

## EU NEWS YOU CAN USE

European Commission in Ireland



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### Top News

#### Commission unveils the White Paper for European Defence and the ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030

The European Commission this week presented a White Paper on the future of European Defence, together with the ReArm Europe plan. The White Paper presents solutions to close critical capability gaps and build a strong defence industrial base while the the ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030 enables funding of over €800 billion to be mobilised. President von der Leyen said: "The era of the peace dividend is long gone. The security architecture that we relied on can no longer be taken for granted. Europe is ready to step up. We must invest in defence, strengthen our capabilities, and take a proactive approach to security".



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#### Commission unveils Savings and Investments Union strategy to enhance financial opportunities for EU citizens and businesses

The European Commission this week unveiled its strategy for the Savings and Investments Union. It aims to create better financial opportunities for EU citizens, while enhancing the financial system's capability to connect savings with productive investments. Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union, Maria Luís Albuquerque, said: "Europeans are some of the best savers in the world, but many of their savings are sitting in low-yield deposit accounts. At the same time, Europe is struggling to meet its investment needs. With the SIU, we can create a virtuous cycle for the benefit of both citizens and companies, helping Europeans get a better return on their hard-earned savings, while bringing substantial investment into the economy".

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## Commission presents Action Plan to secure a competitive and decarbonised steel and metals industry in Europe

The European Commission is taking action to maintain and expand European industrial capacities in the steel and metals sectors. The Action Plan on Steel and Metals, presented by the Commission this week, is designed to strengthen the sector's competitiveness and safeguard the industry's future. It focuses on 6 pillars: ensuring access to clean and affordable energy; preventing carbon leakage; strengthening European industrial capacities; promoting circularity for metals; defending quality industrial jobs; and de-risking projects through lead markets and public support. President von der Leyen, said: "The steel industry has always been a core engine for European prosperity. Next-generation, clean steel should therefore continue to be manufactured in Europe. That means we have to help our steelmakers who are facing strong headwinds on the global market".

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## Other news

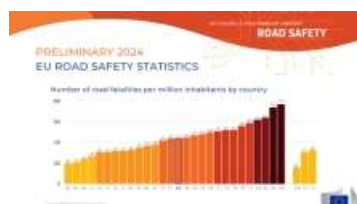
### Commission proposes to extend adequacy decisions for the UK by six months for free and safe data flows

The European Commission this week proposed to adopt an extension of the two 2021 adequacy decisions with the United Kingdom for a period of six months. With this extension, the free flow of data with the UK would be maintained until 27 December 2025. This will allow time for the legislative process to conclude in the UK. Commissioner Michael McGrath, said: "The adequacy decisions are key to our relationship with the UK. They ensure data can flow freely and safely, which is crucial for trade, justice, and law enforcement cooperation".

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### 2024 sees 3% drop in EU road fatalities, yet progress remains slow

According to preliminary figures on road fatalities for 2024 published by the Commission earlier this week, around 19,800 people were killed in road crashes in the EU last year, a slight 3% drop compared to 2023. This equates to 44 deaths per million of population, down from 46 in 2023. Road deaths in Ireland were down from 34 per million population in 2023 to 32 per million in 2024, putting us in 7th lowest position in the EU. The figures also show that most EU Member States, including Ireland, are not on track to meet the EU's goal of halving road deaths by 2030.

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### Commission sends preliminary findings to Alphabet under the Digital Markets Act

The European Commission this week sent two sets of preliminary findings to Alphabet for failing to comply with the Digital Markets Act (DMA), regarding two services for which it has been designated as a gatekeeper. Firstly, the Commission informed Alphabet of its preliminary view that certain features and

functionalities of Google Search treat Alphabet's own services more favourably compared to rival ones. In addition, the Commission has informed Alphabet of its preliminary view that its app marketplace Google Play does not comply with the DMA, as app developers are prevented from freely steering consumers to other channels for better offers.

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## EU mobilises international support for Syria's transition and the region raising €5.8 billion

During the ninth edition of the Brussels Conference on "Standing with Syria: meeting the needs for a successful transition" hosted earlier this week by the European Union, the donor community pledged a total amount of €5.8 billion. The overall figure includes the nearly €2.5 billion pledged by the EU for 2025 and 2026, announced during the Conference by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The total amount pledged by the EU and its Member States amounted to almost €3.4 billion, reaffirming them as the largest donor to Syria and neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees.

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## Commission provides guidance under Digital Markets Act to facilitate development of innovative products on Apple's platforms

The European Commission adopted two decisions under the Digital Markets Act (DMA) specifying the measures that Apple has to take to comply with certain aspects of its interoperability obligation. The Commission is assisting Apple in its compliance by detailing the measures needed for enabling interoperability with iOS for third-party connected devices and by streamlining the process put in place by Apple to handle future requests for interoperability with iPhone and iPad devices.

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## Commission statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in Gaza

The High Representative Kaja Kallas and Commissioners Dubravka Šuica (Mediterranean) and Hadja Lahbib (Equality; Preparedness and Crisis Management) issued a joint statement this week deploring the breakdown of the ceasefire in Gaza and the deaths of civilians, including children, in Israeli airstrikes: "The EU calls on Israel to end its military operations and reiterates its call on Hamas to release all the hostages immediately. It urges Israel to exercise restraint and to resume unimpeded entry of humanitarian aid and electricity to Gaza. We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law."

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## New data shows strong levels of consumer trust, but online threats persist

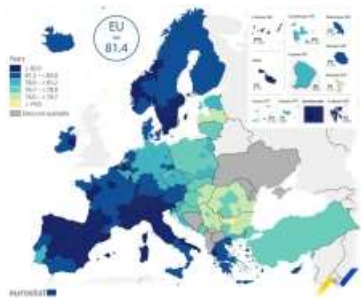
The 2025 Consumer Conditions Scoreboard, published last week, shows that 68% of European consumers feel confident about the safety of the products that they buy, while 70% trust that their consumer rights are respected by traders. The respective figures for Irish consumers are 71% and 77%. However, data from the Scoreboard also shows that online risks for consumers persist, including scams, fake reviews, and misleading advertising practices. The results will now be discussed with Member States, consumer associations and businesses, and will feed into the preparation of forthcoming initiatives such as the Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 and the Digital Fairness Act.

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### Statistic of the week

## Life expectancy in the EU and in Ireland rises in 2023: Eurostat

New data from Eurostat shows that average life expectancy at birth in the EU was 81.4 years, up from 80.6 years in 2022. Average life expectancy at birth in Ireland was also up - from 82.6 years in 2022 to 82.9 years in 2023. The highest life expectancy at birth in the EU in 2023 was the Spanish region of Comunidad de Madrid (86.1 years). In general, women in the EU had an average life expectancy of 5.3 years more than men with this figure rising to 10.1 years in Latvia. Ireland, however, had the 4th lowest gender gap in life expectancy at birth at 3.5 years.



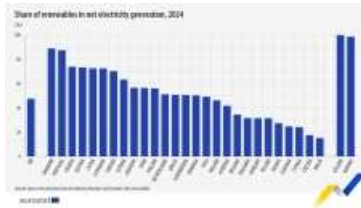
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### Electricity from renewable sources reaches 47% in 2024: Eurostat

In 2024, 47.4% of net electricity generated in the EU came from renewable energy sources, up by 2.6 percentage points compared with 2023. Denmark had the highest share of renewables in its net electricity generation at 88.8%, followed by Portugal (87.4%) and Croatia (73.8%). The lowest shares of renewables were recorded in Malta (15.1%), Czechia (17.5%) and Cyprus (24.1%). In Ireland, just over 46% of electricity came from renewable sources in 2024.



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### First-time asylum applications down 13% in 2024: Eurostat

According to Eurostat, the number of first time asylum applications in the EU fell from 1,049,500 in 2023 to 912,000 in 2024, a fall of 13%. Syria, which accounted for 16% of the total number of first-time applications in 2024, was the main country of citizenship of asylum seekers. It was followed by Venezuela with 72,800 applications (8% of the EU total) and Afghanistan with 72,200 applications (8%). Germany continued to be the EU country with the highest number of applicants, accounting for a quarter of all first-time applicants in the EU (25%). It was followed by Spain (18%), Italy (17%), France (14%), and Greece (8%).



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Agenda

Thursday 20 March: European Parliament Spring Talks - Debate on Children’s Rights, Dublin

The European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland is hosting a series of talks in Spring 2025 curated by Catriona Crowe. The third in the series, on children’s rights, takes place at 6pm on Thursday 20 March. It features a panel of distinguished experts including: Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Ireland and Bruce Adamson, former Chair of the European Network Of Ombudspersons for Children and Scottish Children and Young Peoples Commissioner. The debate will be moderated by Noeleen Blackwell, of the Children’s Rights Alliance. This event takes place at the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland, Europe House, 5 Balfe St, D2.



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Thursday 20 and Friday 21 March: European Council, Brussels

EU leaders are meeting in Brussels to discuss competitiveness and to follow up on the special European Council held on 6 March to address recent develop-

ments in Ukraine and the next steps on defence. The next multiannual financial framework (MFF), migration, the latest developments in the Middle East, multilateralism and other global issues are also on the agenda.

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## Thursday 20 March: Euro Summit, Brussels

EU leaders are meeting for a Euro Summit, held in an inclusive format, to discuss the economic and financial situation in view of the current geopolitical risks and uncertainties. The President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, and the President of the Eurogroup, Paschal Donohoe, will attend the meeting. The Euro Summit is taking place in the margins of the European Council meeting, during the discussion on economic issues and competitiveness.

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## Monday 24 March: Agriculture and Fisheries Council, Brussels

On the agenda: the Communication on a Vision for agriculture and food published by the European Commission on 19 February 2025; the future of the Common fisheries policy; other business.

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## Tuesday 25 March: Careers in the EU online event

On Tuesday 25 March at 11 am, the University of Limerick's EU Student Career Ambassador Orlaith Curtin will host an online Zoom event with 3 guest speakers: Jason Gavin, Interpreter at the EU Commission, Patrick Lavelle, Policy officer in the Secretariat General of the EU Commission, and Fatima Gonzalez Gomez, Project Adviser at the European Health and Digital Executive Agency. This event offers a great opportunity to meet online with EU staff, ask questions and receive firsthand insights into what it's like to work for the EU. See below the link to the Zoom event - Passcode: 6lrmWd.

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## Tuesday 25 March: Disinformation and Democracy in a New Era: Can Reality be Rescued? (IIEA online event)

In this webinar Nina Jankowicz, co-founder and CEO of the American Sunlight Project, will discuss the evolution of disinformation in democracies, ranging from Russian-linked disinformation campaigns in Eastern Europe to the new U.S. Government's hostile stance towards disinformation research. She will discuss how the new US administration's relationship with technology companies may affect content moderation policies and practices. Ms Jankowicz will also assess the implications of readily accessible Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications for the generation of disinformation and will explore how democracies can best respond to the evolving threat of disinformation.

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## Wednesday 26 March: 50 years of supporting better policies for a strong social Europe: Eurofound launch event for its anniversary campaign

On Wednesday lunchtime, 26 March, Eurofound is hosting the launch event for its 50th anniversary campaign at the European Parliament Office in Dublin. This event will bring together up to 70 distinguished stakeholders, including Government representatives, MEPs, the European Commission, trade unions, employers, and key think tanks as well as academic institutions. It will be an opportunity to reflect on how social and employment policy has evolved over five decades, and to discuss Europe's future direction and policy responses to emerging challenges. It will also be a chance to highlight Ireland's role in shaping Europe ahead of its 2026 chairing of the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Register at the link below.

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## Thursday 27 March: Environment Council, Brussels

Ministers will focus on the environmental dimension of the clean industrial deal, which was presented by the Commission on 26 February 2025 as a joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation. They will also exchange views on global environmental policies in the presence of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Inger Andersen.

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## Friday 28 March: General Affairs Council (Cohesion), Brussels

On this link you will soon find all the information related to this meeting.

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## Monday 31 March to Thursday 3 April: 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 2 April: Keynote Address by Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia (IIEA event)

Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, and President of the Danube Commission will address an IIEA Future Proofing Europe event on Tuesday afternoon, 2 April.



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## Wednesday 2 April: A Decade After the Paris Agreement: Global Progress and Challenges in Clean Energy Transitions (IIEA event)

Ten years after the historic climate agreement reached at COP21 in Paris, considerable progress has been made in areas ranging from energy efficiency and renewables deployment to electric vehicles and heat pumps. However, this progress is well below that required to deliver on the goals in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, and investment in clean energy remains uneven. As political headwinds increase, Brian Motherway, Head of the Office of Energy Efficiency and Inclusive Transitions at the International Energy Agency, will consider what the past decade has taught us in terms of global engagement on climate and clean energy, and what we have learned in terms of engaging citizens and societies in the vital project of clean energy transitions. This hybrid event takes place at 1 pm.



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## Thursday 3 and Friday 4 April: First EU-Central Asia summit, Samarkand

On this link you will soon find all the information related to this meeting.



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## Wednesday 9 April: Market Access Day 2025, Dublin 4

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the European Commission's Market Access team are organising "Market Access Day 2025" on Wednesday 9 April 2025. The agenda will include topics such as: implementation and enforcement of EU trade policy and its benefits for Irish businesses; available tools for business looking to export outside the EU Single Market; EU trade policy instruments (Access to Markets and Single-Entry Point); trade barriers and solutions; trade policy in the changing geopolitics; EU Free Trade Agreements and their concrete benefits to companies; and Trade Defence Instruments.

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## Job opportunities

19/03/2025

### Temporary positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs in the lead up to, and during, the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Department of Foreign Affairs is seeking a number of Presidency Policy Officers (Administrative Officer level) for temporary positions in the lead up to, and during, the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Ireland will assume the rotating six-month Presidency on 1 July 2026. Successful candidates will have an exciting opportunity to be involved in all aspects of the work of the Department, either directly related to the Presidency or in other priority areas where they will provide cover for staff who have been assigned to Presidency duties. See below for information on jobs in Dublin.

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## Competitions

### Applications open for European Capital of Smart Tourism and European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism 2026

The 2026 edition of the European Capital of Smart Tourism and the European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism competitions were launched this week. The European Capital of Smart Tourism, open to cities with a population of over 100,000, recognises European cities with outstanding tourism destinations achievements in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation and cultural heritage and creativity. Meanwhile the European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism competition, open to destinations with a population of between 25,000 and 100,000, recognises emerging sustainable tourism destinations across Europe. The application period closes on 30 May 2025, at 4pm (Irish time).

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### Applications open for the European Digital Connectivity Awards 2025

Applications for the European Digital Connectivity Awards 2025 have just opened. The Awards target projects contributing to the fulfilment of Europe's Digital Decade connectivity objectives. There are three award categories: Excellence and innovation in deployment of Gigabit-Ready Infrastructure; Champions in addressing digital divide in rural and remote areas; and, Cross-border and international connectivity. The deadline for submitting the applications is 2 June 2025.

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## Calls for Tender/Proposals

### Applications for the Department of Foreign Affairs's annual Communicating Europe Initiative grants scheme now open

Applications for the Department of Foreign Affairs annual Communicating Europe Initiative grants scheme are now open. This year's theme is "Europe as a catalyst for change". The Communicating Europe Initiative provides funding to voluntary organisations, educational bodies, civil society groups and Local Authorities for projects intended to deepen public awareness of the role that the European Union plays in our daily lives, and improve the quality and accessibility of public information on European issues, at local, regional or national level. Projects should communicate European issues, the role of the European Union and Ireland's place in Europe. The deadline for applications is 17 April 2025.

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