

Letter n°1162 of Tuesday 30th June 2026

Europe must finance its Power

Jean-Marc Vigilant - 30 Jun 2026

Europe must find new ways to fund its rearmament to strengthen its security and strategic autonomy, despite public finances that are already under severe strain. This effort will need better coordination of investment, greater support for the European defence industry and a reduction in dependence on external suppliers, with a view to transforming the increase in military spending into genuine European strategic power.



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■ **Foundation :**

75th anniversary of the Santa Margherita Ligure summit

On 1 July, the De Gasperi Foundation, in collaboration with the Robert Schuman Foundation, is organising a conference to mark the 75th anniversary of the Santa Margherita Ligure summit, the founding event of post-war European cooperation at which the Italian and French heads of government, Alcide De Gasperi and René Pleven, met, accompanied by the Foreign Ministers Carlo Sforza and Robert Schuman. In the presence of various political leaders, academics and representatives of institutions, discussions will focus on the current challenges facing European integration, particularly in the areas of security, competitiveness, the digital transition and strategic sovereignty. [Read more](#)



NextGenEU: new payments for Austria and Romania

On 22 and 23 June, the Commission made two new payments to Austria, amounting to €325 million, and to Romania, amounting to €2.25 billion, under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. With this fourth payment, Austria has now received 92 per cent of its total allocation of €3.96 billion. This is also the fourth payment for Romania, which has received 60.6 per cent of its total allocation of €21.41 billion. The Foundation provides an overview of the various national recovery plans on its website, setting out the amounts, timetables and priorities. [Read more](#)

■ Commission :



Tax simplification measures

On 24 June, the European Commission presented tax simplification measures designed to reduce paperwork for businesses and boost the competitiveness of the single market. The proposals include simplifying the rules applicable to cross-border activities, modernising administrative cooperation between Member States and easing certain reporting obligations. According to the Commission, these measures would enable businesses in the European Union to save nearly €8 billion a year, including €3.3 billion in administrative costs. [Read more](#)



Strengthening the European response to crime

On 24 June, the Commission proposed measures to strengthen Europol and Eurojust with a view to improving the European response to cross-border crime and terrorism. Concerning Europol, the new rules are designed, in particular, to ensure a more effective exchange of information between Member States, and to strengthen operational support through the creation of support offices and a technology and innovation hub. Eurojust's mandate is being extended to cover new areas of crime, and it will have greater capacity for initiative and operational support. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries

On 22 and 23 June, European ministers for agriculture and fisheries discussed the regulation setting out the conditions for EU support for fisheries, aquaculture and maritime policy for 2028–2034. The European Commission presented its communication on the state of the Common Fisheries Policy. This discussion marked the start of the annual process for setting total allowable catches and quotas. They examined the arrangements for shaping the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2027. Whilst they welcomed the proposed amendments, they nevertheless called for greater flexibility in implementing the CAP's objectives. Finally, they discussed the current challenges facing the agricultural sector, with a statement by Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Taras Kachka. [Read more](#)



Energy Ministers' Meeting

On 26 June, European energy ministers approved the Council's negotiating position on the 'European Grids' package, which aims to modernise and develop Europe's energy infrastructure in order to promote the electrification and decarbonisation of the continent. They exchanged views on decarbonisation efforts beyond 2030 to achieve the target of a 90 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, and on the impact of the crisis in the Middle East on the energy sector. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Environment Ministers

On 25 June, European environment ministers reviewed progress made on amending the regulation on CO2 emission standards for cars. They then took stock of the water resilience strategy and held a discussion on the link between biodiversity loss and a decline in competitiveness. Finally, they exchanged views on the future of the REACH Regulation, which governs the use of chemicals. They focused in particular on ways to strengthen its enforcement and modernise the existing rules. [Read more](#)



Trade with the United States: final approval of tariff commitments

On 25 June, the Council formally adopted two regulations implementing the tariff provisions of the EU-US Joint Statement. The two texts remove customs duties on US industrial products and provide for preferential access to the European market for certain seafood and agricultural products. These tariff commitments are accompanied by safeguard and suspension mechanisms. They enable the EU to suspend tariff preferences where the US fails to honour its commitments, and to act swiftly if such preferences lead to a significant increase in imports that threatens EU operators. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Appointments to the European External Action Service

On 24 June, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Kaja Kallas, announced appointments within the European External Action Service (EEAS). The former Dutch minister, Kaja Ollongren, has been appointed Secretary-General of the EEAS. Currently the European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights, she will take up her post on 1 September. Matti Maasikas of Estonia, currently Deputy Secretary-General and Director-General for Europe and Central Asia, has been appointed Deputy Secretary-General for Geo-Economy and Inter-institutional Affairs. Finally, David Cvach, currently France's Permanent Representative to NATO, has been appointed Deputy Secretary-General for Peace, Security and Defence. [Read more](#)



Statement by the leaders of the E5 group

On 24 June, meeting in Berlin, the leaders of Germany, France, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom reiterated their commitment to strengthening Euro-Atlantic security in the run-up to the NATO summit on 7 and 8 July in Ankara. In particular, they agreed to step up their defence cooperation, strengthen military and political support for Ukraine, develop European defence industrial capabilities and coordinate their efforts to ensure a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. The five countries also welcomed the memorandum of understanding concluded between the United States and Iran, which they regard as an opportunity to strengthen regional stability. [Read more](#)

■ France :



36th Franco-Italian Summit

On 25 June, a summit between France and Italy was held in Antibes. Emmanuel Macron and Giorgia Meloni reiterated their shared commitment to achieving a more united, sovereign, democratic and competitive Europe. They agreed to deepen their bilateral cooperation, particularly in the political, economic, agricultural, social, educational, scientific and cultural spheres, as well as in the industrial and innovation sectors. Furthermore, after reaffirming their support for Ukraine and welcoming the memorandum of understanding signed between the United States and Iran, they indicated their intention to further strengthen Franco-Italian cooperation on foreign, security and defence policies across all sectors. [Read more](#)



Plenary session of the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly

On 22 June, the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly (APFA) held a further plenary session in Paris, co-chaired by the President of the National Assembly, Yaël Braun-Pivet, and the President of the Bundestag, Julia Klöckner. French and German MPs renewed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in the face of European challenges relating to security, economic competitiveness and the energy transition. Discussions focused on support for Ukraine, strengthening European defence and Franco-German coordination within the European Union. This meeting confirmed the APFA's role as a key forum for parliamentary dialogue between Paris and Berlin and as an instrument for political rapprochement between the two countries. [Read more](#)



Franco-German agreement on KNDS

On 22 June, France and Germany reached an agreement on the strategy and joint governance of KNDS, a European land defence company in which both countries intend to become co-shareholders. Furthermore, this agreement aims to see KNDS listed on the stock exchange in the near future, which would position it as a leading defence company in Europe and globally, serving both the French and German armed forces, and strengthen its competitiveness within the European land systems industry. [Read more](#)

■ Hungary :



New measures to tackle corruption

On 23 June, Hungarian MPs approved measures designed to tackle corruption, as part of Prime Minister Peter Magyar's wave of reforms. The legal powers of the Integrity Authority – an anti-corruption body established in 2022 as part of reforms driven by the European Union – have been strengthened. It will now be able to scrutinise asset declarations, request anti-corruption investigations from the judiciary, and even suspend procurement procedures in order to protect EU funds. This wave of reforms aims to provide the country with access to the €16 billion in EU funds that the Commission has announced it intends to release, provided that reforms are put in place to address issues relating to corruption and the rule of law. [Read more](#)



Visegrad Group Meeting

On 23 June, the leaders of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia met in Hungary as part of the Visegrad Group (V4), a platform for cooperation between these countries established in 1991. In a joint statement, they agreed to strengthen their cooperation, as well as their ties with external partners, whether regional, European or global. They identified areas in which they shared common interests on the European stage, such as the next multiannual financial framework and agricultural and cohesion policies. They also agreed to boost the region's competitiveness, notably by developing their cooperation in the fields of digitalisation, AI, cross-border cybersecurity, transport and energy. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Lithuania :



Resignation of the Prime Minister

On 23 June, the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Inga Ruginienė, announced her resignation and that of her government, which had been rocked by a series of crises, bringing her ten-month term to an end. A new government led by Mindaugas Sinkevičius, leader of the Social Democratic Party, is expected to be formed in the coming days. It will be the third government led by this party since the 2024 elections. [Read more](#)

■ Romania :



Prime Minister fails to win Parliament's confidence

On 22 June, Adrian Vestea, the Prime Minister appointed by Romanian President Nicolae Ciucanu, failed to win Parliament's confidence, securing only 189 votes out of the 233 required. Almost two months after the government of Ilie Bolojan was brought down by an alliance between the Social Democrats and the far-right AUR, the President must once again appoint a new Prime Minister. [Read more](#)

■ Iceland :



European Free Trade Association meeting in Reykjavik

On 22 June, ministers from the member states of the European Free Trade Association, meeting in Reykjavik, welcomed the progress made in negotiations towards a comprehensive free trade agreement with Vietnam. At the conference, EFTA members reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international trading system. Discussions also focused on updating trade agreements with Canada and Mexico, as well as on relations with the European Union. [Read more](#)

■ Moldova :



2nd summit with the European Union

On 22 June, European Union leaders and the Moldovan President, Maia Sandu, adopted a joint declaration following the second EU–Moldova summit. The parties reiterated their commitment to accelerating Moldova's accession process, just a few days after the opening of the first round of negotiations. The EU welcomed the reforms undertaken by Chişinău and confirmed its political, economic and security support, notably through the Growth Plan for Moldova, of which €504 million has already been disbursed, whilst a further €528 million could be mobilised by 2027. The summit served to strengthen cooperation on energy, digital issues, security and the fight against hybrid threats, against a backdrop marked by the war in Ukraine and Russian pressure in the region. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Conference on the Reconstruction of Ukraine in Gdańsk

On 25 and 26 June, the Polish city of Gdańsk hosted the Conference on the Reconstruction of Ukraine, co-chaired by Poland and Ukraine, with the aim of mobilising international support for the country's recovery. Bringing together representatives from governments, international organisations, financial institutions and the private sector, the conference focused on the reconstruction of critical infrastructure, strengthening energy security and mobilising investment. On this occasion, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced the disbursement of a first tranche of €3.2 billion as part of the €90 billion European loan intended to finance Ukraine's budgetary support and defence needs for 2026 and 2027. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Closer ties with the OECD

On 23 June, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the Secretary-General of the OECD, Mathias Cormann, to discuss the implementation of the reforms undertaken by Ukraine and the prospects for closer ties with the Organisation. On this occasion, he submitted an updated application with a view to obtaining candidate country status for OECD membership from autumn 2026. Discussions focused on the continuation of reforms in the areas of governance, the fight against corruption, the modernisation of public administration and economic reconstruction. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Extension of temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine

On 26 June, the European Commission proposed to extend, by one year, until 4 March 2028, the temporary protection for people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Nearly 4.4 million displaced people currently benefit from this protection. The Commission's aim is also to balance the need to protect people with Ukraine's ability to defend itself. Temporary protection is therefore not granted to people who are required to remain on Ukrainian territory due to their military obligations. The Council must now adopt the proposal. [Read more](#)



Renewal of sanctions against Russia

On 25 June, the Council renewed the sanctions against Russia for one year, until 31 July 2027, in response to the war of aggression it is waging in Ukraine. The existing measures cover sectors such as trade, finance, energy, financial services and oil. Since 24 February 2022, the European Union has adopted 20 packages of sanctions aimed at stepping up pressure on Russia to end its war of aggression and engage in a peace process. [Read more](#)

■ Council of Europe :



Plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

From 22 to 25 June, during its summer plenary session, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe debated a number of issues relating to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In particular, parliamentarians examined the risks posed by artificial intelligence to democratic institutions, access to healthcare for migrants and refugees, media freedom in sport, transnational repression and the impact of violent pornography on human rights. Debates on the state of democracy in Serbia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran, as well as discussions on food security in times of crisis, took place. The parliamentarians also elected the Council of Europe's new Deputy Secretary General, Tanja Gonggrijp of the Netherlands, who will take up her post on 1 September. [Read more](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Report on criminal networks in Europe

On 26 June, Europol published the second issue of its report "Unravelling the most dangerous criminal networks", which paints a mixed picture of the fight against organised crime in Europe. The report highlights the rise of cybercrime and the increasing use of artificial intelligence, cryptocurrencies and legitimate business structures to conceal illicit activities. Faced with this form of organised crime, described as "fluid", Europol is calling for a response that goes beyond law enforcement alone, bringing together public authorities, the private sector and civil society. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Convergence Reports

On 24 June, the European Commission published its convergence report, which examines the progress made by Member States outside the euro area (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Sweden). According to the Commission, none of these Member States currently meets the euro area criteria. The Commission's assessment is published alongside the European Central Bank's (ECB) convergence report. In its conclusions, the ECB states that the countries are demonstrating economic resilience but still face obstacles to adopting the euro. The budgetary situation is deteriorating in most countries, and their legislation is not yet fully compatible with the expected monetary requirements. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Trilogues :



Posted workers, workers exposed to hazardous substances and passengers' rights

On 23 and 25 June, negotiators from the Council and the European Parliament reached three agreements on rules aimed at facilitating the electronic declaration of posted workers, protecting workers from exposure to hazardous substances and strengthening the monitoring of compliance with passengers' rights. With regard to posted workers, the regulation will enable the digitisation of posting declarations, thereby reducing red-tape. Furthermore, the revision of the directive on carcinogens and substances toxic to reproduction strengthens workers' health protection. Finally, the rules designed to safeguard passengers' rights within the EU simplify the existing framework, particularly with regard to the handling of complaints and service quality standards. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :

HAYWARD GALLERY

Anish Kapoor in London

Until 18 October, the Hayward Gallery in London is hosting an exhibition celebrating British artist Anish Kapoor, nearly 30 years after his first major retrospective in the UK. The artist's work explores spirituality and religion, drawing on Kapoor's experiments with Vantablack, a material that absorbs 99.9 per cent of light. [Read more](#)

Astrup Fearnley Museet

Beatriz González in Oslo

Until 11 October, the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo is hosting a retrospective dedicated to Beatriz González. Bringing together more than 150 works, this exhibition pays tribute to the career – from the 1960s to the present day – of the Colombian painter who passed away earlier this year. Renowned for her visual language rooted in the social realities of her country, the artist depicts Colombia's wounds through press photographs, official portraits and ironic paintings characterised by stark contrasts of vivid colours. [Read more](#)

FESTIVALS DE WALLONIE

Wallonia Festival

Until 22 October, the Wallonia Festival is taking place under the theme 'Journeys'. Nearly 100 concerts offer audiences a musical journey through 21 towns, featuring a varied repertoire ranging from Elizabethan song to British melodies. [Read more](#)

PHOTO ELYSEE

Photo in Lausanne

Until 1 November, the Photo Elysée photography museum in Lausanne is hosting the exhibition "Inferno & Paradiso" by the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar, which brings together 40 photographs selected by 20 international photojournalists, who were invited to choose the most painful and the most hopeful images they had taken during their careers. Inspired by Dante's "Divine Comedy", this exhibition explores contemporary crises and examines the role of photography in understanding the political and social issues of our time. [Read more](#)



Rapla Sacred Music Festival

Until 12 July, the Rapla Sacred Music Festival in Estonia is celebrating its 34th season with a varied programme which, in addition to concerts and recitals, also features an International Singing Academy and continues its commitment to training young artists. [Read more](#)



Fest Anča Festival in Žilina

Until 5 July, the city of Žilina in Slovakia is hosting the 19th edition of the Fest Anča International Animation Film Festival. As a showcase for the country's short films, it annually presents works and highlights from the world of animated cinema, raising awareness of this art form in its various guises. Under the theme "Fake", this year's festival explores issues relating to disinformation, myths and the boundaries between reality and fiction, through screenings, exhibitions and talks. [Read more](#)



Aix-en-Provence Festival

Until 21 July, the city of Aix-en-Provence is hosting the 78th edition of its opera festival, centred on the theme of the "quest for humanity". It aims to present a high-quality and highly diverse programme: opera productions, contemporary works, and the rediscovery of Baroque masterpieces and chamber music. [Read more](#)



Erna Rosenstein in Vienna

Until 10 January 2027, the Belvedere Museum in Vienna is hosting an exhibition dedicated to Erna Rosenstein, a leading figure of the post-war Polish avant-garde. Shaped by the Holocaust and the political upheavals in Poland, her work reflects her determination never to give up. The 80 or so pieces – paintings, drawings, assemblages and poems – evoke persecution and exile, loss and mourning, whilst bearing witness to the artist's creative independence and unwavering commitment to renewal. [Read more](#)



Victor Brauner in Monaco

Until 3 January 2027, Monaco's new National Museum is devoting all the exhibition spaces at its Villa Paloma to Victor Brauner, a Franco-Romanian artist and pioneer of 20th-century surrealism. Featuring over 160 artworks, this exhibition covers the artist's entire career, from the 1920s to the 1960s, encompassing painting, drawing and sculpture. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :



29/06/2026

"Employment, Social Policy" Council (Luxembourg)



1/7-31/12

Irish Presidency of the Council



06/07/2026

Plenary Session of the European Parliament



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