

# #TRENDY THURSDAY

## EUROPEAN UNION

### Commission's strategy for a competitive market

The EU executive has presented its committed Single Market Strategy aimed at boosting the EU's internal trade and investment market. The new plan entails a fourth Omnibus simplification package that focuses on removing trade barriers for EU companies. The strategy introduces a new definition for small mid-caps, encompassing businesses with up to 750 employees and either €150 million in turnover or up to €129 million in total assets. This classification will exempt them from certain EU regulations. For companies looking to expand or streamline their operations, this strategy offers significant opportunities within a more accessible and business-friendly European market.

## AGRIFOOD

### MEPs back EU plan to cut on Russian agrifood imports

The European Parliament has approved a 50% tariff hike on key Russian and Belarusian agricultural goods to cut EU dependence and block funding for the war in Ukraine. New duties like sugar, flour, vinegar, and animal feed, alongside a rising tariff on fertilisers—from 6.5% now to €430/tonne by 2028. This move aims to curb imports, boost EU fertiliser production, and encourage market diversification. With 411 votes in favour, the legislation includes strict monitoring to prevent price spikes and protect EU farmers. It also gives farmers time to adapt to market shifts and rising production costs. The regulation must now await formal Council adoption before it can enter into force.

## TECH

### Protecting minors online: EU countries move for harder lines

Greece, France and Spain are calling on the European Commission to adopt stricter rules to protect minors online. They propose establishing a pan-european "Digital Majority Age", setting a clear threshold for access to social networks, mandatory, built-in-age verification systems and parental controls on all devices with internet access sold in the EU, and EU regulations that restrict addictive platform designs—such as autoplay features, pop-ups and excessive personalization. Monitoring this initial proposal will be paramount for stakeholders in the technology, education, health, and child protection sectors to anticipate forthcoming compliance and design obligations across the EU digital landscape.

## ENERGY

### €1.8 billion boost to power clean hydrogen

The European Commission has greenlighted 15 transformative renewable hydrogen projects across five countries, backed by nearly €1 billion in EU funding and an additional €836 million from national budgets. Set to deliver 2.2 million tonnes of clean hydrogen and cut 15 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, these projects will fuel key sectors like transport, chemicals, and shipping. Through the European Hydrogen Bank, the initiative closes the cost gap between green hydrogen and fossil fuels—fast-tracking Europe's energy independence, climate goals, and industrial transformation. For energy leaders and investors, this marks a prime opportunity to engage with the future of Europe's clean hydrogen economy.

## COOPERATION

### €2 billion humanitarian aid package for 2025

The European Commission is ramping up with a bold €2.3 billion humanitarian aid package for 2025, focused on the world's most urgent and complex crises. Announced at the European Humanitarian Forum, this funding targets critical hotspots including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the rapidly worsening crisis in Sudan. The Middle East will also receive vital support, especially for Gaza. In addition, €80 million will be specifically allocated to address the severe humanitarian emergency in Yemen. This essential mobilization equips frontline partners with the resources they need to strengthen their impact where it matters most.

## TRADE

### EU-UK deal: new opportunity era for trade and cooperation

The European Union and the United Kingdom have signed a landmark agreement that redefines post-Brexit cooperation with ambitious, sector-wide impact. From smoother trade and food exports to joint defence initiatives, the deal paves the way for deeper collaboration in agriculture, energy, fisheries, and education. Key wins include simplified border checks, renewed mobility for citizens and students, and enhanced security coordination. This agreement is more than a reset—it marks a significant step towards rebuilding and strengthening EU-UK ties, and represents a strategic leap forward for stakeholders across Europe and the UK.

