

Letter n°1147 of Tuesday 17th March 2026

European Union military operations – Part 1

Nicolas-Jean Brehon - 17 Mar 2026

The European Union has shifted its military focus from territorial crisis management to comprehensive strategic and material support. Since 2021, the European Peace Facility has marked a major turning point by directly funding lethal equipment and partner training. This shift now prioritises technological and budgetary assistance, particularly in Ukraine. The study lists all military operations conducted by Europe since 2003.



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■ Elections :



Parliamentary elections in Hungary on 12 April

As Hungary's parliamentary elections on 12 April draw near, Viktor Orbán appears to be under greater threat than ever. The latest poll, conducted on 11 March, puts his main opponent, Peter Magyar (Tisza), in the lead in voting intentions. After 16 years in power, the decline of confidence in Viktor Orbán can be attributed in particular to record inflation, near-zero growth (0.4% in 2025) and diplomatic tensions with the European Union and its neighbours. Faced with this risk of defeat, fears are emerging regarding possible foreign interference. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



European Integration and Religious Identities

As part of Francophonie Month, the Joseph Karolyi Foundation, in partnership with the Robert Schuman Foundation and German and Italian foundations, is organising a conference on 20 and 21 March entitled 'European Integration and Religious Identities'. [Read more](#)



NextGenEU: Green light for Germany's application

On 13 March, the European Commission approved Germany's third payment request for €4.6 billion under the European recovery plan 'Next Generation EU'. The Foundation is monitoring the implementation of the recovery plan in each country. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Commission :



Measures to promote clean energy, including nuclear power

On 10 March, the European Commission presented several initiatives aimed at stimulating investment in clean energy. This "energy package" is designed to strengthen energy resilience, reduce prices and lessen the EU's dependence on imported fossil fuels. This strategy will enable investment in specific energy infrastructure projects in partnership with the European Investment Bank Group. The "Energy for Citizens" package will help provide affordable energy to consumers. Finally, for the first time, the European Commission has unveiled a strategy for small modular reactors (SMRs) to accelerate their deployment across the EU by 2030. [Read more](#)

■ Parliament :



Copyright protection in the age of artificial intelligence

On 10 March, MEPs adopted recommendations aimed at protecting copyrighted works against their use by artificial intelligence. They believe that the use of copyright-protected material by generative artificial intelligence systems must be transparent and fairly remunerated, whilst authors must have the option to refuse such use. With regard to the press, MEPs call on the European Commission to protect this sector to ensure media pluralism and diversity of information, in particular by preventing the selective processing of information by AI. [Read more - Other link](#)



Creation of a European Talent Pool

On 10 March, MEPs voted to establish a digital platform known as the "European Talent Pool", designed to match job vacancies in EU countries with jobseekers from third countries. The EU and its Member States are facing labour and skills shortages in many sectors. This pool should help Member States address these shortages whilst enhancing the EU's attractiveness to talent from third countries. The Foundation recently published a study on this subject. [Read more - Other link](#)



Report on the enlargement of the Union

On 11 March, MEPs adopted a report in which they state that enlargement constitutes a strategic response to the geopolitical situation and a vital investment in the security and stability of the Union, as the cost of non-enlargement could exceed that of admitting new members to the Union. The report calls on the Council to remove all obstacles to accession where the candidate countries' ambitions are matched by tangible reforms. MEPs are calling for enhanced monitoring of reforms in the candidate countries and advocate the provision of adequate pre-accession funding within the new multiannual financial framework. The Foundation has published a recent analysis on this subject. [Read more - Other link](#)



Proposals to establish a common defence market

On 11 March, MEPs adopted proposals aimed at establishing a single defence market within the European Union. With a view to strengthening the European Defence Industrial and Technological Base (EDITB), MEPs have expressed their support for an approach based on 'buying European'. Ukraine should also be treated as an integral part of the EU defence market. Finally, MEPs highlighted serious shortcomings in defence capabilities and called on Member States to swiftly launch their flagship projects under the roadmap on defence readiness for 2030. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



New rules to protect travellers in the event of unforeseen circumstances

On 12 March, MEPs adopted the revised rules on package travel. The updated directive provides a clearer definition of package holidays, introduces rules on the use of vouchers and extends the conditions for penalty-free cancellation in the event of extraordinary circumstances occurring at the destination or point of departure. This update will provide better protection for consumers booking these services. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



New 'framework agreement' with the Commission

On 11 March, MEPs gave the green light to the reform of the framework agreement governing relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission. The agreement sets out several key principles, such as the provision of comprehensive information to enable Parliament to exercise its legislative and budgetary functions, as well as more regular participation by European Commissioners in Parliament's plenary sessions. The text also provides that the European Commission may ask Parliament to take an urgent decision on a proposal, clarifying the conditions under which the Commission may use its emergency powers. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Ministers for Economic Affairs and Finance

On 10 March, the Ministers for Economic Affairs and Finance discussed the integration of the EU's capital markets. They called for work to be stepped up in order to boost the EU's competitiveness. In addition, they set the maximum net expenditure path for Ireland, whilst Estonia's targeted amendments to its Recovery and Resilience Plan were approved. Ministers also held discussions in preparation for two upcoming meetings: the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting and the IMF Spring Meeting. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Ministers responsible for Social Policy

On 9 March, the Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs called on Member States and the Commission to invest in children to combat poverty and ensure their well-being. As part of the European Semester, ministers adopted the 2026 Joint Employment Report, approved a recommendation on human capital aimed at addressing labour and skills shortages, and discussed the provision of quality jobs in the age of artificial intelligence. Finally, they endorsed the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and discussed efforts to break the cycle of poverty. [Read more](#)



Eurogroup meeting

On 9 March, Eurogroup finance ministers met in Brussels under the chairmanship of Greek Minister Kyriakos Pierrakakis. Against the backdrop of ongoing geopolitical instability in the Middle East, the ministers discussed developments in energy prices and the implications for the euro area. European Commissioner for the Economy Valdis Dombrovskis warned of a "major stagflationary shock". Ministers also examined Belgium's draft budgetary plan for 2026 and the latest developments in digital finance, with a view to assessing the potential benefits for the EU's financial system. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



G7 Meeting on the Middle East

On 11 March, G7 leaders held a video conference to discuss the economic consequences of the war in the Middle East. They agreed to establish coordination with a view to preparing for the restoration of freedom of navigation in the region, as well as to establish coordination between G7 countries and Gulf economies regarding the economic consequences of the war in the region. The leaders also welcomed the announcement by the International Energy Agency, made at the G7's instigation, to release up to 400 million barrels of strategic reserves. Finally, they reiterated their unity and determination to continue sanctions against Russia. [Read more](#)



Sanctions renewed for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity

On 14 March, the Council decided to extend until 15 September 2026 the restrictive measures targeting those responsible for actions that undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. These targeted measures apply to approximately 2,600 individuals and entities and include travel restrictions, an asset freeze and a ban on making funds or other economic resources available to those on the list. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Conference of European Union Ambassadors

From 9 to 13 March in Brussels, the annual Conference of European Union Ambassadors brought together more than 145 EU ambassadors and heads of delegation from around the world to discuss the prospects for the EU's adaptation and repositioning. In her opening address, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen listed the three areas in which the EU must project its power more assertively: security and defence, investment and trade, and the evolution of European diplomacy. These conclusions were echoed by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, who argued that the EU must be the antithesis of the autocratic axis currently taking shape, whilst the President of the Council, António Costa, called for the defence of the rules-based international order. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Strategic partnership with Azerbaijan

On 11 March, the President of the European Council, António Costa, and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their strategic partnership. Discussions focused on developing energy cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Southern Gas Corridor, as well as on deepening economic, trade and connectivity relations through infrastructure projects, such as the modernisation of the rail network. Finally, the two leaders emphasised the importance of political dialogue and reiterated their support for the normalisation process between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the stability of the South Caucasus. [Read more](#)

■ France :



World Nuclear Energy Summit

On 10 March, more than 60 countries, global industry leaders and international nuclear organisations gathered in Paris for a World Nuclear Energy Summit. They discussed, in particular, the need to develop nuclear power as a tool for combating climate change, ensuring energy sovereignty and enhancing competitiveness. They emphasised the central role played by nuclear power in providing clean, reliable, affordable and safe energy against a backdrop of rising electricity demand and geopolitical tensions. Following the summit, two statements were issued: one reaffirming the commitment to developing nuclear energy as part of the global transition to low-carbon energy systems, and the other calling for strengthened international cooperation and easier access to financing. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ireland :



Meeting between the Irish and British Prime Ministers

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Irish counterpart, Taoiseach Micheál Martin, met at the second UK-Ireland Summit in Cork. They emphasised the need and the desire of both countries to strengthen their ties, particularly in the context of the conflict in the Middle East. Following their meeting, they issued a joint statement, entitled "Shared Prosperity, Shared Seas, Shared Ties", outlining areas for cooperation. They also signed a memorandum of understanding on security, in which both countries commit to protecting undersea cables and critical subsea infrastructure. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Poland :



The government intends to implement the SAFE programme, despite the presidential veto

On 13 March, the Polish government led by Donald Tusk pledged to implement the European Security Action for Europe (SAFE) programme, despite President Karol Nawrocki's veto. With €150 billion in loans, this mechanism aims to support joint European investment in armaments, ammunition and critical infrastructure in the face of the Russian threat. As the main beneficiary of this scheme, Poland could mobilise nearly €43.7 billion to strengthen the country's defence capabilities and consolidate the EU and NATO's 'Eastern Shield'. To circumvent the presidential veto, the government plans to draw on the Armed Forces Support Fund, an existing budgetary instrument designed to ensure the effective mobilisation of these funds. [Read more - Other link](#)



Bilateral cooperation with Sweden

From 10 to 12 March, the King of Sweden paid an official state visit to Poland at the invitation of President Karol Nawrocki, with a view to strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Against a regional backdrop marked by the war in Ukraine, discussions focused on deepening security cooperation in the Baltic Sea, notably through the development of joint defence capabilities, the intensification of exercises and the protection of critical infrastructure. The Polish President also emphasised the importance of the trade and technology partnership, noting that some 700 Swedish companies are investing in Poland and that bilateral trade continues to grow. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Slovenia :



Latest polls ahead of the general election

Ahead of the Slovenian general election on 22 March, the latest opinion polls conducted by Valicon for Siol reveal a narrow gap between the two main political parties. The right-wing Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS) and the centre-left Gibanje Svoboda (GS) are now running neck and neck, setting the stage for an extremely close contest for first place. Further down the line, several parties such as Demokrati (centre-right), Socialni demokrati (Social Democrats) and the joint Levica Vesna list (left-wing Greens) are projected to achieve a score of around 6 per cent based on voting intentions, revealing a growing polarisation of the Slovenian political landscape. [Read more - Other link - Other link](#)

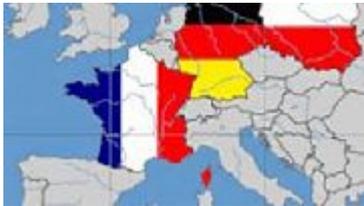
■ Armenia :



Armenian Prime Minister's visit to Strasbourg

On 11 March, the Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, travelled to Strasbourg, where he addressed MEPs. He spoke in particular about the establishment of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, formalised in August 2025, and his country's aspiration to join the EU. He highlighted his country's adoption of the law launching the process of accession to the EU. He stated that one of the main obstacles to Armenia's integration into the EU was the freeze in political dialogue with Georgia, and called for the process to be resumed. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Georgia :



Statement by the Weimar Triangle on new repressive legislation in Georgia

On 10 March, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland issued a joint ministerial statement regarding Georgia's adoption, on 4 March, of legislative amendments relating to foreign funding and political activities. They regret the adoption of this new legislation, which extends state control over political and civil society activities in Georgia and undermines the freedoms of association and expression, thereby weakening the rule of law. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



Meeting with the Lithuanian President

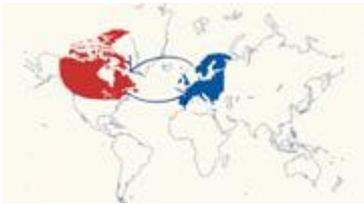
On 10 March, Moldovan President Maia Sandu visited Lithuania, where she met her counterpart, Gitanas Nausėda. The Lithuanian President reiterated his country's support for Moldova in its fight against Russia's unprecedented hybrid attacks, and in its aspirations, alongside those of Ukraine, to become full members of the European Union by 2030 at the latest. He also emphasised that Lithuania was ready to share its experience in the information and communication technology sector with Moldova, particularly in the fields of e-governance and cybersecurity. Furthermore, he called on the country to strengthen its military capabilities, and stated that Lithuania's military aid to Moldova would amount to €6 million between 2026 and 2028. [Read more](#)



Security cooperation with the European Union and NATO

On 11 March, the Moldovan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mihai Popșoi, was in Brussels to meet with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Kaja Kallas. Discussions focused on the progress of Moldova's accession process to the European Union, strengthening cooperation with NATO, and international support for the country's security resilience. Against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the Minister emphasised the importance of concrete mechanisms such as the Security and Defence Partnership, a European cooperation framework, and the European Peace Facility, which funds and modernises the Moldovan armed forces, thereby directly strengthening the country's security. [Read more](#)

■ Norway :



Strengthening cooperation between the Nordic countries and Canada

On 15 March, the Prime Ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden adopted a joint declaration in Oslo aimed at strengthening strategic cooperation between Canada and the Nordic countries. Discussions focused on Euro-Atlantic security and stability in the Arctic, as well as the development of defence industrial capabilities and resilience to hybrid threats. The leaders discussed strengthening economic, technological and energy cooperation, particularly in the areas of innovation and the green transition. They also reiterated their commitment to a rules-based international order, state sovereignty and support for Ukraine, and pledged to continue regular political dialogue to strengthen their partnership. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



The Ukrainian President in Romania and France

On 12 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Romania, where he met his counterpart Nicusor Dan and Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan. They signed a strategic partnership agreement, covering areas such as the economy, energy and military cooperation. In particular, it provides for the construction of drones in Romania, drawing on Ukrainian expertise, as part of the SAFE programme. On 13 March, the Ukrainian President travelled to Paris, where he met his counterpart Emmanuel Macron. They discussed the situation in the Middle East, the strengthening of sanctions against Russia and the intensification of support for Ukraine. Furthermore, Emmanuel Macron stated that Ukraine deserved the opening of the first chapters of negotiations with a view to its accession to the European Union. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Unprecedented effort to stabilise the oil market

On 11 March, the 32 member countries of the International Energy Agency unanimously decided to carry out the largest coordinated release of oil stocks in their history, authorising the release of 400 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves onto the market. This measure aims to mitigate disruptions to global supply caused by the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has led to a significant drop in production and high price volatility. This decision by the member countries is part of their commitment to international energy security, with the aim of stabilising markets and limiting the impact on the global economy. [Read more](#)



Deportation of Ukrainian children: UN highlights crimes against humanity

On 12 March, a report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that the Russian authorities had committed crimes against humanity, notably through the deportation and forced transfer of Ukrainian children to territories under Russian control. The commission documents 1,205 cases of children who have been deported or transferred, nearly 80% of whom have not yet been repatriated, whilst Kyiv claims that the figure actually amounts to as many as 20,000 children. The report highlights violations of international humanitarian law, including the obstruction of family reunification and the unjustified delay in the return of displaced children. [Read more - Other link](#)

■ Culture :



65th Taras Shevchenko Prize Ceremony

On 9 March, in Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the 65th ceremony of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize, the country's highest cultural honour, traditionally awarded on the anniversary of the eponymous poet's birth. This year's ceremony marks a significant development for the prize, with an expansion in the number of categories and the introduction of new artistic disciplines such as photography, design and art curation. Through this ceremony, the Ukrainian authorities reinforced the essential role of artistic creation in preserving national identity and, in times of war, in passing on the country's collective experience and memory. [Read more - Other link](#)



Ruse Classical Music Festival

The 65th edition of the March Music Days International Festival, one of Bulgaria's oldest classical music events, is taking place until 29 March. Founded in 1961, this festival transforms the city on the Danube into a meeting place for artists and ensembles from Europe and around the world every year. The 2026 edition features a programme of 18 concerts bringing together musicians from 12 countries, blending the European classical repertoire, contemporary works and forays into jazz, confirming the festival's role as a major platform for the dissemination of music and international musical dialogue. [Read more](#)



David Hockney in London

Until 23 August, London's Serpentine North Gallery is hosting an exhibition devoted to recent and new works by British artist David Hockney. It features a series of new paintings created for the Serpentine, as well as the artist's monumental frieze entitled A Year in Normandy (2020–2021), on display in London for the first time. [Read more](#)

Bourse de Commerce Pinault Collection

'Clair-obscur' in Paris

Until 24 August, the Bourse de Commerce is hosting around a hundred works from the Pinault Collection in an exhibition entitled 'Clair-obscur', dedicated to the legacy of 'chiaroscuro'. Alberto Giacometti, Philippe Pareno, Victor Man, Wolfgang Tillmans and many other artists are on display in the galleries surrounding the Rotonde, which is hosting French artist Pierre Huyghe's Camata carte blanche. [Read more](#)



European institutions in Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Until 23 March, the Châteauneuf-du-Pape Twinning Committee is presenting, in the vaulted cellars of the Tourist Office and in partnership with the Maison de l'Europe in Nîmes, an educational and illustrated exhibition on how the European Union works, its history, its institutions and its powers. [Read more](#)

■ Sport :



Closing Ceremony of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympic Games

On 15 March, the closing ceremony of the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympic Games took place. In keeping with tradition, the Greek delegation led the procession, in its capacity as a founding nation of the Games, alongside that of the host country, Italy, followed by the other delegations. In total, the Member States of the European Union won a combined total of 90 medals: 29 gold, 30 silver and 31 bronze. The closing ceremony also saw the handover of the flag to France, which will host the next edition in the French Alps in 2030. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 16/03/2026

"Foreign Affairs" Council "Energy" Council (Brussels)

 17 March 2026

"General Affairs" Council "Environment" Council (Brussels)

 18-19 /03/2026

ECB Council of Governors (Frankfurt/Main)

 19-20/03/2026

European Council (Brussels)

 22/03/2026

Parliamentary Elections (Slovenia)



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