

Letter n°1109 of Tuesday 29th April 2025

Europe appears to be the solution, not the problem

Birgit Holzer - 29 Apr 2025

The latest Eurobarometer survey shows historically high approval ratings for the European Union, even as nationalist and Eurosceptic parties continue to gain ground in the European Parliament and/or in Member States. What appears to be a paradox can be explained by a shift in rhetoric: even right-wing populists no longer question the European Union.



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■ Front page! :



New Germany, new Europe

Friedrich Merz, future Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, has big plans for his country and isn't afraid to break with traditional policies. This true European and supporter of Franco-German relations has managed to lift the constitutional taboo on the 'debt brake' and wants to commit to European strategic autonomy. Many challenges await him: 'If he succeeds in tackling them, we will be able to say "Germany is back" and even extend this slogan to "Europe is back".' [Read more](#)

■ Elections :



Early parliamentary elections on 18 May in Portugal

The Portuguese are being called to the polls on 18 May after the country's president, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, announced the dissolution of the Assembly of the Republic, the country's unicameral parliament. According to the latest opinion poll conducted between 14 and 22 April, the Democratic Alliance, which brings together the PSD and the CDS/PP, is set to win 34.1% of the vote, with the PS credited with 27.1%. Chega, led by its founder André Ventura, is expected to win 15.2% and the Liberal Initiative 8.3% of the vote. Luis Montenegro (PSD), the outgoing Prime Minister, could therefore be re-elected. [Read more](#)



Rafal Trzaskowski leads the polls in Poland's presidential election

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On 18 May, Polish voters will go to the polls to elect the successor to Andrzej Duda, from the Law and Justice Party (PiS), who has served two terms and is not eligible to stand again. Thirteen people are running for president, including Rafal Kazimierz Trzaskowski, the current mayor of Warsaw and candidate for the Civic Platform (PO) party, who is the favourite with 31.7% of the vote, according to the latest opinion poll conducted on 23 April. Karol Tadeusz Nawrocki, supported by the PiS, is credited with 27.6% of the vote, and Slawomir Jerzy Mentzen, a far-right candidate and president of the libertarian New Hope (NN) party, is in third place with 11.3% of the vote. A second round will be held on 1 June between the two candidates who came out ahead in the first round. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



Support the Robert Schuman Foundation

The period of economic and geopolitical uncertainty currently facing the continent is an opportunity for Europe to show strength and unity in the face of adversity. To shed light on these crucial issues, the Robert Schuman Foundation conducts research and organises events to promote European values and pass on the spirit of the Founding Fathers of Europe. Now more than ever, your support is important to help us strengthen our task of analysis and information. Support the Foundation by making a donation that is 66% tax deductible for individuals and 60% for businesses! [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Apple and Meta sanctioned for non-compliance with European legislation

On 23 April, the European Commission fined Apple €500 million and Meta €200 million for non-compliance with digital market legislation. Apple has been penalised for preventing developers from directing users to alternative offers outside the App Store. Meta has been criticised for its 'consent or pay' model, which is deemed insufficient to guarantee users a real choice over the use of their personal data. These decisions, the first of their kind under the DMA, mark a turning point in the regulation of large digital platforms in Europe. [Read more](#)



Boosting investment in the defence industry

On 22 April, the European Commission proposed adjustments to existing funding programmes to accelerate investment in the European Defence Industrial Base (EDIB). The ReArm Europe plan and the expansion of the STEP platform aim to support defence-related projects, particularly critical technologies such as AI and cybersecurity. Innovative start-ups will also receive increased support through Horizon Europe. In addition, cohesion funds may be voluntarily reallocated to the European Defence Fund and the ASAP initiative, which has been extended until the end of 2026. [Read more - Other link](#)



Modernisation of road safety and vehicle inspection rules

On 24 April, the European Commission proposed a reform of road safety and vehicle registration rules to better integrate electric vehicles and emerging technologies. The text provides for enhanced technical inspections, particularly for older vehicles and driver assistance systems, as well as new emissions tests. It also introduces digital registration and roadworthiness certificates, measures to combat odometer fraud and cross-border recognition of roadworthiness tests. These measures aim to save 7,000 lives and prevent 65,000 serious injuries by 2050. [Read more](#)



Protection of the high seas

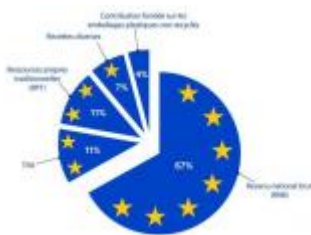
On 24 April, the European Commission proposed incorporating the international agreement 'Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction' into European Union law. This treaty aims to protect biodiversity in the high seas, in particular through the creation of marine protected areas and environmental assessments prior to any activity in international waters. It also facilitates the equitable sharing of marine genetic resources. The directive, which aims to harmonise practices within Member States, will be examined by the European Parliament and the Council with a view to ratification before the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Countervailing duties on Chinese mobile access equipment

On 25 April, the European Commission imposed definitive countervailing duties on imports of mobile access equipment (MAE) from China, ranging from 7.3% to 14.2%. These measures are in addition to the anti-dumping duties decided in January 2025, bringing the total duties to between 20.6% and 66.7%. The aim is to protect the European industry, which employs more than 3,000 people, from Chinese subsidies deemed unfair. The investigation found that these subsidies, such as preferential financing and tax reductions, have harmed the competitiveness of European producers. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Towards a more ambitious post-2027 European budget

On 23 April, members of the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets adopted a report calling for a stronger long-term budget (multiannual financial framework) after 2027. They argue for an increase above the current ceiling of 1% of the Union's gross national income to meet geopolitical, economic and environmental challenges. The report rejects the 'national plan per Member State' model and is calling for greater transparency, flexibility and parliamentary control. It also supports the creation of new specific funds, better traceability of expenditure and respect for the rule of law as a condition for access to European funds. [Read more](#)



Towards a more integrated and united Europe in defence

On 24 April, MEPs adopted their position on the EDIP programme, which aims to strengthen the EU's defence industry. The text provides for increased investment, joint procurement and better integration of European industrial capabilities. It also includes enhanced support for Ukraine through a new instrument (USI) facilitating its cooperation with the European defence industry. MEPs are also calling for 'European procurement', giving preference to components from the European Union and the creation of a common catalogue of military equipment. [Read more](#)



Gas: more flexibility to calm the market without compromising security

On 24 April, MEPs backed the extension of the gas storage regulation until 2027 as part of a response to the energy crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. To ease pressure on prices, they propose reducing the stock filling target from 90% to 83%, with flexibility margins depending on market conditions. The target could be achieved between 1 October and 1 December 2025. Despite this flexibility, the overall minimum level should not fall below 75% in order to guarantee winter energy security. [Read more](#)



Gradual rollout of the Entry and Exit System at EU borders

On 23 April, the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee approved the gradual rollout of the Entry and Exit System (EES), which will record crossings at the EU's external borders by third-country nationals. This system, which replaces passport stamps with electronic biometric data, aims to enhance security and facilitate border crossings. It will be rolled out over 180 days, with progressive registration thresholds. MEPs insist on flexible implementation, excluding periods of high traffic, and on the inclusion of emergency procedures in case of malfunction. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Strengthening military support for Moldova and North Macedonia

On 25 April, the Council adopted €15 million in assistance for North Macedonia through the European Peace Facility (EPF), bringing the total assistance since 2023 to €38 million. This measure aims to strengthen capabilities in intelligence, electronic warfare, vehicles and communication systems. It is part of the security partnership signed with the European Union. On 24 April, two new measures were adopted in favour of Moldova, worth €60 million. They will be used to modernise short-range air defence and infantry mobility. This support demonstrates the European Union's increased commitment to regional security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

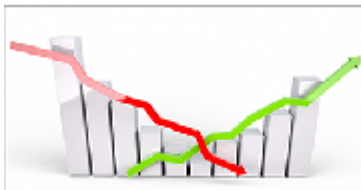
■ European Agencies :



ACES in orbit: Europe redefines time measurement from space

ESA's ACES programme, which carries the most accurate atomic clocks ever sent into orbit, was successfully launched on 21 April to the International Space Station. Equipped with the PHARAO and SHM clocks, this European mission will test general relativity and connect the best clocks on Earth via an ultra-precise time transfer system. Managed from France and Germany, ACES promises unrivalled time accuracy, losing only one second in 300 million years, and opens up new prospects in fundamental physics and global synchronisation. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Zero growth forecast

On 24 April, the German government published its spring budget forecast, in which it forecasts zero GDP growth. While the annual economic report at the end of January forecast GDP growth of 0.3%, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Robert Habeck said that the US government's customs policy had had an impact on the German economy. He nevertheless welcomed the conditions for financing investment and innovation included in the amendment to the Basic Law on the Special Fund for Infrastructure and Climate Protection, as well as the exception to the debt brake for defence spending. [Read more](#)



Announcement of future CDU ministers in the government

On 28 April, following a meeting of its executive committee, the CDU announced the names of the federal ministers (7), ministers (5) and parliamentary state secretaries (12) nominated by the party to serve in the future coalition. [Read more](#)

■ Spain :



Defence spending at 2% of GDP

At the Council of Ministers meeting on 22 April, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced that Spain would meet the target set by the government in 2014 of spending 2% of GDP on defence. To achieve this, he outlined an investment plan of nearly €10.5 million, a fifth of which will be allocated to conventional armaments and a third to creating a digital shield against hackers. This increase in investment will be financed in particular by the European recovery plan 'NextGenerationEU', thus avoiding any increase in taxes, social spending or debt. [Read more](#)

■ Ireland :



Strengthening cooperation between the United Kingdom and Ireland

The intergovernmental conference between the United Kingdom and Ireland was held on 24 April. The British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) was established after the Good Friday Agreement, concluded in 1998 between the two countries, concerning the status of Northern Ireland. Members of the Irish and British governments discussed maintaining political stability and security, as well as strengthening cooperation between their two countries. They committed to implementing one of the clauses of the agreement, which recognises and takes into account the suffering of the victims and survivors of the 'Troubles', the conflict that divided the two nations from 1969 to 1998. [Read more](#)

■ Portugal :



Defence investment plan

On 23 April, the Portuguese government announced that it would ask the European Commission to activate the national derogation clause allowing it to benefit from an exemption from compliance with EU budget rules, in accordance with the White Paper on European Defence and the 'ReArm Europe' plan. Portugal is the first Member State to activate this clause. The country's defence spending, up to a limit of 1.5% of GDP, will not be taken into account in the limits imposed by the net primary expenditure ceilings set out in the medium-term national budgetary plan for 2025-2028, nor when assessing compliance with the reference value for the deficit (3%). [Read more](#)

■ Sweden :



Defence meeting between Sweden and Lithuania

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson welcomed his Lithuanian counterpart Gintautas Paluckas to Stockholm on 22 April. The two heads of government discussed defence cooperation, transatlantic security, the invasion of Ukraine and European competitiveness. They also discussed the acquisition of CV90 infantry fighting vehicles by all the Nordic and Baltic states. Sweden, Lithuania, Finland and Norway are planning to coordinate their purchases of armoured vehicles, which will enable them to reduce costs and delivery times while promoting interoperability in the field. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UK :



Meeting with the President of the European Commission

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met on 24 April at Downing Street. They discussed the situation in Ukraine, defence, energy security and the global economy. The two leaders restated their support for Ukraine and condemned the recent Russian attacks. They acknowledged satisfactory progress in the negotiations for a partnership between the United Kingdom and the European Union, and set out the goal of presenting an ambitious partnership plan at the first United Kingdom/European Union summit to be held in May. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

Summit on the future of energy security in London

The International Energy Agency organised a summit on the future of energy security on 24 and 25 April in London. Discussions focused on geopolitical, technological and economic issues affecting the energy sector. Representatives from around 60 countries and 50 companies discussed the tools that need to be developed to guarantee energy security, particularly with regard to electricity, renewable energies and the materials and minerals needed to deploy them. However, they also recognised oil and gas as 'key elements of the energy mix'. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



President's meetings on a possible ceasefire

On 26 April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held talks with his US counterpart Donald Trump during a historic meeting in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. The two men discussed a range of issues, including the protection of Ukrainian civilians, an unconditional ceasefire and a secure and lasting peace. The Ukrainian head of state then met with his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, with whom he agreed to align their positions in order to achieve an acceptable ceasefire. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ IMF :



Global slowdown and increased financial risks

In its Global Financial Stability Report published on 22 April, the IMF warned of a slowdown in global growth, expected to reach 2.8% in 2025, due to trade tensions, particularly the widespread tariffs imposed by the United States. This uncertain environment is exacerbating financial vulnerabilities, with asset valuations still high, increased non-bank debt and pressure on bond markets, especially in emerging countries. In addition, geopolitical risks such as conflicts are increasing market volatility and undermining macro-financial stability. The IMF is calling for international coordination, structural reforms and proactive risk management to contain these threats. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ WTO :



EU arbitration procedure on intellectual property before the WTO Dispute Settlement Body

The European Union has initiated arbitration proceedings in accordance with Article 25 of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding. This step is intended to challenge the findings of the Panel in the case 'China — Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights' (DS611). The notice of appeal was notified to WTO Members on 24 April. In accordance with the arrangements agreed between the European Union and China, the European Union has incorporated the entire Panel report into its notice of appeal. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Annual Report of the NATO Secretary General

The annual report of NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, which reviews the main achievements of the Transatlantic Alliance in 2024, was published on 24 April. The report emphasises collective defence and deterrence, which have been strengthened this year, in particular by expanding high-readiness forces, enabling the organisation to have 500,000 military personnel ready to deploy in all environments. To increase NATO's defence capabilities, Allies must devote more than 2% of their GDP to defence spending, a threshold that the leaders concerned had formally committed to in 2014 at the summit in Wales. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



40 years of Schengen: priorities for a safer and more integrated area

On 23 April, the European Commission published its fourth report on the state of Schengen, highlighting the progress made in 2024-2025 and setting priorities for the coming year. The report welcomes the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as a strengthening of the Schengen area. It highlights the decline in irregular crossings, the effective application of the rules and the importance of digitalisation in strengthening security. The Commission calls for increased police cooperation, more effective return management and strengthened governance. These guidelines will be discussed at the Schengen Council in June, marking the 40th anniversary of the signing of the agreement. [Read more](#)



Annual report on the Digital Markets Act

On 25 April, the European Commission published its second annual report on the Digital Markets Act (DMA), covering the year 2024. The report details the actions taken to ensure the effective application of the DMA and to strengthen fairness and contestability in the digital sector. It reviews the gatekeeper designation decisions, regulatory dialogues with gatekeepers, and non-compliance investigations launched. The report also examines the information provided on planned mergers and consumer profiling techniques. It highlights cooperation with national authorities and the work carried out by the High Level Group on Digital Markets. [Read more](#)



Report on Kosovo's implementation of the Berlin agreements

The Democratic Institute of Kosovo, supported by the German Foreign Ministry, published its third report on the status of implementation of the Berlin process in Kosovo on 22 April. According to the report, the country has continued to make moderate progress, particularly in the digital sector. Kosovo's Minister of Economy, Artane Rizvanolli, stated that Serbia had not implemented the agreements reached under this process and expressed scepticism about the possibility of reaching any further agreements. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Global Baroque in Rome

The Quirinale Stables in Rome are hosting the exhibition 'Global Baroque: The World in Rome in the Age of Bernini' until 13 July. Works of art by Baroque masters such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona and Nicolas Poussin offer an insight into the multi-ethnic and multicultural world of Rome at that time, where missionaries, diplomats and artists from Africa, America and Asia engaged in dialogue and drew inspiration from this diversity. [Read more](#)

Gabriele Münter in Paris

The exhibition 'Gabriele Münter – Peindre sans détours' (Gabriele Münter – Painting without detours) is on display at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris until 24 August. This is the first retrospective dedicated to this artist in France. Around 170 works are on display, retracing more than 60 years of creativity by this co-founder of the Blue Rider group. [Read more](#)



The world of King James VI in Edinburgh

The National Galleries of Scotland are presenting 'The World of King James VI and I' until 14 September. Marking the 400th anniversary of King James' death, this exhibition traces his reign through stories of friendship, family, feuds and ambition. Son of Mary, Queen of Scotland, and successor to Elizabeth I, King James VI (1566-1625) was the first monarch to reign over Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales. The exhibition features over 140 objects, including paintings, jewellery and drawings on loan from numerous galleries in the United Kingdom. [Read more](#)



Baroque in Ljubljana

The National Gallery of Slovenia is hosting the exhibition 'Baroque in Slovenia' until 9 November, featuring over 170 works of art, including works by Italian artists Giulio Quaglio and Francesco Fontebasso, and painters from the Viennese court, Martino Altomonte and Martin van Meytens the Younger. [Read more](#)

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Helen Frankenthaler in Bilbao

Until 28 September, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is hosting the exhibition 'Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules'. Known for her role in the transition from abstract expressionism, this artist created a considerable body of work, including paintings, sculptures, ceramics, tapestries and graphic works. The exhibition brings together some thirty poetic abstract works created between 1953 and 2002, grouped by decade, each telling a chapter of Helen Frankenthaler's life. [Read more](#)



Klára Hosnedlová in Berlin

The Hamburger Bahnhof National Gallery of Contemporary Art in Berlin is hosting the exhibition 'Embrace' dedicated to Klára Hosnedlová until 26 October, which explores the themes of home, utopia and everyday life within different political systems. 'Embrace' is the largest institutional solo exhibition dedicated to the artist to date and includes nine-metre-high tapestries, site-specific objects, organic reliefs and large-scale embroideries. [Read more](#)



"Amazonies" in Lyon

The "Amazonies" exhibition at the Musée des Confluences immerses visitors in the cultural richness of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon through objects, stories and knowledge. It highlights the Ashaninka, Kayapo Mëbengôkre, Wayana and Apalai peoples and emphasises the challenges of preserving these territories and cultures. The exhibition is on display until 8 February 2026. [Read more](#)



Hiroshige in London

The British Museum is hosting an exhibition of the works of artist Utagawa Hiroshige until 7 September. Born in Japan in the late 18th century, the artist illustrated the natural beauty of landscapes and the pleasures of urban life during a period of significant historical upheaval. Utagawa Hiroshige became one of the country's most popular artists, depicting his world sometimes as it was, but often as he imagined it to be. While exploring his work, the exhibition shows his influence on artists such as Vincent van Gogh. [Read more](#)



Danube Festival

From 2 to 4 May and from 9 to 11 May, the Danube Festival will be held in Krems an der Donau, Austria. This cultural and musical festival stands out for its various, sometimes changing, performance venues. The programme includes music, performances, discussions and film screenings. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :



4 May

Presidential Election (1st round) (Romania)



5-8 May

European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)



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