

## Letter n°1144 of Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### Enlargement: What the European Union and its Member States can really achieve by 2026

Veronica Anghel - 24 Feb 2026

In 2026, the enlargement of the European Union is establishing itself as a geostrategic lever based on gradual integration and strict conditionality. The success of the process depends on a balance between results-based funding, the reversibility of gains in the event of democratic backsliding, and targeted internal reforms of voting procedures. The aim is to transform political promises into concrete achievements for Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans, while preserving the cohesion of the single market.



[Elections](#) | [European Council](#) | [Commission](#) | [Council](#) | [Diplomacy](#) | [European Agencies](#) |

[Belgium](#) | [Bulgaria](#) | [Spain](#) | [France](#) | [Bosnia-Herzgovina](#) | [Ukraine](#) |

[Council of Europe](#) | [Studies/Reports](#) | [Culture](#) | [Sports](#) |

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

#### ■ Elections :



#### Parliamentary elections in Slovenia on 22 March

Slovenians are invited to elect 90 members of the lower house of parliament on 22 March. The Svoboda movement, led by outgoing Prime Minister Robert Golob, appears to be struggling in the polls, trailing behind former Prime Minister Janez Janša's SDS. Neither seems capable of winning on its own, and the main interest of the 22 March election will be to determine which coalition government can be formed. [Read more](#)

## ■ European Council :



### Strategic convergence between the European Union and Norway

On 19 February, following a meeting in Oslo with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, European Council President António Costa emphasised the importance of cooperation with Norway, a long-standing partner in foreign, security and defence policy. He praised Norway's essential role in supporting Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression, both militarily and financially, as well as in terms of solidarity, and emphasised the shared commitment to strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy and energy security. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss deepening cooperation on the competitiveness of the single market and collective responses to geopolitical challenges. [Read more](#)

## ■ Commission :



### Strengthening support for the eastern regions of the Union

On 18 February, the European Commission adopted a strategy to strengthen support for the eastern regions of the European Union bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This strategy covers five areas: security and resilience, regional growth and prosperity, development of cross-border hydrogen infrastructure and regional bioeconomy hubs, connectivity, and remedies for depopulation and labour shortages. [Read more](#)



### Including Gibraltar in the trade agreement with the United Kingdom

On 17 February, the European Commission adopted proposals to include Gibraltar in the trade and cooperation agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom, which has been in force since 2021. The main objective is to ensure Gibraltar's future prosperity by removing all physical barriers to the movement of people and goods with Spain, while fully preserving Schengen, the EU single market and its customs union. [Read more](#)



## Trade with the United States: clarification requested following Supreme Court ruling

On 22 February, the European Commission requested full clarification on the measures the United States intends to take following the Supreme Court's 20 February ruling on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The current situation is not conducive to the establishment of 'fair, balanced and mutually beneficial' transatlantic trade and investment. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Council :



### Eurogroup ministers' meeting

On 16 February, the finance ministers of the euro area exchanged views on the progress of work and possible measures to strengthen the international role of the euro, with a view to promoting European monetary sovereignty. They discussed global imbalances in the context of current geo-economic risks with ministers from outside the euro area. [Read more](#)



### Meeting of Ministers for Economy and Finance

On 17 February, the Ministers for Economy and Finance approved their guidelines for the European Union's annual budget for 2027, emphasising the need for prudent budgeting and leaving sufficient margins in the Multiannual Financial Framework. They highlighted the potential of supplementary pensions to ensure adequate retirement income for citizens by mobilising long-term private savings. They decided to activate the national derogation clause under the Stability and Growth Pact for Austria, and to add two countries (Turks and Caicos and Vietnam) to the list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes, and to remove three (Fiji, Samoa and Trinidad and Tobago). [Read more](#)



### Amendment to the emissions trading system

On 18 February, the Council adopted an amendment aimed at ensuring greater price stability and predictability for a smoother start to the European carbon market in 2028, particularly for buildings and road transport. The amendment significantly increases the capacity to intervene to limit excessive increases in carbon prices. [Read more](#)



## Iran: Revolutionary Guard Corps designated as terrorist organisation

On 19 February, following the political agreement reached by foreign ministers on 29 January, the Council formally decided to add Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to the European Union's list of terrorist organisations. As a result, it will be subject to restrictive measures, including the freezing of its funds and other financial assets or economic resources in EU Member States, as well as a ban on European operators making funds and economic resources available to the group. Following this decision, 13 individuals and 23 groups and entities are now subject to the restrictive measures provided for in the so-called 'EU terrorist list'. [Read more](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



### Meeting of the E5 defence ministers

On 20 February, the British, French, German, Italian and Polish defence ministers met in Krakow as part of the Group of Five. They announced the launch of the Low-Cost Effectors & Autonomous Platforms (LEAP) initiative. This project involves the development of advanced low-cost air defence systems, such as drones and autonomous missiles, with the first project due to be delivered by 2027, offering a unique opportunity to leverage Europe's funding, leadership, artificial intelligence and autonomy in the field of defence. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



### Nordic Council meeting

On 18 February, the eight ministers responsible for Nordic cooperation from Denmark, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Åland met for the first Nordic Council meeting of 2026. Among other things, they discussed a further revision of the Helsinki Treaty, which has served as the framework for official Nordic cooperation since 1962 and was last amended in 1996. The aim of the joint Danish and Faroese presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers is to allow the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland to become full members. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ European Agencies :



## Airbus announces record results for 2025

On 19 February, European aerospace industry leader Airbus published its results for the 2025 financial year, marking a record year in terms of financial performance and deliveries. The manufacturer produced 793 commercial aircraft, generating revenue of €73.4 billion, up 6% compared to 2024, and a net profit of €5.2 billion. For 2026, Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury has set a target of 870 deliveries, continuing the ramp-up in production while consolidating its Defence, Space and Helicopters activities and developing, with its partners, a major industrial player in the space sector. [Read more](#)



## Dismantling of an international drug trafficking network

On 17 February, Eurojust and Europol coordinated a transnational operation in Italy and Spain that led to the arrest of 12 individuals suspected of leading drug trafficking groups. A previous operation, also coordinated with the Italian and Spanish authorities, had led to the arrest of 13 people and the seizure of 900 kg of drugs. [Read more](#)

## ■ Belgium :



## Brussels-Capital finally has a government

On 13 February, negotiators from seven parties (Reformist Movement (MR), Socialist Party (PS), centrists (Engagés), Greens (Groen), Flemish Socialists (Vooruit), Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Anders) and Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V)) agreed to form a new government for the Brussels-Capital Region. The mayor of the municipality of Uccle, Boris Dilliès, was appointed Minister-President. The political agreement ended the longest government-formation process in Belgian history (20 months). Central to the negotiations was the deterioration of the region's finances. In the absence of a functioning government to approve a new budget, debt continued to rise, exceeding €16 billion. [Read more](#)

## ■ Bulgaria :



## New government of experts in Bulgaria

On 19 February, Bulgarian President Iliana Yotova appointed a government led by Andrey Gyurov ahead of new parliamentary elections scheduled for the spring. The government comprises 21 members, including six women. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Spain :



### Spanish Prime Minister visits India

On 18 and 19 February, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited India, where he met with his counterpart Narendra Modi to mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Pedro Sánchez emphasised Spain's interest in the region and announced that the government would present Spain's new foreign policy strategy for the Asia-Pacific region this week. They also discussed the need to strengthen their economic and cultural relations and to move towards human-centred artificial intelligence at the Summit on the Impact of AI held in New Delhi. [Read more](#)

## ■ France :



### Official visit by the French President to India

From 17 to 20 February, French President Emmanuel Macron made an official visit to India and met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a joint statement, the two leaders announced that they were upgrading their relations to a 'special comprehensive strategic partnership', aimed at deepening cooperation in security, defence, innovation, energy, health and education, as evidenced by the historic agreement approved by the Indian Defence Acquisition Council for the acquisition of 114 additional Rafale fighter jets as part of the Indian Navy's modernisation programme. Emmanuel Macron also represented France at the 'India AI 2026' summit in New Delhi, which brought together international leaders and experts to discuss the strategic challenges of artificial intelligence. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## National strategy against information manipulation

French President Emmanuel Macron has adopted the first National Strategy to Combat Foreign Information Manipulation, developed under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Defence and National Security. This strategy calls for raising public awareness of the risks of disinformation, regulating online platforms and generative artificial intelligence services, strengthening the national operational capacity of institutional actors (Viginum, diplomatic and military networks) and non-institutional actors (open source intelligence channels – OSINT – information actors, journalists, researchers, etc.), and the structuring of a European community to combat information manipulation with the implementation of a coordinated assistance strategy during periods of vulnerability linked to election deadlines. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Bosnia-Herzegovina :



### Official visit by the OSCE Chairperson

On 20 February, the Chairperson of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Ignazio Cassis, concluded an official visit to Sarajevo, where he met with members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the leadership of the Central Election Commission. They discussed OSCE support for democratic institutions, electoral integrity for the October 2026 general elections, and the implementation of the Dayton-Paris Agreement. Ignazio Cassis emphasised the importance of constructive dialogue, respect for international commitments, and cooperation with local authorities and civil society. [Read more](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



### Visit by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

On 17 February, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, reaffirmed his support for Ukraine during a two-day official visit to the country. In his speech, he emphasised that the institution, of which Ukraine has been a member for thirty years, will continue to support the country in its reconstruction and its European future. This support takes the form of concrete mechanisms for justice for victims, such as the Register of Damage and the establishment of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. [Read more](#)



## Youth work in Ukraine during the war

On 19 February, the Council of Europe published its second collection of experiences concerning youth work in Ukraine during wartime. Twenty-three people contributed their personal accounts, in which they share stories of resilience and perseverance, explain how they defend freedom, democracy and human rights, and describe how they help society and its young people on a daily basis. This collection is part of the Council of Europe's project entitled 'Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase IV', carried out in cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Youth and Sports. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Statement by the French and Finnish presidents

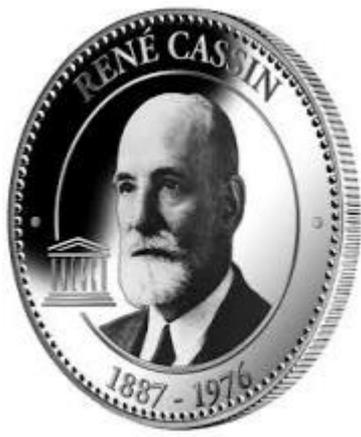
On 23 February, at a press conference, French President Emmanuel Macron and Finnish President Alexander Stubb called on the European Union to continue to increase 'pressure' on Russia in the war in Ukraine. They announced their intention to move forward with the European Union's 20th package of sanctions, which Hungary is threatening to veto. They indicated that discussions on this issue will be held in the coming days. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## The vulnerability of Ukrainian women in the face of the Russian invasion

On 20 February, UN Women's Head of Humanitarian Action, Sofia Calltorp, returned from a mission to Ukraine. She paints a grim picture of the situation for women in the country, with sectors where they are in the majority, such as health, education, social services and commerce, among the hardest hit. According to UN Women, since February 2022, more than 5,000 women and girls have been killed and around 14,000 injured in the country. Despite this deteriorating environment, women's organisations remain a pillar of the humanitarian response, distributing aid, supporting local employment, assisting victims of violence and participating in economic and political reconstruction. [Read more](#)

## ■ Council of Europe :



## Tribute to René Cassin

On 20 February, at the Institut de France in Paris, the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, the Council of State, the European Court of Human Rights and the René Cassin Foundation paid tribute to René Cassin on the 50th anniversary of his death. An exceptional jurist, member of the Free French government during the Second World War, Companion of the Liberation, he was rapporteur for the draft Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the UN General Assembly in 1948, Vice-President of the Council of State from 1944 to 1959, and President of the European Court of Human Rights from 1965 to 1968. [Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



### Reducing road deaths by 2030

On 16 February, the European Commission published a report tracking progress towards the European Union's goal of halving the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads by 2030. Although progress has been made, the report reveals that the current pace is insufficient. It presents recommendations for coordinated action to help strengthen the enforcement of road traffic rules and deter bad driving behaviour; advance the deployment of vehicle safety technologies; address new forms of mobility; and prioritise road safety research. [Read more](#)



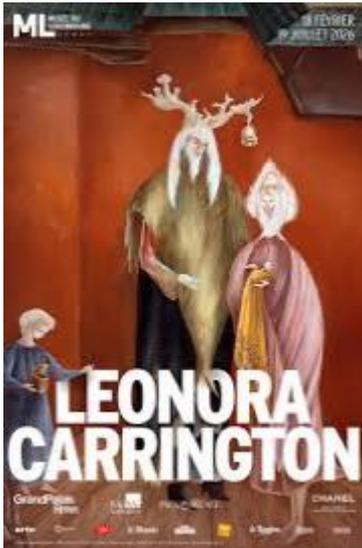
### Report of the Anti-Torture Committee in Georgia

On 18 February, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published a report on its visits to Georgia in 2024 and 2025. It paints a mixed picture of the situation in the country, noting material progress but major shortcomings in respect for fundamental rights. The Committee recommends the visible identification of masked officers during interventions and increased training in crowd control techniques. With regard to prisons, it recommends the closure of large semi-open establishments in favour of structures that promote reintegration. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## European Securities and Markets Authority opinion on sustainable development

On 18 February, the European Securities and Markets Authority issued its opinion on the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group's draft revised European sustainability reporting standards. In its opinion, it strongly supports the European Commission's objective of improving competitiveness and growth by simplifying and reducing environmental burdens. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Culture :



### Leonora Carrington in Paris

Until 19 July, the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris is hosting a retrospective dedicated to one of the major figures of surrealism, Leonora Carrington. The event presents a significant selection of the artist's works and creations, exploring her universe where mythology, metamorphosis and symbolism intertwine, and highlighting her unique journey through Europe and Mexico. [Read more](#)



### Van Gogh and yellow in Amsterdam

Until 17 May, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam is hosting 'Yellow. Beyond Van Gogh's Colour', the first exhibition to explore the significance of the colour yellow for Vincent Van Gogh and his contemporaries. It opens with the artist's masterpiece, Sunflowers, before exploring art, fashion, music and literature at the turn of the 20th century. It is accompanied by a striking light installation by Danish artist Olafur Eliasson (1967), which invites visitors to discover the colour yellow in a unique way. [Read more](#)



## Kandinsky in Lille

Until 14 June, the Lille Museum of Modern Art (LaM) is hosting a retrospective dedicated to the artist Wassily Kandinsky, a major figure in 20th-century art. Co-organised with the Centre Pompidou, the exhibition explores a little-known aspect of his work: the fundamental role of images in the development of his artistic thinking. Through an exceptional collection of works and archives, notably from Nina Kandinsky's bequest to the Centre Pompidou and supplemented by loans from European institutions, the exhibition invites visitors to rediscover the importance of images in the work of one of the founders of abstract art. [Read more](#)



## Giacometti and Lynda Benglis in London

Until 31 May, London's Barbican Centre is hosting an exhibition bringing together the works of Lynda Benglis and Alberto Giacometti for the first time. Giacometti is one of the most important European sculptors of the 20th century, known for his distinctive sculptures that experiment with the human form. For her part, since the 1960s, American artist Lynda Benglis has been famous for her free and ecstatic forms, which are both playful and visceral, organic and abstract. In addition, she is presenting a collection of previously unseen works alongside her own selection of sculptures by Alberto Giacometti, thus opening up links and dialogues between generations. [Read more](#)



## Bellezza e Bruttezza in Brussels

Until 14 June, the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels is hosting the exhibition 'Bellezza e Bruttezza'. It explores how artists from Italy and Northern Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries represented beauty and ugliness, from refined ideals to deliberate grotesqueries. A rare opportunity to admire extraordinary works by renowned artists. [Read more](#)



## Sergel in Stockholm

The exhibition 'Fantasy and Reality' is being held at the National Museum in Stockholm until 9 August. It presents the sculptor and draughtsman Johan Tobias Sergel (1740-1814), a central figure in Swedish art at the end of the 18th century and considered one of the most important sculptors of his time internationally. The exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of his life and art, from his early years in Stockholm in the 1760s, through his extended study trips to France and Italy, to his commissions for King Gustav III, and his return to Stockholm. [Read more](#)



## Zehra Doğan in Italy

Until 16 May, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Termoli is presenting Zehra Doğan's exhibition 'Moi, Témoin' (I, Witness). Through a rich collection of paintings, drawings, photographs and tapestries, the exhibition highlights the close link between her personal history and her political commitment. Condemned and then granted political asylum in Berlin, Zehra Doğan transformed her experience of detention into an act of production and resistance, making images and drawings essential tools with which to bear witness. Through her story, the female figure emerges as a symbol of resilience, offering the public a profound insight into how art can become a space for shared memory and dialogue between personal history and collective responsibility. [Read more](#)



## 'Half Light' in Valencia

Until 14 June, the Valencia Institute of Modern Art is hosting a unique exhibition that showcases, at the crossroads of contemporary artistic practices, numerous materials used in crafts and trades and traditions related to the earth. The various pieces on display include ceramics, clay, wool, textiles, embroidery, esparto grass, palm leaves, wicker and other natural fibres, illustrating the non-hegemonic knowledge associated with these regions, while helping to preserve shared skills and heritage. [Read more](#)

## ■ Sports :



## Milan-Cortina Olympic Games medal table

On 22 February, the closing ceremony of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games was held. In keeping with tradition, the Greek delegation led the procession, as the founding country of the Games, followed by the host country, Italy, and then the other delegations. In total, the Member States of the European Union won 164 medals: 54 gold, 56 silver and 54 bronze. The Paralympic Games will be held from 6 to 15 March. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 23/02/2026

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

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 24/02/2026

**"General Affairs" Council** (Brussels)

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 26/02/2026

**"Cohesion" Council** (Brussels)

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 26-27/02/2026

**"Competitiveness" Council** (Brussels)



### The Letter n°1144

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