

#TRENDY THURSDAY

EUROPEAN UNION

Commission adopts its Work Programme for 2023: Tackling the most pressing challenges, while staying the course for the long-term

The Commission has adopted its Work Programme for 2023, which sets out an agenda to respond to the current crisis. The Programme contains 43 new policy initiatives –across all six of the headline ambitions of President von der Leyen's Political Guidelines—many of which follow up on the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Now the Commission will start discussions with the Parliament and Council to establish a list of joint legislative priorities on which co-legislators agree to take swift action.

HEALTH

New mental health strategy must involve everyone, EU Commissioner

As announced by the Commission's President, a strategy on mental health is in the second quarter of next year's schedule. This week more details related to understanding mental health and the reform of national mental health systems have been given. Health Commissioner also stressed the need for commitment from all sectors of society to address the challenge. The Commission also confirmed other long-awaited health initiatives for 2023, namely asbestos screening, the European disability card, smoke-free environments and vaccine-preventable cancers.

DIGITAL & TECH

EU Council nears common position on AI Act in semi-final text

The AI Act is landmark legislation which seeks to regulate the sector based on its potential risks. The Council of the EU has circulated a new compromise on the Act, set to be the basis for an agreement next month. The new text clarifies exemptions for military, defence and national security and people using AI for non-professional purposes. Moreover, there will be an AI Board, which will gather representatives from the member states and support market surveillance regarding the emergence of risks of systemic nature.

ENERGY

Netherlands follows Spain in quitting Energy Charter Treaty

Dutch Minister for climate and energy announced the intention of the Netherlands to withdraw from the Energy Charter Treaty. He backed his decisions because the ECT was not in line with the Paris Agreement, and re-negotiations failed. With no specific date, this withdrawal comes after Italy withdrew in 2016, and Spain announced its wildness to do so last week. Campaigners claim that even if the Commission presented a reformed treaty to be voted on in November this year, this new text is still insufficient, and the best option is to leave.

MEDIA

EU plans new transparency laws on foreign media

The European Commission plans to bring forward to early next year new legislation targeting foreign actors and influence in the European media sphere as part of attempts to increase transparency. The plans are set to be the latest planks of the European Democracy Action Plan adopted by the Commission in 2020, which seeks to establish a framework for protecting media freedom and pluralism. The new rules will look at increasing transparency on foreign organisations operating in the EU's media network. The EU executive has also proposed to set up a new independent European Board for Media Services.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU considers paying Elon Musk to keep giving Starlink internet to Ukraine

After statements made by Tesla's boss, Elon Musk, on not being able to pay for Ukraine's access to Starlink, concerns have risen in Europe regarding securing telecommunication system access to Ukrainians. Lithuanian Foreign Minister expressed these concerns and affirmed that the Foreign Ministers Council discussed the issue on Monday. He also expressed concern over one man having control of Ukraine's access to the internet and that a contractual relationship between Mr Musk and a coalition of countries in this regard is the best solution.

