



EUROPEAN UNION

European Semester Spring Package: Sustaining a green and sustainable recovery in the face of increased uncertainty: The European Commission has presented the European Semester Spring Package, offering guidance two years after Covid broke out in Europe. The EU economy is set to keep growing in the following years. However, the ongoing situation in Ukraine has brought some new challenges to the scene. This package stresses the importance of the Recovery and Resilience facility and links it to the newly approved REPowerEU. The European Commission also evaluates the escape clause triggered by Covid, extension, and deactivation dates. Other topics covered by commissioners include deficit compliance of 18 Member States, macroeconomic imbalances, employment guidelines provisions, or the EU's progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusions of the special meeting of the European Council: The European Council held a special meeting earlier this week in which they argued about the key current issues for the EU. The meeting opened up with the situation in Ukraine, where EU leaders discussed support provision, justice, and the impact of the situation. This was followed up with talks on food security, defense, and energy, where Member States representatives had the opportunity to discuss international cooperation, the role of the CAP, possible joint defense investments, and the EU's tools for cutting dependency on Russia energy-wise.

National recovery plans should boost resilience, autonomy and social protection: The Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Budgets committees are committed to linking recovery funds to the rule of law respect and ensuring maximum return on investment. MEPs want to assure that funds are not misused, doubled, or overlapped, and therefore they ask for auditing and monitoring mechanisms and the rule of law compliance requisite. Moreover, the European Parliament asks for the creation of a scoreboard providing basic information on the implementation of plans for citizens and the encouragement of cross-border projects, especially in the energy field.

HEALTH

Countries reach a deal on changes to global health rules: The World Health Organisation has reached an agreement on countries' responses to global health crises. The US-led resolution determines the timeline for amendments to the International Health Regulations. These changes come after the pandemic brought up the inefficiencies in the report mechanisms for public health threats. Timeline changes include extending the rejection period for amendments and shortening the time for its entry to one year. Lastly, the new text proposes a working group to look at and discuss future amendments.

TRADE

It's time to trade: 8 free-trade deals Brussels wants to seal: Due to the ongoing situation in Ukraine, the EU is now aiming to strengthen its trade links with other countries. Given the next presidencies of the council, new trade agreements are set to be created. Confrontation with Russia has brought light to the need for resource diversification, and many EU countries are convinced that the free-trade momentum is back. The EU is expected to center its attention on trade deals with Chile, China, Mexico Mercosur, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland as starting points.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU leaders downplay chances of rapid Russian gas ban: EU leaders agreed this Monday on a new package of sanctions that will see the majority of Russian oil imports stopped. These new sanctions do not yet target Russian gas imports. This is due to European leaders' different points of view, considering them needed in the seventh package and others calling for standby and pushing gas sanctions to the latest possible date. As the debate inside the EU continues, Russia has started cutting supplies to countries refusing to pay in roubles, including the Netherlands, Finland, and Poland. Because of Russia's actions, Brussels is also laying down an investment plan to wean off Russian gas by the end of the decade.