

A review of the Von der Leyen I Commission (2019-2024)

[Elise Bernard - 03 Dec 2024](#)

As the new European Commission takes office, this study looks back at the key events of the previous legislature. The von der Leyen I Commission, which its President had intended to be "geopolitical", was marked by a succession of major crises that have shaped European policies over the last five years.



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■ **Front page! :**



People are still dying for Europe - the Georgian nightmare

'While often disenchanting Europeans are still arguing over domestic political issues, in their immediate neighbourhood, once again, there is a vibrant and dramatic call for help. On the borders of the European Union, people are risking their lives to gain access. For Jean-Dominique Giuliani, the events underway in Georgia are proof of the determination of peoples for whom Europe represents a goal and a future. An aspiration shared by Georgians and Ukrainians alike. [Read more](#)

■ Elections :



Fianna Fail wins Ireland's general election

"Fianna Fail (FF) (Soldiers of Destiny), led by Micheal Martin, came first in Ireland's general election on 29 November, winning 21.9% of the vote (first preference). It is ahead of Fine Gael (FG) (Clan of Gaels), the party of the Taoiseach (name of the Prime Minister in Ireland) Simon Harris, which garnered 20.8% of the vote." These results differ from the opinion polls which had given Simon Harris' party the lead in the elections. But the outgoing coalition could be renewed with the addition of another party. [Read more](#)



Results of the parliamentary elections in Romania

'The Social Democratic Party (PSD), led by outgoing Prime Minister Ion-Marcel Ciolacu, came out ahead in the 1 December parliamentary elections in Romania with 21.97% of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies (Camera deputatilor) and 22.31% in the Senate (Senatul). It led over the far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), with 18% of the vote in the lower house and 18.29% in the upper house. The National Liberal Party (PNL) won 13.20% of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and 14.29% in the Senate. Save Romania (USR) won 12.4% in the lower house and 11.25% in the Senate. Negotiations to form the future government could be long and difficult. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



The Schuman Network, a platform for sharing European ideas

The Schuman Network, a Foundation initiative, is a platform which offers European think-tanks the opportunity to promote their studies in connection with European issues. Comprising 21 members from 13 European countries, the Schuman Network brings together researchers specialising in European issues to encourage the sharing of ideas, debate and reflection on Europe. Since its launch 143 publications have been shared. [Read more](#)



Progress in the recovery and resilience facility

Cyprus received €115 million on 26 November under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The country has completed 37 benchmarks and targets set out in the plan submitted under this facility. At the same time, the European Commission has adopted a preliminary assessment of Bulgaria's second payment request. You can find the national plans of all the EU Member States and their respective progress on the Robert Schuman Foundation's dedicated page. [Read more](#)



Order your copy of the Schuman Report 2024

The Schuman Report on the State of the Union in 2024 is available on the Robert Schuman Foundation website. With contributions from leading political figures such as Roberta Metsola and Ursula von der Leyen as well as eminent researchers, the Schuman Report contains the essential analyses of the current and strategic issues surrounding the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ European Council :



Antonio Costa succeeds Charles Michel

Antonio Costa officially took office as President of the European Council on 1 December. He succeeds Charles Michel, who has led the institution since 2019 and whose term of office was coming to an end. He reiterated his commitment to the values of the Union and the need to work together, while respecting the differences between the 27 Member States. He reiterated his commitment to a return to peace on the European continent, without this being achieved at the price of concessions to the Russian aggressor. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Commission :



Autumn package of the European Semester

The Commission has presented the first autumn package of the European Semester since the reform of the Union's new economic governance framework came into force last April. The Commission has completed its assessment of 21 of the 22 recovery plans presented. Of these 21 plans, 20 meet the requirements of the new framework and set out a credible budgetary path capable of placing the debt of the Member States concerned on a sustainable downward path, or maintaining it at conservative levels. Brussels has judged the medium-term budgetary and structural plan submitted by France to be compliant, which envisages a reduction in the deficit to below 3% of GDP by 2029. [Read more](#)



Authorisation of State aid for Corsican maritime links

On 26 November, the European Commission ruled that the French State was allowed to pay €853.6 million to Corsica Linea and La Méridionale, the companies responsible for maritime transport between Marseille and Corsica between 2023 and 2030, in compliance with European rules on State aid. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



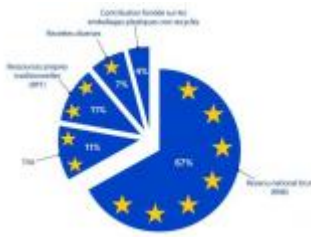
College of Commissioners validated by Parliament and Council

MEPs approved the new Commission chaired by Ursula von der Leyen on 27 November by 370 votes to 282, with 36 abstentions. This represents the smallest majority for a college of Commissioners since 1995. On the strength of this vote, the Commission was able to take up its duties on 1 December, following its appointment by the European Council on 28 November. It comprises 11 women and 16 men. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Agreement between the Parliament and the European Prosecutor's Office

On 28 November, the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, signed a working agreement with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) to support investigations within the institution. The agreement facilitates access by the European Public Prosecutor's Office to Parliament's premises, requests to waive the immunity of legislators and staff, and access to documents relating to investigations. The agreement comes a few weeks after the European Public Prosecutor's Office revealed that it was conducting an investigation into the European People's Party (EPP). [Read more](#)



Vote on the EU budget for 2025

MEPs voted on the 2025 budget on 27 November, which totals €199.4 billion in commitments and €155.21 billion in payments. This represents an increase of 6%, or €10 billion, compared to 2024. Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe have seen significant increases in their respective budgets: an increase of €422 million for Erasmus+ and €20 million for Horizon Europe. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Ministers

The ministers for education, youth, culture and sport, meeting on 25 and 26 November, discussed support for young people in rural areas, as well as the youth priorities for 2025-2027, recognition of the diversity of university career paths and the issue of skills shortages, particularly in the light of the Draghi report. The ministers agreed on the need to promote the lasting legacy of major sporting events to support their economic, social and environmental sustainability. A European model of sport is envisaged as one of the priorities for the period 2024-2027. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Kaja Kallas, new High Representative

Former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas took over as head of European diplomacy on 1 December. Her political experience and dynamism make her 'the right person at the right time' to defend Europe's interests in the world. Her tough stance on Russia has already earned her the nickname of Europe's 'new Iron Lady'. [Read more](#)

■ Court of Justice :



HSBC fine of €31.7 million maintained

On 27 November, the Court of First Instance upheld the fine imposed on HSBC. This fine had been decided by the Commission in 2016 against Crédit Agricole, HSBC and JPMorgan Chase for antitrust practices in the derivatives sector. The fine was initially annulled by the General Court in 2019 before being reinstated and revised to €31.7 million by a Commission decision in 2021. In its judgment, the Court of First Instance dismissed HSBC's appeal, rejecting in particular the argument that the limitation period had expired. [Read more](#)

■ Court of Auditors :



Food labels can be misleading

The European Court of Auditors published a report on 25 November finding that European food labelling can be misleading. The auditors found shortcomings stemming from a surfeit of different information, not covered by European rules, which are evolving more slowly than the content of the labels. The Court also noted a lack of uniformity in the various Nutriscore-type nutritional labelling systems. [Read more](#)



Report on harmful tax practices

The European Court of Auditors published a report on 28 November estimating the EU's tax losses caused by transfers of corporate profits resulting from complex tax planning strategies. This amounts to almost €100 billion a year for the EU. The Court points out that this loss of revenue penalises other taxpayers, who have to pay more. It acknowledges that European legislation in this area, with three new directives in recent years, has been fleshed out, but that shortcomings remain. [Read more](#)

■ European Agencies :



Closure of one of the world's largest illegal streaming sites

An operation led by Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom has led to the closure of one of the world's largest illegal streaming sites. This was announced on 27 November by Eurojust, which supported the operation along with Europol. The site was visited by more than 22 million people worldwide and pirated more than 2,500 television channels, among others. These figures represent an illegal profit of €250 million per month and damage to copyright holders estimated at €10 billion. [Read more](#)



Annual Report on Erasmus+

The annual report on the Erasmus + programme was published on 27 November. It highlights the programme's achievements in terms of education, ecological transition, social inclusion and the promotion of EU values. With a budget of €4.5 billion, Erasmus + has given more than a million people the opportunity to learn abroad, while offering people displaced by the war in Ukraine the chance to integrate into the EU's education systems. [Read more](#)

■ Austria :



Vienna wins Access City Award

The Access City Award 2025 was presented to the city of Vienna on 29 November. The award recognises efforts to make cities accessible to people with disabilities. The Austrian capital has adopted a comprehensive approach, which has greatly improved the lives of people with disabilities. All underground stations and over 95% of bus and tram stops are accessible. The cities of Nuremberg and Cartagena were awarded second and third prizes, and the Swedish city of Boras received a special mention. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Ceasefire in Lebanon

The cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah came into effect on 27 November, after two months of open warfare. The ceasefire provides for the evacuation of the area by Hezbollah and the gradual return of civilians. Whether the truce lasts depends on the situation in Lebanon, according to Israel, while the United States and European countries such as France, Germany, Spain and Italy have welcomed the agreement. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Interview with Alexander Stubb and Ulf Kristersson

On 30 November, French President Emmanuel Macron met Finnish President Alexander Stubb. They repeated the need to make Europe a power in terms of defence, security and partnerships. Emmanuel Macron and Alexander Stubb decided to increase their support for Ukraine, with particular emphasis on developing the country's defence industrial base. The French President also met Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden, on 26 November. [Read more](#)

■ Italy :



Meeting of G7 foreign ministers

The foreign ministers of the G7 countries, meeting on 25 and 26 November near Rome, Italy, discussed the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, the situation in the Indo-Pacific and in Africa. They adopted a joint declaration [Read more](#)

■ Romania :



Risk of cyber-attack and recount

On 26 November, Romania's National Audiovisual Council asked the European Commission to open an investigation into TikTok for allegedly violating the Union's Digital Services Act by allowing political advertising for candidate Călin Georgescu. The authorities believe that TikTok has failed to maintain algorithmic transparency and mitigate systemic risk, as required by EU legislation (DSA). As a result, President Klaus Iohannis called a meeting of the Supreme National Defence Council on 28 November. At the same time, the Constitutional Court requested a recount of the election votes. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UK :



New sanctions against the Russian shadow fleet

On 25 November, the United Kingdom adopted new sanctions against Russia, against a further 30 Russian ships in Vladimir Putin's 'shadow fleet'. These sanctions are designed to prevent Russia from circumventing Western restrictive measures on its exports. According to UK government estimates, the Russian shadow fleet is made up of around 600 ships and carries around 1.7 million barrels of oil a day. This is the fifth time that the UK has targeted Russia's 'shadow fleet', which is now targeting 73 ships. [Read more](#)

■ Sweden :



Baltic and Scandinavian Countries Forum in Sweden

On 27 and 28 November, the Baltic-Scandinavian Cooperation Forum was held in Harpsund, Sweden. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk was invited to the summit for the first time. The leaders discussed transatlantic relations and regional security in their neighbourhood. They reiterated their support for Ukraine and agreed to increase aid to the Ukrainian people. They decided to coordinate on strategic issues in the light of Donald Trump's arrival in the White House. Finally, Donald Tusk proposed a new joint NATO naval patrol in the Baltic Sea. [Read more](#)

■ Iceland :



The Social Democrats win the general election

On 30 November, the Social Democrats won the early general election called by Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson after the government coalition broke up in October. The Social Democratic Party, led by Kristrun Frostadottir, narrowly won with 20.4% of the vote, against the Prime Minister's Conservative Party, which obtained 19.4%, its lowest score ever. However, the Green and Left Movement did not reach the minimum threshold of 5% to be represented in Parliament. At present, the prospects for a coalition remain uncertain, although an alliance between the Social Democrats and the Liberals cannot be ruled out. [Read more](#)

■ Georgia :



Pro-European mobilisation in Georgia

The legitimacy of the Georgian Parliament was challenged at its first session on 25 November by numerous demonstrators, as well as by the pro-European President Salome Zurbachidze. The protests have continued unabated ever since. On 28 November, the European Parliament condemned the holding of legislative elections 'which did not meet international standards', and called for them to be 'reorganised within one year'. In response, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced the decision to suspend efforts to join the EU, adding that the country's application would not be resumed before the end of 2028. This announcement is contrary to the European aspirations of the vast majority of the Georgian people,' announced the new High Representative Kaja Kallas on 1 December. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Meeting of NATO-Ukraine Council

On 26 November, the NATO-Ukraine Council met in Brussels to discuss the situation in Ukraine following the firing of an experimental Russian intermediate-range ballistic missile. According to NATO, this attack targeted the Ukrainian town of Dnipro and is seen as a new Russian attempt to terrorise the civilian population and intimidate those who support the country. During the exchange, the participants stated that such an attempt at intimidation would not discourage the Allies from supporting Ukraine. [Read more](#)



European leaders António Costa, Kaja Kallas and Marta Kos in Ukraine

On 1 December, António Costa, President of the European Council, together with Kaja Kallas, High Representative, and Marta Kos, Commissioner for Enlargement, travelled to Kyiv on the very first day of their mandate, for a visit in support of Ukraine. This visit comes at a time when tensions with Russia have never been as high. The leaders said that the EU was continuing to support Ukraine with humanitarian, economic, military and energy assistance. This month, €4.2 billion will be allocated to the Ukrainian budget, followed by monthly support of €1.5 billion in 2024, financed in part by interest on frozen Russian assets. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ WTO :

The European Union challenges Chinese anti-dumping measures

As promised in October, the European Commission has formally challenged the provisional anti-dumping measures imposed by China on brandies produced in the European Union at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The dispute is part of a diplomatic and commercial tug-of-war between the European Union and China since the overtaxation of Chinese electric vehicles. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ NATO :



Mark Rutte travels to Greece and Türkiye

On 25 and 26 November, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte visited Ankara and Athens to meet Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Kyriakos Mitsotakis. In Türkiye, he congratulated the country on devoting a greater percentage of its GDP to defence, and on its positioning to take command of the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (KFOR). In Greece, he discussed the country's substantial investment in defence (3% of GDP), its support for Ukraine following a bilateral agreement between the two countries and the training of Ukrainian pilots. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ UN :



Last round of negotiations on plastic pollution

From 25 November to 1 December, delegates from over 170 countries met in Busan, South Korea, for the final round of negotiations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5). This committee is responsible for drawing up a legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution. However, no binding agreement was reached between the parties, forcing INC chairman Luis Vayas Valdivieso to draw up an alternative draft that will serve as a starting point for the resumption of negotiations in 2025. [Read more](#)

■ Eurobarometer :



Record levels of confidence in the European Union

A Eurobarometer survey published on 29 November highlights the highest level of confidence in the European Union since 2007. 51% of Europeans have confidence in the EU, are more optimistic and would like to see a stronger, more independent Europe. This confidence is highest among young people aged 15 to 24, where 59% expressed confidence in the Union. 74% said they felt they were citizens of the Union, the highest level for almost 20 years. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Rembrandt exhibition in Frankfurt

The Städel Museum in Frankfurt/Main is hosting the exhibition "Rembrandt's Golden Age in Amsterdam?" until 23 March 2025. The exhibition comprises around a hundred paintings, sculptures, engravings and everyday historical objects. Through the works of the famous painter, visitors will be able to take a look at the social reality of 17th-century society. [Read more](#)



Irving Penn in Madrid

The Marta Ortega Pérez Foundation (MOP) is hosting the Irving Penn Centennial exhibition in Madrid, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Irving Penn Foundation. Until 1 May 2025, 175 emblematic works from Penn's career, including portraits, still lifes and street scenes, are on show to the public. [Read more](#)



Ribera in Paris

The Petit Palais in Paris is staging the first French retrospective devoted to the Spanish painter Jusepe de Ribera, with the exhibition 'Ribera, Darkness and Light'. On show until 23 February 2025 are around a hundred works tracing the career of Ribera, a major figure of the Baroque period, from his recently rediscovered Roman years to his Neapolitan period, which marked his rise to fame. [Read more](#)



Festival of Light in Lyon

The Festival of Light will be back in the capital of Gaul from 5 to 8 December. This year, the people of Lyon will be able to discover 32 works of art. For the second time at the Fête des Lumières, a work of art will be presented indoors during the day, in the large auditorium of the Théâtre des Célestins. [Read more](#)



Reopening of Notre Dame de Paris

After five years of restoration, the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris reopens its doors on 7 December. The reopening of Notre-Dame bears witness to an immense collective effort. Thanks to the commitment of the Church, the State, patrons, teams from the Etablissement Public, journeymen, artists and businesses, the challenge of rebuilding in five years has been successfully met. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 2-3 December 2024

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

 5 & 6 December

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)

 8 December

Second round of Presidential election (Romania)

 9 December

Eurogroup (Brussels)

 9 & 10 December

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Brussels)



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