

The 2026 oil crisis: an opportunity for Europe's energy transition

Valérie Plagnol - 21 Apr 2026

The energy crisis of 2026 highlights Europe's continuing dependence on hydrocarbons, despite an electricity sector that is already carbon-free, and is also due to the share of natural gas in the energy mix of the 27 Member States rising from around 14% to over 20% – an increase of 45%. This crisis transforms high oil prices into a strategic lever to accelerate energy independence and the energy transition. The European Union, which has already embarked on a rapid decarbonisation of its electricity mix, will no longer be able to 'manage' its oil dependency through repeated emergency measures. Only a structural reduction in hydrocarbon consumption will enable it to regain sustainable energy sovereignty.



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■ **Front page! :**



Between Europe and the United States: the drift of continents

On 17 April, 51 countries met in Paris to coordinate their responses to the tensions surrounding the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Against a backdrop of potential major disruption to global energy trade, participants discussed measures designed to guarantee freedom of navigation and the stability of trade flows. Beyond this crisis, the widening divide between the two sides of the Atlantic appears increasingly pronounced, driven by growing political and strategic tensions. In this context, Europe is accelerating the development of its autonomy through concrete initiatives in the industrial, banking and digital sectors, confirming a process of strategic emancipation that is now well underway. [Read more](#)

■ Elections :



Rumen Radev wins the Bulgarian parliamentary elections

Former Bulgarian President Rumen Radev emerged as the clear winner of the 19 April parliamentary elections with 44.67% of the vote, securing 131 of the 240 seats in the National Assembly and enabling his coalition to secure an absolute majority. Whilst this result heralds a possible period of institutional stability, following eight elections in five years and a high-profile fight against corruption, it is raising some concerns, particularly regarding the diplomatic stance of the future Prime Minister, who could turn Bulgaria into a new pro-Russian element within the EU. [Read more](#)

■ Foundation :



75th anniversary of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

On 18 April 1951, in Paris, the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was signed by Belgium, France, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It was the first founding treaty of the European Communities. It established a common market for coal and steel, placing their production under a common authority. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Commission :



First action plan under the Pact for the Mediterranean

On 17 April, the European Commission presented the first action plan aimed at advancing the implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean, launched in October 2025. This series of 21 initiatives is structured around three strategic pillars: people, the economy and security. Among the flagship projects, the plan includes deepening academic collaboration, the Trans-Mediterranean Cooperation Initiative on Renewable Energy and Clean Technologies (T-MED), and a European platform for firefighting. [Read more - Other link - Other link](#)



Emergency funding to protect fisheries and aquaculture

On 16 April, the European Commission activated the crisis mechanism of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF). This provides Member States with the means to grant financial compensation to operators in the fisheries and aquaculture sector whose livelihoods have been disrupted by the consequences of the conflict in the Middle East. The EMFF crisis support is a temporary aid package of €760 million, which will subsequently be supplemented by additional economic measures in the form of state aid. [Read more](#)



Investment in 57 defence projects

On 15 April, the European Commission announced an investment of €1.07 billion in 57 projects under the European Defence Fund. This funding will support, in particular, four major European Union initiatives: defence against drones, the Eastern Flank, the European Air Shield and the European Space Shield. By targeting strategic sectors such as artificial intelligence, cyber defence, drones and anti-drone systems, the European Union aims to strengthen its position in the development of advanced defence technologies. [Read more](#)

■ **Trilogue :**



Agreement on measures to protect the steel industry

On 15 April, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on new measures designed to counter the negative trade effects of global overcapacity on the EU steel market. A revised system of tariff quotas is being introduced to regulate steel imports. A 50% tariff, instead of the current 25%, would apply to foreign steel, whilst the volume of imports exempt from surcharges would be reduced by 47%. This agreement replaces the EU's current safeguard measures on steel, which are due to expire on 30 June. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



International Conference on the Strait of Hormuz in Paris

On 17 April, under the chairmanship of French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, 51 international leaders gathered in Paris for a conference on the 'Initiative for Maritime Navigation in the Strait of Hormuz'. They called for the unconditional, unrestricted and immediate reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, confirmed their support for the vital work carried out by the International Maritime Organisation to ensure the safety of sailors and ships, and confirmed the establishment of an independent, defensive multinational mission to protect merchant ships, led by the United Kingdom and France, which will coordinate planning and contributing countries. [Read more](#)



Joint statement by European ministers on the situation in Lebanon

On 14 April, the foreign ministers (from Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) issued a joint statement on the situation in Lebanon. They call for the country to be included in regional de-escalation efforts and urge all parties to prioritise a lasting political solution. They condemn both Hezbollah's attacks against Israel and the Israeli strikes carried out in Lebanon on 8 April, which reportedly left more than 350 people dead and over 1,000 injured, as well as the attacks targeting the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. They also welcome the decision by the Lebanese authorities to ban Hezbollah's military activities. [Read more](#)



Third International Conference on Sudan

On 16 April, the European Union, alongside Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the African Union, co-organised the third International Conference on Sudan in Berlin. On this occasion, the European Commission announced €812.14 million in aid to address the crisis in Sudan, which is entering its fourth year. This aid aims to tackle food insecurity and support the maintenance of essential services in order to strengthen the country's resilience. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Annual Security Council session on cooperation with the European Union

On 13 April, High Representative Kaja Kallas took part in the annual session of the United Nations Security Council on cooperation with the European Union. She emphasised that, although the Member States of the European Union account for only 5% of the world's population, they provide 42% of official development assistance and finance a quarter of the United Nations' regular budget. In light of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East, she stressed the need to prioritise multilateralism and cooperation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



António Costa's visit to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar

From 14 to 15 April, the President of the European Council, António Costa, visited the Gulf region to meet with the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. During this visit, the most significant undertaken by the European Union in the region since the start of the war in Iran, he reaffirmed the need for a lasting ceasefire and called for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. He highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships between the European Union and the Gulf States, whilst reaffirming the Union's role as a reliable partner. [Read more](#)

■ ECB:



Towards a genuine single banking market

On 14 April, the governors of the European Central Bank issued a statement calling for greater integration of the banking sector within the eurozone in order to improve its competitiveness. They emphasise that fragmentation between countries and regulatory complexity are currently hampering the efficiency of banks. The leaders propose simplifying certain rules without compromising the soundness of the financial system. In particular, they stress the importance of maintaining resilient banks in order to sustainably support growth and competitiveness. [Read more](#)

■ Spain :



Plan to grant legal status to migrants

On 14 April, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced the launch of a regularisation plan that could affect nearly 500,000 people, particularly those from Latin America. He justified this measure by citing the ageing population and the need to support the economy, which is the fourth largest in the eurozone and one of the most dynamic in Europe. Applicants, who have until 30 June to submit their applications, must prove that they were in Spain before 1 January 2026, that they have resided there continuously for at least five months, that they have no criminal record and that they do not pose a threat to public order. If approved, they will be eligible for a residence and work permit, as well as access to social security and a health card in their region of residence, for an initial period of one year. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Spanish Prime Minister's visit to China

From 11 to 15 April, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez travelled to China on an official visit, confirming the strengthening of bilateral relations. Beijing and Madrid agreed to deepen their strategic partnership and establish a structured high-level dialogue. The visit also resulted in the announcement of around twenty cooperation agreements, mainly in the economic, industrial and technological fields. Pedro Sánchez also defended a pragmatic European approach towards China, calling for a balance between cooperation and the management of differences against a backdrop of growing trade tensions between the European Union and Beijing. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Norway :



Norway – Poland: A meeting to promote regional security

On 13 April, Polish Defence Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz and his Norwegian counterpart Tore Onshuus Sandvik met to strengthen their strategic partnership. As part of NATO, this cooperation aims to bolster security on the Alliance's eastern and northern flanks, against a backdrop of tensions linked to Russian policy and hybrid threats. Focused on stability in the Baltic Sea region, it is based on the intensification of joint military exercises and the sharing of expertise, particularly in the naval, space and intelligence sectors, as well as on the development of defence industry projects. [Read more](#)

■ UK :



The UK rejoins the Erasmus+ programme in 2027

On 15 April, representatives of the European Union and the UK signed an agreement formalising the UK's return to the European university exchange programme Erasmus+ from 2027. Six years after Brexit, this agreement is expected to benefit more than 100,000 people. It aims to strengthen cooperation between London and Brussels, particularly through the development of partnerships between higher education institutions. [Read more](#)

■ Ukraine :



Volodymyr Zelensky's European tour

On 14 April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky began a European tour, meeting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Berlin, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre in Oslo and, the following day, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome. These discussions led to the establishment of several strategic partnerships and the signing of agreements. This initiative forms part of a reconfiguration of the European security architecture, based on increased cooperation between industrial support and Ukrainian expertise. It is reflected in particular in joint projects in the field of air defence, including the production of drones and data sharing. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Swedish visit: towards greater support and cooperation

On 17 April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, accompanied by a delegation, to Lviv. On this occasion, he praised Stockholm's consistent support since 2022, noting that Sweden is one of Ukraine's main donors and has approved €4 billion in aid for the year 2026. Discussions focused in particular on strengthening Ukraine's combat aviation, with a view to cooperation on Gripen aircraft, as well as on expanding defence industrial partnerships between the two countries. The two sides also discussed the continuation of humanitarian and energy aid, with Sweden being the second-largest European contributor to Ukraine's Energy Support Fund, whilst Kyiv is already preparing for next winter. [Read more](#)



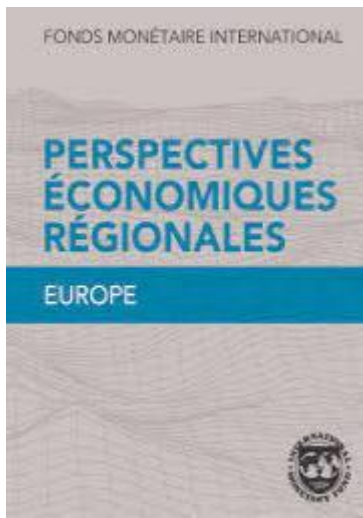
34th meeting of the Contact Group on Defence for Ukraine

On 15 April, the 34th meeting of the Contact Group on Defence for Ukraine was held in Berlin, co-chaired by Germany and the United Kingdom, and attended by the NATO Secretary General and representatives from over 50 partner countries. Against the backdrop of ongoing Russian offensives, the Allies reiterated their commitment to maintaining and strengthening their military support for Kyiv. Key announcements included the delivery of new Patriot defence systems, additional missiles as part of the Czech initiative, and the supply of over 120,000 drones by the United Kingdom over the course of the year. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



The Netherlands honours the Ukrainian people with the Four Freedoms Award

On 16 April, Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten presented Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with the International Four Freedoms Award, in recognition of the resilience of the Ukrainian people in the face of the Russian invasion. Established in 1982, this award honours individuals and organisations that embody the "Four Freedoms" defined by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. [Read more](#)



Revision of growth forecasts

On 14 April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its global growth forecasts for 2026, against a backdrop of heightened geopolitical tensions. Whatever the scenario considered, a slowdown in the global economy appears inevitable, driven by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the energy crisis linked to the conflict in Iran. In its scenario, the IMF anticipates growth limited to 3.1%, down from 3.4% in 2025. In Europe, it forecasts a fall in growth, which is expected to reach 1.1% in 2026 in the eurozone and 1.3% in the European Union. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report by the European Defence Agency

On 15 April, the European Defence Agency (EDA) published its report for 2025, in which it highlights the need to strengthen Europe's strategic sovereignty in the face of the threat posed by Russia. It states that the European Union's defence spending reached €343 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach €381 billion in 2025, representing approximately 2.1% of GDP. Looking ahead to 2030, it recommends making joint procurement the norm, particularly for ammunition, accelerating innovation through the EU Defence Innovation Hub, and strengthening interoperability with NATO and Ukraine in order to address European capability gaps. [Read more](#)



Annual Report of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture

On 15 April, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published its report for 2025. Whilst noting progress made in certain areas in recent years, the report highlights worrying signs regarding the treatment and conditions of detention of persons deprived of their liberty in Europe. In particular, the CPT warns of a resurgence of mistreatment in some countries, impunity for police violence and prison overcrowding. It has therefore called on governments to improve prison conditions and to strengthen measures to prevent police mistreatment. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :

August Macke and Max Ernst in Bonn

Until 23 August, the August Macke Museum in Bonn is hosting an exhibition devoted to the artistic beginnings of Max Ernst, a leading figure of the Dadaist and Surrealist movements, whilst exploring his close ties with August Macke. The exhibition features around 80 works, including paintings, drawings, sketches, sculptures, photographs and period documents. It highlights two women, Luise Straus and Elisabeth Gerhardt, whose roles were pivotal in the artists' careers and work. [Read more](#)

William Blake and the Romantic Imagination in Dublin

Until 19 July, the National Gallery in Dublin is hosting an exhibition dedicated to William Blake, a leading figure of British Romanticism, entitled 'William Blake: The Age of Romantic Fantasy'. It brings together over a hundred works — paintings, drawings and engravings — and highlights his world, marked by the imagination and the supernatural. The exhibition also places his work within the context of the artistic transformations of the late-18th century. [Read more](#)

Lee Miller in Paris

Until 2 August, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, in collaboration with Tate Britain and the Art Institute of Chicago, is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the photographer and war correspondent Lee Miller. A leading figure of the avant-garde, she was a model, a surrealist artist, a fashion photographer and a war correspondent for the US Army. Long reduced to the role of muse, she is now recognised as one of the great photographers of the 20th century. The exhibition traces her career, from New York to the Second World War in Europe, and highlights a body of work characterised by experimentation, visual audacity and political commitment. [Read more](#)



Seville Feria

From 21 to 26 April, the city of Seville is opening its doors to music, dance, gastronomy and celebration for the 2026 edition of its feria, originally established in 1847 as a livestock fair. It begins at midnight on 20 April with the lighting of thousands of coloured bulbs at the fairground and the main gate, and ends at midnight on 26 April with a grand fireworks display on the banks of the River Guadalquivir. [Read more](#)



Brussels Art Fair

From 23 to 26 April, Art Brussels brings together nearly 30,000 professionals, collectors and art lovers, confirming its status as one of Europe's leading contemporary art fairs. This 42nd edition brings together 139 galleries from 26 countries and showcases nearly 500 artists. It is organised into five distinct sections: Prime, Solo, '68 Forward, Discovery, and the new Horizons section. [Read more](#)



Plovdiv to the beat of 6Fest

From 20 to 26 April, the city of Plovdiv in Bulgaria is hosting a new edition of 6Fest, a major event dedicated to street arts in Eastern Europe. Launched in 2019 as part of the "Plovdiv: European Capital of Culture" programme, and bringing together sixteen artistic projects from eleven countries and three continents, this festival takes over the urban space with a multidisciplinary programme combining contemporary circus, theatre, dance and visual performances. [Read more](#)



GoEast Film Festival in Wiesbaden

From 21 to 27 April, the Wiesbaden International Film Festival, known as GoEast, offers visitors the chance to discover the best films from Central and Eastern Europe. Fourteen feature-length fiction films and documentaries allow audiences to explore the major and minor conflicts of our time. Visitors can chat with the directors during post-screening discussions. [Read more](#)


■ Agenda :

20-24 April

Spring Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg)

 21 April

"General Affairs" Council (Luxembourg)

 23-24 April


Informal meeting of the heads of State and Government (Lefkosia)

 27 April

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Luxembourg)

 27-30 April

Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)



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A question, a suggestion ?

Contact us!

info@robert-schuman.eu

Editors-in-chief :

Juliette Bachschmidt

Publishing Director :

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