

# #TRENDY THURSDAY

## POLITICS

### MEPs call for 'urgent' debate into Russian influence scandal

If EU lawmakers or candidate have taken money from Russia, "They must be exposed," says Renew chief. The Czech government on Wednesday sanctioned the news site Voice of Europe, saying it was part of a pro-Russian influence operation. Belgian PM Alexander De Croo came out Thursday saying Russia had approached MEPs and "paid to promote Russian. In response, the president of the liberal Renew group, Valérie Hayer, who is also Macron's top candidate for the EU election, called for an "urgent debate" in Parliament in a letter to Metsola. This debate should take place at the next plenary session.

## ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

### France must not cave to Brussels on renewables, says ex-energy minister Pannier-Runacher

France should continue refusing to include renewable targets in its energy-climate plan, which will be submitted to the European Commission in June, the country's former energy minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher said this week.

This back-and-forth about including renewable targets in the energy-climate plan has been going on since last November when France submitted its National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) to the Commission. This laid out its climate and energy targets for the coming years but did not include any renewable targets.

## ECONOMY

### Eurozone inflation fall defies projections, encouraging hopes of ECB interest rate cuts

Eurozone inflation overshot analysts' expectations on Wednesday (3 April), with headline prices falling back to their lowest level in three years and core inflation numbers dropping to their lowest in two years in March – boosting hopes of rate cuts ahead of the European Central Bank's (ECB) meeting next week. EU's official statistics office Eurostat reported that headline inflation dropped from 2.6% in February to 2.4% in March: the lowest recorded rate since July 2021. Despite the strong decline in price pressures, analysts overwhelmingly expect the ECB to maintain rates at their current record-high levels at its meeting next Thursday (11 April)

## DEFENSE

### Spanish PM asks Israel to 'clarify' Gaza strike on humanitarian aid workers

Spain's PM Pedro Sánchez demanded Israel to clarify the circumstances of what he called a 'brutal' air strike on central Gaza, which claimed the lives of seven volunteers from the NGO World Central Kitchen, run by Spanish chef José Andrés. "I demand and hope that the Israeli government clarifies the circumstances of this brutal attack that has taken the lives of seven people who were only engaged in cooperating", told Spanish press. Both Commission and Council Presidents showed too their concerns about the situation in Gaza. An independent Israeli body will investigate the attack.

## EUROPEAN UNION

### European Parliament demands action over Russian interference allegations, worry about election fallout

EP will demand swift action over Russian interference allegations and plan to debate the issue, fearing the scandal's impact on the upcoming elections. This comes after an investigation by the Czech authorities uncovered a pro-Russian influence operation in Europe involving Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk and the news Voice of Europe. Political groups are now demanding action to shield the institution and its reputation ahead of the elections. "A full and transparent internal investigation by the President of the EP is now needed," said Renew Europe Group President. In a letter to Metsola, where he called for "a debate and resolution".

## AGRI FOOD

### New French agricultural law puts food sovereignty on an equal footing with environmental protections

Following a promise made to protesting farmers, Paris presented a new draft of the agriculture law focusing on food sovereignty and making it a priority of EU and national public policy, on equal footing with environmental sustainability. The law "puts food sovereignty at the heart of parliamentary and public debate" as a "structuring element of public policy," officials of the French Agriculture Ministry affirmed. It includes provisions to fulfill promises made by the French government regarding tax removal on diesel fuel for agriculture, as well as administrative simplifications.