

#TRENDY THURSDAY

DEFENCE

Commission unveils EU Defence White Paper

The European Commission has presented its major European strategy on security and defence aimed at strengthening EU defence capabilities in support of Ukraine. The White Paper on European Defence calls on Member States to close their capability gaps by investing in security and defence, advocates for a deeper integration of the European and Ukrainian defence industries and urges EU countries to accelerate defence industrial transformation. This new approach to defence is accompanied by the committed ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030, which will contribute to strengthening military capabilities across the EU.

TECH

Industrial tech companies call for 'radical action'

Over 100 tech companies have called on the European Commission to take further action to achieve technological sovereignty in Europe. In a letter addressed to President Von der Leyen and Tech Commissioner Virkkunen, companies such as Airbus, Nextcloud and Scaleway have urged the Commission to reduce Europe's dependencies on critical technologies in order to accelerate productivity growth and ensure economic security for the industry. The signatories called for concrete actions, including prioritising European tech products, creating a Sovereign Infrastructure Fund to support public investments and emphasised the need to address digital infrastructure needs.

ENLARGEMENT

Moldova takes a significant step toward EU membership

The European Council has given its final approval to the largest EU financial support package for Moldova. The Reform and Growth Facility is the financial cornerstone of the Moldova Growth Plan, presented in October last year, and aims to accelerate Moldova's integration into the EU single market. The facility will allocate €1.9 billion to support Moldova's economic growth and energetic independence, ultimately contributing to the country's economic convergence with the EU and advancing the EU's Comprehensive Strategy for Moldova's Energy Independence and Resilience. Payments will be released twice a year until 2027, provided that all relevant conditions outlined in the Reform Agenda have been met.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Law amendment put off to spring

The European Commission Executive Vice-President, Teresa Ribera, announced on Tuesday that the proposed amendment to the European Climate Law will be postponed until the second quarter of 2025. Initially expected to be unveiled alongside the Clean Industrial Deal in the first quarter of this year, the 90% emission-reduction target for 2040 will now be presented in the spring. This new legislative proposal aims to set a new 2040 climate target, falling between the committed 55% reduction target for 2030 and the net-zero target by 2050. The European Climate Law Amendment will be crucial for the EU to present its global climate vision at the COP30 Brazil Summit in November.

EUROPEAN UNION

Portugal to face elections in an overwhelming May

Portugal will hold snap national elections on May 18th. President Rebelo de Sousa announced that he will dissolve the country's parliament following Prime Minister Montenegro's resignation after a failed confidence vote last week. Montenegro was accused of conflict of interest by enriching himself through consultancy while serving at the head of the country's executive branch. These legislative elections will be the third to be held in Portugal since 2023 and will coincide with the Polish and Romanian presidential elections in an exceptional Sunday vote with three EU Member States holding three national elections at once.

HEALTH

Mediterranean countries lead the way in lifespan

According to Eurostat's latest report, the EU's life expectancy reached a record high of 81.5 years in 2023, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. This marks an increase of 3.8 years since data recording began in 2002. However, the report highlights a persistent gap in life expectancy between Western and Eastern countries, with Mediterranean nations generally showing higher rates. Spain leads with 84 years, while Bulgaria has the lowest at 75.8 years. Romania saw the most significant increase since 2019, with a rise of one year. Despite this progress, disparities remain, as 15 EU countries have life expectancies above the EU average, underscoring the divide between Western and Eastern Europe.