

#TRENDY THURSDAY

ECONOMY

EU unveils green industrial plan to counter US and Chinese competition

President Ursula von der Leyen announced a plan to boost subsidies and tax breaks for clean-tech companies at the Davos conference. The EU intends to respond more robustly to competition from China and the US by creating a new 'Net-Zero Industry Act' that fast-tracks clean tech and increases funding for strategic sectors. The EU only has a "small window" to invest and stake its claim before the "fossil-fuel economy becomes obsolete", Von der Leyen claimed. The European push for cleantech is primarily a response to the US Inflation Reduction Act approved by Congress which directs about \$369bn to clean energy and energy-security programmes.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Humanitarian Aid: EU increases funding to €1.7 billion for 2023

The EU has adopted its initial annual humanitarian budget of €1.7 billion for 2023. Human-induced humanitarian crises, resulting from wars, conflicts, and outbreaks of violence are the main source of humanitarian needs in the world. The budget will be allocated to addressing the needs of people affected by conflict, insecurity, forced displacement, and climate shocks in various regions around the world as well as in disaster-prone countries to prepare better for natural hazards.

TECHNOLOGY

Protecting gamers and encouraging growth in the video games sector

The European Parliament called for better protection of gamers from addiction and manipulative practices while acknowledging the potential of the gaming sector. Specific measures to protect children include harmonized rules for parents to have control over what games their children play and how much they spend on them. Game developers should prioritize data protection, gender balance, and player safety and should not discriminate against people with disabilities. The Parliament also proposed an annual European online video game award and a European Video Game Strategy to support the further development of the sector.

ECONOMY

Europeans concerned by cost of living crisis and expect additional EU measures

The latest Eurobarometer survey finds that the rising cost of living is the most pressing worry for 93% of Europeans. High support for the EU remains stable, and citizens expect the EU to continue working on solutions to mitigate the effects of the crises. The second most mentioned worry is the threat of poverty and social exclusion (82%), followed by climate change and the spread of the war in Ukraine to other countries (81%). Citizens are not satisfied by the actions taken either at the national or at the EU level to tackle the rising cost of living, with only a third of Europeans expressing satisfaction.

EMPLOYMENT

Commission warns of shrinking workforce in many EU regions

The Commission has expressed its interest to help European regions to train, retain, and attract workers in an effort to limit the negative impact of the demographic transition on regional economies and address the decline of the working-age population. The Commission will launch a pilot project to support EU regions, an initiative to help retain young people, facilitate collaboration between EU countries and regions and provide member states with a support tool to develop national and regional reforms.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste shipments: MEPs push for tighter EU rules

The European Parliament has adopted its negotiating position to revise EU procedures and control measures for waste shipments. The revised legislation aims to protect the environment and human health more effectively while taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by waste to achieve the EU's goals of a zero-pollution economy. The adopted text supports explicitly banning shipments of all wastes destined for disposal within the EU, except if authorized in limited and well-justified cases. EU exports of hazardous waste to non-OECD countries would also be prohibited.