

#TRENDY THURSDAY

DIGITAL

EU lawmakers set to settle on OECD definition for Artificial Intelligence

The Parliament has agreed to adopt the definition of Artificial Intelligence (AI) used by the OECD to close a contentious point of the AI Act. The AI Act aims to regulate the technology based on its potential to cause harm, and a right to explanation is also under discussion. The definition of AI will play a significant role in defining the scope of the EU's AI rulebook. A revised text is expected to be released by co-rapporteurs Brando Benifei and Dragoş Tudorache. Other definitions, such as those for significant risk and biometric authentication and identification, were also agreed upon."

EUROPEAN UNION

EU Commission wants 10% of critical raw materials mined in Europe

The Commission is planning to introduce targets for the mining, recycling, and processing of critical raw materials used in the EU to be done within the bloc, aiming for 10%-40% self-sufficiency by 2030. The proposed Critical Raw Materials Act also aims to diversify supply chains and prevent dependence on a single third country for over 70% of imports. The regulation includes special treatment for "strategic projects" which will receive streamlined permitting processes and financial support from member states.

EMPLOYMENT

EU Commissioner calls for better pay for essential professions

The European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, has called on member states to improve the recognition, pay, and working conditions of certain professions, such as care jobs, to make them more attractive to Europeans. Schmit emphasized that member states should not rely solely on third-country immigration to address labor shortages and that better pay and working conditions are needed to attract people to these professions.

ENVIRONMENT

LIFE programme: EU invests more than €116 million in nature, environment and climate Strategic Projects

The Commission has announced an investment of over €116 million in eight major projects across seven Member States through the new LIFE Programme's Strategic Projects. The funding will support projects related to nature conservation and restoration, water quality and waste management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, with the aim of achieving the EU's climate and environmental targets. These projects are expected to attract additional funds from other EU funding sources, national funds, and private sector investment.

TRADE

A new way forward on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland

The Commission and the UK government have reached a political agreement in principle on the Windsor Framework, which includes joint solutions to address practical challenges faced by citizens and businesses in Northern Ireland. The solutions cover customs, agri-food, medicines, VAT, and excise. New customs arrangements include an expanded trusted trader scheme, simplifying procedures and declarations, while a permanent solution ensures access to medicines for Northern Ireland.

EUROPEAN UNION

EU Commission to police public deficits again in 2024

The Commission has revoked the general escape clause that suspended the EU's fiscal rules during the pandemic and plans to launch "Excessive Deficit Procedures" in spring 2024. The Commission urged MS to limit growth in current spending rather than cutting investment to avoid damaging economic growth. There will be enhanced engagement with Northern Ireland stakeholders on Protocol-related matters, including a new emergency mechanism, the Stormont Brake.