

#TRENDY THURSDAY

DIGITAL & ENERGY

Commission endorses positive preliminary assessment of the Netherlands' first payment request for €1.3 billion under the Recovery and Resilience Facility

The European Commission has endorsed a positive preliminary assessment of the Netherlands' first payment request for €1.3 billion under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Netherlands' plan, backed by €5.4 billion in grants, aims to drive the green transition, digitalisation, and labour market reforms through 25 milestones and 5 targets. Key measures include reforms in the pension system, environmental taxation, and digital transformation, as well as investments in training, quantum technologies, and e-health. The assessment has been sent to the Economic and Financial Committee for further approval before the payment is made.

EUROPEAN UNION

Statement at the European Parliament Plenary by President Ursula von der Leyen, candidate for a second mandate 2024-2029

The European Union's future looks ambitious. The bloc prioritizes economic growth through streamlined business practices and support for small ventures, while simultaneously investing heavily in clean energy and developing a "Clean Industrial Deal." Strategic investments target key sectors like agriculture and digital technologies, with a dedicated "European Savings and Investments Union" fueling innovation. Security concerns are addressed through a potential European Defense Union, emphasizing cooperation while acknowledging NATO's importance. Finally, the EU seeks to strengthen its position by welcoming new members like Ukraine and Moldova, all while prioritizing social issues like youth well-being and a high quality of life for its citizens.

AGRIFOOD

Economists warn no easy fix for low farm prices as EU launches agrifood observatory

The EU's new Agri-Food Chain Observatory aims to improve transparency in food prices and distribution, responding to farmer protests over perceived unfair compensation. Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski launched the initiative to enhance price transparency and enforce EU rules against unfair trading practices, but challenges remain, including differing enforcement levels across member states and concerns over implementing minimum prices. Agricultural economists caution against simple solutions, emphasizing structural changes and market diversification to address low farmer remuneration effectively.

SUSTAINABILITY

EU to invest record €7 billion into sustainable, safe and smart transport infrastructure

The European Commission has allocated over €7 billion to 134 transport projects through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). This funding will enhance railways, waterways, and maritime routes across Europe. Major initiatives include improving cross-border rail connections like Rail Baltica and the Lyon-Turin line, as well as upgrading ports in countries like Ireland, Spain, and Germany. Projects also aim to boost road safety and air traffic management. Additionally, the new TEN-T Regulation, effective July 18, will support the development of a sustainable and resilient EU transport network.

HEALTH

Statement by the Commission on the General Court's judgments on the access to documents cases concerning the purchase agreements for COVID-19 vaccines

The Commission acknowledges the General Court's rulings on COVID-19 vaccine contract transparency and will analyze their implications. The Court supported most of the Commission's positions on protecting commercial interests in the contracts but highlighted areas where more detailed justifications were needed for withholding information. The Commission remains committed to transparency while balancing legal obligations to safeguard taxpayer interests and maintain commercial confidentiality in COVID-19 contracts.

MIGRATION

Commission eyes extra migration restrictions in bid for right wing support

EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson will propose changes to the EU's visa regime in July to address irregular migration and enhance border security. Her letters to member states outline upcoming measures under Article 25a of the Visa Code, focusing on suspending visa privileges for countries not accepting the return of their nationals. Additionally, Johansson calls for swift progress on revising the visa suspension mechanism to deter irregular migration effectively. The Commission will allocate €150 million for border surveillance to strengthen EU border security amid rising pressures from organized migration and hybrid threats.