

Letter n°1141 of Tuesday 3rd February 2026

Skilled immigration and the competitiveness of the European Union: attractiveness and policy options

Olena Oliinyk - 03 Feb 2026

The European Union faces increased global competition to attract highly skilled workers, who are essential to innovation and economic competitiveness. To address this, on 29 January it launched a new strategy to develop Europe's talent pool and become more attractive than other global hubs for skilled immigration. Strengthening Europe's attractiveness therefore means better integrating skilled immigration into innovation, employment and international partnership policies and simplifying the rules and processes for attracting the talent and skills Europe needs to strengthen the competitiveness of the European economy.



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■ Front page! :



The real danger: that Europeans will repeat American arguments about their inevitable decline.

Europe has structural advantages that are comparable to, or even superior to, those of the United States, based not on the display of its power, but on the size of its market, the strength of its structures and its long-term resilience. While challenges remain and should not be ignored, they do not justify fatalism or political renunciation. It is therefore up to leaders and citizens alike to convince themselves of this in order to reaffirm, without complexes, a singular but effective power on the international stage. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Visa and migration strategy

On 29 January, the European Commission presented its visa and migration strategy. The visa strategy consists of strengthening the Union's security by modernising the visa waiver system, introducing new digital procedures, and attracting more students, researchers and highly skilled workers. The migration strategy aims to prevent illegal migration and put an end to the activities of criminal smuggling networks, protect people fleeing war and persecution while preventing abuse of the system, and attract talent to the EU in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the European economy. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Second wave of defence funding under the SAFE instrument

On 26 January, the European Commission authorised a second wave of national funding under the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) defence instrument. It aims to provide financial assistance to Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Finland. These eight Member States will be eligible for approximately €74 billion after the loan agreements have been signed. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Commemoration of Holocaust victims

On 27 January, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony, marking the 81st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. He reiterated the importance of remembering the millions of victims of the Nazi regime and the need to combat anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred. The day concluded with a testimony by Tova Friedman, a Holocaust survivor, who spoke before the Bundestag about the importance of keeping the memory of survivors alive in the European consciousness. MEPs also commemorated this anniversary in the presence of Tatiana Bucci, a Holocaust survivor. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries

On 26 January, the Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries welcomed the European Commission's proposal on organic farming, which aims to avoid unnecessary red tape and increased costs so as to promote greater competitiveness in the sector with third countries. The Cypriot Presidency gave assurances that it would promote a fair, competitive and sustainable primary production sector within the framework of the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy. They stressed the need not to compromise food security and to harmonise as well as simplify the rules and procedures applicable within the framework of the Union's bioeconomy strategy. [Read more](#)



Meeting of European Affairs Ministers

On 26 January, European Affairs Ministers definitively adopted the REPowerEU Regulation on the phasing out of Russian pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports into the EU. They also discussed the situation regarding the rule of law and debated the priorities of the Cypriot Presidency in implementing the European Democracy Shield. Finally, the French and Portuguese delegations informed the Council of the importance of the Union's outermost regions, while the Spanish delegation provided information on the Union's macro-regional strategy for the Atlantic. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Trilogues :



Increasing the effectiveness of the Union's external action

On 26 January, negotiators from the Council and the European Parliament reached an agreement on targeted amendments to the regulation establishing the European Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument. The aim is to increase the effectiveness of the Union's external action through more efficient use of budgetary guarantee resources, optimised risk coverage (via the European Investment Bank), lighter obligations for large-scale private investments and new guarantees for the least developed countries. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting

On 29 January, Foreign Affairs Ministers discussed the decision to add Russia to the list of countries at risk of money laundering and discussed the 20th package of sanctions against it. They then continued their work on the €90 billion loan to Ukraine. On the Middle East, ministers reached agreement on designating Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organisation and emphasised the need for the European Union to step up its involvement in the Gaza peace plan through civilian missions. Finally, they discussed how to remedy the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. [Read more](#)



Strategic partnership with Vietnam

On 29 January, European Council President António Costa and Vietnamese President Luong Cuong officially announced the elevation of relations between Vietnam and the European Union to a comprehensive strategic partnership, 35 years after the establishment of diplomatic relations. In a joint statement, they committed to closer cooperation in all areas, including trade and investment, sustainable development, climate and energy, digital transformation, security issues and cooperation in multilateral forums. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Association Council with Morocco

On 29 January, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Kaja Kallas, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, Nasser Bourita, met for the 15th meeting of the Association Council between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco. This meeting, which marks the 30th anniversary of the Association Agreement, provided an opportunity to reiterate the importance of a multidimensional strategic partnership between equals and to celebrate the progress made in the economic and trade fields, in the promotion of democracy and human rights, as well as in cooperation on migration, ecological transition and innovation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Strategic Partnership Agreement with India

On 27 January, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Council President António Costa and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the conclusion of a Strategic Partnership Agreement at the 16th EU-India Summit in New Delhi. It includes a free trade agreement that significantly reduces Indian customs duties on European vehicles and wines. In return, European customs duties on Indian imports of textiles, electronic products and pharmaceuticals, among other items, will be reduced. The leaders also signed a partnership agreement on security and defence. Finally, they formulated a joint strategic agenda for 2030 structured around prosperity and sustainability, technology and innovation, and security and defence. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ European Agencies :



New launch contract with Arianespace

On 27 January, the European Union Agency for the Space Programme signed a new launch contract with Arianespace for the deployment of the second pair of second-generation Galileo satellites. It will be launched aboard an Ariane 6 launcher, thereby strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy. The second-generation Galileo satellites will enable the European Union's satellite navigation system to remain a world-class navigation system serving citizens, businesses and public authorities across Europe and around the world. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Germany :



3rd International North Sea Summit in Hamburg

On 26 January, Germany hosted the 3rd International North Sea Summit in Hamburg, bringing together leaders and energy ministers from coastal countries to strengthen cross-border cooperation on offshore wind and hydrogen infrastructure. Participants adopted the Hamburg Declaration and signed an investment pact aimed at connecting up to 100 GW of offshore wind capacity, making the North Sea a major hub for clean and secure energy for Europe. As part of this, Germany and Denmark will jointly develop the Bornholm Energy Island project, a 3 GW wind farm that will serve as a model for cross-border integration of renewable energy. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Denmark :



Mette Frederiksen and Jens-Frederik Nielsen in Berlin and Paris

On 27 and 28 January, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen visited Berlin and Paris, together with her Greenlandic counterpart, Jens-Frederik Nielsen. On the 27th, they met with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who reiterated Germany's solidarity with Denmark and Greenland in their disagreement with the United States. On the 28th, they were hosted at the Élysée Palace by French President Emmanuel Macron, who confirmed European solidarity and France's support for Denmark and Greenland, their sovereignty, and territorial integrity. According to him, the current situation is a strategic wake-up call for all of Europe. [Read more](#)

■ The Netherlands :



Coalition agreement for a minority government in the Netherlands

On 27 January, three Dutch political parties agreed to form a minority government. Rob Jetten, leader of the centrist D66 (Democrats 66) party, is set to become Prime Minister, three months after his surprise victory in the general election on 29 October. He has formed an alliance with the centre-right CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal) and the liberal VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy). Together, they hold 66 of the 150 seats in the lower house and 22 of the 75 seats in the upper house. He could take office by the end of February. The three parties have unveiled their programmes: significant investment in defence and security, cuts in public spending on social services, the holding of a summit on asylum and the resolution of the housing crisis. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Portugal :



Voting intentions for the second round of the presidential election

According to the latest poll published on 29 January, one week before the second round of the Portuguese presidential election on 8 February, António José Seguro (PS) is clearly ahead of his opponent, André Ventura (Chega). According to the international institute GfK, which specialises in opinion polls and surveys, and its partnership with the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon, António José Seguro is set to win with around 66/67% of voting intentions, compared to 33/34% for André Ventura. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Kosovo :



Victory confirmed for outgoing Prime Minister's party

The party led by Kosovo's interim Prime Minister Albin Kurti won the 28 December parliamentary elections, as confirmed by the electoral authorities after a full recount on 31 January. The chair of the Central Election Commission announced that Vetëvendosje! had won 51.1% of the vote, ahead of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (20.19%) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (13.24%). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Moldova :



Maia Sandu addresses the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

On 26 January, Moldovan President Maia Sandu addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, speaking of the threats that Europe faces. In her view, European democracy is facing two interrelated wars: Russia's aggression in Ukraine and a hybrid war characterised by disinformation, cyberattacks and external interference in democracies. She described the Council of Europe as a 'line of defence' against these situations and recalled the threat that Russia's war poses to Moldova. She also stressed the need for a clear and comprehensive legal instrument on information manipulation and foreign interference. [Read more](#)

■ Montenegro :



Conclusion of a new chapter of negotiations

On 26 January, the 25th meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro provisionally closed negotiations on Chapter 32 (Financial Control). Montenegro has opened all 33 negotiation chapters and has now provisionally closed 13 of them, consolidating its position as the most advanced country in the accession process. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UK :



Stronger partnership between the United Kingdom and China

On 27 January, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced during his visit to China his intention to build a partnership focused on stability, economic growth and national interest. Flanked by a high-level delegation representing the worlds of business, sport and culture, the British leader emphasised that the renewed engagement with the world's second-largest economy and the UK's third-largest trading partner should benefit British workers and businesses. Among the priorities outlined, Keir Starmer mentioned access to Chinese markets for British services, support for innovative sectors and the strengthening of trade and investment, with a view to making the Sino-British partnership a lever for sustainable prosperity for the United Kingdom. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



The war in Ukraine, the 'greatest threat' to global nuclear safety

As the war in Ukraine drags on, the fragility of the electricity grid continues to pose a direct threat to the safety of the country's nuclear facilities. On 30 January, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) sounded the alarm about the increased risk of nuclear accidents. [Read more](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Petra Bayr elected head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

On 26 January, Petra Bayr, the Austrian representative of the Group of Socialists, Democrats and Greens, was elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for a one-year term, which is renewable once. Petra Bayr won an absolute majority in the first round, succeeding Theodoros Rousopoulos and becoming the 36th President of the Council of Europe, as well as being the fifth woman to hold this position since 1949. In her inaugural speech, she emphasised the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms, equality and justice, while reaffirming her determination to build a Europe united around peace and respect for human rights, bringing European institutions closer to citizens. [Read more](#)



Winter session of the Parliamentary Assembly

The winter session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was held from 26 to 30 January. Several resolutions were adopted, including one on the situation in Greenland, describing US threats as a fundamental challenge to the international order, and another highlighting the urgent need to address the escalating political crises in Iran and Syria, which threaten human rights and the protection of minorities in the Middle East. A ceremony was held to mark the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The PACE also adopted a resolution condemning the 'intensification of violence and suffering' inflicted by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, in which it calls for an immediate and complete ceasefire. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Changing tactics in cocaine trafficking operations

On 27 January, Europol published a report on changing tactics in cocaine trafficking operations to Europe via maritime routes. Cocaine trafficking in Europe has reached unprecedented levels, driven by high production in Latin America and growing demand within the European Union. Criminal networks have demonstrated their ability to rapidly adjust operations, fragment routes and adopt complex and covert trafficking methods. Europol's response to the threat of cocaine trafficking includes operational support through its specialised drugs unit, analytical and coordination support, and the deployment of experts in the field. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Single Market Report

On 30 January, the European Commission adopted the 2026 Single Market and Competitiveness Report. It is based on 29 performance indicators covering areas such as market integration and barriers, electricity prices and investment trends. Indicators that remained stable include labour productivity (measured in GDP per hour worked), ease of regulatory compliance (measured by business surveys) and private and public expenditure on research and development as a percentage of GDP, etc. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Monitoring and recording antisemitism in the European Union

On 27 January, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights published a report highlighting persistent gaps in the monitoring and recording of antisemitic acts in Europe. These shortcomings, caused by differences between Member States in the classification and recording of incidents, make comparisons and analyses difficult and undoubtedly hamper the fight against antisemitism in the European Union. To remedy this, the Agency has formulated clear guidelines, specialised training for law enforcement agencies and enhanced cooperation with civil society to encourage reporting and obtain robust data that reflects the reality of the phenomenon. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



The Rediscovered Treasure of the Sun King

Until 8 February, the Grand Palais will be open to the public for the exceptional exhibition 'The Rediscovered Treasure of the Sun King', devoted to the artistic splendour of Louis XIV's reign. It showcases a spectacular collection of monumental tapestries, which had been dispersed in various locations as the centuries went by. Now for the first time they are on display together as they were originally intended. By showcasing this rare legacy, the exhibition aims to help the general public appreciate the central role played by the decorative arts in forging the image of royal power. By combining scientific rigour with an immersive display, the Grand Palais shows its commitment to making art history engaging, accessible and a source of national pride. [Read more](#)



The Carpathians take centre stage in Warsaw

Until 30 June, the Museum of Ethnography in Warsaw is hosting a unique exhibition on the artistic achievements of the Lemko ethnic community from the Carpathians. It showcases renowned artists such as Andy Warhol, as well as others who have never been exhibited before, and brings visibility to their artistic heritage, which has often been marginalised. [Read more](#)



26th edition of Vinterjazz in Denmark

Until 28 February, the jazz festival will be back in many Danish cities for its 26th season. With over 600 concerts organised in nearly 150 venues across the country, this festival is an opportunity to discover many well-known and independent artists, both in the capital and in smaller towns. [Read more](#)



Memory and history in Freiburg/Breisgau

Until 14 September, the National Documentation Centre on National Socialism in Freiburg is presenting the exhibition 'End of Contemporary Testimony?'. It focuses on various aspects of contemporary witnesses to the Holocaust: How does a narrative emerge from personal memories and what influences them? How do interviews and other testimonies actually come about? What has changed in their processing since 1945? [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Beryl Cook in Plymouth

Until 31 May, The Box in Plymouth is presenting a retrospective entitled 'Pride and Joy', celebrating the centenary of the birth of British artist Beryl Cook. This exhibition features more than 80 works, including iconic paintings, sculptures and previously unseen archival pieces, and offers a reassessment of Beryl Cook's unique role as a chronicler of British everyday life and popular culture. [Read more](#)



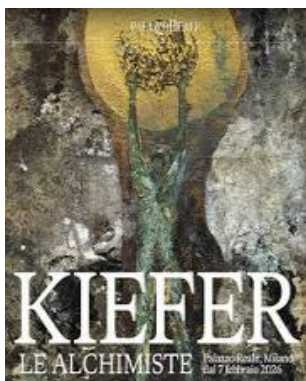
Gaudí's geometry in Barcelona

Until 17 May, Casa Batlló in Barcelona is hosting the exhibition 'United Visual Arts'. It is structured around day and night, light and darkness. This cyclical concept reflects the transition of light and the movement of the sun, as well as broader arcs such as the cycle of life and death. These ideas tie in with Gaudí's own research and his representation of the hidden order of the natural world, in addition to a belief in divine geometry. [Read more](#)



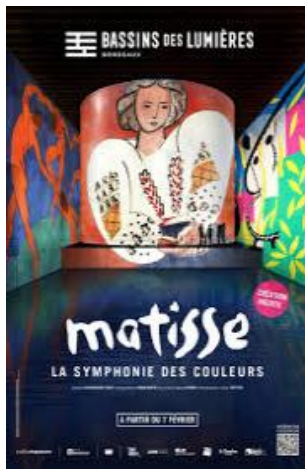
Edvard Munch in Kristiansand

Until 10 May, the exhibition 'Edvard Munch Portraits' at the Kunstsilo Museum in Kristiansand, Norway, is honouring the painter Edvard Munch. After spending the spring of 2025 in London, this exhibition presents numerous portraits by the painter. Known in part for The Scream, this exhibition is an opportunity to discover a lesser-known part of Munch's work. [Read more](#)



Anselm Kiefer in Milan

Until 27 September, Milan's Palazzo Reale is hosting 'The Alchemist', a new in situ work by German artist Anselm Kiefer. The exhibition features thirty-eight paintings depicting women from the world of alchemy, blending history, myth and science, in dialogue with the wounds left by the 1943 bombings in the Sala delle Cariatidi at the Palazzo Reale. [Read more](#)



Matisse in Bordeaux

Until 2 January 2027, the Bassins des Lumières in Bordeaux is hosting the immersive exhibition 'Matisse, la symphonie des couleurs' (Matisse, the symphony of colours). A 45-minute visual spectacle, comprising projections reflected on the water, this immersive journey traces the painter's career, from his Impressionist beginnings to his most stylised creations. [Read more](#)

■ Sports :



Six Nations Tournament

On 5 February, the Six Nations Tournament will kick off in unprecedented fashion with a evening match between France and Ireland at the Stade de France, launching the 132nd edition of this prestigious European rugby union competition. In an exceptional schedule, the choice of a Thursday evening for this first match is intended to avoid overlapping with the opening ceremony of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. This year's tournament will end with the 'Crunch' on 14 March between France and England. [Read more](#)



Opening of the Winter Olympics

From 6 to 22 February, Italy is hosting the Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics, a unique edition co-organised by the city of Milan and the ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo. This event marks the return of the Games to the country after Turin in 2006 and celebrates the 70th anniversary of the 1956 Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Designed to bring together nearly 2,900 top athletes in 116 events across 16 disciplines, these Games are a global showcase for winter sports. Through their scale, territorial dimension and sporting programme, the Milano-Cortina Games confirm their ability to unite a diverse audience around spectacular performances and a shared Olympic spirit. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 4-5 February 2026

Governing Council of the ECB (Frankfurt/Main)

 8th February 2026

2nd round of the Presidential election (Portugal)



The Letter n°1141

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