

## Letter n°1102 of Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025

### Europe and Putin: Should realism prevail over reality?

[Alain Fabre - 11 Mar 2025](#)

What was true yesterday remains true today: the 'Munich 1938' moment has returned to Europe. From the outset, Putin has largely followed the Führer's strategy and warlike methods, starting with the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936: the annexation of the Sudetenland, ratified by the Munich Conference, was both the culmination and the unveiling of the logic at work from the beginning.' Faced with the threat posed by Vladimir Putin, Europeans must invest in their defence so as not to relive their darkest hours. Even deprived of American military support, Europeans cannot give up on the ultimate goal of ridding Ukraine of conquering Putinism. There is still time for Europeans to convince Putin that he is not facing Chamberlain and Daladier, but Churchill and de Gaulle.



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■ **Front page! :**



## Trump's America, increasingly alone

'In the space of a few days, Donald Trump's America, denying what it is at its very core, finds itself relegated to the camp of dictators and liberticides.' According to Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Europe's moment could well have arrived in the face of the isolation of the United States on the international stage in recent days. The world leadership of the foremost military power is being called into question by its traditional allies, and the consequences will be long-lasting. [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



### 2nd annual Paris Defence and Strategy Forum

The Defence Academy of the École Militaire is organising the second edition of the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF), from 11 to 13 March. The PDSF has a clear objective: to enable French and European strategic thought to contribute effectively to the debate on the major security and defence issues. On 11 March, the Robert Schuman Foundation will organise two panels focusing on European issues to encourage discussions between leading figures. The first will be on 'new impetus for European strategic autonomy'; the second on 'thinking about the future of the new European security order'. [Read more](#)



### Launch of the 7th edition of the VGE Prize

The 7th annual Valéry Giscard d'Estaing Prize has been announced. The Valéry Giscard d'Estaing Foundation, in partnership with the Robert Schuman Foundation, will award a prize to one student and one or more runners-up in recognition of their commitment and European achievements. The theme of the 2025 edition is 'The best method for strengthening the defence of the European continent and moving towards a European defence'. Candidates have until 2 June to submit their work. [Read more](#)



## Schuman Network, uniting minds for Europe

An initiative of the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Schuman Network brings together 23 think-tanks from 13 European countries. This network encourages collaboration between researchers specialising in European issues, facilitating the exchange of ideas and thoughts on Europe. It provides an ideal framework for the sharing of studies on a variety of topics: social issues, economic integration, European Neighbourhood Policy, and relations between the European Union and the rest of the world. Since its launch, the Schuman Network has provided access to 160 publications. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Council :



### Extraordinary European Council

On 6 March, the heads of state and government debated European defence and Ukraine and reiterated their support for the country. The desire for a peace agreement to end the war was affirmed by recalling the fundamental principles, in particular Ukraine's presence at the negotiating table. The leaders also said they were prepared to step up the pressure on Russia. In this context, they emphasised the need for the Union to guarantee its autonomy in the field of defence. They also took note of the Commission's willingness to grant €150 billion in loans in this area and are considering activating a derogation clause of the Stability and Growth Pact to facilitate these expenditures. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



### Antonio Costa in Moldova

The President of the European Council, António Costa, travelled to Chişinău on 3 March to meet Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova. During their discussions, the two leaders discussed the importance of European democratic values and the promotion of lasting peace in the region. In addition, António Costa announced that the European Union would provide around €60 million to Moldova in 2025 to strengthen the country's defensive capabilities. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Commission :



## Statement on the defence package and the ReArm Europe plan

On 4 March, the President of the European Commission outlined the 'ReArm Europe' plan, which contains proposals for using the available financial levers to increase defence spending. It has three components: recourse to public funding with a target of an average of 1.5% of GDP invested in defence, the granting of loans to Member States up to a value of €150 billion for defence investments and the use of the EU budget via cohesion policy programmes. The 'ReArm Europe' plan could mobilise up to almost €800 billion for a safe and resilient Europe. [Read more](#)



## Action plan for the competitiveness of the European automotive industry

On 5 March, the European Commission presented an action plan to guarantee the European automotive sector a solidity and sustainability that will enable it to unleash its power of innovation. €1.8 billion will be made available to create a secure and competitive supply chain. This plan follows a strategic dialogue on the future of the European automotive industry launched in January. One of the objectives pursued is to accelerate innovation and the transition to clean mobility, in particular through a European alliance dedicated to connected and autonomous vehicles. This plan aims at European production of cost-competitive cells for battery supply. [Read more](#)



## The Commission's roadmap for strengthening women's rights

On 7 March, the European Commission unveiled a roadmap for women's rights and presented the 2025 report on equality between women and men. This roadmap builds on the significant progress made under the 2020-2025 strategy for gender equality. The Commission nevertheless recognises that progress remains slow and varies between areas and Member States. For example, the report for the year 2025 states that one third of women in Europe have suffered physical and/or sexual violence. The roadmap thus pursues several objectives such as the absence of gender-based violence, the establishment of higher health standards, equal pay and economic empowerment. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



## Launch of the strategic dialogue on the future of the steel sector

On 4 March, the President of the European Commission launched a strategic dialogue on the future of the steel sector. The aim is to address the critical challenges facing the sector, which is under severe pressure. The reasons for this include increased production costs due to high energy prices and falling demand. Steelworks employ more than 2.5 million people in the EU. These consultations will feed into an action plan on steel and metals to be presented on 19 March. [Read more](#)



## Presentation of the Commission's initiative on Skills Union

On 5 March, the European Commission presented its Skills Union project. It aims to achieve higher levels of basic skills, offer opportunities for lifelong professional retraining and facilitate recruitment in the EU. New targets for 2030 have been set, including 5% of students enrolled in ICT doctoral programmes (with one-third women) and 15% of people with poor reading, writing, mathematics and science skills. Several projects and initiatives have been announced as part of this concept of combining skills: a pilot project on skills guarantees, an initiative on the transferability of skills and a strategy on visa policy to create a European talent pool. [Read more](#)



## 1st anniversary of the Strategic Technologies for Europe platform

The "Strategic Technologies for Europe" platform, known as STEP, celebrated its first year of existence on 4 March. Its aim is to support the development and production of critical technologies in Europe, and in its first year it has mobilised more than €15 billion. This sum has been used to support competitiveness in 3 strategic sectors: digital technologies and deep tech innovation, clean technologies and resource savings, and biotechnologies. In particular, it has been used to fund projects from around 60 calls for proposals, 40 of which are still open. As a result, 142 high-potential projects have been awarded the STEP label by the European Commission. [Read more](#)



## Meeting of the Ministers of the Interior and of Justice

The Ministers of the Interior, meeting on 5 March, approved a roadmap for the deployment of the interoperability architecture, enabling interconnected border management and law enforcement. The Schengen barometer was also presented, as well as an action plan on cable security, particularly in the Baltic Sea after several incidents. The Ministers of Justice, meeting on 7 March, discussed the crimes committed in Ukraine by Russia and the creation of a special tribunal under the direction of the Council of Europe. In parallel, discussions on the harmonisation of legislation relating to insolvency took place. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ ECB :



## Lower key rates and the economic outlook

On 6 March, the European Central Bank once again lowered its three key interest rates by 25 basis points. It reiterated that the trend towards disinflation is on track and forecasts inflation of 2.3% in 2025, then 1.9% in 2026 and 2% in 2027, stabilising at around the 2% target in the medium term. This is the sixth cut in key rates since June 2024. The aim is to stimulate economic activity by relaxing borrowing conditions for banks and households while maintaining the inflation target. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Agencies :



## Commercial launch of Ariane 6

The new European rocket, Ariane 6, took off for the second time from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou on 6 March. This represents the first commercial flight for Ariane 6, the aim of which was to put the French observation satellite CSO-3 into orbit. Several flights are planned for 2025. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Significant drop in asylum applications within the European Union

On 4 March, the European Union Agency for Asylum published its annual report on asylum trends in the European Union. The EUAA notes an 11% drop in asylum applications in 2024, particularly for Syrians, Afghans and Turks, with a total of 1,014,000 applications recorded. Despite a decrease of almost 30% in applications, Germany remains the country receiving the most asylum applications, while Cyprus and Greece receive the most per capita. The overall recognition rate for asylum seekers remains stable at 42%, with variations according to nationality. [Read more](#)



## The European Observatory Copernicus notes new records regarding climate change

The European Copernicus observatory released its monthly bulletin on 6 March, and highlights two historical data points concerning the climate and the environment. The cumulative surface area of sea ice around the two poles, the Antarctic and the Arctic, reached its lowest level ever recorded in February. Global temperatures, meanwhile, were almost as high as last year's record. The bulletin thus heralds a third year in a row with historically high records after 2023 and 2024. [Read more](#)

### ■ Austria :



## New government in Austria led by Christian Stocker

The new Austrian chancellor was officially sworn in on 3 March. Christian Stocker is heading a coalition government bringing together three parties for the first time: the People's Party (ÖVP), the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Liberals (INEOS). The first two parties each have six ministers and the third two. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

### ■ Finland :



## Denmark and Finland strengthen defence cooperation

Denmark and Finland signed a defence agreement on 4 March in Helsinki to strengthen their military cooperation in the Baltic Sea. The agreement covers joint training, personnel exchanges and pooled procurement, in a context of growing tensions. The strengthening of their cooperation is part of a broader Nordic dynamic, including Norway and Sweden, thanks to the conclusion of an agreement in 2021. The objective is to ensure strategic self-sufficiency in the face of the Russian threat and uncertainties about American engagement in Europe. [Read more](#)

## ■ France :



## Speech by Emmanuel Macron on strengthening European defence

The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, spoke on television on 5 March. He called on Europe to prepare to defend Ukraine without the help of the United States, after the suspension of their military support and intelligence sharing. The Head of State emphasised that Russia remained a threat to France and Europe, and insisted on the need to strengthen European military autonomy. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Parliamentary debate on European defence and the war in Ukraine

On 3 and 4 March, a debate was held in parliament on the issue of the suspension of aid from the United States and the importance of strengthening European defence. In the National Assembly, the speeches following the statement by the Prime Minister, François Bayrou, highlighted differences of opinion on how to deal with the Russian threat and developments in American policy. In the Senate, on 4 March, Claude Malhuret, Senator for Allier, President of the 'les Indépendants' group and Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee, strongly criticised the American President after the announcement that American aid to Ukraine would be frozen. His speech was broadcast around the world. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Italy :





## Turkish-Italian Alliance for the production of drones

On 6 March, Leonardo, a company in the aeronautics and space sector, signed an agreement with the Turkish group Baykar to create a joint venture that should enable the development, production and maintenance of drones. This partnership will enable the Turkish company, the world's leading exporter of armed drones, to consolidate its presence on the European market, while responding to the surge in orders from the arms industry, due to the increase in the EU's defence budgets. [Read more](#)

## ■ Luxembourg :



### Inauguration of the Centre de Documentation Européenne (CDE) in Luxembourg

Luxembourg officially opened its European Documentation Centre on 3 March. The centre aims to provide information and resources on the European Union, its policies and global issues, in an effort to improve citizens' understanding of European affairs. Through this initiative, Luxembourg hopes to promote civic engagement and make access to European information easier. The project is part of an approach aimed at making the European Union more approachable and accessible to all. [Read more](#)

## ■ Czech Republic :



### Slavkov Summit

On 5 March, the Czech President Petr Pavel, his Slovak counterpart Peter Pellegrini and his Austrian counterpart Alexander Van der Bellen met in Slavkov to discuss relations between their countries. The three heads of state emphasised the need to maintain strong ties despite differences on certain foreign policy issues, particularly Slovakia's pro-Russian positions. The meeting also focused on topics such as transport infrastructure and innovation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Romania :



## Appeal by candidate Călin Georgescu rejected and exclusion from next campaign

On 6 March, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rejected the appeal by far-right candidate Călin Georgescu against the cancellation of the first round of the Romanian presidential election. Suspecting Russian interference in the election, the Constitutional Court had annulled the first round of voting, which had placed Călin Georgescu in the lead. Georgescu then lodged an appeal under the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court unanimously declared the application inadmissible. This decision is final. On 9 March, the Electoral Commission rejected the candidature of Calin Georgescu, accused of having violated 'the democratic rules of honest and impartial suffrage'. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



## The EIB signs a guarantee of 2 billion € for Ukraine

On 6 March, the European Investment Bank and the European Commission signed a €2 billion guarantee under the Facility for Ukraine. Its aim is to support the reconstruction and resilience of the country, which has been under attack from Russia for the past three years, by targeting critical infrastructure, particularly in the fields of energy, transport, water and heating. The Facility for Ukraine currently has €50 billion for the period 2024-2027. An agreement has also been reached to deploy a team of advisory service specialists in Kyiv to accelerate the implementation of funded projects. [Read more](#)



## Norway increases its aid to Ukraine

On 6 March, the Norwegian Prime Minister announced that his country would increase aid to Ukraine to €4.2 billion for the year 2025. This decision is part of the Nansen support programme for Ukraine, launched in February 2023, which has been extended until 2030 with a total financial framework of around €18.6 billion. Norway is coordinating its efforts with other European countries, notably the United Kingdom and France. [Read more](#)

## ■ Switzerland :



## Switzerland extends its sanctions against Russia

On 4 March, Switzerland extended its sanctions against Russia by adopting some of the measures recently adopted by the European Union. These sanctions follow the Russian military aggression in Ukraine and now target individuals, ships and financial institutions. These new sanctions came into force immediately and are intended to increase the pressure on Russia. [Read more](#)

## ■ Eurostat :



## Historic decline in births in 2023

On 7 March, Eurostat announced a historic fall in the birth rate in the European Union in 2023, to a level not seen since 1961. The fertility rate has fallen to 1.38 children per woman across Europe. In France, it remains relatively stable at 1.66 children per woman, placing the country in a better position, unlike countries such as Germany, Poland or Italy. This general decline in the birth rate raises concerns about the renewal of the European population. [Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



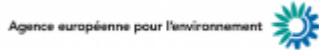
## Council of Europe report on freedom of the press

On 5 March, the Council of Europe published a report on the protection and safety of journalists in Europe for the year 2024. Against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the Council of Europe warns of the growing threat of disinformation, particularly AI-generated content and state propaganda, used to manipulate public opinion and weaken independent journalism. [Read more](#)



## European Court of Auditors report on the fight against polluting ships

On 4 March, the European Court of Auditors published a report on sanctions against polluting ships. The European Union aims for zero water pollution by 2030 but is struggling to monitor and sanction due to the difficulty of identifying it at sea. The Court recognises the progress made in European legislation, which is sometimes even stricter than international legislation, particularly with regard to pollution caused by hydrocarbons and the management of wrecks. However, too many loopholes have been identified, particularly the practice of flying third-country flags, which allows ships to avoid certain obligations. The actions of Member States are also deemed insufficient, despite the existence of European tools at their disposal. [Read more](#)



## Report on monitoring and the prospects for zero pollution

On 3 March, the Commission and the European Environment Agency published the second report on monitoring and the prospects for zero pollution, providing an overview of the work to achieve the objectives by 2030. European policies have thus contributed to reducing air pollution, but the observed pollution levels remain too high. A reduction in pollution from marine litter, pesticides and antimicrobials has been observed, but levels of harmful noise, microplastics, nutrients and waste pollution remain too high. Much stronger action is therefore considered necessary to achieve the reduction targets, which must be integrated into all policies. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## SIPRI Report on the international transfer of arms

According to new data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), published on 10 March, a significant change in the dynamics of the global arms trade has been observed. Due to the armed conflict with Russia, Ukraine became the world's largest importer of arms between 2020 and 2024, with an increase of almost 100 times compared to the previous period. European countries, taken collectively, are experiencing a very significant increase in their arms imports, with growth of 155% for the same periods. Meanwhile, the United States has consolidated its position as the world's leading arms exporter, increasing its share to 43% of the total market. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



### Wolfgang Tillmans in Dresden

The 'Weltraum' exhibition by Wolfgang Tillmans, German photographer and visual artist, is on display at the Albertinum in Dresden until 29 June. After several retrospectives in the United States and then in Canada, the exhibition focuses on new works, created since 2022, around the theme of the traces of digital technologies in the world. [Read more](#)



### Arcimboldo, Bassano and Bruegel in Vienna

Until 29 June, the Historical Museum of Vienna is presenting an exhibition of works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jacopo and Leandro Bassano, and other Renaissance artists. More than 140 works, some of them on loan from international museums and Viennese collections, focus on the interactions between man, nature and time. [Read more](#)



### Edvard Munch in London

Until 15 June, the National Portrait Gallery in London is hosting an exhibition entitled 'Edvard Munch Portraits', which pays tribute to one of the greatest portrait painters. This event brings together intimate portraits of his family, his friends and his self-portraits. The exhibition is the first in the United Kingdom to focus on this important but sometimes neglected aspect of the artist's work. [Read more](#)



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## Tracey Emin in Florence

From 16 March to 20 July, the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence is exhibiting the work of contemporary artist Tracey Emin, presenting more than sixty works spanning the artist's career since the 1990s. Tracey Emin addresses issues related to the body and desire in various forms: painting, drawing, video and photography. Many of the British artist's works are being shown for the first time on this occasion. [Read more](#)



## Brussels Book Fair

The Brussels Book Fair runs from 13 to 16 March. This annual event brings together all the key players in the book industry, including a large number of authors, illustrators, publishers and book reviewers. [Read more](#)



## Sebastião Salgado exhibition in Deauville

The exhibition 'Sebastião Salgado', on display in Deauville at Les Franciscaines until 1 June, highlights the outstanding work of this photographer. Through his black and white photographs, he explores the relationship between humanity and nature, addressing themes such as the condition of workers and migration. [Read more](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 10-13 March 2025

**European Parliament Plenary Session** (Strasbourg)

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 01/03/2025

**Meeting of the Eurogroup "Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs" Council**  
(Brussels)

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 11 mars 2025

**"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council**

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 12 mars 2025

**"Competitiveness" Council (internal market and industry)**

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 13 March 2025

**EU-South Africa Summit**

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 17 March 2025

**"Foreign Affairs" Council "Transport, Telecommunications and Energy" Council** (Brussels)

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 17 March 2025

**9th Conference on Support to Syria** (Brussels)

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