

EU NEWS YOU CAN USE

European Commission in Ireland



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Top News

Commission unveils action plan to protect the health sector from cyberattacks

The European Commission this week presented an Action Plan to bolster the cybersecurity of EU hospitals and healthcare providers. The Plan focuses on four priorities: enhanced prevention; better detection and identification of threats; rapid response to cyberattacks; and deterrence. Under the Plan, the EU agency for cybersecurity, ENISA, will establish a pan-European Cybersecurity Support Centre to provide hospitals and healthcare providers with tailored guidance, tools, services and training. EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi said "Patients must feel confident that their most sensitive information is secure. Healthcare professionals must have faith in the systems they use daily to save lives".



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Commission disburses first €3 billion to Ukraine of its part of the G7 loan, to be repaid with proceeds from immobilised Russian assets

Last Friday, the European Commission disbursed the first €3 billion tranche of its exceptional Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) loan for Ukraine. This loan, amounting up to €18.1 billion, represents the EU's contribution to the G7-led Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loans initiative, which collectively aims to provide approximately €45 billion in financial support to Ukraine. Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said: "With this loan, the aggressor is paying for the destruction it is causing in Ukraine as these loans will be repaid from the proceeds of immobilised Russian state assets. We will continue to provide Ukraine with all necessary assistance to end Russian aggression".



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Commissioner McGrath visits the Netherlands

Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Michael McGrath, is in the Hague this week for meetings with Eurojust, Europol, the Register of Damage for Ukraine and the International Criminal Court, to strengthen important cooperation on justice matters with key institutions based in the city. The Commissioner said he was: "Pleased to be visiting key European and international institutions on my mission to the Netherlands and to discuss our cooperation on justice matters. Through strong collaboration with Eurojust, Europol and the International Criminal Court, we are building a united front against transnational crime and are safeguarding Europe's values. I also met with the Register of Damage for Ukraine to discuss claims for damage, loss and injury caused by Russia's war of aggression. Our support for the people of Ukraine is unwavering." Follow the Commissioner on X at the link below for updates on his visit.



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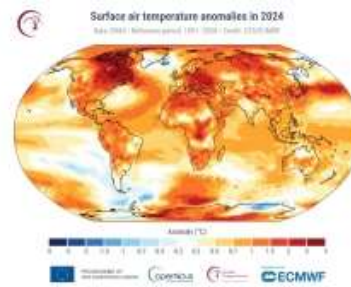
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[See also](#)[Follow Commissioner McGrath on LinkedIn](#)[more](#)

Other news

2024 is officially the hottest year on record - Copernicus

In its Global Climate Highlights 2024, published last Friday, the Copernicus Climate Change Service confirmed that 2024 was officially the hottest year on record. It also became the first year with an average temperature clearly exceeding 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level – a threshold set by the Paris Agreement to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. Multiple global records were broken, for greenhouse gas levels, and for both air temperature and sea surface temperature, contributing to extreme events, including floods, heatwaves and wildfires.

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Commission calls on Member States to review outbound investments and assess risks to economic security

The European Commission published a Recommendation this week that calls on EU Member States to review outbound investments of their companies into non-EU countries. The Recommendation applies to three technology areas of strategic importance as well as the highest risk – semiconductors, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies – and calls on Member States to assess risks to economic security potentially arising from such transactions.

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President von der Leyen establishes fourteen Project Groups to deliver on political priorities

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has established fourteen Project Groups in the Commission. The aim of the Groups is to ensure preparation and political steer in the delivery of initiatives from conception to implementation. Each Project Group has its own mandate, composition, duration and working methods. And each Group will be chaired by a Member of the College, designated by the President. Ireland's Commissioner Michael McGrath will chair the Group on the European Democracy Shield.



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New EU rules on Health Technology Assessment open up a new era for patient access to innovation

Last Sunday, 12 January, the Regulation on Health Technology Assessment (HTA) entered into application. The new rules create an EU framework for the assessment of health technologies, such as medicines and medical devices. This will help national authorities to make more timely and informed decisions on the pricing and reimbursement of health technologies and streamline the procedure for health technology developers. EU Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi said: "With these new rules we want to ensure faster entry into the market for pharmaceuticals with lower costs, less red tape and faster administrative procedures".



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EU will provide €1.9 billion in initial humanitarian aid for 2025

The European Union announced this week that it will provide an initial humanitarian budget of €1.9 billion for 2025. Of this amount, the largest sums will go to the Middle East and North Africa (€470 million) and Africa (€510 million). Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib said: "With more than 300 million people needing humanitarian assistance in 2025, the EU is upholding its commitment to help those most in need as a leading humanitarian aid donor. Our humanitarian aid funding will support our partners on the ground – the UN family, the Red Cross/Red Crescent family, international and local government and non-governmental organisations – to provide life-saving, emergency assistance where needed".



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Commission acts against dumped imports of erythritol from China

The European Commission imposed definitive anti-dumping duties on imports of the sweetener erythritol from China. The measures were taken to ensure a level playing field for EU industry, which was threatened with definitive closure. A preceding investigation showed that dumped imports from China were seriously injuring the Union industry, which sustained double-digit losses and was forced to halt its erythritol production towards the end of 2022. The EU market is worth €30 million annually.



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New €148 million EU humanitarian aid package for Ukraine

The European Commission this week announced a new €148 million EU humanitarian aid package for Ukraine. This funding will continue to support vital humanitarian aid in both Ukraine and Moldova, and will bring the total of humanitarian aid allocated by the European Commission to over €1.1 billion. Of the new package, €140 million is allocated for humanitarian projects in Ukraine and €8 million is allocated for humanitarian projects in Moldova. Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib said: "We will continue to do everything in our power to help those affected by this crisis with all our partners and the Ukrainian authorities. This war is a threat to all of us. We must stand together at this critical moment for Europe".



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EU announces new €120 million humanitarian aid package for Gaza

As part of the EU's long standing commitment to support Palestinians in need and in light of the latest developments in the region, the European Commission has announced a new aid package for Gaza worth €120 million. This brings total EU humanitarian assistance to Gaza to over €450 million since 2023 and comes in addition to the EU Air Bridge Flights which have delivered over 3,800 tonnes of aid. President von der Leyen said: "The ceasefire and hostage release agreement offers hope the region desperately needed. But the humanitarian situation remains grim in Gaza. Europe will channel €120 million of aid in 2025, alongside tons of in-kind aid, to keep supporting Palestinians."



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EU provides €40 million in humanitarian aid in Ethiopia

The European Commission is to provide €40 million in initial humanitarian aid to Ethiopia for 2025. This brings total EU humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia to €436.5 million since 2020. The new aid package will support EU humanitarian partners on the ground in providing protection, food aid, access to clean water and hygiene, shelter, basic essential items, nutritional assistance, disease prevention and access to primary health care, and education and protection for children caught up in humanitarian crises.



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Commission to assess next steps for tackling discrimination in China's public procurement market for medical devices

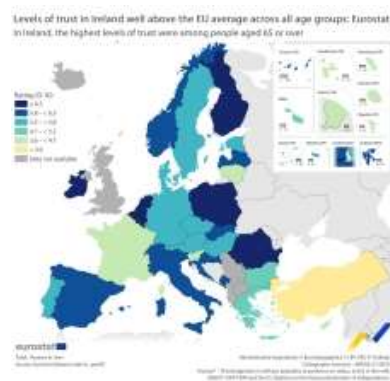
A report published this week, highlighting continued discrimination against EU medical devices in China's public procurement market, will inform the Commission's assessment on what measures should be taken to restore the EU-China level playing field in this area. The report presents clear evidence of China limiting the access of EU medical devices producers to its government contracts in an unfair and discriminatory way. The EU remains committed to engaging China in a constructive dialogue aimed at addressing and eliminating the discriminatory measures. However, in the absence of an acceptable solution, the Commission will now carefully assess the possibility of adopting IPI measures.

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Statistic of the week

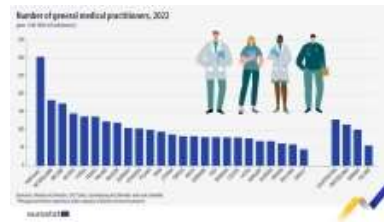
Levels of trust in Ireland well above the EU average across all age groups: Eurostat

According to Eurostat, the estimated average rating of trust in others among people aged 16 and older in the EU stood at 5.8 (on a scale from 0 'do not trust at all' to 10 'trust completely') in 2023. In Ireland, the trust rating stood at 6.7, joint 4th highest in the EU with the Netherlands, and after Finland (7.3), Romania (7.2), and Poland (6.9). The lowest levels of trust in others were recorded in Cyprus (3.6). In most EU countries, the highest levels of trust in others were reported by people aged 16 to 29. Ireland, however, was one of 5 countries where people aged 65 or older (7.0) had higher trust levels than other age groups.

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Ireland had the second highest number of GPs per head of population in 2022: Eurostat

According to Eurostat, there were 481,000 practising generalist doctors (GPs) in the EU in 2022. The Netherlands had the highest ratio of practising GPs, with 183.4 per 100,000 people, followed by Ireland (174.1), Austria (146.1) and Cyprus (137.7). A high ratio of GPs, with 304.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, was reported by Portugal, however, this figure refers to physicians licenced to practice, rather than practicing GP's, making it not directly comparable. Greece (45.8 per 100,000 inhabitants) and Bulgaria (59.8) had the lowest ratios. The figures also show that Ireland had the 4th lowest share of GPs aged 55 years or over.

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Ireland records second largest drop in greenhouse gas emissions intensity: Eurostat

Ireland (-50%) recorded the second largest drop in greenhouse gas emissions intensity in the EU between 2013 and 2023, after Estonia (-61%), according to new Eurostat figures. Over the same period, the EU as a whole recorded a decrease of 32% with Austria (-17%), Lithuania (-17%), and Luxembourg (-19%) recording the lowest drops. The greenhouse gas emissions intensity measures the amount of emissions (measured in CO2 equivalents) per unit of gross value added (measured in euro) in a given economy. A decrease in the emissions intensity means fewer emissions for the same amount of economic value added.

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Agenda

Monday 20 January: Keynote Address by Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (IIEA online event)

On Monday morning 20 January, Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, Senior Expert in Disability and Inclusion at the European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, will address an IIEA online event. Her unit is responsible for the coordination of European policies for persons with disabilities. She works on European disability policies including the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, and the EU implementation of the UNCRPD. Inmaculada has worked on research programmes addressing accessibility as well as assistive technologies and has been Deputy Head of Unit for various disability-related units in the Commission.

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Monday 20 January: Eurogroup meeting, Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available at the link below.

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Monday 20 to Thursday 23 January: European Parliament plenary session, Strasbourg

Daily agendas for this session of the European Parliament can be found at the link below.

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Tuesday 21 January: Economic and Financial Affairs Council, Brussels

Agenda highlights: the programme of the Polish Presidency; competitiveness and regulatory burden; and the state of play of the economic and financial impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.



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Monday 27 January: Agriculture and Fisheries Council, Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available at the link below.



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Monday 27 January: Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available at the link below.



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Tuesday 28 January: General Affairs Council, Brussels

Ministers responsible for European affairs will meet in Brussels in public session to hear a presentation of the priorities of the Polish presidency with a focus on those falling within the remit of the General Affairs Council. They will also hold a country-specific discussion in the framework of the annual rule of law dialogue, focusing on the rule of law situation in Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

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Friday 31 January: Russia’s Political Discourse: Patriotic Policy Critics or Nationalist Opposition? (IIEA online event)

On Friday lunchtime, 31 January, Dr Jade McGlynn, author of Russia’s War and Memory Makers, will address an online IIEA event where she will explore the identity, interactions, and influence of nationalist policy critics within the Russian political landscape, particularly concerning the war in Ukraine. She will discuss how nationalists' criticisms target military strategy and leadership inefficiencies and straddle a line between regime support and vocal opposition. Finally, Dr McGlynn will discuss how nationalist critics continue to exert a tangible, albeit constrained, influence on governmental strategies, prompting shifts in military tactics and policy but doing little to undermine regime stability.



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Monday 3 February: EU leaders meet for informal retreat in Belgium

In a security landscape marked by Russia’s war against Ukraine, growing hybrid and cyberattacks on member states and the situation in the Middle East, EU leaders will discuss European defence and how to strengthen defence capabilities. The Secretary-General of NATO, Mark Rutte, has been invited to a lunch, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Keir Starmer, to a dinner.



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Competitions

European Organic Awards 2025 just launched!

The yearly European Organic Awards, jointly organised by the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, IFOAM Organics Europe and COPA-COGECA, have just been launched. In 2025, the awards scheme will comprise 6 categories and 7 prizes: best organic farmer (female and male); best organic city; best organic region / bio-district; best organic food processing SME; best organic food retailer; and best organic restaurant/food service. In 2023, the Merry Mill, in Vicarstown, Co Laois, won the award for best organic food processing SME.



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Commission launches competition for 2027 European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards

The European Commission is inviting European cities committed to sustainability to apply for the 2027 edition of the European Green Capital (cities with over 100,000 inhabitants) and Green Leaf Awards (cities with over 20,000 inhabitants). These Awards recognise and reward the efforts of European towns and cities that strive to reduce their local and global environmental impact while improving the quality of life for their inhabitants. The winner of the Green Capital Award will receive €600,000 and up to two Green Leaf winners will receive €200,000 each. The deadline for applying is 15 April 2025.



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Applications open for the New European Bauhaus Prizes 2025

The European Commission this week opened applications for two awards celebrating innovation and creativity inspired by the New European Bauhaus (NEB). The NEB Prizes will honour outstanding projects and ideas from individuals, teams, and organisations while the NEB Boost for Small Municipalities will support smaller local governments in implementing transformative projects with a strong community engagement. Visionaries, creatives, and change-makers from across Europe and beyond are invited to submit innovative projects and ideas that reshape the way we live and interact with our environment by 6pm (Irish time) on 14 February 2025.



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Public consultations

Commission launches public feedback period on uniform format for Member States' nature restoration plans

The European Commission has launched a public feedback period on the uniform format for Member States' national restoration plans under the Nature Restoration Regulation. This is a pioneering example of digital planning tools being utilised to limit administrative burden and reuse existing information, adopting the 'report once' approach. The feedback period is open until 7 February 2025.



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