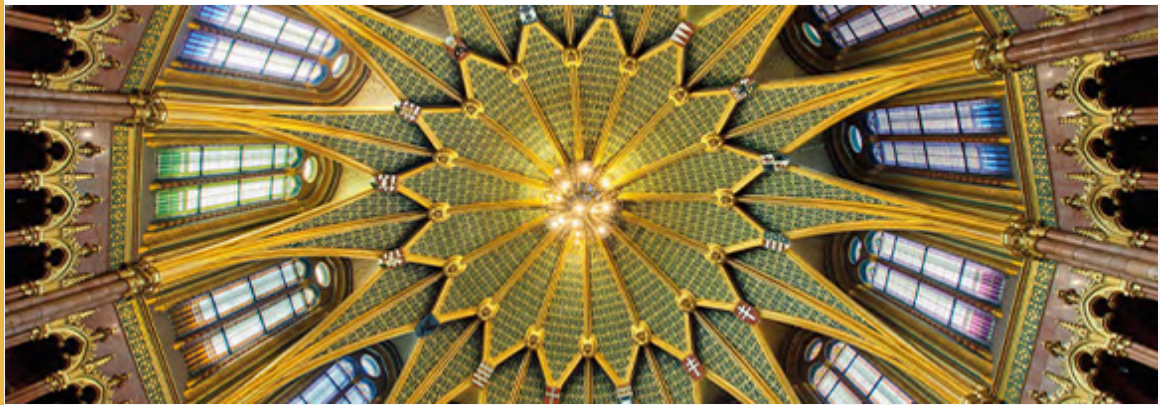


## Letter n°1157 of Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026

### A major turning point

Jean-Dominique Giuliani - 26 May 2026

Faced with a hostile geopolitical climate marked by Russian aggression and US disengagement, Europe is at a historic turning point that calls for radical change. To preserve its democratic model and its sovereignty, the European Union must shed its bureaucratic rigidity in favour of greater efficiency, enhanced strategic autonomy and a renewed sense of pride.



[Elections](#) | [Foundation](#) | [Commission](#) | [Parliament](#) | [Council](#) | [Trilogues](#) |

[Diplomacy](#) | [France](#) | [Hungary](#) | [Malta](#) | [Slovenia](#) | [Moldova](#) |

[Ukraine](#) | [Vatican](#) | [Prizes](#) | [NATO](#) | [Studies/Reports](#) | [Culture](#) |

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### ■ Elections :



## Results of the general election in Cyprus

The centre-right Democratic Rally (DISY) came out ahead in the general election in Cyprus on 24 May, with 27.1% of the vote and 17 seats, followed by the left-wing Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), with 23.9% and 15 seats. The National Popular Front (ELAM), a far-right party, came third with 10.9% and 8 seats, closely followed by the centre-left Democratic Party (DIKO), which also secured 10% and 8 seats. Two new parties, Citizens for Europe (ALMA) and Direct Democracy (ADK), entered Parliament with 5.8% and 5.4% respectively, winning four seats each. All other parties failed to clear the 3.5% threshold required for representation in Parliament. Six political parties will therefore be represented in the House of Representatives (compared to seven in the previous legislature), leading to a new political landscape. Voter turnout stood at 66.91%. [Read more](#)

## ■ Foundation :



### NextGenEU: Green light for Lithuania and payment for Ireland

On 18 May, the European Commission gave a positive assessment of Lithuania's sixth payment request, for an amount of €178 million, and made a fourth payment, amounting to €249 million, to Ireland. With regard to Lithuania, this sixth payment request will bring the total funds disbursed to Lithuania to €2.8 billion, representing 73.7% of its total allocation of €3.85 billion. With this payment, Ireland has now received 80% of its total allocation of €1.15 billion. The Robert Schuman Foundation provides a summary of the various national recovery plans on its website, setting out the amounts, timetables and priorities. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Commission :



### Growth Plan for the Balkans

On 20 May, the European Commission allocated €49 million to Albania, €44.2 million to Montenegro and €65.7 million to North Macedonia under the Reform and Growth Facility. This follows the Commission's positive assessment of the reform measures implemented in the areas of business competitiveness and innovation, education and digitalisation. Under this financial instrument, which has a total budget of €6 billion as part of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia have received €212.8 million, €89.3 million and €142.1 million respectively. [Read more](#)



## Fertiliser Action Plan

On 19 May, the European Commission presented an action plan aimed at securing Europe's supply of fertilisers, supporting farmers in the face of rising costs, and reducing Europe's dependence on imports. Twenty-five immediate and longer-term support measures were set out. The Commission also intends to diversify its supply sources by encouraging the development of bio-based and low-carbon fertilisers, strengthening its investment partnerships with third countries, and establishing a European fertiliser value chain partnership. [Read more](#)

## ■ Parliament :



## Screening of foreign investments in the EU

On 19 May, MEPs approved new rules on the mandatory screening of foreign investments in sensitive sectors such as defence, semiconductors, financial services and critical raw materials. Essential for European economic security, this new regulation is expected to strengthen cooperation between national screening authorities and lead to greater harmonisation of procedures. An initial screening regulation came into force in October 2020, and the Commission had proposed a review in 2024. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Protecting the European steel market

On 19 May, MEPs adopted new measures to protect the European steel industry from the negative effects of the global steel surplus. These measures provide for a reduction in import quotas alongside an increase in customs duties, in full compliance with World Trade Organisation rules. They introduce a so-called 'melting and casting' rule to improve the traceability of steel and limit circumvention via third countries. Recognising that the steel industry is strategic for European defence capabilities, MEPs are thus replacing the measures due to expire on 30 June 2026 to ensure greater resilience in the face of global steel overcapacity. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



## Concerns regarding the rule of law in Slovakia

On 20 May, MEPs voted in favour of a resolution expressing their concern at the deterioration of the rule of law in Slovakia. They want the Commission to determine whether there is a clear risk of a serious breach of the Union's values. To protect these values, they are calling for the activation of the EU's rule of law conditionality mechanism. This is the second resolution voted on by MEPs regarding the rule of law in Slovakia in less than a month. [Read more - Other link](#)



## Improvements to support and protection measures for victims

On 21 May, MEPs approved new rules strengthening legal support and protection measures for victims in criminal proceedings. They adopted the establishment of a European helpline for victims and the use of digital tools to report criminal offences online. To strengthen victims' rights during criminal proceedings, a new right to privacy and the non-disclosure of a victim's details to the offender have been approved. Finally, access to healthcare for victims of sexual violence is guaranteed. [Read more - Other link](#)

## ■ Council :



## Meeting of trade ministers

On 22 May, European trade ministers exchanged views on the impact of the situation in the Middle East on the European economy and on the strategic responses required, with a focus on diversifying supply sources. They extended sanctions against Iran, particularly against entities and individuals involved in the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. They suspended customs duties on certain fertilisers and adopted stricter rules on trade preferences for certain developing countries. [Read more](#)



## Meeting of development ministers

On 18 May, European ministers responsible for 'Development' adopted conclusions on fragility, calling for a more robust, better-coordinated and long-term approach. The ministers also exchanged views on the Global Gateway strategy, emphasising that it allows the Union to build mutually beneficial partnerships and promote its foreign policy priorities. Finally, the ministers decided to extend the restrictive measures targeting individuals and entities linked to the former Syrian regime by one year, whilst removing seven entities from the list. [Read more](#)



## Eurogroup Meeting

On 22 May, Eurogroup ministers met to discuss the latest macroeconomic developments in the euro area, based on the European Commission's spring 2026 economic forecast. They also discussed the various economic challenges and policy options relating to affordable housing. Finally, they reviewed progress on the digital euro. [Read more](#)

## ■ Trilogues :



## Trade agreement with the United States

On 20 May, negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the implementation of the tariff aspects of the Turnberry Agreement, signed in July 2025 with the United States. The agreement provides for safeguards and flexibility that allow the European Union to protect its economic interests. Thus, the Union's preferences will expire at the end of 2029, unless they are renewed. The co-legislators have agreed to introduce a safeguard mechanism, allowing the Commission to suspend the application of the regulation if the United States fails to honour its commitments. With regard to tariffs on steel and aluminium products, the Commission will be able to suspend the preferences if the United States continues to impose tariffs of more than 15% on these products. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Diplomacy :



## G7 Finance Ministers' Meeting

On 18 and 19 May, G7 finance ministers and central bank governors, meeting in Paris, reiterated their support for Ukraine and considered imposing further pressure on Russia. They emphasised the need for diversified and resilient supply chains for critical minerals and welcomed the OECD/G20 Framework's proposed global minimum tax rate. Furthermore, they renewed their commitment to combating financial crime, addressing the risks associated with extreme weather events and ensuring the stability of the financial sector. Finally, they expressed their commitment to multilateral cooperation in addressing the risks affecting the global economy. [Read more](#)



## Joint statement on the situation in the West Bank

On 22 May, the leaders of the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, Canada, Australia and New Zealand issued a joint statement on the situation in the West Bank. They reiterate that, under international law, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, a territory of Palestine occupied since 1967, are illegal. They therefore call on the Israeli government to halt the expansion of settlements and its administrative powers, and to ensure that settlers who commit acts of violence are held to account. Finally, they reiterate their unwavering commitment to a negotiated two-state solution, comprising Israel and Palestine. [Read more](#)



## Narendra Modi's tour of Europe

From 15 to 20 May, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on a six-day tour of Europe, which took him to the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway, where he took part in the 3rd India-Nordic Forum. He concluded his tour in Italy with talks with Giorgia Meloni, which resulted in a joint statement. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



## The European Union and Mexico strengthen their comprehensive partnership

On 22 May, leaders from the European Union and Mexico met in Mexico City for their eighth summit. The meeting was marked by the signing of the new comprehensive agreement between the European Union and Mexico, designed to deepen trade and strategic cooperation between the two partners. Discussions also focused on several shared priorities, including energy security, the fight against organised crime, climate transition, innovation, and major international geopolitical issues against a backdrop of significant global tensions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ France :



## New funding for quantum computing and semiconductors

On 22 May, French President Emmanuel Macron announced an additional €1.55 billion in public investment for the development of the quantum computing, electronics and semiconductor sectors, during a visit to the Lucy photonic quantum computer at the French Atomic Energy Commission. This funding forms part of the France 2030 public investment programme for innovation, launched in 2021 with a budget of €54 billion, of which €11 billion remains to be deployed. [Read more](#)

## ■ Hungary :



## The new government takes office and makes its first visits

On 13 May, the new government led by Peter Magyar was sworn in. It comprises 17 ministers, including four women. On 19 and 20 May, Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar travelled to Poland for his first overseas visit. After stopping in Krakow, he travelled to Warsaw where he met his Polish counterpart, Donald Tusk, as well as the President, Karol Nawrocki. On 21 May, Peter Magyar travelled to Austria, where he met with Chancellor Christian Stocker. The two heads of government emphasised the historically close ties between their countries. They also spoke in favour of strengthening regional cooperation and the enlargement of the Union to include the Western Balkans. [Read more](#)

## ■ Malta :



## The Labour Party is heading for a fourth consecutive term

The latest polls ahead of the general election on 30 May in Malta continue to show a lead for the Labour Party (PL) of outgoing Prime Minister Robert Abela, with 53.3% of voting intentions compared to 42.8% for the Nationalist Party (PN). The other parties are projected to account for 3.9% of the vote. This trend, based on surveys by the leading Maltese polling organisations, confirms the prospect of a fourth consecutive term for the Labour Party in a political climate dominated by issues of economic stability, the cost of living and regional security. [Read more](#)

## ■ Slovenia :



## Janez Janša appointed Prime Minister with a mandate to form a government

On 22 May, the Slovenian Parliament approved, by 51 votes out of 90, the appointment of Janez Janša, leader of the Democratic Party (SDS), as Prime Minister, paving the way for a new government committed to introducing tax cuts, business-friendly reforms and changes to pension funding. This would mark Janez Janša's fourth term as head of government (2004–2008, 2012–2013, 2020–2022) [Read more](#)

## ■ Moldova :



## Moldova strengthens its ties with Europe

On 20 May, Moldovan President Maia Sandu travelled to the Netherlands for a visit that aimed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and support Moldova's accession process to the European Union. At the same time, Moldovan Prime Minister Alexandru Munteanu reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on a new three-year cooperation programme. This is intended to support the country's macroeconomic stability, underpin structural reforms and strengthen the resilience of the Moldovan economy in a regional context marked by the consequences of the war in Ukraine and energy tensions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Ukraine :



## €90 billion loan to Ukraine: signature of the memorandum of understanding

On 21 May, the European Commissioner for the Economy, Valdis Dombrovskis, signed a memorandum of understanding with Ukraine regarding the forthcoming €90 billion macro-financial assistance (MFA) package. He also announced that the European Union planned to disburse an initial €3.2 billion in budgetary aid to Ukraine in mid-June. [Read more](#)

## ■ Vatican :



### Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical

On 25 May, Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical—a solemn letter from the Pope addressed to the entire Catholic Church—was made public. Entitled "Magnifica Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), it is the first major doctrinal text of his pontificate. Running to over a hundred pages, this text sets out a Catholic doctrine on artificial intelligence, combining a critique of technological capitalism, geopolitical reflections on war and anthropological questions regarding humanity's place in an automated world. In particular, the Pope asserts that artificial intelligence must be disarmed and freed from the logic that turns it into an instrument of domination, exclusion or death. [Read more](#)

## ■ Prizes :



### First presentation of the European Order of Merit

On 19 May, the first presentation ceremony for the European Order of Merit was held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. This new distinction, created in 2025 to mark the 75th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, was established to honour individuals who have made a significant contribution to European integration and the defence of the Union's values. The first 20 recipients include former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, former Polish President Lech Wałęsa, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Moldovan President Maia Sandu, as well as figures from the worlds of politics, culture, academia and humanitarian work. [Read more](#)

## ■ NATO :

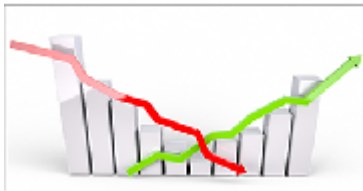


## NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting

On 21 and 22 May, the foreign ministers of NATO member countries met in Sweden. Among other things, they discussed increased defence spending, boosting defence industrial production, continued support for Ukraine, ways to strengthen NATO and to ensure fairness among its members, as well as the situation in the Middle East. Their discussions also helped lay the groundwork for the Organisation's next summit, to be held in Ankara in July.

[Read more](#)

## ■ Studies/Reports :



### Spring Economic Forecast

On 21 May, the European Commission published its Spring 2026 Economic Forecast, predicting a slowdown in economic activity within the eurozone due to the conflict in the Middle East. Growth is set to slow, with a rate not expected to exceed 0.9% in 2026, whilst inflation is expected to rise, peaking at 3%. The energy crisis is placing a further strain on household bills and public finances. The risk of shortages could worsen and compound the uncertainties surrounding trade relations between the European Union and the United States, as well as those relating to artificial intelligence. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at 6% of the labour force in the European Union. [Read more - Other link](#)



### Report on the State of the Schengen Area

On 18 May, the European Commission published its fifth report on the state of the Schengen Area. The 2026 edition notes that the Schengen Area continues to demonstrate resilience and highlights several significant achievements. The number of illegal border crossings fell by 26%, evidence of improved protection of external borders, whilst the return rate reached its highest level in the last ten years, at 28%. The full launch of the Entry/Exit System (EES) in April enabled greater digitalisation of the Schengen Area. The Union's first visa strategy was also adopted in January. [Read more - Other link](#)



## Publication on European Demography

On 21 May, the 2026 edition of the publication on European Demography was released by Eurostat. Bringing together a range of data on the 451 million citizens of the European Union, this publication allows readers to explore trends in European demographics, as well as their diversity and structure, through a series of interactive visualisations. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

## ■ Culture :



### Baselitz in Venice

Until 6 May, the Giorgio Cini Foundation is presenting Georg Baselitz's latest works in an exhibition paying tribute to the artist, who passed away last month. On display is a series of self-portraits and monumental portraits of his wife Elke, created during the last two years of his life. [Read more](#)



### 'Cassirer and Impressionism' in Berlin

Until 27 September, the former National Gallery in Berlin is paying tribute to Paul Cassirer (1871–1926), a leading art dealer of his time. Thanks to the rich, ongoing exhibition programme at his gallery, he played a decisive role in promoting French Impressionism in Germany, notably showcasing artists such as Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir and Vincent van Gogh. This exhibition presents over 100 works of Impressionism and classical modernism, bearing witness to Paul Cassirer's commitment to the arts. [Read more](#)



### Ewa Juszkiewicz in Madrid

Until 6 September, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid is hosting an exhibition devoted to Polish artist Ewa Juszkiewicz, bringing together some twenty works centred on her critical reinterpretation of the classical European female portrait. Through a meticulous painting technique, the artist subverts the conventions of the 18th and 19th centuries by concealing the faces of her figures with compositions of fabrics, plant motifs or organic materials, thereby questioning the criteria for representing beauty and femininity. [Read more](#)



## Contemporary Art in Porto

Until 1 November, the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the contemporary art collection of the German collector Christian Duerckheim. Acquired over four decades and regarded as one of the most significant private collections in Europe, it comprises 90 works by 34 artists from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. [Read more](#)



## Krakow Film Festival

From 31 May to 7 June, Krakow will host the 66th edition of its Film Festival, one of Europe's oldest events dedicated to documentaries, short films and animated films. Nearly 200 international films will be screened before an international jury. The Marcel Łoziński Award will recognise creative exploration in documentary filmmaking, in tribute to the director whose influence continues to shape new generations of filmmakers around the world. [Read more](#)



## The 80th Nuits de Fourvière

From 28 May to 25 July, the Nuits de Fourvière, a cultural festival bringing together theatre, music, dance, film and circus arts, returns to Lyon. For its 80th anniversary, there are over 60 performances to discover at the Roman theatres of Fourvière and other iconic venues across the city. [Read more](#)



## 'Flood Festival' in Cyprus

From 30 May to 1 June, Cyprus celebrates the Kataklysmos, or 'Flood Festival', a traditional festival unique in the world, held in the island's main coastal towns. Combining Greek mythology, Orthodox traditions and Cypriot folk culture, this event features concerts, folk dances and recitals of improvised poetry, and places particular emphasis on Cypriot oral traditions, notably the 'Chatistes', sung poetic contests that form a central part of the local cultural heritage. [Read more](#)

## ■ Agenda :

 26/05/2026

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

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 27/05/26

**Council of the European Economic Area**

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 28-29 May 2026

**Competitiveness Council** (Brussels)

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 30/05/26

**General Elections** (Malta)



### The Letter n°1157

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