

## European Union military operations – Part 2

Nicolas-Jean Brehon - 24 Mar 2026

European military operations go beyond mere defence to become a powerful diplomatic tool, asserting the Union's political presence on the international stage. Despite operational successes and unprecedented multinational experience, they face budgetary complexities and reluctance to engage in high-intensity risk. This defence dynamic is currently the scene of a major institutional rivalry between the Council and the Commission over control of strategic resources.



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### ■ Elections :



## Parliamentary elections in Bulgaria on 19 April

These are the eighth snap parliamentary elections in five years, following the resignation of the Jeliaskov government in December 2025 and widespread public protests against corruption and inflation. Former President Rumen Radev, polling at 21.1%, with his new Progressive Bulgaria coalition (uniting the PDS, SDP and DNN), will face GERB (polling at 18.5%) and the liberals of the PP-DB (12%). The challenge is to break the political deadlock that has persisted since 2021, but success will depend on a stable future alliance involving at least three parties. [Read more](#)



## Parliamentary elections in Slovenia: Robert Golob and Janez Janša neck and neck

On 22 March, the Movement for Freedom (Svoboda) led by outgoing Prime Minister Robert Golob narrowly edged out Janez Janša's Democratic Party (SDS). Five other parties managed to exceed the 4% threshold required to gain representation in parliament. Svoboda is therefore set to come out ahead with 28.6% of the vote and 29 seats, followed by the SDS, which secured 27.95% and 28 seats. The NSi/SLS/FOCUS coalition (centrist) comes in third with 9.29% and 9 seats; followed by the Social Democrats (centre-left) and the Democrats (centre-right), a new party, which each won 6.70% and 6 seats. The Left (Levica) secured 5.58% and 5 seats, and Resni.ca (far right) 5.5% and 5 seats. Ethnic minorities secured 2 seats. The question remains as to which majority can be formed and with whom. [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



## 3rd edition of the Paris Forum on Defence and Strategy

On 24 March, the Minister for the Armed Forces, Catherine Vautrin, will open the third Paris Forum on Defence and Strategy (PDSF), an international event organised by the Defence Academy of the École Militaire, which this year will feature Denmark as its guest of honour. Until 26 March, French and international civilian and military experts will discuss the theme "Sovereignty, Partnerships and Alliances". The Foundation is a partner in this event, hosting a debate on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and a round table on challenges in the Arctic, both to be held on 24 March. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## The Schuman Network, a European network promoting reflection

The Schuman Network, a digital platform bringing together research centres and think tanks, aims to promote reflection and debate at European level by providing access to a wide range of up-to-date research. With 22 partners, it offers a platform for disseminating and promoting publications dedicated to major contemporary issues. A new study on Antarctica is being published this week [Read more](#)



## Progress on the NextGenerationEU recovery plan.

On 20 March, the European Commission approved Malta's fourth payment request, amounting to €51.5 million, under the NextGenerationEU recovery plan. Malta submitted its request on 15 December 2025. The Foundation provides an interactive map to track the recovery plan in each Member State. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ European Council :



### Conclusions

On 19 March, European Union leaders, in the presence of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, reiterated their support for Ukraine and decided to disburse the first tranche of the loan in early April, despite Hungary's isolated stance. Regarding the Middle East, they reiterated their refusal to participate in military operations led by the United States and Israel in Iran. The rise in energy prices resulting from the conflict was central to discussions, and leaders called for a moratorium on strikes against energy and water facilities in Iran. To tackle rising prices, the Commission has been asked to make proposals to reduce prices and reform the carbon market. They also launched a plan entitled "One Europe, One Market" to boost European competitiveness and strengthen the Union's strategic autonomy and economic security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Commission :



## Investments in nuclear research

On 19 March, the European Commission adopted the 2026–2027 work programme for the Euratom programme, providing for an investment of €330 million to support the development of fusion energy and nuclear technologies. This initiative aims to strengthen the European Union's energy independence, competitiveness and technological leadership, whilst contributing to the climate neutrality targets for 2050. [Read more](#)

# EU-INC

## EU Inc.: a 28th legal framework to foster the emergence of European champions

On 18 March, the European Commission presented its proposal entitled EU Inc., a new legal model designed to boost the European economy in the face of competition from the United States and China. This "28th legal framework" offers a single, harmonised set of rules that companies can choose to operate under in all 27 member states without any additional formalities. This new framework will facilitate the creation and growth of businesses within the EU through simplified, accelerated and online procedures. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Council :



## Meeting of Energy Ministers

On 16 March, energy ministers discussed energy prices in Europe, in the context of the Action Plan for Affordable Energy presented a year ago, and the price rises caused by the conflict in the Middle East. They emphasised the need for targeted short-term measures whilst maintaining the long-term trajectory towards renewable energy. They held a policy debate on European networks with the aim of improving energy interconnections between EU countries, promoting electrification and speeding up authorisation procedures for energy infrastructure. [Read more](#)



## Eurozone Summit

On 19 March, European Union leaders met for a Eurozone summit. They discussed the economic and financial situation in the Eurozone, which has been affected by the conflict in the Middle East. Whilst the leaders highlighted the economy's resilience, they warned of future geopolitical uncertainty and called on the Eurogroup to monitor economic fluctuations. On the savings and investment union, they welcomed the progress made on revising the framework governing the securitisation market. They welcomed the progress made on the international role of the euro. Finally, they welcomed Bulgaria's adoption of the euro on 1 January 2026, as well as the progress made on the digital euro project. [Read more](#)



## Meeting of Environment Ministers

On 17 March, Environment Ministers discussed amendments to the regulation on CO2 emission standards for cars and vans. They also exchanged views on climate action, with a view to preparing measures for the post-2030 period. In particular, they discussed science diplomacy as a means of strengthening the EU's position in multilateral environmental negotiations. Finally, they approved conclusions on the EU's bioeconomy strategy, recognising its considerable potential to promote the transition to clean industries. [Read more](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



## Meeting of Foreign Ministers

On 16 March, foreign ministers discussed the war in Ukraine and regional instability in the Middle East. They reiterated their support for Ukraine remained their priority, and voted to impose several sanctions against individuals responsible for the Bucha massacre or for disinformation and interference against the Union and its partners. On the situation in Iran, the ministers expressed their concern at the regional escalation and called for a return to diplomacy. They imposed restrictive measures against a further 16 individuals responsible for human rights violations. On the subject of maritime security, they ruled out the idea of deploying the Aspis maritime traffic protection mission to the Strait of Hormuz. Finally, they expressed their deep concern at the deteriorating conditions in Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. [Read more](#)



## Joint statement on the Strait of Hormuz

On 19 March, the leaders of Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on the Strait of Hormuz. They strongly condemn the recent attacks carried out by Iranian forces, as well as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. They have called on Iran to immediately cease its threats, its mining operations, its drone and missile attacks, and any other attempts to block the Strait to commercial shipping. [Read more](#)



## G7 Statement on the Middle East

On 21 March, the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom, together with the High Representative of the European Union, issued a statement in which they expressed their support for their partners in the Middle East in the face of attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran. In it, they condemn the attacks carried out by the Iranian regime against civilian populations and infrastructure, particularly energy infrastructure, in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman, and call for their immediate and unconditional cessation. [Read more](#)

## ■ ECB :



## Decision of the Governing Council

On 19 March, the members of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank decided to leave the Bank's three key interest rates unchanged, with the aim of ensuring that inflation stabilises at 2% in the face of the crisis in the Middle East. The interest rates on the deposit facility, the main refinancing operations and the marginal lending facility will remain at 2%, 2.15% and 2.40% respectively. Inflation is forecast at 2.6% in 2026, 2% in 2027 and 2.1% in 2028. [Read more](#)



## Boris Vujčić appointed Vice-President

On 19 March, the European Council appointed Boris Vujčić of Croatia as Vice-President of the European Central Bank (ECB) for a non-renewable eight-year term. He will replace Luis de Guindos of Spain with effect from 1 June. [Read more](#)

## ■ Germany :



## State elections in Rhineland-Palatinate

On 22 March, voters in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate went to the polls to elect a new state parliament. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) came out ahead with 31% of the vote, ahead of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which secured 25.9%. Behind them, the Greens (7.9%) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) with 2.1% recorded almost marginal results, compared to the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which confirmed its rise by winning 19.5% of the vote. Against a backdrop of fierce political competition, the CDU is therefore expected to replace the SPD at the head of this state. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Cyprus :



## Cyprus becomes an associate member of the European Space Agency

On 19 March, the European Space Agency (ESA) announced that the Republic of Cyprus, previously a cooperating state, would become an associate member following the entry into force of the association agreement signed on 23 October 2025. This new status, valid for a period of seven years, enables Cypriot companies, research institutes and start-ups to participate in several of the ESA's strategic programmes, notably in Earth observation, telecommunications and technological support. With this agreement, the Cypriot government hopes to stimulate its national space ecosystem, increase its expertise and foster collaborations with the Agency's member states. [Read more](#)

## ■ Denmark :



## Latest polls for the Danish elections on 24 March

Snap general elections are taking place in Denmark on 24 March, called by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on 26 February. According to the latest polls, her party, the Social Democrats, is set to lead with 21.9%. The 'red' coalition is projected to lead with 48.4% of the vote, ahead of the 'blue' coalition, which is credited with 45.4% of the seats. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ France :



## 'France Libre': France's future aircraft carrier

On 18 March, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the name of France's future aircraft carrier: 'France Libre', during a visit to the Naval Group site where construction of the vessel has begun. This new flagship, intended to succeed the 'Charles-de-Gaulle', is due to enter service by 2038. It will be 310 metres long and weigh 80,000 tonnes, almost double the size of the Charles-de-Gaulle. This major project will ensure the continued existence of the French naval aviation group and guarantee France the capacity to act and deploy across all seas and oceans. [Read more](#)

## ■ Iceland :



## New security and defence partnership signed with the European Union

On 18 March, the EU's High Representative, Kaja Kallas, and the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, signed a security and defence partnership. It provides a framework for cooperation to deepen exchanges on regional security issues and strengthen cooperation in areas such as support for Ukraine, Arctic issues and maritime security. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Montenegro :



## Closure of a further accession chapter with Montenegro

On 17 March, the 26th meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro provisionally closed accession negotiations on Chapter 21, which concerns trans-European networks. This brings the number of chapters provisionally closed by Montenegro to 14, following the closure of Chapter 32 on financial control in January, reinforcing the country's leading position in the enlargement process. [Read more](#)

## ■ UK :



## Towards a new defence funding mechanism

On 17 March, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on defence funding and procurement. They plan to establish a new funding body specifically for defence initiatives: the Multilateral Defence Facility, designed to complement existing European and NATO efforts. Open to countries with strong credit ratings, both within and outside the EU, it aims to revitalise their defence sectors and accelerate rearmament efforts, notably by simplifying joint procurement. Its launch is scheduled for 2027. [Read more](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



## The UK and Ukraine strengthen their strategic and space cooperation

On 17 March, during a visit to the UK, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer adopted a joint declaration aimed at strengthening their cooperation in the fields of security and the defence industry. This partnership establishes a framework for developing a shared industrial and technological ecosystem in the fields of innovation and equipment production. The following day, the space agencies of both countries signed a civil space cooperation agreement, designed to develop joint projects, foster innovation and strengthen technological capabilities in the space sector. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Council of Europe :



## Conference on disinformation and foreign interference

On 20 March in Chişinău, the Council of Europe examined innovative ways to combat disinformation, information manipulation, foreign interference and hate speech, which undermine public trust and undermine the integrity of democratic processes in Europe. Secretary General Alain Berset announced that the Council of Europe was working on a new legal instrument to combat information manipulation and foreign interference, including disinformation, electoral interference and other related hybrid threats. [Read more](#)

## ■ UN :

## The IMO calls for the establishment of a maritime security framework in the Middle East

On 19 March, the Council of the International Maritime Organisation, meeting in extraordinary session in London to discuss the impact of the crisis in the Middle East, strongly condemned the attacks on merchant ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Its members called for the establishment of a provisional and urgent maritime security framework to facilitate the evacuation of merchant ships currently stranded in the Gulf region. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

### ■ Studies/Reports :



#### World Trade Report

On 19 March, the World Trade Organisation published its 'World Trade Outlook'. According to the report, global trade is expected to slow in 2026, following stronger-than-expected growth in 2025, driven in particular by the intensification of trade in goods required for AI, falling from 4.6% in 2025 to 1.9% in 2026. WTO economists warn that the ongoing conflict in the Middle East could further reduce trade growth if energy prices remain high, and note that food supplies and trade in services are under pressure due to disruptions to travel and transport. The outlook could, however, improve if the conflict ends quickly and the boom in AI-related spending continues. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



#### Opinion of the European Court of Auditors on the 2028–2034 budget and innovation

The European Court of Auditors has issued two opinions in relation to the European Union budget for the period 2028–2034, as well as a performance assessment report on the Innovation Fund. On 12 March, it highlighted several issues common to the Erasmus+ and AgoraEU programmes, particularly regarding governance and accountability. On 19 March, it concluded that the roll-out of the Innovation Fund for competitiveness and the fight against climate change was still too slow and insufficient to support European competitiveness in the clean technology sector. It noted that uncertainty regarding the volume of funding available was limiting its impact, which was further undermined by the lack of a coherent strategy for resource allocation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## OECD reports on Romania and Austria

On 16 and 19 March, the OECD published two economic studies on the situation in Romania and Austria. Regarding Romania, it was emphasised that, despite income convergence with OECD countries and support from European funds, fiscal consolidation and improved competitiveness remained essential for balanced and sustainable growth. For Austria, the OECD reiterated that reducing the public deficit, adapting to demographic ageing and further boosting business dynamism remain fundamental to strengthening growth and public finances. Both reports emphasise the need for structural reforms to support long-term economic resilience in different national contexts that nevertheless face common challenges. [Read more - Other link](#)



## The OSCE manages to adopt a budget for 2026, after five years of deadlock

On 19 March, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) managed to agree on a budget for 2026, bringing to an end five years of deadlock since the last budget was approved in 2021. This decision, taken by consensus, demonstrates a shared commitment to preserving the OSCE's role as a platform for dialogue, despite an international context marked by significant tensions. During his chairmanship, Swiss President Ignazio Cassis intends to strengthen the organisation's cooperation and capacity for action, building on its priorities in the areas of security, multilateral dialogue and respect for fundamental principles. [Read more](#)

## ■ Culture :



### Monet in Frankfurt

Until 5 July, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main is hosting the exhibition 'Monet's Coast: The Discovery of Étretat'. The exhibition highlights the fascination that the French fishing village of Étretat held for 19th-century artists, particularly Claude Monet, and examines its influence on the development of Impressionism. The exhibition features some 170 exceptional paintings, drawings, photographs and historical documents, on loan from major international museums as well as several private collections. [Read more](#)



## Renoir in Paris

Until 19 July, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris is hosting the exhibition "Renoir and Love: The Joy of Modernity" (1865–1885), a captivating journey into the world of the painter Auguste Renoir. Organised in collaboration with the National Gallery in London and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, this exhibition highlights the subtlety and tenderness of Renoir's portraits and scenes of everyday life. This retrospective combines rigour and sensitivity, inviting visitors to a unique sensory and aesthetic experience. [Read more](#)



## Andy Warhol in Ferrara

Until 19 July, the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara is hosting the exhibition "Andy Warhol. Ladies and Gentlemen", showcasing an exceptional selection of over 150 portraits by the father of Pop Art. The museum is recreating and expanding on the first edition of the exhibition held in 1975–1976, when the series helped to redefine the art of portraiture in the contemporary era. [Read more](#)



## Simon Fujiwara in Luxembourg

Until 23 August, the Musée d'Art Moderne du Luxembourg is presenting the exhibition "Mudamland", an immersion into the world of the British-Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara. Designed as a retrospective, this exhibition confronts the viewer with the contemporary world in all its beauty, complexity and absurdities, within an environment inspired by amusement parks. Spanning nearly twenty years of creative work, it reveals the breadth of a practice that combines painting, film and storytelling. Through installations blending humour, personal narratives and cultural references, the artist examines the mechanisms of our contemporary society. [Read more](#)

## 'This Cat was drawn during the War' in Warsaw

Until 13 September, the Ujazdowski Castle Art Centre in Warsaw is hosting the exhibition 'This Cat was drawn during the War'. Exploring issues related to the experience of war in Europe, particularly the war against Ukraine, the works on display examine artistic creation in the face of war. Bringing together European artists, including many from Ukraine, the exhibition explores how war transforms art, its effectiveness, and the scope for critical reflection. [Read more](#)



## Matisse in Barcelona

Until 16 August, the Caixa Foundation in Barcelona, in partnership with the Centre Pompidou, is hosting an exhibition devoted to the French painter Henri Matisse. It presents a curated selection that brings together some thirty of the artist's paintings and major figures from the 20th and 21st centuries. [Read more](#)



## Brussels Book Fair

From 26 to 29 March, the 55th Brussels Book Fair will take place at Tour & Taxis under the theme 'Challenging the Future'. With over 350 activities, 300 exhibitors and 1,200 authors, visitors are invited to discover and rediscover literature in all its forms, with a particular focus on new ways of reading. The "Place à l'Europe" area will host a series of literary events and debates on major European issues, featuring 55 speakers from across Europe. [Read more](#)



## Francophonie Day, Week and Month

On 20 March, the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) celebrated International Francophonie Day, dedicated to promoting the French language and Francophone cultural diversity. Finally, the Secretary General of the OIF, Louise Mushikiwabo, also presented the latest edition of the quadrennial report 'The French Language in the World 2026', which provides an up-to-date overview of the expansion and influence of French on a global scale. [Read more - Other link](#)

# ■ Agenda :

 24/03/2026

**General elections in Denmark**

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 26-29/03/2026

**Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)**  
(Yaoundé)

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 27/03/2026

**Eurogroup Meeting** (Video Conference)

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 30/03/2026

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



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