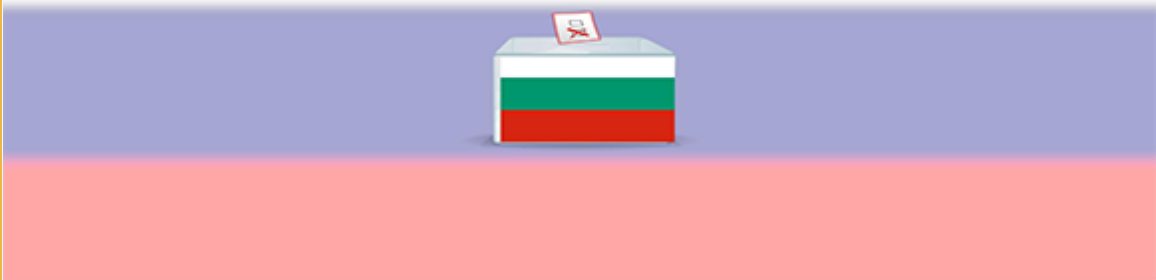


## The resurgence of the Russian dilemma on the Bulgarian political scene

[Maria Mateeva-Kazakova - 04 Jun 2024](#)

On the eve of the legislative and European elections on 9 June, Moscow is making a limited comeback as a cultural alternative and geopolitical model, but without succeeding - for the moment - in ruining Bulgaria's pro-European orientation. There is certainly an age-old Russian-Bulgarian narrative, but this alone does not explain the breakthrough of the far-right Vazrazhdane party in recent years.



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### ■ Front page! :



#### The time of gravity

With a view to the European elections to be held from 6 to 9 June, Jean-Dominique Giuliani stresses the importance of exercising one's right to vote, because "in Europe, the European Parliament is increasingly involved in drawing up common laws". He underlines its influence and points out that its powers increase with each election. "Its composition will count for a great deal in shaping the future, and

choosing its members is increasingly important". [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



### A site for 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 role and powers of the Parliament, the voting rules and the issues at stake, and to follow the campaign with the lists of candidates and party programmes in each Member State. [Read more](#)



### Publication of the Schuman Report, State of the Union 2023

The Foundation is publishing the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2024". This year it includes contributions from the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, as well as from the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of 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, in print and online. Order your copy here. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Commission :



### Creation of an artificial intelligence (AI) office

On 29 May, the Commission unveiled the creation of the AI Office, which aims to enable the future development, deployment and use of AI in a way that promotes societal and economic benefits and innovation, while mitigating risks. Together with the European AI Committee, composed of representatives of the Member States, it will ensure the consistent implementation of AI legislation. [Read more](#)



## Stricter rules for TEMU

On 31 May, the European Commission declared Chinese e-commerce giant Temu a Very Large Online Platform (VLOP) under the Digital Services Regulation (DSA). With an average of 45 million monthly users in the European Union, Temu must comply with the strictest DSA rules by the end of September. These obligations include increased monitoring of illegal products, improved consumer protection, and greater transparency and accountability. [Read more](#)

## ■ Council :



## Meeting of Trade Ministers

On 30 May, trade ministers adopted a regulation aimed at levying prohibitive customs duties on cereal products imported from Russia and Belarus. This regulation increases duties on cereals, oilseeds (such as almonds, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, etc.) and derived products from Russia and Belarus to a level that will, in practice, put an end to imports of these products. The ministers discussed how to deepen trade relations with African countries, as well as the future of the EU's trade policy, in preparation for Mario Draghi's forthcoming report on Europe's competitiveness. [Read more](#)



## Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers

Meeting on 27 May, the agriculture and fisheries ministers examined the EU's response to current concerns in the agricultural sector and welcomed the entry into force on 25 May of the changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) aimed at reducing the administrative and environmental burdens on farmers. On 30 May, the Commission adopted a communication clarifying the use of force majeure and exceptional circumstances for the EU agricultural sector in the event of unforeseeable and extreme weather events. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Meeting of Energy Ministers



On 30 May, the energy ministers adopted conclusions on sustainable electricity network infrastructure, aimed at speeding up the deployment and implementation of new electricity networks to better protect against cyber and hybrid threats. The ministers invited the Commission to propose a plan to accelerate the reduction of the EU's dependence on fossil fuels. The Member States formally adopted the withdrawal of the European Union and Euratom from the Energy Charter Treaty. [Read more](#)



### Meeting of Defence Ministers

Defence ministers met on 28 May to discuss support for Ukraine, in the presence of Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. They reaffirmed the importance of increasing European armaments production and ensuring the timely implementation of the various means of supporting Ukraine. They defined five priorities for the Union's security and defence. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



### Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers

On 27 May, the foreign ministers adopted sanctions against "Voice of Europe" and two people closely linked to it, for propaganda justifying Russia's war in Ukraine. They also introduced a new sanctions regime for human rights violations in Russia. With regard to the Middle East, the ministers asked Israel to respect the order of the International Court of Justice on the cessation of operations at Rafah and access to humanitarian aid in Gaza, while allowing funding for the Palestinian Authority. [Read more](#)



### Agreement with Australia on critical minerals

On 28 May, the European Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a bilateral partnership to cooperate on critical, strategic and sustainable minerals with Australia. The aim of this partnership is to diversify the European Union's supplies of materials needed for the ecological and digital transitions, while contributing to the development of Australia's domestic critical minerals sector. [Read more](#)



## Security and defence partnership with Norway

The European Union and Norway signed a security and defence partnership in Brussels on 28 May. This partnership aims to strengthen collective security for the citizens of the European Union and Norway. It includes continued joint support for Ukraine, Norwegian participation in EU CSDP missions, cooperation on maritime and cyber security, and the fight against disinformation. [Read more](#)



## International aid for Syria and the Middle East

At the eighth Brussels conference on aid for the future of Syria and the countries of the region, organised by the European Union on 27 May, the international donor community pledged €7.5 billion in aid. The EU has pledged €2.12 billion for 2024 and 2025, announced High Representative Josep Borrell. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Agencies :



### EarthCARE satellite launch

On 29 May, the European Space Agency announced the successful launch of its EarthCARE satellite aboard a Falcon 9 rocket from the Vandenberg spaceport in California. The aim of the satellite is to study the role of clouds and aerosols in the Earth's climate, since clouds remain one of the greatest uncertainties in our understanding of how the atmosphere governs the climate system and, more importantly, how they will shape our future climate. [Read more](#)



### EUCLID: first results and new images of the Universe

On 23 May, the European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope mission published the largest images of the Universe ever taken from space. The aim of the mission is to understand how our Universe formed and evolved over the



course of cosmic history, as well as the most mysterious of its fundamental components: dark energy and matter. The images captured by Euclid, which are at least four times more detailed than those obtained by ground-based telescopes, reveal new physical properties of our Universe. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Operation Endgame against malicious software

Between 27 and 29 May 2024, Operation Endgame, coordinated by Europol, took 100 servers offline and led to the arrest of four people in Armenia and Ukraine. This was the largest operation ever carried out against botnets, which play a key role in the deployment of ransomware, malicious software that takes data hostage, particularly company data. Initiated and led by France, Germany and the Netherlands, the operation was also supported by the United Kingdom, the United States and Ukraine, among others. [Read more](#)

## ■ Spain :



## Parliament approves amnesty law for Catalan separatists

On 30 May, the Spanish parliament approved the controversial amnesty law for hundreds of Catalan separatists, including Carles Puigdemont, the former president of the Catalan region, following their attempted secession in 2017. The law was passed by a narrow majority - 177 votes to 172 - and is the result of a compromise between Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and separatist lawmakers when he needed their support to form a new government last November. The law is likely to be the subject of legal challenges and would then be examined by the higher courts. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Finland :



## State Visit of Alexander Stubb to Estonia

Finnish President Alexander Stubb paid a state visit to Estonia from 27 to 29 May. On this occasion, he met his Estonian counterpart, Alar Karis, as well as Prime Minister Kaja Kallas. In a speech to the Estonian Parliament, he said that a new Iron Curtain had been erected, that there was no sign of Russia becoming a liberal democracy in the near

future, and that it would continue to pursue a policy of aggression and expansion. In the face of this, both parties affirm their determination to support Ukraine's victory and its accession to the European Union and NATO. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ France :



### Emmanuel Macron on a State visit to Germany

French President Emmanuel Macron made a State visit to Germany from 26 to 28 May. He attended a dinner at Château Bellevue with his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, gave a speech on the future of Europe in Dresden and received the Peace Prize in Münster. The Franco-German Council of Ministers was held on 28 May, at the end of which a new agenda for strengthening competitiveness and growth in the European Union was proposed. A Franco-German Security and Defence Council was held, during which the heads of state and government and the ministers of the two states expressed their commitment to the creation of a sovereign and geopolitically strong Europe in the face of the Russian threat, as well as their hope for greater cooperation in security, defence and armaments. [Read more](#)

## ■ The Netherlands :



### Dick Schoof tasked with forming a government

On 28 May, the future Dutch coalition announced that it had chosen Hendrikus Wilhelmus Maria "Dick" Schoof as its likely Prime Minister. This senior civil servant, who does not belong to any political party, has headed the intelligence and immigration services as well as the anti-terrorism agency in the Netherlands. He is expected to form a government within the next four to five weeks. [Read more](#)

## ■ Georgia :



### Controversial law on "foreign influence" passed

84 Georgian MPs voted in favour of the law on the "transparency of foreign influence" on the evening of 28 May, overriding the veto of the President, Salomé Zourabichvili. Reintroduced two months ago by the

Georgian Dream party, this Russian-inspired law should finally come into force in the next few days. The head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, pointed out that the "Georgian Parliament was going against the fundamental principles and values of the European Union". Supported by thousands of demonstrators who protested in the streets of Tbilisi to the sound of the European anthem, nearly 200 Georgian NGOs announced on 29 May that they were refusing to obey this law. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Iceland :



### Halla Tomasdottir wins the presidential election

Halla Tomasdottir won the Icelandic presidential election on 1 June, beating former Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir among others. The Icelandic presidency, although mainly honorary, has the power to veto legislation or call referendums. Businesswoman and founder of Audur Capital, Halla Tomasdottir will become Iceland's second female president, taking office on 1 August. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



### New military aid from Sweden

On 29 May, the Swedish government announced its 16th military aid package for Ukraine, worth SEK 13.3 billion (€1.1 billion). This new package, the largest ever provided by Sweden for Ukraine, includes the delivery of air defence equipment, armoured vehicles for troop transport, ammunition, as well as financial support and assistance for the maintenance of military equipment previously sent by Sweden. On 31 May, during a visit to Stockholm, the Ukrainian President signed a security agreement with Sweden, worth €6.5 billion between now and 2026. [Read more - Other link](#)



### Security agreements with Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Norway and Iceland

On 27 May, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Spain and signed a bilateral security agreement with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in which Spain pledged to send €1 billion in military aid by the end of the year. On 28 May, Volodymyr Zelensky signed a bilateral





security agreement with Belgium, for €977 million by the end of the year and 30 F-16s by 2028, and with Portugal, for €126 million; agreements were also signed with Norway, for €1.2 billion by the end of the year, and with Iceland, for €30 million by the end of the year. The bilateral agreements commit the countries concerned to supporting Ukraine's accession to NATO and the European Union, and to maintaining the aid for at least 10 years. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



### NATO support "for as long as it takes"

At a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Prague on 30 and 31 May, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the Allies must continue to support Ukraine "for as long as it takes". Following the meeting, he said that the alliance would play a greater coordinating role in providing equipment and training to Ukraine to meet its immediate and long-term needs. [Read more](#)

## ■ ECHR :



### Judgment of the Chamber against Poland

On 28 May, the European Court of Human Rights unanimously ruled that Poland's 2016 laws on policing and terrorism violated Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Adopted by the previous government led by the Law and Justice party (PiS), the ECHR ruled that they allowed excessive telephone and electronic tapping. [Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



### Report on Artificial Intelligence

On 29 May, the European Court of Auditors published a report revealing that the European Union is lagging behind the United States and China in developing a competitive artificial intelligence ecosystem and attracting investment. Despite measures taken since 2018, the lack of coordination with Member States and insufficient monitoring of investments persist. The auditors recommend stronger governance and more and better targeted investment in AI. [Read more](#)



## Quality of Bathing Waters in Europe

The European Environment Agency published its annual report on bathing water quality in Europe on 28 May. In 2023, 96% of European bathing sites met the Union's minimum quality standards, with coastal waters generally of better quality than inland waters. Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Austria have the highest proportions of excellent sites. Bathing water quality in Europe has improved since the adoption of the 2006 Bathing Water Directive. [Read more - Other link](#)



## GRECO Annual Report

In its annual report for 2023, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) expresses concern about the slow implementation of its recommendations aimed at preventing corruption among parliamentarians, compared to other professional groups. It points to slower than expected implementation and limited progress in establishing or enforcing codes of conduct for parliamentarians. Although there have been significant improvements in the transparency of the legislative process, further measures are needed to ensure the transparency of parliamentarians' asset declaration systems. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



## Robert McCabe in Athens

Robert McCabe's exhibition entitled "Χαίρε Ξένη. In the Land of Dreams" will run until 8 September at the Acropolis Museum in Athens. This retrospective presents the "Greek era" of the philhellenic American photographer through around 100 photographs capturing the landscapes of post-war Greece. [Read more](#)



## "Lisbon in Revolution" in Lisbon

The "Lisbon in Revolution, 1383-1974" exhibition will run until 5 January 2025 at the Lisbon Museum's Palais Pimenta. To mark the 50th anniversary of the revolution of 25 April 1974, the exhibition highlights various moments of

disruption and transformation that have marked Lisbon from the Middle Ages to the present day. The exhibition tells stories of resistance, reinvention of identity, human rights and freedom. [Read more](#)



### Caracalla Festival in Rome

The 2024 edition of the Caracalla Festival features sixty events running until 10 August at the Baths of Caracalla, Teatro del Portico and Teatro Grande. Organised by Rome's Teatro dell'Opera, the festival pays tribute to the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini with two new productions of Tosca and Turandot. [Read more](#)



### Klimt, Stuck, Liebermann in Vienna

The exhibition "Klimt, Stuck, Liebermann: Secessions" is on until 13 October at the Wien Museum in Vienna. The secessions in nineteenth-century art represented the advent of modernity, initiated by artists aspiring to freedom, tired of the structures and criteria of the time. [Read more](#)



### Stained Glass windows in Krakow

Until 13 October, the National Museum in Krakow is exhibiting the cartoons of stained-glass windows by Józef Mehoffer (1869-1946), which he designed for St Peter Nicholas Cathedral in Freiburg as part of the international stained-glass competition he won in 1895. Considered one of the most important representatives of Polish Art Nouveau and Symbolism, the exhibition will leave a lasting impression thanks to the power of expression, originality and unconventional style of the stained glass windows. [Read more](#)



## Civilisations Art Fair in Brussels

The "Civilisations - Tribal, Asian, Oriental Art" Fair is being held from 5 to 9 June in the Sablons district of Brussels. It presents undisputed pieces from the tribal, Asian and Oriental art scene, seeking to meet the demands of international collectors and visitors. [Read more](#)



## Bachfest in Leipzig

Bachfest takes place in Leipzig from 7 to 16 June. The 25th edition of the festival presents the complete cycle of Johann Sebastian Bach's choral cantatas, marking 300 years since their first performance. This cycle, comprising 66 cantatas, is performed by some thirty international choirs. The festival is organised with around a hundred musical events and guided tours across Leipzig. [Read more](#)



## Festival of Granada

The city of Granada is hosting the International Festival of Music and Dance from 7 June to 14 July. Several stages are set up in emblematic locations in and around the city, such as the Generalife gardens and the Albaicín and Sacromonte districts. [Read more](#)



## Miquel Barcelo in Monaco

From 7 June to 13 October, Monaco's new national museum will be celebrating the work of Spanish artist Miquel Barceló. The exhibition features around sixty of his works, centred on the sea and including paintings, ceramics, embroidery and works on paper. [Read more](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 6-9 June 2024

**European Elections** (European Union)

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 6 June 2024

**80th Anniversary of D-Day** (France)

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 9 June 2024

**Belgian Federal General Elections** (Belgium)

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 9 June 2024

**Bulgarian Legislative Elections** (Bulgaria)



### The Letter n°1070

PDF

**in English** -- Edition of Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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N° ISSN: **2729-6482**

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