

Letter n°1112 of Tuesday 20th May 2025

The European Union–United Kingdom summit on 19 May 2025: a milestone in the long road to Brexit

Thibaud Harrois - 20 May 2025

The European Union–United Kingdom summit on 19 May 2025 paves the way for renewed cooperation, particularly in defence and security, trade, with progress on the carbon market and agricultural product controls at borders. It represents a moment of clarification of bilateral ambitions after years of post-Brexit tensions. However, the UK's red lines and Brussels' reluctance to renegotiate existing agreements limit the room for manoeuvre, suggesting that targeted progress is possible but that a new chapter is being written.



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■ Elections :



Nicusor Dan wins presidential election in Romania

The mayor of Bucharest, pro-European independent candidate Nicusor Dan, won the presidential election in Romania on 18 May. He secured 53.60% of the votes cast in the second round, ahead of far-right candidate George Simion (AUR), who won 46.40% of the vote. Nicusor Dan made an incredible comeback of 30 points between the two rounds, benefiting from strong mobilisation among Romanians, particularly those living outside the country. He will succeed Klaus Iohannis, who served two terms and was therefore unable to stand for re-election, at the Cotroceni Palace, the official residence of the Presidents of the Republic of Romania. [Read more](#)



The centre-right wins Portugal's parliamentary elections again without an absolute majority

The Democratic Alliance, a coalition comprising the Social Democratic Party (PSD), led by Luis Montenegro, and the Democratic and Social Centre/People's Party (CDS/PP) led by Nuno Melo, came out on top in Portugal's parliamentary elections on 18 May. The two parties together won 32.72% of the vote and 89 seats. The Socialist Party, the main opposition party, came second with 23.38% and 58 seats. Chega (Enough) (CH), a far-right party led by André Ventura, won 22.56% and 58 seats. Luis Montenegro is expected to be reappointed Prime Minister. [Read more](#)



Rafal Trzaskowski, who came out ahead, will face Karol Nawrocki in the second round on 1st of June

Rafal Trzaskowski, candidate for the Civic Platform and mayor of Warsaw, came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election in Poland on the 18th of May. Winning 31.36% of the votes cast, he will face the Law and Justice Party (PiS) candidate Karol Nawrocki, who secured 29.54% of the vote, in the second round on 1st June. Turnout was 67.31%, slightly higher than in the first round of the previous presidential election on 28 June 2020 (+2.8 points). [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Spring economic forecasts

According to the European Commission's economic forecasts published on 19 May, the European Union economy is expected to grow modestly by 1.1% in 2025, before a stronger recovery in 2026. Despite an uncertain global environment, consumption remains solid, supported by a dynamic labour market and slowing inflation. Investment is also growing, supported by European funds. However, trade tensions and geopolitical uncertainties are weighing on exports and the overall growth outlook. [Read more](#)



Simplification of the CAP to ease the burden on farmers

On 14 May, the European Commission proposed measures to simplify the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and reduce the administrative burden on farmers. Among the new measures are a doubling of the flat-rate payment for small farmers, lighter environmental controls, better crisis management and increased digitisation of procedures. These adjustments aim to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of the agricultural sector, while saving time and resources. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



A bolder and more competitive Europe

In a speech at the event 'Europe at a Crossroads' held on 13 May, Roberta Metsola urged the European Union to reinvent itself for it to have a greater impact on the world stage. She called for a smarter, stronger and safer Europe, focusing on innovation, regulatory simplification and enhanced defence. The President of the European Parliament also called for stronger transatlantic partnerships and a change of mindset to meet citizens' expectations. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers

On 13th May, Economy and Finance Ministers backed the SAFE instrument, which aims to mobilise up to €150 billion to strengthen joint defence procurement. They adopted a general approach on the reform of import VAT, making suppliers responsible for payment. Ministers discussed the strategy for the savings and investment union to boost competitiveness. An exchange of views took place on the economic impact of the war in Ukraine. The Commission presented progress on financial support for Kyiv. They also approved the revised recovery plans of several Member States. [Read more](#)



Meeting of trade ministers

On 15 May, trade ministers reiterated their unity in the face of US trade policy, hoping for a balanced solution before the end of the partial freeze on reciprocal measures. At the same time, the European Union is preparing possible countermeasures and monitoring the risks of trade diversion. The ministers also discussed economic security, particularly foreign investment, export controls and outward investment. Finally, the ongoing trade negotiations with several countries, including India, Australia and Mercosur, were discussed. [Read more](#)



Extension of sanctions against cyberattacks until 2026

On 12 May, ministers decided to extend the sanctions targeting cyberattacks against the European Union or its Member States by one year, until 18 May 2026. The legal framework for these measures has been extended until 2028. This regime allows for the sanctioning of 17 individuals and four entities involved in major attacks through asset freezes and travel bans. The European Union is thus showing its determination to fight cyberattacks and defend a free and secure cyberspace. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Summit with the United Kingdom

European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on 19 May in London for the first summit between the United Kingdom and the European Union since Brexit. The European and British leaders signed several agreements on this occasion: a security and defence partnership forms the core of the reset of relations between the two sides. It is accompanied by a commitment to cooperation in the form of a 'common agreement', the details of which are still to be negotiated in the coming months. They agreed to extend until 2038 a fishing agreement allowing European boats to fish in British waters and vice versa. [Read more](#)



Digital and technological partnership with Japan

On 12 May, at their third Digital Partnership Council in Tokyo, the European Union and Japan reiterated their strategic alliance in the face of global geopolitical uncertainties. They agreed to strengthen their cooperation in areas such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum computing and cybersecurity. Major advances include a joint research project on 6G, joint work on quantum for science and climate, harmonisation of digital identities, and the development of connectivity routes, including in the Arctic. [Read more](#)

**EUROPEAN
POLITICAL
COMMUNITY**

European Political Community meeting

The 6th meeting of the European Political Community took place in Tirana on 16th May, with the theme 'A new Europe in a new world: unity – cooperation – joint action'. The heads of state and government of the 47 countries present discussed Europe's security and democratic resilience, competitiveness and economic security, and the challenges of youth mobility. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Access to Pfizer documents: Commission overruled

On 14 May, the European Court of Justice overturned the European Commission's decision to deny a New York Times journalist access to messages exchanged between Ursula von der Leyen and the CEO of Pfizer. It found that the Commission had not provided a plausible explanation for the absence of the requested documents. The evidence provided by the journalist was sufficient to rebut the presumption that the messages did not exist. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Chancellor Merz's first general statement to the Bundestag

Eight days after his inauguration, the new Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, delivered his first general statement to members of the Bundestag on 14 May. Foreign policy was at the heart of his speech, in which he emphasised the need to strengthen Europe, referring to Franco-German initiatives and highlighting a 'new start' in relations between the two countries. He focused on German rearmament, expressing his desire to make the Bundeswehr 'the most powerful conventional army in Europe'. [Read more](#)



Meeting with the Greek Prime Minister

Chancellor Friedrich Merz met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on 13 May. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the path to peace were the focus of the talks. Migration, security and defence issues in Europe were also discussed. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Chancellor's trip to Italy

On 17 May, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz was in Rome, where he met with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. During the meeting, they agreed on the need to combat irregular migration more vigorously. They agreed to hold German-Italian government consultations next year to cooperate on improving European policy. The Chancellor described Italy as an 'indispensable strategic partner'. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Choose France Summit and EY Barometer of Attractiveness

President Emmanuel Macron attended the 8th edition of the Choose France Summit, an annual economic gathering of industrialists, investors and business leaders from around the world, on 19 May at the Palace of Versailles. According to the EY barometer published on 15 May, France ranks as the most attractive country in Europe for international investors for the sixth consecutive year. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Luxembourg :



Franco-Luxembourg judicial cooperation agreement

On 13 May, Luxembourg's Minister of Justice, Elisabeth Margue, and her French counterpart, Gérald Darmanin, signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen the fight against organised crime, particularly drug trafficking. A cross-border coordination office will be set up to improve the exchange of information. The public prosecutors of the State of Luxembourg, John Petry, and of the courts of appeal of Metz and Nancy, François Perain and Hugues Berbain, also took part in the ceremony. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Poland :



Energy agreement in the Baltic Sea

On 12 May, the coastal states of the Baltic Sea, members of the European Union, and Norway signed a memorandum of understanding in Warsaw to renew the energy market interconnection plan adopted in 2015. This agreement supports the energy transition in the region and strives to create an open and integrated energy market. Signed by Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, the European Commission and Norway as an observer, the Baltic Sea States agreement is one of the oldest and most advanced forms of regional energy cooperation. [Read more](#)

■ Albania :



Parliamentary election results

On 11th May, Albanian citizens voted in parliamentary elections. On 13 May, the results were announced and the victory of the Socialist Party was declared, led by the current Prime Minister, Edi Rama. Rama, who made his country's accession to the European Union by 2030 the main promise of his campaign, is now set to begin a fourth consecutive term as head of the country thanks to this victory. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Kosovo :



18th attempt to form the Kosovar Assembly

On 19 May, the 18th attempt to form the 9th Assembly of Kosovo failed. This failure was due to a lack of consensus among MPs on the election of a Speaker. The MPs of the Vetëvendosje Movement (VV) had proposed the name of Albulena Haxhiu, who did not get enough support from the Assembly, and then suggested moving to a secret ballot. The opposition party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, has lodged an appeal with the Kosovar Constitutional Court regarding the change in the voting procedure. It has now been a month since the sessions to form the assembly began. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



Declaration in support of Moldova's European integration

On the margins of the European Political Community summit in Tirana on 16 May, the leaders of six European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom), together with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, met with Moldovan President Maia Sandu. They reiterated their unanimous support for Moldova's European integration and welcomed its commitment to democratic reforms and the rule of law. They pledged their support for the country's economic transformation and the protection of its democratic processes from external interference, in a difficult regional context. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



The European Union and Ukraine strengthen their industrial ties in the defence sector

At the second EU-Ukraine Defence Industry Forum in Brussels on 12 May, more than 500 representatives worked to strengthen cooperation between Ukrainian and European defence industries. The event marked the first meeting of a joint working group that aims to launch flagship projects and integrate Ukraine into the European defence industrial base. A memorandum of understanding was signed between Ukraine and the European Association of Aerospace and Defence Industries (ASD). The European Union, the main investor in the Ukrainian defence industry, has committed €1.4 billion from profits on frozen Russian assets to support military equipment production and strengthen Ukraine's long-term security. [Read more](#)



Solidarity of European foreign ministers with Ukraine

Meeting in London on 12th May, the foreign ministers of Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom, together with the High Representative of the European Union, Kaja Kallas, reiterated their solidarity with the Ukrainian people. The ministers called for an immediate, complete and unconditional 30-day ceasefire to allow for talks to be held with a view to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. European support for Ukraine remains unchanged and includes robust security guarantees and the reduction of Russia's war capabilities, drawing on NATO, the European Union and the United Kingdom, which has recently strengthened its relations with its European partners. [Read more](#)



Commemoration of Sürgün

On 18 May, numerous Ukrainian officials commemorated the 81st anniversary of the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars, which lasted four decades. On this occasion, a documentary tracing the history of the Crimean Tatars was screened at the headquarters of the Crimean residence in Kyiv. On 18 May 1944, Stalin ordered the start of mass deportations of Tatars to gulags, claiming that they had collaborated with the Nazis. To date, several countries have recognised the 1944 deportation of Crimean Tatars as genocide. [Read more](#)



European defence ministers discuss coordination of support for Ukraine

On 16 May, Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto welcomed his German, French, Polish and British counterparts to discuss coordination of support for Ukraine. This was the fourth meeting of its kind, following those held in Berlin (25 November), Warsaw (13 January) and Paris (12 March). The press conference given by the defence ministers served to reiterate the commitment to strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy in managing its own security issues, while maintaining strong ties with NATO and the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ Vatican :



Inauguration Mass and reception of the diplomatic corps

Pope Leo XIV celebrated the Mass inaugurating his pontificate on 18 May. Several foreign delegations were present, along with more than 200,000 worshippers. The Pope described an open Church and outlined a path for building peace. Leo XIV issued an appeal for brothers and sisters suffering because of wars. The Supreme Pontiff received members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on 16 May and shared his vision of papal diplomacy based on three guidelines: peace, justice and truth. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UN :



Ministerial summit on peacekeeping in Berlin

On 13 and 14 May, the German capital hosted its first ministerial summit on peacekeeping operations, attended by Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the foreign and defence ministers of dozens of Member States. After noting that there have never been so many conflicts since the creation of the UN, the Secretary-General reiterated the need for a thorough modernisation of the organisation and a strengthening of its resources. According to Antonio Guterres, the strategic overhaul will be based on three pillars: undertaking a review of peace operations to assess their relevance, increasing flexibility in the use of financial and human resources, and providing strong political support. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Sharp rise in export restrictions on critical raw materials according to the OECD

According to an OECD report published on 12 May, export restrictions on critical raw materials have exploded, increasing five-fold since 2009, with a clear acceleration in 2023. This trend, linked to the ecological and digital transitions, threatens global supply chains. Seven countries account for 94% of the measures, particularly affecting cobalt and rare earths. The OECD warns of the economic risks and calls for less restrictive alternatives. [Read more - Other link](#)



10th Western Balkans Forum in Podgorica

The European Economic and Social Council held the 10th Western Balkans Civil Society Meeting in Podgorica on 13 and 14 May. Discussions focused on ways to help Montenegro join the European Union, particularly the role of civil society in the accession process and in developing fundamental rights. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Ivana Kobilca in Ljubljana

For the first time, artist Ivana Kobilca's sketchbooks will be on display until 21 September at the National Gallery of Slovenia. These sketchbooks reveal the working methods of a pioneering Slovenian painter, from her studies in Munich to her spells in Sarajevo and Berlin. The exhibition features 14 original works, sketches and photographic studies, highlighting Ivana Kobilca's innovative use of the techniques of her time. The exhibition offers a rare insight into her creative process and artistic legacy. [Read more](#)



Panayiotis Tetsis retrospective in Athens

To mark the centenary of his birth, the National Gallery of Athens is devoting a major retrospective to Panayiotis Tetsis, a major figure in post-war Greek art, until 31st October. The exhibition traces his artistic career through 160 works – paintings, engravings and watercolours – revealing his unique view of the world, marked by an obsession with light, colour and recurring motifs such as Hydra, markets and seascapes. [Read more](#)



Francesc Gali in Barcelona

Until 14 September, the National Art Museum of Catalonia is hosting the exhibition 'Francesc d'A. Galí. El maestro invisible' in tribute to the painter Francesc d'Assís Galí i Fabra, an important figure in Catalan art in the first half of the 20th century. This exhibition aims to bring to light someone who wanted to be invisible. The Museum of Exile, MuME, in La Jonquera is hosting the exhibition Galí: exile and escape until 13 July, which complements the first exhibition by reconstructing the tragic moment when the artist left for London due to the civil war. [Read more](#)



The place of women in Malta

The Muza Museum in Valletta is hosting an exhibition dedicated to artist Louisa Chircop and the female figure in Maltese art, 'Grotto Girl', until 29 June. Through an exploration of the historical, artistic and symbolic context, the exhibition questions the place of women in visual representation and the construction of national identity. The exhibition combines works of art, archives and new interpretations, offering a fresh look at a forgotten icon representing Maltese beauty. [Read more](#)



Photography at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne

The exhibition 'Street Photography, Lee Friedlander, Joseph Rodríguez, Garry Winogrand' can be viewed until 12 October in the new photography rooms at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. This exhibition is dedicated to three protagonists from two generations of street photographers: Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander and Joseph Rodríguez, who each have a unique approach to their art. [Read more](#)



Exhibition 'An Artist's Presence' in Dublin

The Print Gallery in Dublin is presenting the exhibition 'An Artist's Presence' until 14 September, focusing on the theme of artistic self-representation. The exhibition brings together works from the 18th to the 21st century, in which painters and draughtsmen appear themselves in their creations. Through self-portraits, studio scenes and distinctive styles, the exhibition questions the trace left by the artist in their work. It is a sensitive reflection on the visible or suggested presence of the creator in the face of the viewer's gaze. [Read more](#)



'Dans le Flou' exhibition in Paris

The 'Dans le Flou' exhibition, running at the Musée de l'Orangerie until 18 August, explores the aesthetic of blurring as an artistic response to the upheavals of the 20th century. It showcases more than 80 works by painters, photographers and sculptors, illustrating how blurring became a means of expression in an unstable world. [Read more](#)



NADA Villa Art Fair in Warsaw

From 22 to 25 May, the Gawronski Villa in Warsaw will host the second edition of NADA Villa Warsaw, an event bringing together galleries from around the world. Organised by the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA), this second edition will feature 50 contemporary art galleries from 15 different countries. The event aims to promote international artistic exchange and highlight Warsaw's importance as a major cultural centre. [Read more](#)



Piano in Milan

From 23 to 25 May, the Piano City festival will take place in Milan with 278 concerts scheduled. The entire city will be transformed into a huge concert hall, including theatres, gardens, museums, public squares and even houses. Since 2011, this project has been bringing together artists, associations and the public around the art of music. [Read more](#)

Agenda :

 20th May 2025

Foreign Affairs and Defence Council (Brussels)

 21st May 2025

3rd European Union-African Union ministerial meeting

 21st May 2025

European Economic Space Council

 22nd May 2025

5th Membership Conference with Albania

 23rd May 2025

"Competitiveness" Council

 26th May 2025

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council Meeting of Development Ministers (Brussels)



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