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The European Union and the war in Ukraine: liberal power and its limits

Author: Maxime Lefebvre



With the war in Ukraine, the European Union has indeed become a liberal power that defends its values by using the tools of "hard power". But to become an active force, even a power, it must overcome several strategic, economic and political obstacles.

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Elections :

Nicos Christodoulides is the favourite in the first round of the Cypriot presidential elections



After two consecutive mandates, the outgoing Cypriot head of state, Nicos Anastasiades, of the Democratic Rally (DISY), cannot stand for re-election in the first round of the presidential elections to be held on 5 February. Former foreign minister Nicos Christodoulides is leading the polls with 39.73% of the vote, ahead of DISY chairman Averof Neophytou and Andreas Mavroyiannis supported by the Progressive Party of Workers (AKEL). A second round will be held on 12 February if none of the 14 candidates achieves an absolute majority... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

European Recovery Plans: figures and priorities



In response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has set up a €672.5 billion recovery fund. At the end of December, Italy, Austria and Luxembourg submitted payment requests to the Commission after meeting a series of targets. The Foundation offers an interactive map of the plans country by country, to check the amounts and timetables... [Read more](#)

Energy Crisis, European Measures



In response to rising energy prices, Member States and the European Union have taken measures, drawn up plans to reduce consumption and developed a European gas price cap mechanism. The Foundation provides a regularly updated map of these measures... [Read more](#)

Ukraine/Russia :

Aid in response to disruption of the agricultural sector



On 4 January, the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) announced plans to fund \$15.5 million in agricultural sector assistance in response to reduced agricultural production in Ukraine. It will "support the functioning, strengthening and consolidation of value chains in agriculture, fisheries and forestry" in Ukraine. For this, agricultural producers and rural households will receive grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000... [Read more](#)

Provision of tanks



In a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 4 January, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the upcoming delivery of light battle tanks to Ukraine. On 5 January, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and US President Joe Biden jointly announced the supply of Marder and Bradley armoured personnel carriers and Patriot air defence missiles... [Read more](#)

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Visit by the French Minister of the Armed Forces



The French Minister of the Armed Forces, Sébastien Lecornu, said on 28 December, during his first trip to Kyiv, that he wanted to work towards meeting Ukrainian military needs "for the coming weeks"... [Read more](#)

Volodymyr Zelenskiyy's Speech



In a speech to the US Congress on 22 December, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked the United States for its support and asked it to intensify it. In his greetings on 31 December, he congratulated Ukrainians on their unity, tenacity and courage, and called on them to continue their struggle until victory was achieved... [Read more](#)

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Management of the war economy



Andriy Pyshnyy, Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU), spoke in Washington on 22 December about the economic impact of the Russian invasion, the challenges of maintaining banking and financial stability in wartime, and his expectations of the IMF monitoring programme... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The way forward for the digital decade



The Digital Decade 2030 Action Plan, a monitoring and cooperation mechanism to achieve common goals for Europe's digital transformation by 2030, entered into force on 9 January. This initiative will help Member States and the Commission to jointly address gaps in Europe's digital capabilities, while guiding joint actions and large-scale investments to reap the benefits of the digital transformation... [Read more](#)

The Single Market at 30



1 January marked the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Single Market, which allows goods, services, people and capital to move freely within the European Union. According to the Commission, it brings together almost 450 million European consumers and accounts for 18% of global GDP... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Procedure to waive the immunity of two MEPs



The European Parliament announced on 2 January that it had launched an emergency procedure to lift the immunity of two Members of the European Parliament, following a request from the Belgian judicial authorities in the context of the corruption investigation involving Qatar. The two MEPs concerned are Andrea Cozzolino (IT, S&D) and Marc Tarabella (BE, S&D)... [Read more](#)

Council :

Start of the Swedish Presidency



Since 1 January, Sweden has held the six-month presidency of the Council, for which it has defined four priorities: security, competitiveness, the ecological and energy transition, and democratic values and the rule of law. The Swedish Presidency will be launched on 12-13 January with a visit to Kiruna by the College of Commissioners... [Read more](#)

Adoption of the gas price cap mechanism



On 22 December, the Council formally adopted the temporary market correction mechanism to combat excessively high gas prices. It can be activated for at least 20 days if the gas price exceeds €180/MWh for three working days from 15 February 2023... [Read more](#)

Covid-19: measures on flights from China



Member States decided on 4 January to promote the requirement of a negative Covid-19 test for passengers on flights from China, as well as the mandatory wearing of masks during flights. They also called for the testing and sequencing of airport waste water, random testing of passengers and the promotion of vaccine sharing... [Read more](#)

Approval of the fisheries agreement with the UK



The Council formally approved on 22 December the EU-UK Fisheries Agreement for 2023, which fixes the fishing rights of fishermen in the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea and defines the total allowable catch (TAC) limit for each fish species... [Read more](#)

Increase in the deployment of renewable energies



On 22 December, the Council definitively adopted the legislation on accelerating the deployment of renewable energies, which will facilitate the issuing of permits for new projects or for the adaptation of existing infrastructures... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

US subsidy scheme for commercial vehicles



The Commission confirmed on 29 December that under the new US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), EU companies will be able to benefit from the clean vehicle credit programme without having to change their existing business models. It reiterated the request that European producers of clean vehicles should receive similar treatment... [Read more](#)

Ban on the import of fishery products from Cameroon



On 5 January, the Commission issued a 'red card' to Cameroon, requiring Member States to refuse to import fisheries products from the country. Cameroon, which has not taken adequate restrictive measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, has been identified as a "non-cooperating" country... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Hans Leijtens appointed director of Frontex

 The Management Board of Frontex, the European border and coast guard agency, appointed Dutchman Hans Leijtens as its new Executive Director on 20 December. Previously commander of the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary and governor of The Hague, Hans Laijtens has also served as director general of the Dutch tax and customs administration... [Read more](#)

Croatia :

Entry into Schengen and the euro zone



Croatia has been part of the Schengen area since 1 January 2023, following the Council's decision of 8 December 2022 to lift land and sea border controls between the country and the other signatories of the treaty. 1 January also marked the final adoption of the single currency by Croatia, which became the twentieth member of the euro area... [Read more](#)

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Ireland :

Fine of 390 million € for Meta



The Irish Data Protection Commission, acting on behalf of the 27 EU Member States, has fined the Meta Group €390 million for breaching the EU Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The fine concerns two Meta entities: Facebook (€210 million) and Instagram (€180 million). While the GDPR requires all online services to obtain the "free and informed" consent of Internet users before processing their data to offer them personalised advertising, Meta modified its rules of use by making access to its services conditional on the use of users' data for advertising purposes... [Read more](#)

Slovenia :

Inauguration of the new President of the Republic



The new President of Slovenia, Natasa Pirc Musar (independent), who won the presidential election on 13 November 2022, officially took office on 23 December, succeeding Borut Pahor. In her inaugural speech to Parliament, she stressed her commitment to the defence of "the rule of law, fundamental rights and the autonomy of sub-state systems", as well as to the European Union, which she defines as "a family"... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

Prime Minister's visit to Paris



Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson visited French President Emmanuel Macron on 3 January. The two leaders exchanged views on the priorities of the Swedish Council Presidency and confirmed their support for Ukraine. Emmanuel Macron reiterated his wish for Sweden to join NATO "as soon as possible". Ulf Kristersson expressed his wish to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the nuclear, defence and space sectors... [Read more](#)

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Switzerland :

Alain Berset, President of the Confederation in 2023



Alain Berset is the President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 2023. He has been a Federal Councillor since 2012 and heads the Federal Department of Home Affairs... [Read more](#)

Vatican :

Death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, born Joseph Ratzinger, died on 31 December 2022 at the age of 95 in the Mater Ecclesiae monastery (Vatican). His funeral was celebrated on 5 January by Pope Francis. Benedict XVI succeeded John Paul II in 2005 and resigned in 2013... [Read more](#)

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UN :

100 million migrants in 2022



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced on 28 December that 100 million migrants left their home countries in 2022, including people fleeing "conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution", an unprecedented figure. Protracted conflicts in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Syria and Myanmar are partly responsible for the 10 million increase over 2021... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Drop in the inflation rate in the euro zone



According to figures published by Eurostat on 6 January, the annual inflation rate in the euro area was 9.2% in December, compared with 10.1% in November. The lowest rate was recorded in Spain at 5.6%, and the highest in Latvia at 20.7%. Energy was the largest component of inflation, followed by food, alcohol and tobacco, industrial goods excluding energy and services... [Read more](#)

Unemployment rate at a record low



According to figures published on 9 January by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 6% in the European Union in November 2022 and at 6.5% in the euro area... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Arte Kino Festival Prize



The Arte Kino Festival has announced the winners of its awards. The European Audience Award went to the film *Linhas Tortas* by director Rita Nunes, and the Youth Jury Award to the film *Summer Survivors* by director Marina Kavtaradze... [Read more](#)

Albi Jazz Festival



From 14 to 22 January, the Albi Jazz Festival will take place. Six concerts are being organised in three venues in the Tarn: the Grand Théâtre in Albi, the Maison de la Musique du Cap'Découverte and the Apollo in Mazamet. At the same time, masterclasses, meetings and public rehearsals are open to the public free of charge... [Read more](#)

Zofia Matuszczyk-Cygańska in Krakow



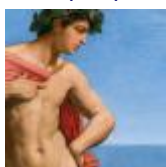
The National Museum in Krakow is organising an exhibition devoted to the tapestries made by Polish artist Zofia Matuszczyk-Cygańska until 5 February. Ten works are on display, which reflect two crucial aspects of her activity in the 1950s and 1960s: work for the Artists' Cooperative "Ład" and research into weaving techniques... [Read more](#)

Turner in Dublin



The National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin is holding its annual free exhibition of watercolours by William Turner, with paintings from the Henri Vaughan collection, until 31 January... [Read more](#)

Baroque painting in Frankfurt



The Städel Museum in Frankfurt, in cooperation with the Prado Museum in Madrid, is devoting a new exhibition to the Italian Baroque painter Guido Reni (1575-1642) until 5 March. It includes more than 130 paintings, drawings and engravings by the artist, whose life was marked by faith and superstition... [Read more](#)

Maurice Denis at the Orsay Museum



Until 14 May, the Musée d'Orsay is devoting an exhibition to Maurice Denis: "Maurice Denis: Les Amours de Marthe". It presents his works on first love encounters, created at the very end of the 19th century, and inspired by his relationship with his future wife Marthe Meurier... [Read more](#)

Miró's star at CaixaForum in Madrid



The CaixaForum in Madrid is showing the tapestry created by Joan Miró and Josep Royo that gave rise to the Miró Star, the emblem of the bank la Caixa, from 13 January to 21 May. These two artists created seven monumental tapestries together. This one was commissioned to create the institution's brand image... [Read more](#)

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Portraits by Vincent Peters in Milan



From 12 January to 26 February, the Palazzo Reale in Milan is showing the exhibition "Timeless Time", which includes a selection of 90 black and white shots by photographer Vincent Peters. These portraits of celebrities, taken between 2001 and 2021, are marked by a use of light that defines the emotions and tells the subjects' stories... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



12-13 January 2023

Kiruna

Visit from the European Commission to launch the Swedish Council Presidency



13-14 January 2023

Czech Republic

Presidential Election (first round)



16 January 2023

Brussels

Eurogroup Meeting

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