everyday aspects, landscapes and myths of Slovenia in the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries. [Read more](#)



Muzeum
Narodowe
we Wrocławiu

Impressions in Wrocław


Until 19 May, the National Museum in Wrocław, Poland, is presenting "Impressions. The Young on Old Art". The exhibition attempts to highlight the dreams and feelings of young people and what they are looking for in the art of the past. [Read more](#)



National Picasso Museum-Paris

The Musée National Picasso in Paris is presenting its collection until March 2027. Drawn from the artist's studios, the collection on show is the largest public collection of works by Picasso. A veritable retrospective of the artist's life, the exhibition raises questions about his style. From Cubism to Symbolism, Classicism to Surrealism, and the figurative to the political, the works on display give visitors the freedom to interpret them in their own way. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 19 March 2024

General Affairs Council (Brussels)

 20 March 2024

Tripartite Social Summit (Brussels)

 20 March 2024

Foreign Affairs Council (Brussels)

 21-22 March 2024

European Council (Brussels)

 22 March 2024

Eurozone Summit (Brussels)

 23 March 2024

Presidential Election (1st round) (Brussels)

 25 March 2024

Environment Council (Brussels)



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