

#TRENDY THURSDAY

EUROPEAN UNION

Spaniards face EU elections with ideological confusion, says expert

Spanish citizens approach the 2024 EU elections with skepticism and confusion, mixing national and European interests. The blurred line between national and European issues poses challenges for EU decision-makers and their electoral campaigns. Recent events like the pandemic and joint initiatives have increased citizens' interest in a Europe that provides protection and addresses their vulnerabilities, although there is still a lack of understanding about the EU's functioning and its impact on individual voters.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Heightened cyber attacks threat before Council of Europe summit in Reykjavik

In the run-up to the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik, there has been a notable increase in attempted cyber attacks targeting Icelandic infrastructure, believed to be carried out by groups sympathetic to Russia. The attacks, known as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, aim to cause temporary system collapse rather than steal data. While the incidents so far have not resulted in major damage, cyber security teams and infrastructure operators remain vigilant and prepared for potential disruptions.

DIGITAL

EU approves Microsoft-Activision merger, at odds with UK, US regulators

The EU antitrust authorities have approved Microsoft's acquisition of gaming company Activision Blizzard, following an investigation into competition concerns. Microsoft made commitments to address the regulator's initial concerns, including ensuring equal access to Activision's games for rival gaming companies and offering free licenses to consumers in the European Economic Area. However, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) rejected the proposed solutions and blocked the acquisition, while the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is also scrutinizing the deal.

EUROPEAN UNION

2024 EU elections confirmed between 6 and 9 June

The next Parliament elections are set to take place between 6 and 9 June 2024, as no unanimous decision on an alternative date was reached among member states. The current EU electoral law defaults to early June for the elections. This decision poses challenges for incoming MEPs, who will have limited time to settle in, form alliances, and make important decisions regarding the new European Commission composition. Some MEPs have criticized the outdated electoral law, which has remained unchanged since 1976 despite ongoing European integration efforts.

ENVIRONMENT

No to pesticide cuts? No gene editing proposal. Commission official warns

MEPs have endorsed new rules for Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems in Europe, which aim to ensure a human-centric and ethical development of AI. The rules follow a risk-based approach and establish obligations for providers and users, depending on the level of risk the AI can generate. MEPs substantially amended the list to include bans on intrusive and discriminatory uses of AI systems and expanded the classification of high-risk areas to include harm to people's health, safety, fundamental rights, or the environment.

ECONOMY

EU Commission presents 'most ambitious customs reform since 1968'

The Commission has proposed an ambitious overhaul of the EU's Customs Union, including the establishment of an EU Customs Data Hub and a new EU Customs Authority. The Data Hub aims to streamline customs declarations and reduce administrative burdens for importers, while the Customs Authority will enhance risk prioritization and coordination among member states. The proposal seeks to address increasing trade flows, particularly in e-commerce, and ensure closer scrutiny of supply chains.