

Letter n°1111 of Tuesday 13th May 2025

"We need to find the 'coalition of the willing' capable of overcoming current differences."

[Ernest Wyciszkievicz - 13 May 2025](#)

On 9 May, France and Poland signed a friendship treaty in Nancy, while Warsaw holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union and plays a central role on the European stage, particularly due to its proximity to Ukraine, which has been at war since February 2022. In an interview, Ernest Wyciszkievicz analyses Poland's current strategic position within the European Union, looks back at the evolution of transatlantic relations since the election of Donald Trump, and highlights the renewed importance of the Weimar Triangle in advancing defence and security issues in Europe.



[Front page!](#) | [Foundation](#) | [Ukraine](#) | [Vatican](#) | [Commission](#) | [Parliament](#) |

[Council](#) | [Diplomacy](#) | [Germany](#) | [Cyprus](#) | [France](#) | [Romania](#) |

[UN](#) | [Eurobarometer](#) | [Studies/Reports](#) | [Culture](#) |

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

■ **Front page! :**



Schuman, more relevant now than ever

'World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it. The contribution which an organised and living Europe can make to civilisation is essential to the maintenance of peaceful relations.' These are the words of the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, quoted by Jean-Dominique Giuliani to remind Europeans that the achievements of the European Union do not prevent international instability, which has long been forgotten. Amid this uncertainty, Europe remains a global benchmark for democracy and the rule of law in response to the rise of extremism and populism within its borders. It must therefore show strength and uphold its values in the face of global challenges. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



The future of the European project

To mark the 75th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, the De Gasperi and Schuman Foundations are organising an event in Rome on 13 May on the European legacy of Schuman and De Gasperi, the founding fathers of the European Union. Antonio Tajani, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, will conclude the proceedings. [Read more](#)



Schuman Network: a think-tank for Europe

Created on the initiative of the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Schuman Network is a think-tank that brings together 23 organisations from 13 European countries. Its aim is to strengthen synergies between experts in European affairs. This forum for exchange allows for the comparison of different points of view and enriches analysis on topics such as social cohesion, economic dynamics, the European Union's foreign policy and its international relations. Since its creation, more than 160 contributions have been published, demonstrating a genuine intellectual commitment to European integration. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Joint statement by European leaders in Kyiv

The leaders of France, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom and Ukraine met in Kyiv on 10 May. The five leaders reiterated their commitment to negotiating a comprehensive and unconditional ceasefire lasting 30 days to allow diplomacy to take its course. They agreed to adopt tougher sanctions against Russia if it refuses a ceasefire, as well as a 17th package of European Union sanctions to be coordinated with sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom, Norway and the United States. [Read more](#)



Creation of a special tribunal for Russian crimes of aggression against Ukraine

On 9 May, on Europe Day, in Lviv, an international coalition of 39 European states officially approved the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian crimes of aggression against Ukraine. In the presence of Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas, the states established an international tribunal with jurisdiction to prosecute senior officials for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. [Read more](#)



European Parliament extends suspension of customs duties

On 8 May, MEPs voted in favour of extending trade liberalisation measures with Ukraine, initially scheduled to expire on 5 June 2025. This decision maintains the suspension of customs duties and quotas until June 2028, particularly for the steel sector, in order to support the Ukrainian economy during the war. The aim is to guarantee Ukraine vital export revenues by continuing to open up the European market. [Read more](#)



Meeting of culture ministers in Helsinki

The culture ministers of the Nordic and Balkan countries met in Helsinki on 6 May to discuss the protection of cultural heritage in times of crisis or war. Ukrainian Minister of Culture Mykola Tochytskyi attended the meeting as a special guest. This informal meeting allowed ministers to continue discussions begun at a similar conference held in Stockholm last year. [Read more](#)



Meeting with the Secretary-General of the OECD

On 6 May, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Mathias Cormann, to discuss the role of the international organisation in the development and implementation of Ukraine's reconstruction plan. The OECD's latest report on Ukraine, published on the same day, notes that the Ukrainian economy has shown resilience and that its GDP is expected to grow by 2.5% in 2025 and 2.0% in 2026. This growth, despite the security situation, could be strengthened if circumstances improve. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Vatican :



Habemus Papam: Leo XIV

The conclave to elect the head of the Catholic Church lasted only 24 hours, from 7 to 8 May. The 133 cardinals from 69 countries, gathered in the Sistine Chapel to elect the successor to Pope Francis, chose the American-Peruvian Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as the 267th pope in the third round of voting. Upon his first appearance, the Pope, who chose the name Leo XIV, called for peace and disarmament throughout the world. [Read more](#)



Pope Leo XIV's first Sunday prayer

Pope Leo XIV delivered his first Sunday prayer on 11 May from St. Peter's Basilica. He said: 'I carry in my heart the suffering of the Ukrainian people. Let us do everything possible to achieve a just and lasting peace as quickly as possible.' The pontiff called for the release of prisoners of war and the return of Ukrainian children to their families, and welcomed the ceasefire between India and Pakistan. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Towards the end of energy dependence on Russia

On 6 May, the European Commission presented a roadmap to phase out all imports of Russian energy, including gas, oil and nuclear power. From 2025, new gas contracts will be banned and existing contracts will be phased out by the end of 2027. Member States will have to draw up exit plans by the end of 2025. This plan is supported by a strengthened energy transition framework and greater diversification of supplies, particularly liquefied natural gas. Specific measures will also target nuclear imports and oil transport by the Russian 'ghost fleet'. [Read more](#)



Preparation of a trade response to US tariffs

On 8 May, the European Commission launched a public consultation on a list of US imports worth €95 billion that could be subject to countermeasures if the ongoing negotiations with the United States fail. At the same time, the EU is initiating WTO proceedings against universal tariffs and those targeting the automotive sector, which it considers contrary to multilateral trade rules. It is also considering restricting certain exports to the United States, while exploring diplomatic solutions and alternative outlets. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



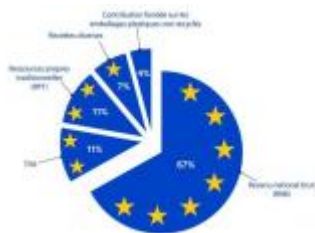
A European Order of Merit to celebrate unity and European values

To mark the 75th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, the European Parliament has decided to create the European Order of Merit, the Union's first civilian distinction. Intended to honour those who work for European integration and its fundamental values, this order aims to strengthen the common European identity. Up to 20 people will be decorated each year, on the recommendation of senior European officials, with the first ceremony scheduled to take place by 2026. [Read more](#)



CO2: more flexibility for car manufacturers

On 8 May, MEPs adopted a measure allowing car manufacturers to smooth their CO2 emissions over the period 2025-2027, rather than having to meet strict annual targets. This flexibility aims to support a sector facing rapid technological change and fierce competition. The average reduction of 15% compared to 2021 remains unchanged. The text, which has already been approved by the Council, must now formally enter into force. [Read more](#)



Towards a more ambitious and responsible post-2027 European budget

In a resolution adopted on 7 May, MEPs called for a more ambitious multiannual financial framework for 2028-2034, tailored to current geopolitical, climate and economic challenges. The text rejects the approach of single national plans and ineffective 'megafunds', advocating transparent governance with greater local involvement. MEPs are calling for a new fund for competitiveness, an increase in defence spending without sacrificing social policies, and a more flexible budget. They also demand strict respect for the rule of law in access to funds and a clear separation between debt repayment and programme spending. [Read more](#)



Strengthening foreign investment screening

On 8 May, MEPs adopted new rules making it mandatory to screen foreign investments in sensitive sectors such as media, critical raw materials and infrastructure. All Member States will now have to apply harmonised screening mechanisms, and the European Commission will be able to intervene directly in high-risk situations. This reform aims to better protect the Union's security and economic sovereignty, while maintaining an attractive market for investment. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Europe strengthens unity in the face of security challenges

At an informal Gymnich meeting in Warsaw on 7 and 8 May, foreign ministers and the EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, discussed crucial security issues. Alongside the United Kingdom, they reiterated their support for Ukraine and the need to maintain pressure on Russia through enhanced sanctions. Transatlantic cooperation, EU-US relations and hybrid threats to EU Member States and candidates for EU membership were also central to the discussions. Participants stressed the urgency of a more coordinated and proactive European response. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Digital Trade Agreement with Singapore

On 7 May, the European Union and Singapore signed an ambitious digital trade agreement aimed at facilitating online trade while protecting consumer rights. The agreement, which modernises digital trade rules, ensures reliable cross-border data flows, prohibits unjustified data localisation requirements, and strengthens regulatory cooperation. It is in line with both partners' commitment to promoting open, competitive and rules-based digital economies. [Read more](#)



80th anniversary of the end of World War II

On 8 May, numerous commemorations were held across Europe to mark the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany's surrender. French President Emmanuel Macron presided over a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe, emphasising the importance of defending peace. He awarded the Legion of Honour to Jean Daikhowski, a figure of the Resistance and survivor of the Vel' d'Hiv. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, in a speech at the London Defence Conference, stressed the need to strengthen ties with European and American allies for the security of the United Kingdom and the European continent. German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier recalled the importance of remembering the past in order to build the future and renewed his support for Ukraine. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Chancellor Merz takes office and new government formed

On 6 May, CDU leader Friedrich Merz was elected Federal Chancellor by an absolute majority of Bundestag members in a second round of voting, winning 325 votes out of a total of 630. He thus succeeds Olaf Scholz, despite the failure of the first ballot, a scenario unprecedented since the post-war period. On the new chancellor's proposal, 17 federal ministers were appointed by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The government comprises ten men and eight women, seven of whom were appointed by the CDU and SPD respectively, and three by the CSU. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Chancellor Merz's first official visits

On 7 May, the day after officially taking office, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited the Élysée Palace to continue the 'good tradition' of the new chancellor's first trip being to France. Three key topics were discussed: the future of Europe, the Franco-German alliance and the defence of Europeans. After his visit to Paris, the Chancellor travelled to Poland on 8 May, where he was welcomed by Prime Minister Donald Tusk to discuss the development of relations between the two countries. On 9 May, the new Chancellor ended his week in Brussels, where he met with representatives of the European Union and reiterated that the current challenges can only be overcome together and in unity. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Cyprus :



Cooperation between Cyprus and Italy to combat trafficking in antiquities

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Italy and Cyprus on 7 May to combat illicit trafficking in antiquities and to strengthen cultural cooperation between the two countries. The ministers of culture reiterated their commitment to protecting cultural heritage through enhanced cooperation, technical training and the exchange of expertise. The Cypriot Minister of Culture, Vasiliki Kassianidou, also presented Cyprus' cultural agenda and priorities for its presidency of the European Union in 2026. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



Treaty for a strategic partnership with Poland strengthened

French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk signed a treaty on enhanced cooperation between their two countries on 9 May in Nancy. The agreement aims to consolidate ties in the defence, energy, nuclear and cultural sectors. This strategic rapprochement reflects a shared desire to strengthen European sovereignty. The city of Nancy was symbolically chosen to highlight the historical roots of Franco-Polish relations. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Romania :



Resignation of the Prime Minister and appointment of an interim government

On 5 May, following the results of the first round of the presidential election, Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu (PSD) resigned. On 6 May, interim President Ilian Bolojan signed a decree appointing Interior Minister Catalin Preodoiu of the Liberal Party (PNL) as interim Prime Minister. The latter stated that Romania must guarantee democracy and preserve Euro-Atlantic values. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UN :



Discussions at the Security Council regarding the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina

At the Security Council on 6 May, several leaders spoke about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UN High Representative, Christian Schmidt, warned of an 'extraordinary' crisis shaking the country and fuelled by secessionist initiatives by Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated political entity in the country. Željka Cvijanović, Serbian member of the rotating presidency, criticised Christian Schmidt's legitimacy, while the European Union ambassador to the country, Stavros Lambrinidi, deplored the Republika Srpska's initiatives as 'contrary to the European path' and urged all political actors in the country to 'renew their commitment to the reforms necessary for continued European accession'. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Eurobarometer :



Culture brings people together, according to the latest Eurobarometer

A Eurobarometer survey published on 8 May reveals that Europeans consider culture to be a key factor in unity and identity. 87% of respondents believe that cultural exchanges should play a central role in the European Union. Artistic freedom is considered important by 88% of citizens, although perceptions vary between countries. Nearly half of Europeans participated in an artistic activity in 2023, compared to 37% in 2013. There are growing concerns about the impact of AI on artists, with only 51% of respondents believing that artists are fairly remunerated. Citizens are calling for a greater role for the EU in supporting culture, making the arts more accessible and protecting heritage. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



European Court of Auditors' review in 2024

In its 2024 activity report published on 5 May, the European Court of Auditors emphasises its commitment to ensuring the rigorous and effective use of European Union public funds. It will have published 32 reports and plans 69 audits between now and 2026 on a wide range of topics, from climate to energy security. Against a changing budgetary backdrop, the Court of Auditors stresses the importance of maintaining transparency and accountability, despite efforts to simplify procedures. It remains a key player in guiding European policies towards better performance. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

On 12 May, Alain Berset, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, presented his 2025 report entitled 'Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe'. The Secretary General's annual report assesses the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the 46 member states of the Council of Europe in the two years following the publication of the last comprehensive report in 2023. [Read more](#)



Counterfeiting: a global scourge with serious consequences

According to a joint report by the OECD and EUIPO published on 7 May, trade in counterfeit goods was worth \$467 billion in 2021, posing a growing threat to consumer safety, the global economy and intellectual property. The sectors most affected include clothing, cosmetics and car parts. The report highlights the growing ingenuity of counterfeiters, who are exploiting new technologies and fast delivery channels. In response to this development, the authors call for enhanced international cooperation and better information sharing to combat this illicit trade. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Cannes Film Festival

The 78th Cannes Film Festival will take place from 13 to 24 May, showcasing world cinema on the Croisette. French actress Juliette Binoche will preside over the jury. This edition will pay tribute to American director Todd Haynes, who will receive the Golden Coach award during the Directors' Fortnight. [Read more](#)



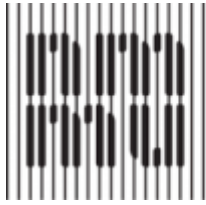
Kunstenfestivaldesarts

The Kunstenfestivaldesarts is celebrating its 30th edition in Brussels until 31 May. This event offers three weeks of contemporary creations in theatre, dance, performance and visual arts. It also highlights contemporary issues through innovative works. [Read more](#)



Robert Rauschenberg in Milan

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of American visual artist Robert Rauschenberg, the Museo del Novecento in Milan is hosting an exhibition of his work until 29 June. A central figure in the transition from modern to contemporary art, Robert Rauschenberg's work demonstrates his commitment to the exchange of ideas within artistic movements. The exhibition also offers visitors the opportunity to rediscover Italian art from the museum's collections. [Read more](#)



NACIONALNI
MUZEJ
MODERNE
UMJETNOSTI

Georges Papazoff in Zagreb

The National Gallery of Modern Art in Zagreb is showcasing works by Bulgarian painter Georges Papazoff, created between 1929 and 1934, until 1 June. Papazoff is considered one of the precursors of the movement known as 'abstract surrealism', alongside other artists such as Miro, Ernst, Malkine and Masson. [Read more](#)



Post-War Scottish Art in Edinburgh

Until 12 October, the Edinburgh City Art Centre is hosting the exhibition 'Out of Chaos: Post-War Scottish Art 1945-2000'. This event traces the period from the late 1940s to the early 1990s and highlights the evolution of approaches to figurative subjects and landscapes, as well as the rise of abstraction and pop art after the Second World War. [Read more](#)



21st European Museum Night


The 21st edition of European Museum Night will take place on 17 May. With more than 3,000 participating museums across Europe, the event offers free admission and a programme of activities, performances and workshops for all ages. [Read more](#)



"The Berlin Wall. A Divided World" in Paris

L'exposition "Le Mur de Berlin. Un Monde Divisé" ouvre ses portes jusqu'au 28 septembre, à la Cité de l'architecture, retraçant l'histoire du Mur de Berlin durant la Guerre froide. Elle présente plus de 200 objets issus de 40 institutions internationales, dont un fragment original du mur. L'exposition explore la vie quotidienne à Berlin-Est et Berlin-Ouest. Quatre espaces thématiques évoquant liberté, démocratie et coexistence dans un monde divisé, structurent l'exposition. [Read more](#)

Agenda :

 12 May 2025

Eurogroup

 12 May 2025

"Education, Youth, Culture and Sports" Council

 13 May 2025

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council

 16 May 2025

European Political Community Meeting

 18 May 2025

Presidential election in Romania (2nd round) Presidential election in Poland (1st round) Legislative Elections in Portugal

 19 May 2025

EU-UK Summit



The Letter n°1111

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in English -- Edition of Tuesday 13th May 2025

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N° ISSN: **2729-6482**

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