

Letter n°1113 of Tuesday 27th May 2025

The new German government: a European turning point?

Stefan Seidendorf - 27 May 2025

Germany must position itself in a rapidly changing Europe. The European ambitions expressed by the government of new Chancellor Friedrich Merz, particularly on foreign policy issues, the ongoing quest for Franco-German compromises and the desire to involve other Member States in the development of the European Union, signal a new turning point for the country as it seeks to return to the forefront of European politics by combining its national interests with its European ambitions.



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■ **Front page! :**



Gathering Momentum

The international context is compelling Europe to speed up integration, to come closer together and to unite. The war in Ukraine and Trump's return to power have prompted Member States to strengthen the European Union's autonomy and diversify their areas of cooperation. Europeans fought together against the Covid pandemic, jointly purchased military equipment and provided more aid to Ukraine than the Americans, while remaining competitive in trade. Jean-Dominique Guilian believes that this acceleration in Europe has created 'de facto solidarity', reviving the Schuman dynamic. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Simplifying rules to boost the economy

On 21 May, the European Commission unveiled a new strategy to strengthen the single market, targeting the ten main obstacles to trade, investment and business growth. The aim is to make the European Union a simpler and more competitive place for businesses, particularly SMEs. Measures include a law on construction services, an 'SME identifier' to facilitate verification of SME status, a reduction in administrative burdens of €400 million per year and the digitisation of documentary requirements. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Parliament :



Recognition of equivalence with Ukraine and Moldova for seeds

On 22 May, MEPs adopted a decision recognising the equivalence of seed inspection and certification systems in Moldova and Ukraine. Moldova is now recognised for fodder plant seeds, and Ukraine for beet, sunflower, rapeseed and soya seeds. This recognition is based on positive audits, adherence to OECD certification systems and international accreditation of their laboratories. These measures aim to strengthen agricultural trade while ensuring the quality of imported seeds. [Read more](#)



Increase in customs duties on Russian and Belarusian fertilisers

On 22 May, MEPs approved an increase in customs duties on fertilisers and certain agricultural products from Russia and Belarus in order to reduce the European Union's dependence on these countries. The measure aims to deprive Moscow of resources used to finance the war against Ukraine, while stimulating European production. The Commission will be required to monitor price developments in order to protect the internal market. [Read more](#)



Simplification of the carbon border adjustment mechanism

On 22 May, MEPs adopted amendments to simplify and strengthen the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). Electricity produced in the exclusive economic zone of a Member State of the European Economic Area will now be exempt. The text also specifies the emission criteria for raw materials taken into account, which are limited to non-exempt countries. These adjustments aim to strengthen the effectiveness of the mechanism while reducing its complexity. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of ministers responsible for competitiveness

On 22 and 23 May, ministers responsible for competitiveness adopted several positions to strengthen European innovation. They welcomed the positive results of the Horizon Europe programme and called for its simplification, particularly for the benefit of SMEs. A common strategy was approved to integrate artificial intelligence into research in an ethical and inclusive manner. The 2025-2027 agenda for the European Research Area was also approved. Finally, ministers supported better use of satellite data for crisis management and security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Meeting of Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers

On 20 May, Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers strengthened military support for Ukraine by adopting the 17th package of sanctions against Russia. Other key measures were decided upon: the activation of the European Union's rapid deployment capability and targeted sanctions against Russian hybrid threats. With regard to the Middle East, they called for immediate humanitarian access to Gaza and decided to lift certain economic sanctions against Syria, while maintaining those related to the Assad regime. [Read more](#)



African Union: enhanced cooperation for the 25th anniversary of the partnership

On 21 May, the foreign ministers of the European Union and the African Union met to review their cooperation on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of their partnership. Discussions focused on peace, security, prosperity, multilateralism and mobility. The year 2025 will be a crucial year for the partnership, with the 7th summit to be held in Africa. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Visit to the Western Balkans

High Representative Kaja Kallas visited three countries in the Western Balkans from 21 to 23 May. In Serbia, she said that the country now needed to make strategic choices and adopt European values in order to join the Union. She urged the Serbian President to contribute to stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to normalise relations with Kosovo. In Kosovo, she said that the European Union had begun to lift sanctions and referred to the political deadlock in the Assembly, ongoing for more than a month, which was preventing the formation of a government. Finally, in North Macedonia, she highlighted the progress made by the country in terms of reforms and alignment with EU policies. Kaja Kallas reiterated that the non-integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union remained a risk to the security of the continent. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Trilogues :



Agreement on the gradual roll-out of the Entry/Exit System at the EU's borders

On 20 May, the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the gradual deployment of the Entry/Exit System (EES), which is designed to record the entry and exit of third-country nationals at the external borders during short stays. This system, which also collects biometric data, aims to enhance security and streamline controls. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Agreement on patent rules for critical products

On 22 May, the Parliament and the Council agreed on a new 'compulsory licensing' mechanism allowing the European Union to temporarily authorise the production of patented products in the event of a major crisis, such as vaccines or semiconductors. This exception aims to ensure rapid supply without the prior consent of the patent holder, who will receive fair compensation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



IMF calls for fiscal consolidation

At the end of its mission to France, the IMF praised the economy's resilience but called for credible fiscal consolidation. In a report published on 22 May, it recommended bringing the deficit below 3% of GDP by 2029, streamlining public spending and targeting inefficient social assistance. The IMF also stresses the importance of structural reforms to boost productivity, particularly through innovation and administrative simplification. Finally, it is encouraging France to strengthen its financial supervision and deepen the European single market. [Read more](#)

■ Italy :



President Sergio Mattarella in Brussels

Italian President Sergio Mattarella, accompanied by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, visited the European institutions on 20 May. He emphasised the importance of a strong and responsible European Union in defence matters at this decisive moment. He also underlined his commitment to restoring strong transatlantic relations. [Read more](#)

■ Lithuania :



German Chancellor's visit

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz travelled to Vilnius with Defence Minister Boris Pistorius on 22 May, where the Bundeswehr's new armoured brigade was deployed. The deployment aims to strengthen NATO's eastern front in the states bordering Russia. The German head of government said he wanted to send a signal to the transatlantic alliance's partners with a view to strengthening the organisation's member states' investment in defence and security. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



A decisive week before the second round of the presidential election

With one week to go before the second round of the presidential election on 1 June, the two candidates, Rafał Trzaskowski (PO) and Karol Nawrocki (PiS), are battling it out to win over undecided voters. Rafał Trzaskowski is banking on his pro-European values and commitment to democracy, while Karol Nawrocki is defending national sovereignty and conservative traditions. A televised debate took place on 23 May, and massive rallies were held on 25 May. Polls indicate a slight lead for Rafał Trzaskowski, but the two candidates are still running neck and neck. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Strengthening of the Polish border with Belarus and Russia

On 20 May, the Polish government extended the resolution aimed at reinforcing security at the eastern border, including the temporary suspension of asylum rights for migrants arriving from Belarus, in force since 27 March, following a vote in the lower house of parliament. This decision was taken in response to growing migratory pressure and repeated attempts to cross the border illegally. It is accompanied by the installation of a physical and electronic barrier, as well as the extension of a buffer zone. [Read more](#)

■ Slovenia :



President Nataša Pirc Musar at the European Parliament

Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar addressed the European Parliament on 21 May. She highlighted Slovenia's positive experience with reforms and integration into the European Union since 2004 and reiterated her country's support for future enlargements to include the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova. She emphasised the need to strengthen the Union's effectiveness and financial and institutional capacities in order to welcome new members. Furthermore, the Slovenian President called for greater strategic autonomy and responsibility for the Union in defending the multilateral world order, particularly with regard to Ukraine and the Middle East. Finally, she also emphasised the importance of strengthening Europe's global competitiveness in order to support the European social model. [Read more](#)

■ Romania :



Swearing-in of new president Nicusor Dan

Nationalist candidate George Simion, who was defeated by Nicusor Dan in the second round of the presidential election on 18 May, appealed to the Constitutional Court on 20 May. On 22 May, the Constitutional Court rejected George Simion's appeal and validated the election results. President Nicusor Dan was sworn in on 26 May before Parliament. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Albania :



Opening of negotiations on the chapters 'competitiveness and growth'

The 5th meeting of the Conference on Albania's accession to the European Union was held in Brussels on 22 May. Eight chapters were opened for negotiations, belonging to Group 3 on competitiveness and inclusive growth. [Read more](#)

■ Kosovo :



Bilateral discussions with Switzerland

On 21 May, as part of a state visit to Bern, the Swiss Federal Council welcomed Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani Sadriu. During her meeting with Swiss President Karin Keller-Sutter, discussions focused on stability in the Western Balkans and addressed the strengthening of economic cooperation, vocational training and innovation. The aim of the visit was to consolidate bilateral relations and explore new partnerships. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Strengthening Czech-Ukrainian ties: a new chapter in cooperation

On 20 May, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala met with his Ukrainian counterpart Denys Shmyhal to deepen cooperation. Discussions focused mainly on economic cooperation and specific projects, including the reconstruction of hospitals and support for Ukraine's European integration. The two leaders signed several memoranda. The Czech Prime Minister reiterated his country's commitment to supporting Ukraine, emphasising that its fight is also one for European security. [Read more](#)



Supply of heavy defence equipment by Finland

On 19 May, Finland and the European Union concluded an agreement to supply Ukraine with heavy ammunition from Finnish suppliers, financed by the proceeds from frozen Russian assets. €90 million will be channelled through the European Peace Facility. [Read more](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Defence of the European Court of Human Rights

On 22 May, nine member states of the Council of Europe (Denmark, Italy, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) published a joint letter calling for a 'new and open dialogue' on the interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights by the Court, in light of recent judgments in the field of migration. On 24 May, in response to this letter, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, reminded these states of their obligation to respect the independence and impartiality of the Court. The rule of law and the independence of the judiciary of the Council of Europe cannot be called into question or undermined by the governments of its member states. [Read more](#)

■ UN :



WHO agreement to prevent future pandemics

On 20 May, the World Health Organisation adopted an international agreement to strengthen pandemic preparedness and management. The agreement, supported by 194 countries, emphasises the equal sharing of medical resources and international cooperation. It includes a mechanism for sharing pathogens and health technologies to better combat future health crises. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report by the German Council of Economic Experts

On 21 May, the German Council of Economic Experts adopted its 'Spring 2025' report, which notes that Germany's economy has been stagnating for three years and that Donald Trump's return to the White House poses a growing risk to economic growth. According to the report, if Germany is to continue growing, it will need to reduce bureaucracy, which is driving up costs for businesses, while cutting greenhouse gas emissions and developing artificial intelligence. To achieve this, the report recommends using the investment fund for infrastructure and energy transition adopted in March. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



G7 commits to sustainable growth and support for Ukraine

Meeting in Banff from 20 to 22 May, the G7 finance ministers and central bank governors reaffirmed their shared commitment to strengthening global economic stability. They emphasised the importance of sustainable growth, resilience to macroeconomic imbalances and the fight against unfair trade practices. Support for Ukraine remains a priority, with enhanced financial commitments for its reconstruction. The G7 also committed to fighting financial crime and improving global supply chains, particularly in Africa and Latin America. [Read more](#)

■ Culture :



Winners of the 78th Cannes Film Festival

The 78th Cannes Film Festival came to a close on 24 May. The Palme d'Or was awarded to Iranian director Jafar Panahi for his film 'A Simple Foul Play', shot in secret, which exposes the moral dilemma faced by Iranians tempted to take revenge on their torturers. The Iranian director has been under house arrest in Iran for fifteen years, where he has been imprisoned twice. This is the Palme d'Or for freedom, courage and emotion. [Read more](#)



From Raphael to Cozens at the British Museum

Until 14 September, the British Museum is celebrating the legacy of Richard Payne Knight (1751–1824), a scholar and collector whose donation of over a thousand drawings transformed the museum's collections. For the first time in two centuries, a selection of masterpieces by Raphael, Michelangelo, Thomas Gainsborough, Claude Lorrain and John Robert Cozens is on display. The exhibition traces Payne Knight's tastes and passions for antiquity, landscape and line art. [Read more](#)



Robert Doisneau: Instants Donnés

The Robert Doisneau exhibition, *Instants Donnés*, on display at the Musée Maillol in Paris until 12 October, offers an exceptional retrospective of the photographer's work. With over 400 photographs selected from among the 450,000 in his body of work, the exhibition reveals the wealth of his vision of 20th-century French society. Visitors will discover portraits of children and artists, scenes from bistros, and poignant images of suburban life and everyday life. [Read more](#)



Mario Giacomelli in Milan

To mark the centenary of the birth of artist Mario Giacomelli, the Palazzo Reale in Milan is hosting a retrospective exhibition of over 300 original photographic works, including prints, documents and period archives, until 7 September. The exhibition is structured around the major chronological chapters of the artist's work, inspired by the writings of great poets. [Read more](#)



Rubens and the Flemish Baroque Artists in Barcelona

The Caixaforum in Barcelona is hosting the exhibition 'Rubens and the Flemish Baroque Artists' until 21 September. The work of Peter Paul Rubens, one of the great masters of the Baroque period, is represented through his influence on Flemish artists of his time, such as Van Dyck, Jordaens and Brueghel. [Read more](#)



Blackwater Valley Opera Festival

The Blackwater Valley Opera Festival will take place from 27 May to 2 June at Lismore Castle in Waterford. This unique opera and music festival combines heritage, emerging Irish talent and accessibility to the general public through free concerts and scholarships for young artists. Several opera performances will be given during the festival, as well as classical music concerts. [Read more](#)



Dresden Festival

The Dresden Festival will take place until 14 June, with a varied programme featuring internationally renowned soloists and groups. This festival offers an opportunity to discover stars from the worlds of jazz, rock and pop. The diversity of the buildings hosting the concerts creates a different atmosphere for each one. [Read more](#)



Munster Jazz Festival

From 28 to 31 May, the Munster Jazz Festival celebrates its 37th edition with a varied programme combining concerts, cinema, conferences and social events. The festival pays tribute to its founder, vibraphonist Michel Hausser, by highlighting diversity and sustainability. Activities such as walking music tours and film screenings will enrich the experience. [Read more](#)



Prague Spring Festival

As it has every year since 1946, the Prague Spring Festival will be back until 3 June. The programme includes the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish National Orchestra, around 100 students from the MenArt Academy 2024-2025, and the London Symphony Orchestra. The festival will conclude with a concert at the City Hall featuring eight soloists and three choristers from the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Semyon Bychkov. [Read more](#)

■ Sports :



Bordeaux Bègles European champions

On 24 May, Union Bordeaux Bègles won the first trophy in its history. By beating Northampton Saints 28-20 in the Champions Cup final in Cardiff, with four tries to two, UBB secured its first European title, succeeding La Rochelle (2022, 2023) and Toulouse (2021, 2024). [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :



26th May 2025

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council "Development" Council (Brussels)



27th May 2025

"General Affairs" Council (Brussels)



1st June 2025

Presidential election (2nd round) (Poland)



2nd-3rd June 2025

"Justice and Home Affairs" EU-US Ministerial Meeting (Warsaw)



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