

#TRENDY THURSDAY

EUROPEAN UNION

EU adopts the first Youth Action Plan in EU External Action to strengthen engagement with young people worldwide

The Commission adopted the Youth Action Plan in the EU external action for 2022-2027, the first-ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people worldwide. The Plan is guided by three pillars of action: partnership to engage (increasing young people's voices in policy), partnership to empower (fighting inequalities and providing skills and tools), and partnership to connect (fostering opportunities for young people to network).

ENERGY

EU infrastructure a 'target' for first time in recent history, says von der Leyen

The acts of sabotage against Nordstream pipelines have shown EU's energy infrastructure has become a target for the first time in recent history. Hence, the Commission aims to carry out stress tests of critical infrastructure and better use its surveillance satellites. The EU is currently updating its critical infrastructure directive from 2008 to cover risk areas such as natural hazards, terrorist attacks and sabotage. The new law, which still needs to be approved by MEPs, is expected to come into force in 2024.

TECHNOLOGY

Long-awaited common charger for mobile devices will be a reality in 2024

Following Parliament's approval, EU consumers will soon be able to use a single charging solution for their electronic devices. By the end of 2024, all mobile phones, tablets and cameras sold in the EU will have to be equipped with a USB Type-C charging port. From 2026, the obligation will extend to laptops. As wireless charging becomes more prevalent, the European Commission will have to harmonise interoperability requirements by the end of 2024 to avoid harming consumers and the environment.

TECHNOLOGY

EU Commission postponed AI treaty negotiations with further delays in sight

The Council of Europe (an international human rights watchdog with 46 member countries) set up a Committee on Artificial Intelligence to develop an international treaty on AI focusing on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, also including stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, and observer countries. The European Commission has managed to postpone discussions on the treaty to obtain a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the EU. Further delays might follow as the EU tries to get its act together.

EMPLOYMENT

EU minimum wage directive gets final stamp of approval

EU ministers approved the directive on adequate minimum wages, starting the two-year implementation process for member states. The adequacy should be regularly tested so the minimum wage can be reconsidered if circumstances change, for example, due to inflation. Finally, the directive also obliges member states to introduce control mechanisms to ensure that workers can effectively access statutory minimum wages and to ensure that workers have the right to bargain collectively. Meanwhile, trade unions argue for faster implementation due to the cost of living crisis.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Meeting of the European Political Community

The historic first meeting of the European Political Community in Prague is bringing together leaders from across the continent (except Russia and Belarus), including the British PM and the Turkish President. The summit aims to foster political dialogue and cooperation to address issues of common interest and strengthen Europe's stability and prosperity in the context of security and energy crises. This platform for political coordination does not replace any existing organisation or structure and does not aim to create new ones at this stage.

