

## Twenty years after the largest-ever enlargement

[Elise Bernard - 30 Apr 2024](#)

1 May 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the accession of ten new Member States to the European Union. This greatest-ever enlargement is a symbol of the peaceful unity of the continent and - now more than ever before - our greatest geopolitical asset. This review looks back at the strengths and weaknesses brought about by the accession of 10 States, which has had a profound effect on European integration, from the reform of institutions to the reunification of the peoples of Europe - separated for too long by the Iron Curtain - not forgetting Mediterranean issues and the emergence of political figures who have punctuated the news of our Union over the last 20 years.



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■ **Front page! :**



## Macron and Europe: An urgent appeal

Emmanuel Macron's Sorbonne speech sets out ambitious and visionary proposals for Europe. "They reflect the urgent need to wake up" in economic, financial, security and cultural terms. "We must defend our interests and protect ourselves from repeated aggression, cyber or otherwise; we must even counterattack". Faced with Europe's impoverishment, we need to pursue a policy of growth. In the face of the Russian threat, we need to rearm. To embody Europe's "culture of creativity, freedom and abundance", we need a genuine European digital cultural platform, based on Arte. If we are to offer answers to Europe's citizens, we urgently need to work together with our European partners. [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



## Publication of the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2024".

The Foundation is publishing the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2024". This year it includes the exceptional contribution of the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, as well as that of the Presidents of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. Eminent representatives from the worlds of politics, business, research and diplomacy paint a portrait of a Union that is mapping out the contours of environmental and digital sovereignty and projecting itself into a new geopolitical era, full of new challenges, particularly for its industry and defence. The book is available in French and English. Order your copy now! [Read more](#)

## ■ Commission :



## Fourth round of Eurobond financing

On 23 April, the Commission announced the raising of €8 billion in bonds as part of its fourth operation for 2024. Due to mature on 4 February 2050, the fourth NextGenerationEU green bond will be used to finance Member States' green projects included in their national Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) plans. The Commission has now issued around €48 billion of its €75 billion funding target for the first half of 2024. [Read more](#)

## ■ Parliament :



## Review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

On 24 April, MEPs approved revisions to the CAP Strategic Plans Regulation and the CAP Horizontal Regulation, aimed at reducing the administrative burden on farmers. This revision makes the main environmental obligations that used to condition the payment of direct aid to farmers, such as maintaining biodiversity areas on farms, optional. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Stability and Growth Pact

On 23 April, MEPs adopted new rules for the Stability and Growth Pact, designed to make them clearer, more favourable to investment, better adapted to each situation and more flexible. The aim is to strengthen the protection of governments' investment capacity and guarantee the credibility of these rules by introducing deficit and debt reduction mechanisms. They should also give Member States greater room for manoeuvre. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



## New European body for ethical standards

On 25 April, MEPs approved the agreement reached with eight European institutions and bodies, including the Commission and the Council, to jointly create a new body for ethical standards. This body will be responsible for developing, updating and interpreting common minimum standards of ethical conduct, and will publish reports on how these rules have been taken into account in the internal rules of each signatory. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Corporate due diligence

On 24 April, MEPs approved the "due diligence" directive, which aims to require companies and their partners - upstream and downstream - to prevent, halt or mitigate their negative impact on human rights and the environment, including at the level of sourcing, production and distribution. The new rules require large companies - employing more than 1,000 people, with a global turnover of more than €450 million and operating in the EU - to incorporate due diligence policies and climate transition plans. The directive provides for fines of up to 5% of turnover for non-compliance with European rules. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Ban on products made using forced labour

On 23 April, MEPs gave their final approval to a new regulation enabling the EU to ban the sale, import and export of goods produced using forced labour. Member State authorities and the Commission will be able to investigate suspect products, supply chains and manufacturers. Manufacturers of products banned in Europe will have to withdraw them from the market, but will be able to reintroduce them if they eliminate forced labour from their supply chains, subject to fines for non-compliance. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## New rules for digital platform workers

On 24 April, MEPs adopted new rules to ensure that people working via digital platforms, such as Uber and Deliveroo, have a properly defined employment status and to correct "bogus self-employment". The new law establishes a presumption of an employment relationship for workers on digital platforms and, in particular, bans dismissals based on algorithmic decisions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Reduction of air pollution

On 24 April, MEPs adopted an agreement on new measures to improve air quality in the EU, in order to protect human health, natural ecosystems and biodiversity. The new rules aim to impose stricter limits on harmful pollutants by 2030, with the possibility for Member States to request a ten-year postponement under certain conditions. In the event of non-compliance, citizens will be able to take legal action to obtain compensation if their health has been affected. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Net Zero Emission Industry Act

On 25 April, MEPs approved the agreement reached with the Council on the Net Zero Emissions Industry Act. The aim of this law is for Europe to produce, within its borders, 40% of its annual requirements for the deployment of net zero emission technologies by 2030. This includes renewable technologies, nuclear power, industrial decarbonisation, energy storage technologies and biotechnology. The law is based on the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and aims to capture 15% of the global market value of these technologies. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Combating Russian interference

On 25 April, MEPs voted in favour of a resolution calling on the political leaders of the European Union and its Member States to counter Russia's attempts to interfere as a matter of urgency. The adoption of this resolution comes at a time when elected representatives, such as Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) MEP Maximilian Krah, are being investigated for alleged links with foreign agents, particularly Russians. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



## Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

The Foreign Affairs ministers met in Luxembourg on 22 April. Following speeches by the Ukrainian foreign affairs minister, Dmytro Kuleba, and defence minister, Rustem Umerov, several ministers expressed their wish to contribute to the Czech and German initiatives on munitions and air defence. They discussed the situation in the Middle East, highlighting the lack of progress on the release of hostages and the ceasefire. The ministers also discussed strengthening coordination with the UN and the African Union for a lasting ceasefire in Sudan, and expressed their concerns about Georgia's new law on the transparency of foreign influence. [Read more](#)



## Humanitarian aid to Palestinians

On 26 April, the Commission announced a further €68 million in humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza. This aid will be distributed via trusted organisations already present on the ground. This support is intended to boost food, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and shelter aid, bringing total EU humanitarian aid for the Palestinians to €193 million. [Read more](#)

## ■ Court of Justice :



### Annual Report

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has published its 2023 annual report, entitled "Panorama of the Year", which provides an account of the institution's activities and the case law of its two courts. It shows that the Court dealt with 2,092 cases in 2023, of which 1,687 were resolved. The average length of proceedings was 17.2 months. One of the highlights of 2023 was the Meta Platforms Ireland v Commission judgment, in which the Court ruled in favour of the Commission in its request to Meta to hand over documents containing certain search terms, stating that the protection of sensitive personal data would not be affected, contrary to what Meta had indicated. [Read more](#)

## ■ Court of Auditors :



### Report on European aid for refugees in Türkiye

The European Court of Auditors' report of 24 April examined EU funding for refugees in Türkiye under the 2016 agreement to manage the influx of Syrian refugees, including €6 billion in humanitarian and development aid. The auditors noted adequate EU support but identified shortcomings in the Commission's assessment of project budgets. They also stated that they were unable to determine the real impact of some of these funds. [Read more](#)

## ■ Croatia :



### Rafale enters service with the French Air Force

The Croatian Air Force welcomed its first six Rafale aircraft to the Zagreb base on 25 April, following the acquisition of twelve aircraft in November 2021. For the occasion, the President of the Republic, Zoran Milanović, the Prime Minister, Andrej Plenković, and the Defence Minister, Ivan Anušić, visited the base. The rest of the fleet is expected to arrive by the end of 2024, with a full squadron by mid-2025. [Read more](#)

## ■ France :



## Sorbonne Speech

On 25 April, French President Emmanuel Macron delivered his "Speech on Europe" at the Sorbonne, seven years after his first address at the same venue in 2017. In it, the President set out his vision of the European Union, warning of the external and internal threats weighing on it. He set out a number of proposals, notably in favour of a European preference for arms purchases and missile defence. To face up to China and the United States, he called for exemptions from certain rules on competition and trade. The French President also advocated bringing production lines back to Europe and a genuine European industrial policy. An "investment shock" is needed to raise the €600 to €1,000 billion a year necessary to finance the digital and environmental transitions, putting on the table the possibility of a new common loan and calling for the savings of Europeans to be invested in the Union's economy. [Read more - Other link](#)



## Franco-German tank of the future

French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu met his German counterpart, Boris Pistorius, in Paris on 26 April. At the end of the meeting, the two men signed an agreement sealing the two countries' collaboration on the MGCS (Main Ground Combat System) programme. Financed in equal parts by Paris and Berlin, the project aims to bring together French and German industry to create a "tank of the future" that should replace the German Leopard 2 and French Leclerc tanks. [Read more](#)



## New contract to strengthen Strasbourg's European dimension

French President Emmanuel Macron visited the European School in Strasbourg on 26 April to sign the fifteenth three-year contract for the period 2024-2026, designed to boost Strasbourg's profile as a European capital. The contract is worth €296 million, a significant increase on the previous one of €189 million, and will fund a range of projects between the State and local and regional authorities. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Italy :



## Giorgia Meloni candidate in the European elections

Closing her party's congress on 28 April, Council President Giorgia Meloni announced that she would head her Fratelli d'Italia party's list for the European elections in June. However, she has no intention of stepping down, but wants to use her high profile to benefit her party, which is credited with 28.5% of voting intentions in the polls. She wants to "do in Europe what we did in Italy". [Read more](#)

## ■ Poland :



### Speech by Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs

On 25 April, Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski gave his annual foreign policy speech to the Polish Parliament. In it, he stated that the country's security must be based on European integration and a good transatlantic relationship, the two not being incompatible. He advocated strengthening European defence, notably through the Weimar Triangle, and saw the launch of the EU accession process for Ukraine and Moldova as a strategic imperative. The Minister encouraged continued Western support for Ukraine, to help it win the war against Russia and rebuild. [Read more](#)

## ■ Portugal :



### 50 years since the Carnation Revolution

On 25 April, Portugal commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, marking the peaceful overthrow of Europe's longest dictatorship in 1974. The coup led to Portugal's first democratic elections and the independence of its African colonies. To mark this anniversary, several ceremonies were held in Lisbon in the presence of all the Portuguese-speaking leaders. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ UK :





## Parliament passes controversial "Safety of Rwanda" law

The Safety of Rwanda Act was passed by the British Parliament on 22 April. This controversial law confirms Rwanda's "safe country" status for the resettlement of migrants and authorises the deportation to Rwanda of asylum seekers who have arrived in the UK illegally. In doing so, it overturns an earlier ruling by the UK Supreme Court, which ruled the scheme illegal in November 2023. [Read more](#)



## Rishi Sunak in Berlin and Warsaw

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visited Warsaw on 23 April and Berlin on 24 April, meeting his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk and his German counterpart Olaf Scholz, as well as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. During these meetings, Rishi Sunak announced £500 million in military aid for Ukraine, as well as a £75 billion increase in military spending over the next 6 years, to reach 2.5% of GDP by 2030. The UK and Germany have pledged to strengthen their security cooperation, including a joint programme to acquire the RCH 155 self-propelled gun, and to support the strengthening of the Ukrainian defence industry. [Read more](#)

## ■ Sweden :



## Visit by the Latvian Prime Minister

On 25 and 26 April, Latvian Prime Minister Evika Siliņa travelled to Sweden to meet her Swedish counterpart, Ulf Kristersson. The latter announced the installation of mechanised military units in Latvia, an initiative that has yet to be approved by the Swedish parliament. This announcement is part of the two countries' plans to strengthen security in the Baltic region and the collective defence of NATO allies. They also underlined their support for strengthening military industry and economic cooperation. [Read more](#)



## State visit by the Finnish President

The President of Finland, Alexander Stubb, paid a state visit to Sweden on 23 and 24 April. "We are often similar, sometimes a little different, but always inseparable. Today, more than ever, we stand together. Sweden's cause is our cause. Finland's cause is yours", declared President Stubb in his speech to the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament. The aim of the visit was to intensify cooperation between Finland and Sweden in the current context of security policy, both bilaterally and as members of NATO. The visit also focused on promoting cooperation between Finnish and Swedish companies in order to strengthen the countries' global competitiveness and accelerate the green transition. [Read more](#)

## ■ Macedonia :



### Results of the first round of the presidential election

On 24 April, Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, candidate for the Internal Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) won the first round of the presidential election in Northern Macedonia, with 40.08% of the vote. His main rival, the Social Democrat Stevo Pendarovski, won only 19.92% of the vote. He is followed by Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, candidate of the Albanian DUI party, with 13.37% of the vote, then Maksim Dimitrievski, 9.26% and Arben Taravari 9.2%. The second round will take place on 8 May. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



### 1.5 billion € for Ukraine

On 24 April, the Commission disbursed the second tranche of exceptional financing for Ukraine under the Ukraine Facility, amounting to €1.5 billion. This payment follows the Commission's positive assessment of the conditions agreed for the political reforms to be carried out in a number of areas, such as the justice system, the fight against money laundering and the management of public finances, in order to ensure that the funds are used transparently and effectively. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



## Michelangelo in London

The exhibition "Michelangelo, the last decades" will run from 2 May to 28 July at the British Museum in London. It explores the last thirty years of Michelangelo's life, from his departure from Florence for Rome in 1534 until his death. The exhibition shows the vitality and constant creativity of his artistic production, which tackles the themes of faith, salvation and mortality. [Read more](#)



## Notre-Dame de Paris exhibitions in Madrid and Paris

The CentroCentro cultural centre in Madrid and the Galerie des Gobelins in Paris are devoting an exhibition to Notre-Dame de Paris. The Mobilier National and the Île-de-France Regional Department of Cultural Affairs are presenting the public with masterpieces from the interior decoration of the building, including twenty-one large-format paintings, as well as models of the future liturgical furniture currently under construction. CentroCentro in Madrid is hosting an augmented reality exhibition on the history of the cathedral, from its creation in the 12th century to the fire of 2019 and its restoration. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## "Pompeian Interiors" in Rome

The "Pompeian Interiors" exhibition of photographs by Luigi Spina is on at the Castel Sant'Angelo until 30 June. This Italian photographer has explored the interiors of more than one hundred and twenty of Pompeii's 'domus'. Sixty of his photographs of the various Pompeian sites are on show, offering a unique insight into everyday life in this ancient city. [Read more](#)



## Pierre Bonnard in Aix-en-Provence

The Hôtel Caumont in Aix-en-Provence will be paying tribute to the painter Pierre Bonnard from 30 April to 6 October. Fascinated by Japan, the artist incorporated the aesthetics of Japanese art into his works, breaking with the Naturalist and Impressionist movements of his time. Japanese prints complete the exhibition, illustrating the similarities and affinities between the work of the French painter and Japanese art, and highlighting the artist's main source of inspiration. [Read more](#)

**LOUISIANA** MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

### Roni Horn in Humlebæk

From 2 May to 1 September, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, is exhibiting works by Roni Horn, an American artist and writer who explores the changing nature of art and identity through sculpture, drawing, photography and books. In this exhibition, Roni Horn provides a key to reading her works by exhibiting them side-by-side with extracts from films by Alfred Hitchcock, Ingmar Bergman and Claude Chabrol. [Read more](#)

**ALBERTINA**

### Eva Beresin in Vienna

The exhibition "Eva Beresin - Thick Air" will be on show at the Albertina Museum in Vienna from 1 May to 15 September. This Hungarian artist, who moved to Vienna in 1976, covers a wide range of themes, from the terrible to the humorous. Strolling through the corridors of the museum, visitors encounter hybrid characters, grotesque figures and strange-looking fantastical creatures. [Read more](#)



### Dream Ships in Munich

The "Dreams Ships" exhibition is running until 1 September at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich. Through a careful, top-of-the-range selection of paintings, manuscripts, maps and instruments of maritime navigation, the museum is presenting the most extraordinary works of goldsmithery dating from around 1600. These creations symbolise the ancient times of globalisation and colonisation. [Read more](#)



### Stanisław Wyspiański in Krakow

Until 27 October, the National Museum in Kraków is exhibiting portraits painted by Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907) during his stay in Paris, from the collection of Ziyad Raoof. A leading figure of Polish modernism, his oil paintings and academic charcoal and pastel drawings reveal an artist in search of harmony between ancient themes from Polish history and modern discoveries and innovations. [Read more](#)



## A Ukrainian pavilion at the Venice Biennale

On 20 April, Olena Zelenska opened the Ukrainian pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale. Until 24 November, the pavilion will be showcasing contemporary international artists who are little known to the general public. The works are inspired by the practice of collective weaving of camouflage nets, as a symbol of collective resistance in the face of war. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 29 April 2024

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Luxembourg)



### The Letter n°1065

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The Letter's Editorial Team :

**Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;  
Juliette Bachschmidt, Charles Devoud, Aiti  
Syiemlieh, Thomas Richomme, Elena  
Kuntel**

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A question, a suggestion ?

Contact us!

[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

Editors-in-chief :

**Peggy Corlin**

Publishing Director :

**Pascale Joannin**

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