

# #TRENDY THURSDAY

## ECONOMY

### **Lagarde confirms ECB will raise rates again in March**

The European Central Bank (ECB) plans to raise its interest rates by 50 basis points, despite the eurozone's improving economic outlook. The move will bring the bank's total increase to 3.5 percentage points since July 2021. The ECB is due to publish updated economic forecasts at its March meeting, helping it to formulate future monetary policy. The increase would make rates restrictive, or high enough to slow consumption and investment, reducing the pressure on prices. The move would also guard against the risk of a persistent upward shift in inflation expectations.

## ENVIRONMENT

### **EU Parliament gives green light to combustion engine ban from 2035**

The Parliament has approved a deal to phase out internal combustion engine (ICE) passenger vehicles from 2035. The ruling means that new cars and vans must not emit emissions from 2035, and has been backed by the European Commission and member states. However, some politicians, including conservative European People's Party MEPs, have criticised the compromise, arguing that the ban would make little difference to CO2 reduction targets, while the automotive industry has warned against extending the ruling to include heavy commercial vehicles such as trucks and buses.

## HEALTH

### **Parliament sets up new Public Health subcommittee**

The Parliament has established a new permanent subcommittee for public health, with 30 members. The subcommittee, created under the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, will focus on programmes and actions related to public health, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products, bioterrorism, the European Medicines Agency, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The ENVI committee will remain responsible for voting on legislative proposals. The list of members will be announced at a subsequent plenary session.

## TECHNOLOGY

### **MEPs back deploying new EU satellites to protect government communications**

The Parliament has given the green light for a new network of IRIS<sup>2</sup> telecommunication satellites, costing €2.4 billion, to be deployed from 2024. The satellites will provide a secure communications infrastructure for EU government bodies and agencies, emergency services, and European delegations globally. The move will ensure the EU's strategic autonomy in the area of secure government communications in the face of increasing cyber security threats, with the scheme's environmental provisions also strengthened.

## TECHNOLOGY

### **Semiconductors: MEPs ready to start talks on new law to boost EU chips industry**

MEPs has set out its negotiating position on draft bills related to increasing the production and innovation of chips, and responding to shortages. The proposals focus on next-generation semiconductors and quantum chips and creating a network of centres to address the skills shortage and attract new talent to research, design and production. The draft bill also includes a crisis response mechanism that would allow for the prioritisation of supplies for products particularly affected by shortages, and common purchasing for member states.

## ENERGY

### **REPowerEU: Energy measures to be added to national recovery plans**

The Parliament have approved adding energy measures from the REPowerEU plan to national recovery plans, to increase energy independence, speed up the green transition, and tackle energy poverty. MS applying for additional funds through amended recovery and resilience plans will be required to include measures to save energy, produce clean energy and diversify energy supplies. The new rules will cover measures retroactively from early 2022, and MEPs ensured that the measures would support investments to tackle energy poverty for vulnerable households and enterprises.