

Letter n°1165 of Tuesday 21st July 2026

The entire Foundation team wishes you a wonderful summer and invites you to join us on 7 September.

Cross-border cooperation central to the European project

[Claude Kern - 21 Jul 2026](#)

In Alsace, cross-border cooperation is a reality experienced on a daily basis. Mobility, health, employment, education and even ecological and industrial transitions are all issues that transcend borders and require joint solutions. Drawing on its history and its location at the heart of Europe, Alsace illustrates how cooperation with Germany and Switzerland strengthens regions and gives concrete meaning to the European project, whilst also giving rise to new challenges for the years ahead.



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■ **Foundation :**



Disinformation and foreign interference: a new episode on Station Schuman

Have social media and artificial intelligence ushered in a new era of disinformation? How are foreign powers seeking to influence our democracies, and are we prepared to tackle this? In this new episode of Station Schuman, Constance Le Grip, MP for Hauts-de-Seine, analyses new forms of foreign interference, the role of digital platforms, the challenges posed by generative AI, and the responses from France and the European Union. A fascinating discussion offering a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of information warfare and the democratic stakes at play behind our screens. Available to listen to on Spotify, Deezer, Apple Podcasts, YouTube and the Foundation's website. [Read more](#)



NextGenEU: green light for the Czech Republic, Cyprus and Estonia

On 13 July, the European Commission gave the green light to three payments for the Czech Republic, Cyprus and Estonia under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This is the Czech Republic's sixth payment request, amounting to €897 million. It would bring the total funds disbursed to the country to €7.7 billion, representing 88 per cent of its total allocation. As for Cyprus, the sixth payment request has been approved for €120 million. For Estonia, the fourth approved payment request will result in a disbursement of €135.5 million, bringing the total funds paid out to 80 per cent of the allocation. 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](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Commission :



Electrification Action Plan

On 17 July, the European Commission presented its Electrification Action Plan, which aims to make Europe the first electrified continent and to strengthen the European carbon market. Recent geopolitical shocks have highlighted Europe's dependence on imported fossil fuels. In light of this and to accelerate the continent's clean energy transition, the Commission plans to assess an indicative electrification target of 46 per cent by 2040 as part of the post-2030 Energy Union package. Similarly, it intends to review and modernise the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). [Read more](#)



Guidance for Google on digital markets

On 16 July, the European Commission published two sets of binding measures for Google, to ensure the company complies with the Digital Markets Act (DMA). The first set aims to ensure fair competition among artificial intelligence services by ensuring that competitors to Google's AI services have equal access to the features of Android devices. The second set of measures broadens access to search engine data, which only Google Search is currently able to collect on a large scale. [Read more](#)

■ Council :



Meeting of Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries

On 13 July, European ministers for agriculture and fisheries discussed the livestock farming strategy and the action plan on protein. The Irish Presidency placed the issue of women in agriculture on the agenda, facilitating a discussion on ways to improve women's participation and visibility in the agri-food sector. The Irish Presidency also presented its work programme on agriculture and fisheries. Finally, the ministers adopted the Commission's proposal aimed at helping European farmers cope with the sharp rise in fertiliser prices caused by the crisis in the Middle East. [Read more](#)



Meeting of Ministers for European Affairs

On 14 July, the Ministers for European Affairs discussed the priorities of the Irish Presidency, including the next long-term budget, enlargement, the rule of law, relations with the United Kingdom, and cohesion policy. The ministers held an exchange of views on the European Union's simplification programme. Finally, they approved conclusions on the assessment of the annual dialogue on the rule of law. [Read more](#)

■ Diplomacy :



Foreign Ministers' Meeting

On 13 July, the Foreign Ministers adopted new restrictive measures against individuals and entities responsible for cyber-attacks, serious human rights violations in Russia, and against Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees. They also took stock of the implementation of the strategic approach to the Black Sea and discussed the situation in the Middle East. In particular, they exchanged views on Gaza and the West Bank, reiterating their concern at the deteriorating situation in both territories. Finally, they launched the EU Partnership Mission in Armenia (EUPM Armenia), strengthened sanctions against Sudan and appointed a new EU Special Representative for Kosovo. [Read more](#)



Further progress for Ukraine, Montenegro and Albania

On 14 July, during the Accession Conferences, Montenegro provisionally closed negotiations on competition policy and the customs union – bringing the number of closed chapters to 18 out of 35. Ukraine and the EU opened negotiations on the external relations cluster, one month after the opening of the cluster on the fundamentals. With Albania, three negotiation chapters covering science and research, education and culture, and external relations were provisionally closed. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#) - [Other link](#)



Humanitarian aid for the Palestinians

On 13 July, the European Commission organised the second meeting of the Donors' Group for Palestine, which led to two outcomes: the launch of the Team Gaza initiative and new financial contributions through the PEGASE mechanism. The Team Gaza initiative has raised €883.6 million for rapid recovery projects in Gaza, aimed at restoring basic services for civilians. [Read more](#)

■ Germany :



Franco-German Council of Ministers and Defence and Security Council

On 17 July, whilst on a visit to Germany, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz co-chaired the 26th Franco-German Council of Ministers and the Franco-German Defence and Security Council, bringing together several members of both governments. During the Council of Ministers, the two leaders outlined a joint roadmap aimed at deepening bilateral cooperation and strengthening European sovereignty. On a strategic level, the Defence and Security Council provided an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to consolidating NATO's European pillar, by pursuing closer cooperation in the fields of defence and support for Ukraine. Finally, they emphasised the importance of the Franco-German partnership as a driving force behind the European Union's key policy directions. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Spain :



CJEU upholds Catalonia's amnesty law

On 16 July, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that the amnesty law adopted by Spain in 2024 in favour of those involved in Catalonia's bid for independence is in line with EU law. The judges consider that this law, supported by the Spanish government, pursues a legitimate aim of reconciliation and reducing political tensions, without undermining the financial interests of the EU or European legislation on terrorism. However, this ruling does not resolve the case of Carles Puigdemont, whose return to Spain remains subject to the decision of the national courts. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ France :



A parade in the colours of Europe

On 14 July, the National Day parade celebrated the "Strategic Awakening of Europe", highlighting the synergy between the armed forces and internal security forces in protecting the nation and its allies. Attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the guest of honour, the event also brought together the 35 member states of the Coalition of the Willing, a Franco-British initiative that aims to pave the way for lasting peace in Ukraine. [Read more](#)



Strengthening ties with Morocco

On 6 July, on his first overseas visit, French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu travelled to Rabat accompanied by twelve ministers. During his meeting with his counterpart Aziz Akhannouch, they described their bilateral relations as "extremely positive". In addition to signing eleven cooperation agreements (covering security, the economy, transport and culture), the Prime Minister announced the drafting of a groundbreaking bilateral treaty, which would be the first of its kind signed by France with a country outside the European Union. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Hungary :



Constitutional reform and the President's departure

On 19 July, Hungarian President Tamás Sulyok promulgated the 17th amendment to the Fundamental Law, officially bringing his term of office to an end upon the text's entry into force. Elected in March 2024, he stated that he was legally obliged to sign this reform, whilst denouncing it as an attack on the rule of law and democratic principles. Driven by Péter Magyar's government, this amendment forms part of a wide-ranging programme to dismantle the legacy of the Orbán era. It provides for a twelve-year limit on parliamentary terms of office, an age limit of 70 for judges of the Constitutional Court, and paves the way for the election of a new head of state. On 20 July, Prime Minister Péter Magyar nominated Judit Polgár, a renowned chess player, as president. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Lithuania :



New government

On 14 July, the Lithuanian Parliament approved Mindaugas Sinkevičius's government and its programme by 72 votes to 29, with 40 abstentions. Mr Sinkevičius has therefore been officially appointed Prime Minister, less than a month after Inga Ruginienė's resignation. His programme focuses primarily on defence, notably planning to maintain defence spending at over 5 per cent of GDP and to continue supporting Ukraine. The ruling coalition comprises the Social Democrats, the 'For Lithuania' Democrats, and the Farmers and Greens Union. The government comprises 15 ministers, including four women. [Read more](#)



New agreements with Latvia

On 15 July, Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs paid a state visit to Lithuania, where he met his counterpart, Gitanas Nausėda. They signed a declaration confirming the strategic partnership between the two countries and their shared priorities, particularly in the areas of security, the economy, energy and infrastructure, as well as an intergovernmental agreement on cross-border cooperation to combat crime. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ UK:



New agreement with Switzerland

On 13 July, Switzerland and the United Kingdom announced the conclusion of negotiations on a modernised free trade agreement, which is set to replace the transitional arrangements put in place following Brexit. The agreement preserves existing benefits for trade in goods whilst opening up new opportunities in several sectors, notably financial services, telecommunications, intellectual property and the mobility of service providers. The agreement is expected to be signed by the end of the year. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Gibraltar's entry into the Schengen Area

On 14 July, the European Union and the United Kingdom signed an agreement concerning Gibraltar, which provides for the free movement of goods and people between the British territory and Spain. The agreement formalises the relocation of the border to the port and the airport, where the Spanish authorities will be responsible for immigration controls. They will also have the final say on the issue and renewal of residence permits. The agreement entered into provisional force on 15 July. It is the result of nearly four years of negotiations. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



New Prime Minister

On 20 July, Andy Burnham became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, succeeding Keir Starmer, after being elected leader of the Labour Party. A former minister and Mayor of Greater Manchester since 2017, he is the seventh head of the British government in ten years, set against a backdrop of significant political instability. In his first speech at Downing Street, he pledged to restore confidence in the institutions, improve the standard of living for the British people and boost economic growth, whilst continuing to support Ukraine and strengthening relations with European partners. He is also expected to carry out a cabinet reshuffle and introduce a number of reforms relating to devolution, transport, housing and public services. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Ukraine :



Meeting of the Coalition of the Willing in Paris

On 13 July, 25 leaders of the Coalition of the Willing, meeting in Paris, reiterated their support for Ukraine and announced the creation of an Anti-Ballistic Missile Coalition designed to coordinate the development of European missile defence systems. Multinational military exercises have been scheduled to train the future force, which will be responsible for contributing to Ukraine's security guarantees. They also decided to step up their efforts against Russia's "ghost fleet", which is used to circumvent international sanctions, by intensifying inspections and coordinated operations at sea. [Read more](#)



Joint Franco-Ukrainian Declaration on Defence

On 14 July, the French and Ukrainian Presidents, Emmanuel Macron and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, issued a joint declaration in which they reiterated their intention to cooperate to accelerate the provision of equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces, in accordance with the declaration of intent signed by the two countries on 17 November 2025. As part of this, they agreed to prioritise capability-building projects that strengthen Ukraine's combat aviation, air defence and ballistic missile defence, notably including the order for the first 16 Rafale aircraft out of the 100 planned, to be placed in November. [Read more](#)



Defence industrial partnership and drone alliance with the European Union

On 15 July, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, signed a defence industrial partnership to promote the joint production of drones and anti-drone systems by the end of 2026. The Commission has also provided an additional €1 billion to Ukraine for the procurement of drones, as part of the €90 billion support loan. Finally, Ukraine has been fully integrated into the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Defence Industrial Programme (EDIP). [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



5th Ukraine–South-East Europe Summit

On 15 July, Ukraine hosted the 5th Ukraine–South-East Europe Summit, which brought together the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the leaders of Albania, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Greece, Slovenia and Croatia, as well as representatives from North Macedonia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. The meeting focused on regional security and Ukraine's European integration. In a joint statement, they reiterated their unwavering support for Ukraine and its accession, as well as for Moldova; their condemnation of Russian aggression; the need to strengthen Ukraine's air defence capabilities; and the pressure of sanctions against Russia. [Read more](#)



Keir Starmer's visit to Ukraine

On 16 July, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met in Kyiv. The Prime Minister announced an investment of €300 million to facilitate the delivery to Ukraine of the latest-generation Swedish Gripen fighter jets. The Ukrainian President awarded him the Order of Freedom, the highest Ukrainian honour that can be bestowed upon a foreign national. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)



Cabinet reshuffle

On 16 July, the Ukrainian Parliament approved the appointment of Serhiy Koryukha as Prime Minister. This decision follows a cabinet reshuffle initiated by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to support a change in "political strategy". The day before, Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov had announced his resignation, sparking protests by thousands of Ukrainians. The Cabinet of Ministers, in consultation with the President, appointed Yevhenii Khmara as acting Defence Minister and Andrii Sybiha as acting Foreign Minister. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Studies/Reports :



Decline in irregular border crossings

On 10 July, Frontex published its latest statistics on irregular crossings of the European Union's borders, reporting a 37 per cent fall during the first six months of 2026. This first half of the year was marked by the entry into force of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum. Among the key findings, the agency recorded a 67 per cent fall in detections along the West African route, whilst the western Mediterranean was the only major route to see an increase of 17 per cent. [Read more](#)



Report on the Rule of Law

On 17 July, the European Commission published its seventh annual report on the rule of law, which provides an assessment of all Member States and four candidate countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. This latest edition confirms a generally positive trend, with the completion and further development of substantial reforms in the areas of justice, the fight against corruption, media pluralism and institutional checks and balances. [Read more](#)



Competitiveness of the banking sector

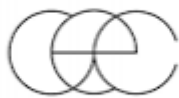
On 17 July, the European Commission adopted a communication on the competitiveness of the European Union's banking sector, setting out measures aimed at strengthening the sector and supporting its growth. In response to the challenges hampering the growth of the banking system, the measures aim to achieve three objectives: removing barriers to cross-border banking, applying international standards whilst taking into account the specific characteristics of the EU, and simplifying the regulatory framework for banks. [Read more](#)



Positive impact of trade with developing countries

On 16 July, the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy published a new joint report on the implementation of the Generalised System of Preferences. This scheme aims to support 65 low- and middle-income countries and their growth by reducing or eliminating import duties into the European Union. The report concludes that the scheme contributed to economic progress and sustainable development in the beneficiary countries over the period 2023-2025. [Read more](#) - [Other link](#)

■ Culture :



Contemporary Art in Athens

Until March 2027, the George Economou Collection in Athens is presenting *The Way We Live Now*, its first group exhibition of contemporary art drawn from its own collections, bringing together major artists such as David Hockney, Louise Bourgeois and Jenny Saville. The exhibition is structured around three themes — Intimacy, Politics and Being — to explore how art challenges our relationships with power, identity and freedom in today's world. [Read more](#)

From Rembrandt to Matisse in Dublin

Until 6 December, the National Gallery of Ireland is hosting an exhibition bringing together around fifty of the finest works on paper by artists from across Europe. The drawings, prints and watercolours explore a variety of themes and styles that have shaped European art over the centuries. To mark Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the exhibition showcases the breadth of the Gallery's collection and European artistic achievement. [Read more](#)

Valeriano D. Bécquer in Madrid

Until 4 October, the Prado Museum is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the Spanish artist Valeriano D. Bécquer. For the first time, the museum is bringing together the eight paintings produced by the artist between 1866 and 1867 as part of a government commission for the former Museum of La Trinidad. Through this exceptional selection of paintings, visitors have the opportunity to explore the work of this eminent artist, whose works focus on scenes of everyday life and both urban and rural landscapes [Read more](#)



Opera in Tallinn

Until 8 August, the Summer Opera festival is taking place in Tallinn, Estonia, with a series of performances every Friday and Saturday. Organised by the Pille Lill Music Fund (PLMF), the event features opera concerts. This 2026 edition has been recognised with the European EFFE Quality Label 2026–2027, awarded by the European Festivals Association (EFA), in recognition of its artistic excellence and cultural commitment. [Read more](#)



Jazz in Marciac

Running until 5 August, the Jazz in Marciac festival is holding its 48th annual event in the village in the Gers. Founded in 1978, it has become one of Europe's biggest jazz festivals, attracting tens of thousands of spectators every summer to its famous marquee and the venues at L'Astrada, whilst also offering numerous free concerts in the village streets. The 2026 programme brings together leading international figures and artists from the new scene, where jazz blends with soul, funk, blues and world music. [Read more](#)



Copenhagen Festival

Until 2 August, the Copenhagen Summer Festival is showcasing the next generation of classical musicians at the Charlottenborg Community Centre. Supported by the Ministry of Culture, the event brings together young international virtuosos and features a number of podcasts. [Read more](#)



Marvão Festival

Until 2 August, the fortified village of Marvão in Portugal is hosting the 12th edition of its International Music Festival. Set within its 13th-century medieval castle, the event offers a varied programme: chamber music, orchestral concerts, solo recitals and vocal performances. [Read more](#)



Patrimonio Guitar Nights

Until 27 July, the 35th Patrimonio Guitar Nights are taking place at the Théâtre de Verdure in the wine-growing village of Cap Corse. Established in 1990, this festival has become one of the Mediterranean's major summer music events whilst retaining its unique identity: bringing together the world's leading guitarists with artists from the worlds of chanson, rock, jazz, blues, flamenco, reggae and world music in an intimate setting. [Read more](#)



150th Bayreuth Festival

Until 26 August, the Bayreuth Festival – an annual event dedicated to the artistic exploration of Richard Wagner's music – is celebrating its 150th anniversary. The 2026 programme features several opera performances. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, conducted by Christian Thielemann, is also on the programme. [Read more](#)

■ Sports :



Spain, World Champions

On 19 July, Spain were crowned world champions after beating Argentina 1-0 in extra time. La Roja have thus secured their second World Cup title, sixteen years after their first victory in South Africa in 2010, and have cemented their status as the best team of the moment following their victory at Euro 2024. This final also marked Lionel Messi's last World Cup appearance, which ended with a second-place finish for Argentina, the defending champions since their victory in Qatar in 2022. [Read more](#)

■ Agenda :

 22-23/07/2026

ECB Council of Governors (Frankfurt/Main)

 27/07/2026

'Budget' Council (Brussels)



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