

Letter n°1103 of Tuesday 18th March 2025

When sleepwalkers awake: German plea for a new European security architecture - a German point of view

Stéphane Beemelmans - 18 Mar 2025

"For three years, war has been raging on Europe's borders between two geographically linked states, a conflict that actually began almost 11 years ago with Russia's occupation of Crimea and Donbass." With the new Trump administration, Europeans can no longer count on their historic ally and must ensure their own defence using their own resources. Europe must wake up and snap out of its state of lethargy to face current challenges, and Germany must adapt and participate fully in a coalition of 'willing' states.



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■ Front page! :



Europe and Cassandra

'It is all very well to point out the deficiencies of the European armies, thus playing Putin's game, but with Europe, one must never despair.' According to Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Europe will emerge stronger from this period, revealing a deep attachment to freedoms and to Liberty. As it has done every time it has faced crises, it will resist in order to safeguard democracy. So we must not listen to the Cassandras. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



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Faced with security challenges and growing geopolitical tensions, the European Union must strengthen its defence and affirm its unity more than ever. To shed light on these crucial issues, the Robert Schuman Foundation conducts research to promote European values. Recognised as being of public interest, it operates thanks to donations from individuals and companies. Your support is essential to the pursuit of this mission of analysis and information. By making a donation, you benefit from a tax reduction of 66% of the amount paid for individuals and 60% for companies. Act for Europe while reducing your taxes! [Read more](#)



Facing facts: Europe caught up in history

The recently published issue 419 of the magazine France Forum calls for a European reawakening. Indeed, the international context places the European Union and its values (pluralism, solidarity, etc.) at a crossroads. Through objective and detached analyses of current events and European strategic positioning, including those of Pascale Joannin and Jean-Dominique Giuliani, the magazine highlights the idea that the Union is not a given, but something that is practised and chosen. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Response to US tariffs on steel and aluminium

On 12 March, the European Commission announced swift and proportionate countermeasures to protect European businesses and consumers in the face of the US imposing new tariffs on European imports of steel and aluminium. These European countermeasures could apply to American exports of goods representing up to €26 billion, constituting an economic scope equivalent to that of American customs duties. The Commission has stated that it remains open to dialogue with a view to finding a negotiated solution, emphasising the importance of avoiding measures harmful to the economies on both sides of the Atlantic. [Read more](#)



Draft regulation on returns in the field of migration

On 11 March, the Commission presented a new regulation on returns to the European Parliament. The text will replace the 2008 'Returns' Directive by amending the legal framework on the expulsion of third-country nationals residing illegally in the European Union. The draft envisages, in particular, a system of mutual recognition of return decisions made by a Member State and a tightening of the conditions of return. The debates are particularly centred around the creation of centres to receive migrants expelled from the Union. [Read more](#)



Draft regulation on critical medicines

On 11 March, the European Commission proposed a regulation aimed at improving the availability of critical medicines. This would help strengthen the European pharmaceutical sector, while protecting the health of citizens and guaranteeing broad access to medicines. This initiative aims to reduce European dependencies and shortages. This proposal contains strategic projects relating to production capacities as well as guidelines relating to state aid and the use of public procurement for financial support, while diversifying supply chains. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Resolution on a White Paper on the future of European defence

On 12 March, MEPs adopted a resolution calling on the European Union to take urgent action to ensure its own security. A White Paper is due to be presented by the Commission on 19 March, containing concrete proposals for action 'akin to that taken in wartime'. The resolution welcomes the ReArm Europe plan presented by the Commission. MEPs point out that peace requires support for Ukraine and the EU's defence resilience in the face of Russia, considered to be 'the most significant direct and indirect threat to the EU'. A common and clear long-term strategy on the future of the European defence industry must also be decided, say MEPs. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of the Finance and Economy Ministers and the Eurogroup

The Eurogroup ministers, meeting on 10 March, reviewed the macroeconomic situation in the euro zone and the coordination of budgetary policies. The Economy and Finance ministers, meeting on 11 March, discussed defence funding to meet the needs of the Union given the geopolitical situation. The issue of competitiveness and the simplification and improvement of the business environment was addressed, particularly in the light of the measures presented by the Commission at the end of February. In addition, the ministers reached a political agreement on the amendment of the directive on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation, with a view to strengthening the exchange of information on minimum taxation. [Read more - Other link](#)



Meeting of European ministers responsible for competitiveness

The ministers responsible for competitiveness, meeting on 12 March, discussed ways of promoting a more competitive European industry, following the publication of the Clean Industry Pact on 26 February. The future strategy for the single market was addressed, with the emphasis on services. An action plan and a roadmap are envisaged. They also held a debate on the simplification measures of the omnibus package, particularly through the question of extending this method to areas other than those dealt with so far. Discussions also focused on the carbon border adjustment mechanism in order to strengthen it by reducing the administrative burden or ensuring the prevention of circumvention practices. [Read more](#)



Negotiations for a regulation of new genomic techniques

On 14 March, the Council approved the right to negotiate a regulation on plants obtained using new genomic techniques. The proposal aims to strengthen innovation and sustainability in the agri-food sector, while contributing to food security and the reduction of external dependencies. This new legislation would therefore adapt European rules to the technological developments of recent decades. For more information, a study on the subject was published in 2023 by the Foundation. [Read more - Other link](#)



Meeting of the ministers responsible for employment and social policies

The employment ministers, meeting on 10 March in Brussels, discussed incentives and solutions to promote the voluntary extension of working life for older people. The aim is to alleviate labour and skills shortages while reducing the impoverishment of older people. An informal debate also took place on the right to disconnect, particularly on raising awareness among employers and employees of the risks of the 'always available' work culture. [Read more](#)



Sanctions against Russia and Belarus

On 14 March, the Council extended the restrictive measures against Russia until 15 September 2025. These restrictions include travel bans and asset freezes. On the same day, the Council also adopted a position with a view to introducing taxes on the remaining agricultural products from Russia and Belarus. The aim is to reduce Russian export revenues. The products affected by these new taxes represent 15% of agricultural imports from Russia in 2023. The European Parliament must adopt its position for an agreement to be reached. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Agreement with Korea on digital trade

The European Union and South Korea concluded negotiations for a historic agreement on digital trade on 10 March. The agreement aims to strengthen the ties between the European and Korean digital economies, boost consumer confidence, ensure predictability and legal certainty for businesses and remove unjustified barriers. It should also increase digital trade in services and goods between the two parties. Following these negotiations, a formal agreement must still be signed to finalise the procedure. [Read more](#)



Extension of Operation IRINI until 2027

On 11 March, the Council extended the mandate of the military operation in the Mediterranean, entitled EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, until 31 March 2027. A new task has been added to the operation's mandate: illegal activities other than arms trafficking are now included in IRINI's control, surveillance and information gathering activities. The operation was launched on 31 March 2020 to make a concrete contribution by the Union in support of the return to peace and stability in Libya through the implementation of the UN arms embargo imposed on the country. [Read more](#)



Tribute to the victims of terrorism in Europe

The French President, Emmanuel Macron, took part in a ceremony in Strasbourg on 11 March to pay tribute to the victims of terrorism. Several speeches were made, including one by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. This symbolic date was chosen in reference to the Madrid attack in 2004, the deadliest attack Europe had ever seen. The Head of State emphasised the importance of remembering and of 'never forgetting!'. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



8th European Union-South Africa Summit

On 13 March, the President of the European Council, António Costa, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, took part in the 8th European Union-South Africa Summit in Cape Town, together with the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa. The leaders addressed the most pressing global and regional issues. They also discussed ways to intensify the European Union's strategic partnership with South Africa in a wide range of sectors (cooperation, human rights, green transition, growth and development), and announced a €4.7 billion 'Global Gateway' investment package to stimulate sustainable trade. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Presentation of the reform of the 'debt brake' in the Bundestag

On 13 March, Friedrich Merz defended a proposed reform of the Constitution on the prohibition of recourse to public debt before the Bundestag. For the coalition formed between the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), the rearmament of the country in the face of American disengagement must go through this revision. An agreement with the Greens was reached on 14 March. The text must now be formally voted on 18 March in the Bundestag and then presented to the Bundesrat. [Read more](#)

■ Denmark :



Victory of the centre-right party in the Greenlandic legislative elections

The centre-right party, the Democrats, emerged victorious from the 11 March legislative elections in Greenland, with 29.9% of the vote. It came out ahead of the nationalist party, Naleraq, which favours independence for the territory, while the outgoing coalition, made up of the ecologists of Inuit Ataqatigiit and the social democrats of Siumut, suffered a clear setback. In the absence of an absolute majority in Parliament, negotiations will be necessary to form a government. With a turnout of over 70%, this election has attracted widespread attention on the international stage, particularly due to recent attempts at interference by the United States. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Emmanuel Macron hosts his Moldovan counterpart, Maia Sandu

French President Emmanuel Macron received his Moldovan counterpart, Maia Sandu, at the Élysée Palace on 10 March. The two leaders discussed the deepening of bilateral relations and the French head of state denounced the 'increasingly uninhibited Russian attempts at destabilisation' in Moldova. At the end of the meeting, the French President reaffirmed France's support for Moldova and the two heads of state concluded a series of agreements on social security and the fight against disinformation. [Read more](#)



Call from 8 countries for the protection of the European chemical industry

On 11 March, France, Spain, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia called on the European Union to take action to protect the chemical industry. The industry is facing a deep crisis, with a 12% drop in production in 2023. These Member States are proposing measures to support competitiveness, the modernisation of production sites and innovation in the sector. They are also calling for action to combat unfair competition. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



Poland calls on Turkey to play a key role in the Ukrainian peace process

On 12 March, the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, encouraged Turkey to play a key role in the peace process between Ukraine and Russia. During a meeting in Ankara with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he emphasised the importance of stabilising the region through effective negotiations. The Polish head of government also emphasised the need to prioritise the reconstruction of Ukraine, while mentioning the growing cooperation between their two countries within NATO. [Read more](#)

■ Portugal :



Collapse of the government in Portugal

On 11 March, the government led by Luís Montenegro submitted a motion of confidence to the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic following revelations of possible conflicts of interest between the Prime Minister and his family business. The motion was rejected by Parliament, bringing down the government. On 13 March, the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, announced the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of early legislative elections on 18 May. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Armenia :



Towards a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan

On 13 March, Azeri and Armenian officials announced that they had concluded a draft peace agreement and the restoration of interstate relations between the two countries, with a view to ending the historic conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, consultations between the foreign ministers of the two states are currently underway to confirm the date and location of the final agreement. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



Revolution of the European Parliament on reforms and growth in Moldova

On 11 March, MEPs adopted a €1.9 billion support plan for Moldova. This agreement includes €520 million in grants and €1.5 billion in low-interest loans. The aim is to accelerate socio-economic reforms in the country to strengthen its resilience and advance its EU integration project, mitigating the impact of the war provoked by Russia in Ukraine. This agreement must now be approved by the Council before it can be published in the Official Journal. [Read more](#)

■ Serbia :



Massive demonstration against the authorities

For several months, the Serbian government has been in the grip of a wave of protest after the collapse of the roof of a station last November in Novi Sad, which caused the death of fifteen people and aroused the anger of the population against the corruption and negligence of the authorities. On 15 March, the student movement organised the largest gathering in the country's history, bringing together nearly 300,000 people in Belgrade to challenge Aleksandar Vučić's regime and replace it with a transitional government. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Support from the E5 group of defence ministers

On 12 March, the E5 group of defence ministers (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom), meeting in Paris, reiterated their support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. They welcomed the diplomatic progress and decided to strengthen military and industrial support, in particular by modernising the Ukrainian forces. The discussions focused on the need for an autonomous European defence, with increased industrial cooperation. Similarly, they emphasised the importance of unity and collective responsibility in facing current and future threats. [Read more](#)



Ukraine facility: third instalment of almost €3.5 billion

On 17 March, the Council approved a third payment to Ukraine under the special facility set up for it. This payment amounts to almost €3.5 billion in grants and loans. The objective is in line with previous payments: to ensure the country's macro-financial stability and to ensure its reconstruction and modernisation. With this payment, Ukraine has already received almost €20 billion since the launch of the facility a year ago. This approval comes after the Council considered that the country had met the necessary conditions set out in the facility plan, including reforms to increase the use of renewable energy and the development of a strategy for agricultural and rural development. [Read more](#)



European Parliament resolution on Ukraine

In a resolution adopted on 12 March, MEPs reiterate that the European Union is Ukraine's main strategic ally, particularly in light of the recent positions of the United States, and that it must therefore help it to defend its right to legitimate self-defence. With this resolution, they welcome the proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, proposed on 11 March. In this resolution, the MEPs state that Ukraine must be able to reject hasty agreements, without any guarantee of security in the medium and long term, and that any blackmail would be unacceptable. [Read more](#)



The Council of Europe will compensate the relatives of those who have disappeared in Ukraine

On 13 March, the Council of Europe announced that people whose close family member has disappeared on Ukrainian territory due to the war can submit compensation claims to the Register of Damages Caused by the Conflict. From now on, people who have lived in uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones can request compensation for the moral damage suffered. [Read more](#)



Security in Ukraine: meeting of chiefs of staff in Paris

On 11 March, 37 chiefs of staff from European countries, NATO and other allies met in Paris to discuss security guarantees in Ukraine. The aim of the meeting was to explore strategies to strengthen stability in Ukraine and prevent any future Russian aggression. Discussions focused on military coordination, armament and support for Ukrainian forces. Proposals were put forward to strengthen and solidify international commitment and collective defence mechanisms. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Mark Rutte travels to the Balkans

On 10 and 11 March, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte visited Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Pristina in Kosovo. During these official visits, he met with several national political representatives, with a view to reasserting the North Atlantic Alliance's support for the perpetuation of peace and stability in the Western Balkans, in a context of separatist tensions in Bosnia. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :

OECD Economic Outlook

On 17 March, the OECD published its report on the economic outlook for 2025. Global GDP growth forecasts have been revised downwards, from 3.3% to 3.1%, and for 2026, from 3.3% to 3%, following growth of 3.2% in 2024. The OECD reports in particular an increase in trade barriers in several G20 economies as well as greater uncertainties affecting investment and household spending. In addition, inflationary pressures persist in several economies. The OECD therefore recommends that monetary authorities remain vigilant and that budgetary measures be adopted to ensure debt sustainability, by reallocating expenditure and increasing revenue. According to the organisation, ambitious structural reforms must be carried out to improve the foundations for growth. [Read more](#)



COUR DES
COMPTES
EUROPÉENNE

Court of Auditors report on the European post-pandemic recovery fund

In a report published on 10 March, the European Court of Auditors raises questions about the effectiveness of the 27 Member States' spending control systems under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Court reports weaknesses in the control of compliance with public procurement rules, which are attributed in particular to a lack of clarity of the rules and a lack of detailed guidance on how to carry out these checks. In addition, shortcomings have been observed in the corrective measures taken at national level, which reduces their dissuasive effect. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Culture :



The Pioneers of 19th Century Art in Helsinki

The Ateneum National Art Museum is hosting an exhibition entitled 'Crossing Borders – Travelling Women Artists in the 1800s' until 24 August. This cultural event brings together for the first time the works of more than 50 women artists from the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, Poland and Germany who were active in the 19th century. The exhibition highlights little-known women artists and their networks, emphasising the importance of Germany as an artistic destination over France. [Read more](#)



Der Blaue Reiter in Berlin

The Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin is devoting an entire exhibition to the art of Der Blaue Reiter, until 15 June. This organisation of artists, founded in Munich at the beginning of the 20th century, contributed to the establishment of the German Expressionist movement. The exhibition 'The Cosmos of Der Blaue Reiter' is organised into seven chapters devoted to the graphic prints of Wassily Kandinsky, the works painted on paper by August Macke, the poetic visual exchange between Franz Marc and the poet Else Lasker-Schüler, as well as the broader theme of the women artists who participated in the group. [Read more](#)

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Refik Anadol in Bilbao

Until 10 October, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is presenting the in situ exhibition: Refik Anadol. Through this presentation, the museum offers the general public the chance to discover a new series devoted to installations designed and created in interaction with their host location and which push the boundaries of contemporary practices. This exhibition calls upon artists from several disciplines (visual arts, technology, music and performance), and explores new ways of perceiving and inhabiting space. [Read more](#)



Warhol in Milton Keynes

The Milton Keynes Gallery is hosting the exhibition 'Portrait of America' by the American pop artist Andy Warhol until 29 June. This exhibition of works dating from the 1950s to the 1980s includes early drawings, painted silkscreen prints and photographic series illustrating Warhol's collaborations with artists, friends, filmmakers and celebrities. More than 130 works, including the famous Marilyn series, images of Liz Taylor and Warhol himself, are presented on the occasion of this collaboration between the Milton Keynes Gallery, the Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland. [Read more](#)



Musée Jacquemart-André

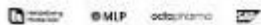
Artemisia exhibition in Paris

From 19 March to 3 August, the Jacquemart-André Museum is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Artemisia Gentileschi, a 17th-century Italian painter. The exhibition presents a selection of 40 works, including masterpieces and rare pieces. It highlights the originality of her art and the impact of her personal experience. Artemisia was a major international figure in the Caravaggisti movement. [Read more](#)

Heidelberger
Frühling
Musikfestival
22. März
– 13. April
2025



Pressemappe



Classical music festival in Heidelberg

The classical music festival in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, will run from 22 March to 13 April. Under the motto 'Liberated Time', the event highlights the work of composers Franz Schubert and Steve Reich. One of the highlights promised is the performance of five piano concertos by Sergei Prokofiev, over three evenings, by Igor Levit with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, conducted by Ivan Fischer. [Read more](#)



The BANAD 2025 Festival: a tribute to Art Nouveau and Art Deco in Brussels

Until 30 March, the Brussels Art Nouveau & Art Deco (BANAD) festival celebrates the unique architectural heritage of the city of Brussels. Visitors can take part in guided tours of iconic Art Nouveau and Art Deco buildings. The event also features art exhibitions and antique markets. The aim is to highlight and preserve the architectural wealth of the Belgian capital. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 17 March 2025

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

 18 March 2025

"General Affairs" Council (Brussels)

 19 March 2025

Tripartite Social Summit (Brussels)

 20 March 2025

Euro Zone Summit (Brussels)

 20 and 21 March

European Council (Brussels)

 24 March 2025

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Brussels)



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