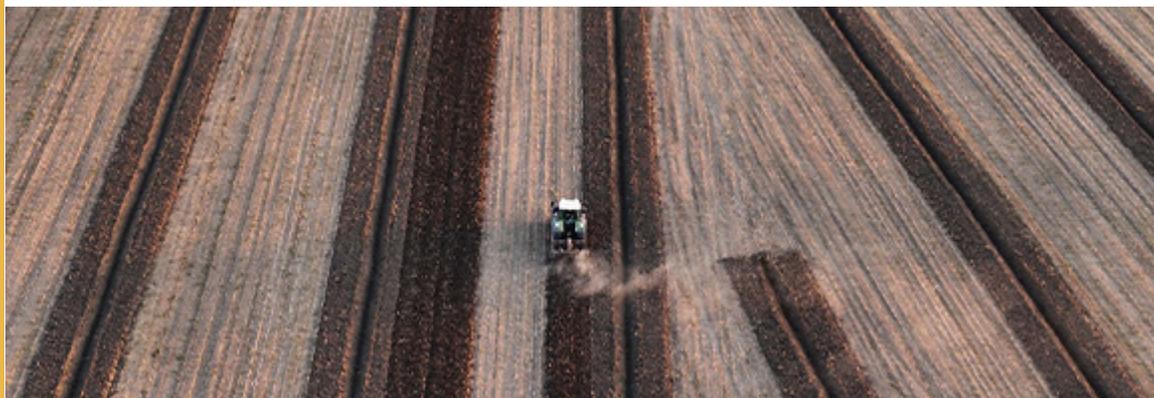


Letter n°1143 of Tuesday 17th February 2026

The decline of French agriculture in Europe

Bernard Bourget - 17 Feb 2026

French agriculture is undergoing a profound crisis marked by multiple protests, a decline in its European competitiveness and a historic trade deficit forecast for 2025. This situation is the result of a series of health crises, national regulations deemed excessive and an inability to adapt to low-price markets in the face of international competition. The sector is also under pressure from free trade agreements, such as Mercosur, and CAP reforms that threaten to reduce direct aid. Recovery will depend on structural modernisation, better water management and increased use of biotechnological innovations.



[Foundation](#) | [European Council](#) | [Commission](#) | [Parliament](#) | [Council](#) | [Court of Justice](#)

[Space](#) | [Germany](#) | [Belgium](#) | [France](#) | [Kosovo](#) | [Ukraine](#) |

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■ Foundation :



Monitoring of the NextGenerationEU recovery plan

On 10 February, the European Commission partially approved Slovakia's seventh payment request, totalling €658 million, under the NextGenerationEU recovery plan. Details of the monitoring of the recovery plan are available on the Foundation's website. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ European Council :



Informal brainstorming session

On 12 February, European leaders met in Belgium to discuss competitiveness. They renewed their commitment to transforming the single market into a fully integrated area by 2027 and agreed on the importance of moving forward with a "28th regime" to ensure that European businesses can operate smoothly across borders. They want consolidation in strategic sectors, such as artificial intelligence and defence, as well as a diversification strategy to reduce critical dependencies. Finally, they call for a pragmatic energy transition and the targeted use of a 'European preference' to guarantee the Union's strategic autonomy. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Action plan against drones

On 11 February, the European Commission presented an action plan to counter the growing threats posed by drones to the security of the European Union. It focuses on the civil dimension of internal security. The plan aims to strengthen Europe's preparedness and resilience, leverage 5G technologies and networks to better detect drones, and strengthen responses to malicious drone activity. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Protecting young people online

On 10 February, the European Commission presented an action plan against cyberbullying of children and young people online. It focuses on the roll-out of an EU-wide application enabling victims of online bullying to easily obtain help, the coordination of national approaches to combat harmful online behaviour, and the prevention of cyberbullying by encouraging better and safer digital practices. [Read more](#)



Notification to Meta of provisional measures

On 9 February, the European Commission notified Meta of charges in which it preliminarily considers that the company has breached EU rules on anti-competitive practices. It allegedly prevented third-party AI assistants from accessing WhatsApp and interacting with its users. This behaviour risks blocking competitors who want to enter or grow in the fast-growing market for AI assistants. [Read more](#)



International Day of Women and Girls in Science

On 11 February, International Day of Women and Girls in Science, the European Union highlighted the progress made and the challenges that remain in terms of gender equality in research and innovation, focusing on the representation of women in research and their career progression. At the same time, EU-supported projects promote scientific environments, stimulate young women's interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and highlight inspiring female role models, such as Sophie Adenot, underscoring the importance of this day to build a more equitable and innovative approach to science. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Parliament :



€90 billion loan to Ukraine

On 11 February, MEPs approved proposals to support Ukraine in its war effort with a €90 billion loan for 2026 and 2027. The support loan will be financed through joint EU borrowing on the capital markets and guaranteed by the EU budget. They adopted a text emphasising that joint security and defence efforts in the European Union are essential to respond effectively to current and future threats. They reiterated the importance of interoperable military capabilities at European level, as well as joint procurement, industrial cooperation, standardisation and alignment with NATO planning, in order to avoid duplication and improve preparedness. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



New rules for safe third countries

On 10 February, MEPs approved a new list of safe countries of origin. This will speed up the processing of asylum applications from nationals of the following countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Kosovo, India, Morocco and Tunisia. Countries that are candidates for EU membership will also be considered safe countries of origin, unless relevant circumstances indicate otherwise, such as violence in the context of armed conflict. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Mercosur: additional safeguard clauses

On 10 February, MEPs approved the adoption of additional safeguards to protect the European agricultural sector following the liberalisation of trade with Mercosur countries. Under the new rules, the Commission will be able to launch an investigation into the need for protective measures when imports of sensitive products (poultry, beef, eggs, citrus fruits and sugar) increase by 5% over a three-year average, compared with the 10% per year initially proposed by the Commission. An investigation may be requested by a Member State or a legal entity representing the industry concerned. Finally, every six months, the Commission will have to submit a report to Parliament assessing the impact of imports of sensitive products. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Protecting and promoting European wine producers

On 10 February, MEPs approved the provisional agreement reached with Member States on 4 December 2025 on the European Union's wine policy, which aims to modernise the regulatory framework for this sector. In order to clarify the rules applicable to alcohol-free wines, the term 'alcohol-free' accompanied by the term '0%' may be used if the alcohol content of the product does not exceed 0.05%. Furthermore, winegrowers will receive additional aid in the event of severe natural disasters, extreme weather conditions or plant disease epidemics. Finally, they will also receive support to promote wine tourism. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Combating unfair trading practices

On 12 February, MEPs adopted new measures to protect EU farmers from unfair trading practices. Member States will now be able to take action of their own initiative to stop cross-border abuses, without waiting for a complaint to be lodged. Producers will benefit from enhanced protection against buyers of agricultural products, both within and outside the EU, thus preventing any circumvention of the legislation. In addition, a structured exchange of information between national authorities via the internal market information system will enable rapid coordination of responses and ensure a deterrent effect against abusive practices. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



For the independence of central banks

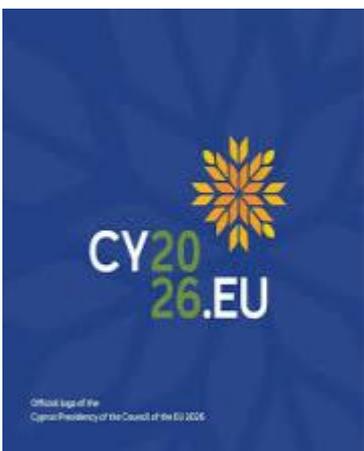
On 10 February, MEPs adopted the annual report on the policies of the European Central Bank (ECB) and its recommendations for 2026, following a debate with its President, Christine Lagarde. They stressed the importance of the ECB's independence in ensuring price stability and monetary confidence in a context of increased geopolitical tensions. They also support the introduction of a digital euro to strengthen the Union's monetary sovereignty, while preserving the fundamental role of cash and strengthening the supervision of crypto-assets in the face of the digitalisation of payments. [Read more](#)



Towards climate neutrality by 2040

On 10 February, MEPs backed an agreement with the Council on amendments to the European Climate Law to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 90% compared to 1990 levels. The revised climate law introduces flexibilities in how the 2040 target can be achieved. It provides for the possibility of using permanent carbon removals at national level to offset emissions that are difficult to reduce under the European Union Emissions Trading System. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Informal meeting of employment and social affairs ministers

On 12 and 13 February, employment and social affairs ministers reiterated the priorities of the European social model: fairness, equal opportunities and dignity at work. They argued that the green and digital transitions were rapidly changing skills requirements and that continuous upskilling and reskilling should become structural features of the European labour market. Finally, they stressed that it was essential to invest in accessible, high-quality long-term care services to ensure intergenerational solidarity and promote active ageing in dignified conditions. [Read more](#)



Customs duties for small parcels

On 11 February, ministers approved new rules on customs duties for small parcels entering the European Union, largely through e-commerce. EU Member States agreed to temporarily introduce a flat-rate customs duty of €3 on items entering in small parcels worth less than €150, shipped directly to consumers in the EU. From 1 July 2026, the duty will be levied on each of the different categories of items contained in a parcel. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Defence Ministers

On 11 February, Defence Ministers discussed military support for Ukraine, with a focus on cooperation on innovation, following an exchange of views with their Ukrainian counterpart, Mykhailo Fedorov. They adopted decisions on financial assistance under the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument available to eight Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and Romania. Finally, they adopted a decision authorising the Union to sign the bilateral agreement with Canada on the participation of Canadian companies and products in procurement, under the SAFE instrument. Canada will be the first non-European country to be associated with this instrument. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Court of Justice :



Critical conclusions regarding Hungary

On 12 February, two Advocates General of the Court of Justice (CJEU) released critical conclusions regarding Hungary. Tamara Čapeta proposed cancelling the release of €10.2 billion in European funds, following a referral to the Court by MEPs in 2024, arguing that the Commission had acted prematurely while reforms on the independence of the judiciary were not yet effective. Juliane Kokott, following a referral to the Court by the European Commission, concluded that the Hungarian law on 'sovereignty protection' violates EU law by creating an office with disproportionate powers and no judicial oversight. In her view, this legislation undermines freedom of expression and association, while disregarding data protection rules (GDPR). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Space :



Sophie Adenot and her crew have arrived at the International Space Station

On 13 February, the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifted off from Cape Canaveral Space Centre in Florida, propelling the Dragon capsule and its four astronauts towards the International Space Station (ISS) as part of the NASA-SpaceX Crew-12 mission. On board are French European Space Agency astronaut (ESA) Sophie Adenot, NASA astronauts Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, and Russian cosmonaut Andrey Fedyaev of the Roscosmos agency, who joined the ISS on 14 February for a nine-month scientific mission focused on biomedical and technological research to support human exploration beyond low Earth orbit. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Successful launch of Ariane 6 with 32 satellites

On 12 February, Arianespace successfully launched 32 Amazon Leo satellites with the first Ariane 64 rocket, an upgraded version of Ariane 6, from the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The satellites were placed in low Earth orbit at an altitude of approximately 465 km. The mission lasted 1 hour and 54 minutes, from lift-off to the separation of all the satellites. This mission, designated VA267, was the first in a series of 18 launches operated by Arianespace with Ariane 6 to support the deployment of the Amazon Leo constellation. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Munich Security Conference

On 13 February, the 62nd Munich Security Conference was held in Munich. Against a backdrop of declining international standards, discussions focused on the crisis in the world order, transatlantic relations, European security, collective defence, and tensions in Ukraine, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. Speakers emphasised the need for enhanced cooperation between allies, greater European strategic autonomy and a renewed commitment to collective stability, while stressing the importance of dialogue in addressing emerging rivalries and threats. The international order is 'being destroyed' is the title of the report published at this 62nd edition. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Belgium :



3rd European Industrial Summit in Antwerp

On 11 February, the 3rd European Industrial Summit was held in Antwerp, Belgium, attended by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Belgian Prime Minister Bart de Wever. They called for a more competitive Europe in the face of global economic giants, urging the removal of internal regulatory barriers and the acceleration of single market integration in order to strengthen industrial capacity, investment and access to global markets. The Commission emphasised the importance of a Clean Industrial Deal to support decarbonisation and concrete measures to reduce energy costs and stimulate European industrial growth. [Read more](#)

■ France :



Third multi-year energy programme

On 13 February, the French government published the new edition of the Multi-Year Energy Programme to address energy consumption and production challenges for the period 2026-2035. This update is part of a comprehensive transition strategy, the French Energy and Climate Strategy, which aims to ensure the availability of energy at a controlled cost, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and adapt France to climate change. Among other things, the new programme aims to accelerate electrification and strengthen France's energy independence, in particular through renewed investment in nuclear power. [Read more](#)

■ Kosovo :



Albin Kurti succeeds in forming a government

On 11 February, Kosovar MPs re-elected Albin Kurti as Prime Minister and approved his new government by 66 votes out of 120. His party won the 28 December 2025 election, securing 57 seats out of 120. This vote, the result of a coalition with minority representatives, comes after a year of political paralysis, during which he led only a technical government due to a lack of sufficient support in Parliament. In a speech prior to the vote, Albin Kurti presented a programme focused on the economy and increased investment in defence. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Pope sends aid to Ukraine

On 9 February, Pope Leo XIV sent 80 electric generators, medicines and food supplies to Ukraine. This aid was organised in response to appeals from bishops who warned of the growing difficulties caused by Russian attacks on energy infrastructure and the very low temperatures across the country. [Read more](#)



Moldovan Prime Minister visits Ukraine

On 10 February, Moldovan Prime Minister Alexandru Munteanu visited Ukraine, where he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The meeting focused on the energy infrastructure of Ukraine and Moldova, particularly the consequences of Russian strikes, which also caused power outages in several Moldovan cities. The two men discussed the response to Russian threats and the strengthening of bilateral cooperation in the energy sector. Finally, the Moldovan head of government pledged his continued support and announced the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including generators and medicines. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Launch of a new mission in the Arctic

On 11 February, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced the launch of a new initiative called Arctic Sentry, which aims to strengthen security in the Arctic and the Far North. It comes in response to Russia's military activity in the region, China's growing interest and Donald Trump's threats against Greenland. The initiative initially combines the Arctic Endurance exercises, led by Denmark, and Cold Response, led by Norway, which mobilise tens of thousands of military personnel equipped to operate in Arctic conditions. [Read more](#)

■ Eurobarometer :



Europeans' sense of security

On 13 February, the European Commission published the results of a Eurobarometer survey on EU citizens' sense of security. The survey reveals that nearly two-thirds of Europeans (68%) believe their country is exposed to growing threats, and 52% trust the European Union to strengthen collective security and defence. This Eurobarometer survey is a key indicator of public opinion, highlighting growing concern about geopolitical risks and contemporary security challenges, as well as majority support for increased investment in European defence and cross-border cooperation on security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

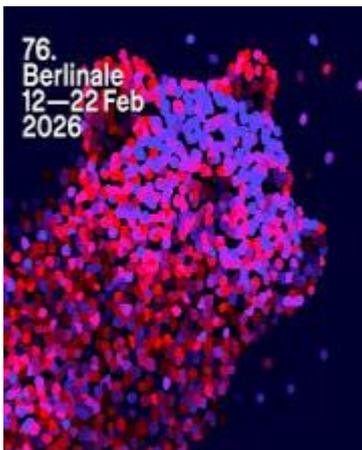
■ Studies/Reports :



Transparency International Corruption Report

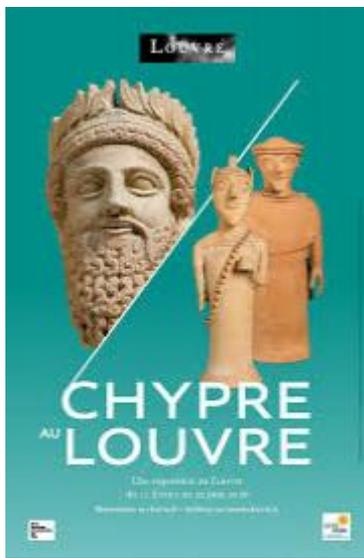
On 10 February, Transparency International published its 2025 Corruption Report, which reveals that while the European Union remains the highest-ranked region (64/100), democratic integrity there is suffering a worrying decline. Denmark (89) tops the ranking, while the organisation denounces the systematic misappropriation of European funds in Hungary (40). To restore confidence, the report recommends protecting the independence of the judiciary and strictly regulating political financing and lobbying to protect the public interest from harmful influences. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



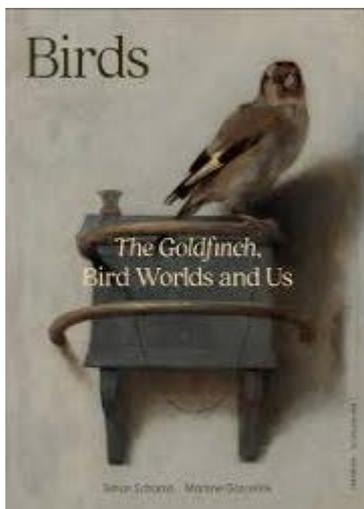
76th Berlinale

Until 12 February, the city of Berlin is hosting the 76th Berlinale, one of the world's most renowned film festivals. The festival presents several hundred international films in different categories and attracts thousands of professionals and film enthusiasts. The Berlinale confirms its status as an international benchmark by recognising cinematic excellence with the Golden Bear and Silver Bear awards. The German capital is thus establishing itself as a major hub for the discovery and dissemination of world cinema. [Read more](#)



Cyprus at the Louvre

On 11 February, the Louvre Museum inaugurated the exhibition 'Cyprus at the Louvre', which will run until 22 June, in the presence of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulídis. Organised as part of the cultural programme of the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the European Union, this exhibition brings together for the first time sixteen major works on loan from the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, enhanced by a unique digital experience. The exhibition invites visitors to discover the material productions, commercial wealth and cultural practices of the island during the Bronze Age, through emblematic pieces such as the picrolite idols of Mount Troodos, archaic votive statues and the god Asclepius. [Read more](#)



Birds take centre stage in The Hague

Until 7 June, the Mauritshuis Museum in The Hague is hosting "Birds", a unique exhibition on birds. Organised around seven themes, ranging from domestic birds to celestial messengers, it presents a diverse collection of historical and contemporary artworks: paintings, drawings, natural history and fashion objects, as well as an audiovisual installation. With works by Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Tracey Emin and Iris van Herpen, this exhibition invites visitors to explore humanity's perspective on birds – symbols of freedom, beauty and love. [Read more](#)



Brâncuși in Bucharest

The exhibition 'After Brâncuși' is being held at the Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest until 23 February. Romania is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Constantin Brâncuși, internationally recognised as the father of modern sculpture. To mark the occasion, the Sculpture Division of the Romanian Union of Fine Artists is organising a series of artistic events through which the sculpting community pays tribute and expresses its gratitude for the creative legacy established by the great artist. [Read more](#)



Paper as art in Budapest

The exhibition 'Paper? Works!' is being held at the Várfok Galéria in Budapest until 14 March. A wide range of emotions is associated with works on paper. The intimacy that stems from the everyday nature of paper and the caution inspired by its fragility create a compelling tension around the medium. Reproduction printing techniques – lithography, drypoint, engraving and monotype – open up new avenues in the cartography of artistic practice on paper. For many of the artists featured, such as Endre Rozsda and Françoise Gilot, paper is not just a surface for sketches or a preliminary stage for ideas, but an authentic and autonomous artistic material. [Read more](#)



Georges Seurat in London

Until 17 May, the Courtauld Gallery in London is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the seascapes of Georges Seurat, a pioneer of the Neo-Impressionist technique. It brings together 26 paintings, oil sketches and drawings produced by Seurat during the five summers he spent on the north coast of France between 1885 and 1890. The largest collection of the artist's works in the United Kingdom, this exhibition offers an opportunity to discover an often overlooked part of his career. [Read more](#)

**THYSSEN-
BORNEMISZA**
MUSEO NACIONAL

Hammershøi in Madrid

Until 31 May, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza is presenting the first retrospective dedicated to Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershøi in Spain, offering a comprehensive and exhaustive overview of his work through around 100 pieces on display. The ambiguity of his paintings allows for numerous interpretations, which have been further enriched in recent decades by attempts to establish links with other European artists and contextualise him in relation to his Danish contemporaries. [Read more](#)



Edward Weston in Turin

Until 2 June, the Italian Centre for Photography in Turin is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Edward Weston, following on from Madrid and Barcelona. Bringing together 171 photographs by the artist, it offers a comprehensive overview of his work, covering more than 40 years of his career from 1903 to 1948. It traces his journey from his early pictorialist experiments to his emergence as a central figure in pure photography, offering a European perspective on his legacy by placing his work in critical dialogue with the modernism of the continent's early photographic avant-garde. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 17/02/2026

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council

 23/02/2026

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council

 23/02/2026

Foreign Affairs Council



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