

Has the time come for European defence?

Maxime Lefebvre - 03 Apr 2024

"From foreign policy to external operations, from the defence industry to collective defence, there is a common thread running through a shared future that has yet to unfold its full potential". So European defence offers some promise, at a time when war has returned to the continent and in the event of a change of policy by the Americans in Ukraine. Without a natural leader, this defence is still viewed in the shadow of NATO and the American umbrella. But we need to break the taboos and open up the debate.



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■ 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 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](#)



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](#)



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 26 March, the Commission approved a preliminary assessment of the second payment request of €58.9 million for Malta. On 27 March, the Commission made the second payment of €360 million to Lithuania. The Foundation offers you an interactive map of the plans country by country, to find out the amounts and timetables. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Online risks during the elections

On 26 March, the Commission published guidelines for major platforms and search engines. The aim is to mitigate systemic online risks that could affect the integrity and fairness of elections, particularly those to be held next June. The Commission has expressed its concern about AI-generated content, such as deepfakes or disinformation. It recommends that the platforms and search engines concerned reduce the monetisation and virality of harmful content, while promoting official information on electoral processes and launching media literacy programmes. [Read more](#)



European Degree

On 27 March, the Commission presented three initiatives to strengthen transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, with the aim of creating a European degree. These initiatives are designed to overcome the obstacles hindering the establishment of joint degree programmes between universities. The communication proposes the creation of a "European preparatory label" pending the establishment of the "European Degree". [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

Meeting on 26 March, the 27 agriculture ministers backed the Commission's proposal to simplify the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Among other things, farmers will no longer be required to convert 4% of their land to set-aside or non-productive land, and will be exempt from the conditions for paying CAP aid in the event of natural disasters. Similarly, farms of less than 10 hectares will be exempt from controls and penalties if they fail to meet their green obligations. Finally, the ministers discussed the situation of European agricultural markets in the light of the war in Ukraine. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Meeting of Environment Ministers

The environment ministers meeting on 25 March adopted the revision of the regulation on the transport of waste. They debated the proposed revision of the Waste Framework Directive, which aims to reduce the environmental impact of the production and management of textile and food waste. Welcoming the Commission's proposal to prevent the loss of plastic granulate into the environment, they discussed the communication on the 2040 climate target. This target aims to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2040 compared to 1990 levels. [Read more](#)



Defence: appointment of new heads of mission

On 26 March, the Council appointed new Heads of Mission for three civilian missions. Major General Bettina Boughani was appointed Head of Mission for EUMM Georgia, with the aim of stabilising, normalising and building confidence in Georgia. Karin Limdal has been appointed as the new Head of Mission of EUPOL COPPS, tasked with supporting the Palestinian Civil Police in the areas of policing and criminal justice. Lastly, Mr Kęstutis Lančinskas has been appointed Head of Mission of EUCAP Somalia, with the task of helping Somalia enforce civil maritime law. [Read more](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Amazon must comply with European digital advertising legislation

On 27 March, the Court of Justice rejected Amazon's request to suspend its obligation to make an advertising register available to the public. Amazon argued that this obligation, established under the Digital Single Market (DSA) Regulation, infringed its fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of enterprise. However, the Court ruled in favour of the European Commission, rejecting Amazon's request for suspension. [Read more](#)

■ Schengen :



Bulgaria and Romania join the Schengen area

Since 31 March, air and sea border controls have been lifted for Bulgaria and Romania, which are therefore partially joining the Schengen area. Land borders are not yet affected. Road controls are therefore being maintained, and are the subject of negotiations with Austria in particular. [Read more](#)

■ Belgium :



COSAC Conference

On 27 March, the Committee for European Affairs of the Member States of the European Union and of the European Integration of Partner and Candidate Countries (COSAC) adopted a final document on Ukraine at the end of its conference. The document calls for European military, humanitarian, political and economic aid to be maintained and accelerated, for Russia to be condemned for its aggression, and for those responsible in Russia to be brought before the International Criminal Court for war crimes. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Bulgaria :



Failed rotation of government and new elections

Three weeks after the resignation of the head of government, Nikolai Denkov, on 6 March, Bulgaria finds itself in a situation of political instability. The rotation provided for in the agreement between GERB and PP-DB has failed, due to a lack of consensus on many points between the two political parties. The former European Commissioner, Mariya Gabriel, who was due to head the government, finally withdrew her candidacy. New elections will therefore be held, the sixth in three years. [Read more](#)

■ Cyprus :



Combating the circumvention of sanctions against Russia

On 26 March, the United States and Cyprus announced the signing of a cooperation agreement to combat money laundering and sanctions evasion. The agreement allows the US Department of Justice and the FBI to provide assistance and expertise to the Cypriot police. The collaboration follows allegations that Cypriot financial services providers have helped Russian oligarchs evade international sanctions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



Space competition: Ariane 6 and mini launchers

During his visit to the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou on 26 March, the French President visited the Ariane 6 assembly area, where the first flight is expected this summer. He also announced support for 4 micro and mini launcher projects, to meet public requirements for small satellites. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Public deficit at 5.5% of GDP in 2023

On 27 March, INSEE published its annual assessment of the French national accounts. The public deficit for 2023 stands at €154 billion, or 5.5% of GDP. In addition, public debt stands at 110.6% of GDP. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



Polish-Ukrainian government meeting

On 28 March, the Polish government led by Donald Tusk met the Ukrainian government led by Denys Shmyhal in Warsaw. The two governments issued a joint declaration, reiterating the Polish-Ukrainian alliance and the need for a balanced trade relationship that benefits farmers in both countries. To this end, the Ukrainian Prime Minister has announced that he is suspending the issuing of licences for the export of cereals to Poland. The two countries say they are ready to step up their joint efforts to block Russian and Belarusian agricultural imports into Europe. [Read more](#)

■ Czech Republic :



Ammunitions purchase for Ukraine

On 26 March, Slovenia and Portugal announced that they were joining the Czech initiative to purchase ammunition for Ukraine. Poland announced on 27 March that it was doubling its contribution. Supported by around twenty countries, the initiative is seen as a success. The head of Czech diplomacy, Jan Lipavský, announced that a total of one and a half million shells could be delivered to Kyiv. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



Agreement on road transport with the European Union

The European Union and Moldova have extended their road transport agreement until 31 December 2025. As a result of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, Moldova can no longer export its products from that country. This agreement therefore aims to facilitate Moldova's access to world markets, by simplifying transit through EU countries. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Parliamentary visits to Kyiv

On 26, 27 and 28 March, the President of the Estonian Riigikogu (parliament) Lauri Hussar, the President of the French National Assembly Yaël Braun-Pivet, a delegation of European Parliament committee chairpersons and a delegation from the European Parliament's Renew group led by its President Valérie Hayer visited Kyiv. They expressed their support for Ukraine's membership of the European Union and NATO, and for the continuation of military aid. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Declaration of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

On 26 March, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted a Declaration to mark the second anniversary of Russia's war against Ukraine. It again condemned the ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and reasserted its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. [Read more](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Michael O'Flaherty, new Commissioner for Human Rights

Michael O' Flaherty, an Irish lawyer, elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe last January, took up his duties as Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 April for a non-renewable six-year term. He has indicated his intention to make his first visit to Ukraine. [Read more](#)



Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya addresses the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

On 27 March, Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya, leader of the Belarusian Democratic Forces, addressed the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, asking it to help the Belarusian people establish democracy in their country. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report on cohesion

The Commission has published its 9th report on the state of economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe. In a context where the effects of the 2009 recession have continued to be felt, cohesion policy has played a crucial role. From 2014 to 2020, it accounted for 13% of public investment at European level, and 51% of public investment in less developed countries. In this way, it has supported economic growth in sectors such as innovation, education and protection against natural disasters. On the other hand, demographic change, the digital transition and climate change are challenges that accentuate disparities within the Union and which this policy must address. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Brancusi at the Centre Pompidou in Paris

The Centre Pompidou in Paris is honouring Constantin Brancusi, the Romanian-born sculptor and inventor of modern sculpture, with an exceptional retrospective. From now until 1 July, over four hundred works by the artist, including one hundred and twenty sculptures, as well as drawings, photographs and films, will be on show, giving visitors an opportunity to discover all the dimensions of the artist's work. This retrospective is the first dedicated to Brancusi in France since 1995. [Read more](#)



Goya in Madrid

Following on from the Milan exhibition, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid is hosting, until 23 June, a selection of works by the Spanish painter Goya, tracing the stages and themes he dealt with throughout his life. Divided into four thematic sections, the exhibition features paintings, drawings, plates and engravings by the artist. [Read more](#)



"Raphael, Titian, Rubens" in Rome

The "Raphael, Titian, Rubens" exhibition is on until 30 June in Rome's Palazzo Barberini. The fifty works on display include masterpieces of the Renaissance. This initiative is a unique and unmissable opportunity to bring together works from the Borghese Gallery, which is currently undergoing restoration work, and the national galleries of ancient art. [Read more](#)

**KUNST
SAMMLUNG
NORDRHEIN
WESTFALEN**

Af Klint and Kandinsky in Düsseldorf

The exhibition "Hilma af Klint and Wassily Kandinsky" runs until 11 August at the Kunstsammlung in Düsseldorf. This is the first time that these two pioneers of abstract art have been exhibited side by side: Kandinsky, the Russian artist who co-founded the Blaue Reiter, and Af Klint, the Swedish artist whose work has just been rediscovered. The exhibition includes paintings, watercolours and drawings. [Read more](#)

G HMP

New realism in Prague

The "New Realism" exhibition will be on at the Municipal Gallery in Prague until 25 August. It offers a perspective on visual culture and art in Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1945. It features works by well-known artists, as well as artists from the German-, Slovak- and Hungarian-speaking minorities. [Read more](#)

STEDELIJK
MUSEUM
AMSTERDAM

Marina Abramovic in Amsterdam

The "Marina Abramovic" exhibition is running until 14 July at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. It offers an opportunity for an immersion in the work of this pioneer of performance art and the body, sometimes defying physical and mental limits. Each day, over 60 performances are presented by artists trained at her school. [Read more](#)

**MUSEUM
LUDWIG**

Roni Horn in Cologne

Until 11 August, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne will be showing an exhibition by Roni Horn, an artist who seeks to demonstrate the changing nature of art and identity through sculpture, photography, drawing and writing. The exhibition consists of pairs of works, each with its 'opposite' to show paradoxes and ambiguity. [Read more](#)



European Craft Days

The European Craft Days are taking place until 7 April. These consist of open days at workshops, collective events and visits to training establishments, museums and exceptional sites. 25 countries are taking part in this year's event, whose theme is "At your fingertips", with Portugal as guest of honour. [Read more](#)



Eero Järnefelt in Helsinki

From 5 April to 25 August, the Ateneum museum in Helsinki is presenting an exhibition by the artist Eero Järnefelt (1863-1937). Born into a cosmopolitan family and a campaigner for an independent Finland at a time when it was under Russian imperial authority, Eero Järnefelt invited visitors to discover the great figures of his time. [Read more](#)



Art Paris

From 4 to 7 April, the 26th edition of the Art Paris contemporary art fair will be held. The fair will be hosting 136 galleries from 25 countries, focusing on two themes: "Fragile Utopias, a look at the French scene" and "Art & Craft". Some 125 tours organised by the "Observatoire de l'art contemporain" will help to understand contemporary art and raise public awareness of it. [Read more](#)

Agenda :

 3-4 April 2024

Informal Meeting of Transport Ministers (Brussels)

 6 April

Presidential Election (2nd round) (Slovakia)

 7-9 April 2024

Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers (Ghent)



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