

#TRENDY THURSDAY

AGRICULTURE

The Council sets post-2027 agricultural agenda

The 27 EU agriculture ministers have unanimously approved conclusions for the future common agricultural policy. They aim to improve farmers' positions in the food supply chain, enhance sector competitiveness and focus on generational renewal and women's participation. The Council also proposed incentives for farmers adopting sustainable practices, reducing bureaucracy, simplifying procedures, easing reporting requirements, and strengthening risk management for climate adaptation. Additionally, they emphasized increasing investments in research and innovation to boost competitiveness.

DIGITAL

Seven AI-leading technology hubs will land in Europe in 2025-2026

The European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC) has selected seven proposals to establish and operate the first AI factories across Europe in Barcelona, Bologna, Kajaani, Bissen, Linköping, Stuttgart and Athens. This €1.5 billion investment will bring AI-optimised supercomputers and advanced infrastructure for developing AI models. Involving 15 EU member states and two participating states, these hubs aim to promote industrial AI applications and support AI startups and SMEs in key EU sectors.

EUROPEAN UNION

The Council greenlights Bulgaria and Romania entry to Schengen area

Bulgaria and Romania will be part of the Schengen area from January 1st 2025. EU member states have decided to remove checks on persons at the internal land borders with and between Bulgaria and Romania and permit them to fully become countries of the Schengen area. The European Council stressed both countries' entry not only will strengthen the Schengen area itself but it will further strengthen the internal market, increase travel, trade and tourism, making the EU stronger at a global scale. Since their accession to the EU, both countries have applied parts of the Schengen legal framework, including those related to external border controls, police cooperation and the use of the Schengen Information System.

EUROPEAN UNION

EU-Mercosur trade deal signed and sealed

The EU and Mercosur have reached a political and trade agreement to strengthen cooperation in geopolitics, economy, sustainability, and security. The deal, a significant milestone, enhances political and economic ties, boosts competitiveness and opens new trade and investment opportunities. Mercosur is the EU's 10th-largest trade partner to where EU firms exported 56€ billion in goods in 2023. The agreement provides preferential access to EU exports, supporting SMEs and promotes sustainable growth with a focus on net-zero industries like renewable energy technologies.

INTERNATIONAL

Syrian regime overturned, Arab country's future looks uncertain

Two weeks after launching a major offensive in North Western Syria, the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and allied factions reached Damascus, forcing President Bashar Al-Assad to flee. The EU's High Representative called the rebel takeover a "historic moment for the Syrian people" and urged all parties to avoid violence, protect civilians, and uphold international law. Despite this, the conflict continues with Turkish-backed rebels advancing in Kurdish areas and Israeli forces carrying out over 350 strikes on Syrian military targets. A transitional president has taken over, calling for "stability and calm".

ENERGY

No more Russian fuel says new energy commissioner

Dan Jørgensen, new commissioner for Energy and Housing, has advanced as his "main priority" a roadmap to sever the EU's energy ties with Russia. Since the start of the Ukrainian war, the EU has reduced Russian LNG imports by two-thirds, and Jørgensen plans to continue this, especially with the expiration of the gas transit agreement via Ukraine in January 2025. While some countries, like Hungary and Slovakia, are reluctant, 10 EU capitals have called for sanctions on Russia's nuclear and LNG sectors. Jørgensen credits the US for helping reduce dependency on Russia and will present his roadmap in his first 100 days in office.