

Letter n°1161 of Tuesday 23rd June 2026

Europeans caught between trust and the need for protection: the paradox of a Union that is "necessary but distant"

[Nando Pagnoncelli - 23 Jun 2026](#)

Whilst the G7 leaders, meeting in Evian from 15 to 17 June, placed security, economic stability and geopolitical challenges at the heart of international discussions, Europeans, too, express strong expectations for protection and collective action in the face of contemporary crises. While they have greater confidence in the European Union, they still feel it is too detached from their concerns and are calling for more joint action on defence, energy, health and migration. This expectation reflects a wish to respond collectively to challenges that individual states struggle to manage on their own. To strengthen public support, the European Union must better showcase its achievements and engage more closely with its citizens.



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■ **Foundation :**



NextGenEU: Green light for Bulgaria

On 19 June, the European Commission gave the green light to Bulgaria's fourth payment request. However, the Commission noted that a milestone relating to water supply and sanitation had not been fully met, nor had a target linked to the cultural sector. Bulgaria will therefore receive a partial payment, out of the €1.1 billion requested, for the milestones and targets that have been met, and has been granted an extension to fulfil the remaining commitments. Bulgaria's total allocation under the Recovery and Resilience Plan amounts to €6.17 billion. The Foundation provides a summary of the various national recovery plans on its website, setting out the amounts, timetables and priorities. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ European Council :



Conclusions of the European Council

On 18 and 19 June, during the European Council, the 27 Heads of State or Government held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. They called for the swift adoption of the 21st package of sanctions against Russia. Furthermore, they called for the strengthening of Europe's defence industrial and technological base, whilst making full use of the Union's instruments. On 19 June, they discussed competitiveness and global economic challenges, including the trade imbalance with China and progress made on the 'One Europe, One Market' agenda. They held discussions on the multiannual financial framework with the aim of reaching an agreement by the end of 2026. Finally, they addressed the situation in the Middle East. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Commission :



Action Plan for the Channel Migration Route

On 16 June, the European Commission presented an action plan setting out a European response to the challenges posed by irregular migration along the Channel. Several measures, such as dismantling migrant smuggling networks and strengthening the protection of external borders, have been outlined. The plan is structured around three main priority areas: strengthening migration diplomacy along the route, disrupting people-smuggling networks and their criminal infrastructure, and strengthening border management. It has been developed in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, a key partner given the shared nature of the challenge. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Diplomacy :



G7 Summit in Évian

From 15 to 17 June, the leaders of the G7 member countries and several guest countries (Ukraine, Brazil, South Korea, Egypt, India and Kenya) met in Évian. At the end of the summit, they adopted nine declarations, including one on Ukraine – in which they agreed to increase their military support and step up pressure on Russia's war efforts – and two on the Middle East and Lebanon, calling for an immediate ceasefire to support the Lebanese authorities. They adopted declarations on macroeconomic imbalances, digital technology and AI, critical minerals, cancer, Ebola, the fight against drug trafficking, international partnerships and the fight against migrant smuggling. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Meeting of Foreign Ministers

On 15 June, the Foreign Ministers approved the opening of negotiations on the 'fundamentals' chapter group with Ukraine and Moldova, as well as the provisional closure of two further chapters for Montenegro, bringing the total to 16 out of 33. They adopted measures against 34 Russian individuals and 47 entities, targeting the military-industrial complex and the energy sector. They discussed the situation in the Middle East, highlighting in particular the dire humanitarian situation in Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. Furthermore, the agreement allowing Canada to participate in the SAFE instrument on public procurement was concluded, making it the first non-European country to do so. [Read more](#)



11th EU-Egypt Association Council

On 15 June, at the 11th EU-Egypt Association Council, officials from both sides welcomed the progress made under their partnership, launched in March 2024, and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, energy, migration and security. Discussions also focused on key regional issues, notably the conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and Libya, as well as security in the Red Sea. On this occasion, Brussels and Cairo confirmed their commitment to deepening a partnership that is essential to the stability, prosperity and security of the Mediterranean region. [Read more](#)



Joint statements on de-escalation and the Iranian nuclear programme

On 17 June, US President Donald Trump and Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at establishing a framework for de-escalation following several weeks of tension in the Middle East. This agreement provides for the launch of a round of negotiations designed to address issues relating to Iran's nuclear programme, the gradual lifting of certain sanctions and regional security. Welcomed by numerous international partners, including the leaders of the E4 (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom), the negotiations began in Switzerland on 22 June and everything will depend on their outcome. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Health Ministers

On 16 June, the European health ministers adopted the Council's position on the directive relating to the European legislative act on biotechnology, with a view to negotiations with the European Parliament. The aim of this directive is to streamline the rules governing marketing authorisation for certain genetically modified micro-organisms (GMMs) and to update the rules on the repackaging of organs to take account of recent scientific advances. The Cypriot Presidency then presented a progress report on the work concerning the proposed regulation aimed at simplifying the rules on medical devices and in vitro diagnostic devices. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Ministers responsible for European Affairs

On 16 June, the Ministers for European Affairs discussed the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034 and developments in the Middle East. Regarding the MFF, they held a policy debate focusing on a quantified negotiating framework. They defined partial negotiating mandates for three of its main pillars, namely the national and regional partnership plans, the European Competitiveness Fund and the 'Global Europe' instrument. The ministers were also briefed on developments regarding the rule of law in Hungary. Finally, they adopted the programme for the period from 1 July 2026 to 31 December, drawn up by the trio of presidencies (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece). [Read more](#)



5th meeting with CARIFORUM

On 19 June, at the 5th meeting of the Joint Council between the European Union and the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, leaders adopted a communiqué reaffirming their commitment to the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement and reporting on progress made in various areas such as trade and development cooperation. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Declaration: Europe for Culture, Culture for Europe

On 18 June, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, and the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Níkos Christodoulides, signed a joint declaration entitled "Europe for Culture, Culture for Europe". The aim of this declaration is to ensure a stronger political commitment to culture and to reaffirm the European Union's role in safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity. Through the phrase "culture for Europe", the declaration recognises the role of culture as a unifying force, a creator of a common European identity and a key tool for addressing contemporary challenges. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Parliament :



Changes to European return policy

On 17 June, MEPs approved the new European system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally. Under the new legislation, nationals subject to a return decision will be required to cooperate with the authorities. If they pose a flight risk or a threat to security, they may be placed in detention. Finally, it will be possible to transfer migrants subject to a return decision to 'return centres' located in third countries that have concluded agreements with Member States. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



New rules for car recycling

On 18 June, MEPs approved new rules to ensure that all new vehicles are designed to maximise recycling and the use of recycled materials. Binding targets have been introduced: each vehicle must contain at least 15 per cent recycled plastic within six years and 25 per cent within ten years. As regards the management of end-of-life vehicles, manufacturers will have to bear the costs of collecting and processing them. Finally, the export of vehicles declared unroadworthy will no longer be permitted. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Tariffs under the trade agreement with the United States

On 16 June, MEPs approved two regulations implementing the tariff provisions of the agreement between the European Union and the United States. MEPs secured the inclusion of safeguards: a sunset clause setting an expiry date of 31 December 2029; the suspension of tariff preferences should the US continue to apply tariffs exceeding 15 per cent on steel and aluminium products; and a safeguard clause should the tariff preferences lead to a rise in imports that is detrimental to European industry. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Adoption of the reform on new genomic techniques

On 17 June, MEPs adopted the reform of the rules on new genomic techniques (NGTs) in agriculture. Unlike GMOs, NGTs allow the genome of a plant to be modified without introducing foreign DNA. They may be patented. However, their use is not permitted in organic production. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Trilogues :



Agreement on strengthening air passengers' rights

On 15 June, negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement updating the European rules on air passengers' rights and the liability of airlines. After 13 years of negotiations, this agreement simplifies the complaints procedure, entitles passengers to compensation following a delay of three hours or more on arrival or a cancellation less than 14 days before departure, and clarifies passengers' right to assistance in the event of disruption. Several new rights have also been introduced, such as the inclusion of hand luggage in the advertised fare and specific rights for passengers with special needs. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Finland :



Parliament repeals the total ban on nuclear weapons

On 17 June, by 125 votes to 61, Finnish MPs voted to repeal the total ban on nuclear weapons, which dated back to the Cold War. Finland, which does not possess nuclear weapons, will now be able to host nuclear weapons belonging to its NATO allies on its territory; the country joined NATO in 2023. For the Finnish government, this reform strengthens the Atlantic alliance in the face of Russia, with which the country shares a 1,340-kilometre border. [Read more](#)

■ France :



€15.1 billion European loan for defence

On 17 June, the Minister for the Armed Forces, Catherine Vautrin, and the Minister for the Economy and Finance, Roland Lescure, signed an agreement with the European Commissioners for Defence, Andrius Kubilius, and for the Budget, Piotr Serafin, for a loan of €15.1 billion under the European SAFE instrument. Adopted on 27 May 2025, this instrument enables Member States to benefit from loans granted by the Commission. These funds aim to help Member States carry out joint procurement in priority capability areas, thereby promoting the development of the European defence industrial and technological base, based on robust European preference criteria. [Read more](#)

■ Poland :



New German-Polish defence agreement

On 17 June, the German and Polish defence ministers, Boris Pistorius and Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, signed a new defence cooperation agreement in Warsaw, which provides for enhanced military cooperation in the fields of defence industry, joint exercises and countering hybrid threats. Particular attention is being paid to the Baltic region, against a backdrop of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the deterioration of the European security environment. At the same time, the foreign ministers, Radosław Sikorski and Johann Wadephul, were meeting in Berlin to mark the 35th anniversary of the Treaty on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the two countries. [Read more](#)

■ UK :



Keir Starmer announces his resignation

On 22 June, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced his resignation from the steps of 10 Downing Street, bowing to mounting pressure from Labour MPs following weeks of political instability. Having come to power in July 2024 following a landslide victory for Labour, he was unable to withstand a series of setbacks: a heavy defeat in the May 2026 local elections, which saw the anti-immigration Reform UK party make significant gains, as well as the rise of Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, who won, on 19 June, the Makerfield by-election with 54.8 per cent of the vote. As the favourite to succeed him, Andy Burnham has been elected to Westminster. With this resignation, the United Kingdom will have had seven Prime Ministers in ten years. [Read more](#)



New sanctions against Russia

On 17 June, the UK Treasury imposed a fine of over £1 million on the technology firm Sabre Global Technologies Limited (SGTL) for continuing, for seven months, to provide Ural Airlines – a Russian airline subject to UK sanctions since 2022 – with access to its booking system. Once its payments were blocked, SGTL attempted to route them through a bank account located outside the UK in order to circumvent the ban. This is the heaviest financial sanction imposed by the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation since the invasion of Ukraine. The British government has reiterated the UK's "unwavering" support for Kyiv, noting that more than 3,300 individuals, companies and vessels are now subject to this sanctions regime. [Read more](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Declaration by the Ministers of Justice

On 16 June, the Ministers of Justice of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe adopted measures designed to strengthen the effectiveness of judicial action in tackling new forms of financial crime. The declaration emphasises the need to strengthen the competent authorities and to adopt national strategies involving both public and private sector actors, who are subject to anti-money laundering obligations. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to depriving criminals of their proceeds, including crypto-assets, with the confiscation of the proceeds of crime being identified as one of the most effective tools in this regard. Finally, they called for the implementation of the Council of Europe's criminal law conventions and their protocols. [Read more](#)



Opinions of the Venice Commission

At its 147th plenary session (12–13 June), the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe adopted seven opinions concerning five countries (Albania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland and Serbia) and endorsed three urgent opinions concerning three countries (Iceland, Lithuania and Serbia). In particular, it endorsed an urgent opinion on the compatibility of Icelandic legislation with international standards, in the context of negotiations for accession to the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ NATO :



Defence Ministers' Meeting

On 18 June, the defence ministers of NATO member states met in Brussels ahead of the Alliance's summit, scheduled for 7 and 8 July in Ankara. On this occasion, the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, addressed the participants of the 35th Contact Group on Defence for Ukraine (Ramstein format), calling for increased military support for Kyiv. In particular, he called for the PURL programme to be expanded, outlined a new German-Ukrainian partnership in the field of ballistic missile defence, and welcomed the supply of 150,000 drones as well as 350 British air defence missiles and radars, whilst calling for economic pressure on Russia to be maintained. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Annual Report on the Digital Decade

On 17 June, the Commission published its annual report on the state of the Digital Decade, taking stock of the progress made by each Member State towards the digital targets set for 2030. Whilst the EU is making progress in the digitalisation of public services, the roll-out of digital infrastructure and the adoption of certain advanced technologies, the Commission highlights the persistence of several structural challenges, particularly in relation to digital skills, coverage by very high-capacity networks and the integration of digital technologies by businesses. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



The European Commission's anti-fraud strategy

On 18 June, the European Court of Auditors published a report on the European Commission's anti-fraud strategy. The auditors consider that, despite the progress made in recent years, the EU system still has a number of shortcomings in terms of preventing, detecting and following up on fraud, which is detrimental to the EU budget. The Court has made several recommendations to strengthen the protection of the EU's financial interests and to improve the effectiveness of its anti-fraud policy. [Read more](#)



Report on the state of European bathing waters

On 16 June, the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) published a report stating that the quality of bathing waters in Europe remains high: 85 per cent of the approximately 22,200 sites monitored are classified as 'excellent' and 96 per cent meet at least the minimum standards set by the European Bathing Water Directive. Coastal waters continue to be rated higher than inland waters (88 per cent versus 78 per cent of excellent quality). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Opening of the National Design Gallery in Saint-Étienne

Until 7 March 2027, Saint-Étienne is showcasing its new National Design Gallery – France's first institution dedicated to public design collections – with the inaugural exhibition "Design en main. From Language to Object". This new cultural venue offers nearly 1,000 m² of exhibition, educational and experimental spaces within the Manufacture building. Bringing together nearly 400 objects from around ten French heritage institutions, this exhibition illustrates the ambition to make design a central part of the nation's cultural heritage. [Read more](#)



Anney International Animation Film Festival

Until 27 June, the Anney International Animation Film Festival is celebrating the best in animated films from around the world. The 51st edition coincides with the opening of the new Cité internationale du cinéma d'animation, a permanent venue entirely dedicated to the festival. Eleven feature-length films are competing in the official competition. Throughout the week, the city will be buzzing with open-air screenings, book signings, talks and exhibitions. [Read more](#)



Ovid in Rome

Until 20 September, the Galleria Borghese is hosting an exhibition celebrating the poet Ovid and the influence of his *Metamorphoses* on Western art. By exploring the theme of transformation as a universal principle and a key to interpreting the cosmos, matter and the human condition, this exhibition showcases works by great masters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, as well as artists from more recent eras, whilst highlighting the visual and conceptual power of Ovid's narratives. [Read more](#)



300 years of Swedish porcelain

Until 13 September, Läckö Castle in Sweden is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Sweden's oldest porcelain manufacturer: Rörstrand. Organised in partnership with the National Museum, this exhibition showcases a rich selection of pieces illustrating 300 years of shapes and colours, drawn from the museum's extensive collection of ceramics. [Read more](#)



34th Alcobaça Music Festival

Running until 31 July, the Alcobaça Music Festival is taking place under the theme 'Resurrection'. For over 30 years, this Portuguese festival has made a name for itself internationally thanks to its motto 'a classic for everyone', welcoming the most renowned artists to the most iconic venues of the town's historical and cultural heritage. [Read more](#)



100th edition of the Varna Summer Festival

Until 14 October, the city of Varna in Bulgaria is hosting the 100th edition of the "Varna Summer" International Music Festival, regarded as Bulgaria's oldest and most prestigious music festival, which brings together symphony orchestras, internationally renowned soloists, chamber music ensembles, opera companies and ballet companies every year. The 2026 edition, which is particularly symbolic, offers a rich programme combining classical repertoire, contemporary works, Baroque music, interdisciplinary projects and open-air concerts. [Read more](#)



Turda Theatre Festival

Until 5 July, the Turda International Theatre Festival (FITT) is taking place in the Romanian town in Cluj County. Under the theme 'Wings for the Future', this year's festival aims to be both a review of the past and a turning point: dialogue, artistic mobility and new forms of expression are its key themes. Its programme, aimed at audiences of all ages, combines major theatre productions with a range of other events. [Read more](#)



"Artists on the Move" in Vilnius

Until 30 April 2027, the Lithuanian Art Centre TARTLE is hosting the exhibition "Artists on the Move", which traces the journeys of Lithuanian artists beyond their country's borders. In a retrospective journey spanning nine decades of the 20th century, the exhibition showcases the works of Lithuanian émigré artists, bringing together paintings, sculptures, prints and archival documents. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 22-23/06/2026

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council (Luxembourg)

 22-26/06/2026

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

 22 June

EU-Moldova Summit (Brussels)

 25/06/2026

"Environment" Council (Luxembourg)

 26/06/2026

"Energy" Council (Luxembourg)

 29/06/2026

"Employment, Social Policy" Council (Luxembourg)



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