

#TRENDY THURSDAY

HEALTH

Health not a priority in EU Council's 2024-2029 strategic agenda

The European Council's leaked draft of the EU's Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029 largely omits health as a priority, focusing instead on security and defense challenges. This shift, surprising to many MEPs, contrasts sharply with the previous agenda and recent Council conclusions emphasizing the importance of health. Health is mentioned only twice, grouped with broader issues like AI and defense, leading to criticism from various EU lawmakers who stress the importance of healthcare in light of recent pandemics and ongoing health risks. The draft is a clear contrast from the Council's 2019-2024 agenda, which promised "good access to healthcare."

ENVIRONMENT & NATURE

Opening remarks by Commissioners Sinkevičius and Hoekstra at the Environment Council press conference

The Environment Council Press Conference took place on Monday. There, environment ministers met and reached a general approach on how the implementation of the EU Green Deal was going, and demonstrated once again EU Commitment with the issue, in a moment of uncertainty right after the Elections. Nature Restoration law was formally adopted. Commissioner Sinkevičius expressed gratitude to the Belgian presidency for a productive Council meeting, highlighting the continued progress of the Green Deal. He enhanced the adoption as crucial for reversing biodiversity loss and aiding climate change mitigation. He also discussed advancements in the Waste Framework Directive, Green Claims proposal, and Soil Monitoring proposal.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature restoration law: Council gives final green light

On Monday, the Council formally adopted the first-ever regulation on nature restoration, targeting the restoration of at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need by 2050. This regulation sets legally binding targets for various ecosystems, from terrestrial to marine and urban, aiming to mitigate climate change, natural disasters, and restore nature. Alain Maron, Minister for Climate Transition of the Brussels-Capital Region, praised this significant achievement, highlighting the urgency of addressing biodiversity collapse and fulfilling international commitments. The regulation prioritizes Natura 2000 sites and introduces measures for pollinator protection and ecosystem-specific restoration.



EUROPEAN UNION

France's next government will have to tussle with EU's spending police

France's next government will need to address the EU's rebuke for excessive spending to avoid sanctions, with potential leadership by Marine Le Pen's far-right party. President Macron's centrist party faces potential electoral defeat, with Le Pen's National Rally and leftwing rivals' economic plans potentially exacerbating the financial situation. The European Commission criticized France, Italy, and five other countries for exceeding the EU's spending limits, signaling stricter enforcement of fiscal rules. France's deficit stood at 5.5% of GDP in 2023, and its debt at 112.4%. The EU's Excessive Deficit Procedure has been reintroduced to control spending in countries with high deficits, including France.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Dialogue with Commission and consumer authorities brings Vinted to improve pricing information and transparency for consumers

Following a dialogue with the Commission and national consumer authorities, Vinted has improved its pricing information to comply with EU consumer law. Complaints had been received about hidden fees and lack of clear refund processes. Vinted has now updated its platform to inform consumers upfront about total prices, including the 'buyer protection fee', and to clarify refund procedures for non-delivery or counterfeit goods. However, Vinted did not agree to show delivery fees at the start of the purchase process, prompting the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network to consider further enforcement actions. The CPC Network will monitor Vinted's compliance, with potential sanctions if commitments are not met.

EUROPEAN UNION

European Parliament ready to engage, President Metsola tells the European Council

During the informal leaders meeting, held in Brussels on Monday, EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola emphasized Parliament's commitment to ensuring a smooth process for electing the next EC President. She highlighted voter turnout as the highest in over 30 years. The Parliament's Conference of Presidents confirmed the Lead Candidate process, with the EPP as the largest political group, nominating the incumbent as their candidate for EC President. Metsola stressed the need to form a qualified majority in Parliament for the Commission President, reflecting the citizens' call for defending EU values, security, and economic growth.