

#TRENDY THURSDAY

HEALTH

New action plan to cyber secure healthcare sector

The European Commission has announced an action plan to protect the health sector from the growing number of cyberattacks targeting hospitals and medical facilities in recent years. The plan, with specific actions expected to be revealed in 2025 and 2026, includes enhancing preparedness measures, establishing a Cybersecurity Support Centre for hospitals and healthcare providers under ENISA, setting up a rapid response service within the EU Cybersecurity Reserve, and promoting the use of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox. Announced as a priority in Von der Leyen political guidelines, the plan will soon be launched for public consultation.

DIGITAL

EU tech-companies to face restrictions

The US's decision to extend export restrictions on AI microchips to several European countries' companies has raised concerns in EU institutions. The new measures, which exclude 18 US "key allies and partners" meeting "high security and trust standards", restrict access to over a dozen EU member states adding them to a list that already includes China, Russia, and Iran. In fact, all middle-eastern EU countries, along with Luxembourg and Portugal, will eventually face restrictions to advanced technology acquisition. In a joint statement, Executive Vice-President Virkkunen and Commissioner Šeřčovič expressed their concerns to the US administration.

EUROPEAN UNION

2025 humanitarian package revealed

To maintain its long-standing commitment to humanitarian assistance, the EU will allocate an initial budget of €1.9 billion for the most pressing global crises in 2025. The planned package, which aims to address the needs of over 300 million people in need of humanitarian aid worldwide, includes €120 million for Gaza's humanitarian needs, €140 million for Ukraine, and €510 million to provide humanitarian assistance in Africa. Additionally, the package will support crises in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the MENA region. This initial allocation will be implemented by European humanitarian NGOs, partner organizations, international missions, and specialized agencies within the Member States.

ENVIRONMENT

Commission seeks next European greenest city

The 2027 edition of the European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards is now open for European cities to submit their candidacies. The Commission has launched this annual initiative to promote and reward the efforts of towns and cities committed to green transition. The performance of the competing cities will be assessed by a panel of independent urban experts according to seven environmental indicators: air quality; water; biodiversity, green areas and sustainable land use; waste and circular economy; noise; climate change mitigation; and climate change adaptation. The winners of the Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards will receive €600,000 and €200,000, respectively.

HEALTH

Commission sets consultative group to assess health emergencies

The newly established expert committee is tasked with supporting and advising the European Commission and the EU member states at all stages of public health emergencies. It will assess the risk of public health crises, advising the Commission on whether they should be considered an emergency. The group, vital for the EU health security architecture, has been created to provide more effective responses to transbordering health threats after the Covid-19 pandemic precedent. Composed by 44 independent experts from various fields, the committee held its first in-person meeting this week in Luxembourg, chaired by health commissioner Várhelyi.

ENVIRONMENT

EU cities fail in green targets

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) special report on urban pollution in the EU shows little progress within European cities. The study, which aimed to check whether the existing EU environmental framework has been implemented properly and whether the measures taken have been effective in improving air quality and lowering noise levels, selecting Athens, Barcelona and Krakow as cases of study, reveals that low-emission traffic spaces helped to tackle cities' air pollution but, however, increased noise levels in surrounding areas, even in traffic-free zones in some cases. Therefore, the report finds "virtually impossible" to reach the European Green Deal target of reducing the number of EU citizens chronically exposed to noise by 2030.