

POLITICS

Both EU citizens and non-EU citizens are subject to systematic checks in person when crossing the EU's external borders. In 2023 alone, there were almost 600 million crossings recorded.

To speed up border controls and ensure smoother and more secure travel, the Commission has proposed to digitalise passports and identity cards for anyone entering or leaving the Schengen area.

Germany to hold new elections amid political crisis. The collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition has plunged Germany into turmoil. Scholz has urged a measured and calm discussion on the timing of a parliamentary confidence vote, which would initiate the process toward early elections.

The current president and pro-Western politician Maia Sandu won the second round of the presidential election in Moldova. The lead over her opponent Alexander Stoianoglo reached ten percentage points. Votes from abroad were decisive for this success.

EU Member States have approved tariffs on Chinese electric cars. A sufficient majority of EU Member States did not oppose the proposal to introduce tariffs. The additional duties are on top of the standard import duty on cars, which is 10% in the EU. China, on the other hand, has imposed provisional anti-dumping duties of up to 39% on imports of brandy from the EU.

The Commission has postponed the deforestation regulation for a year. According to this regulation, it should be reported that various foods and raw materials do not come from places where deforestation has occurred.

Flash floods in Spain claimed more than 200 lives. Water and mud damaged roads, tore down bridges, flooded houses, and there are still hundreds of wrecked cars in the streets, which were swept off the roads by torrential rains. The government has declared three days of national mourning throughout Spain.

ECONOMY

In the third quarter of 2024, seasonally adjusted GDP increased by 0.3% in the EU, compared with the previous quarter. Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, seasonally adjusted GDP increased by 0.9% in the EU in the third quarter of 2024. Ireland (+2.0%) re-

corded the highest increase compared to the previous quarter, followed by Lithuania (+1.1%) and Spain (+0.8%). Declines were recorded in Hungary (-0.7%), Latvia (-0.4%) and Sweden (-0.1%).

EU annual inflation was 2.1% in September 2024, down from 2.4% in August. A year earlier, the rate was 4.9%. The lowest annual rates were registered in Ireland (0.0%) and Lithuania (0.4%). The highest annual rates were recorded in Romania (4.8%) and Belgium (4.3%). Compared with August 2024, annual inflation fell in twenty Member States, remained stable in two and rose in five.

The EU unemployment rate was 5.9% in September 2024, also stable compared with August 2024 and down from 6.1% in September 2023.

In the EU the government deficit to GDP ratio increased from 3.2% in 2022 to 3.5% in 2023. In the EU the government debt to GDP ratio decreased from 82.5% at the end of 2022 to 80.8% at the end of 2023.

In 2023, the EU's employment rate stood at 75.3%, up 0.7 percentage points compared with 2022. This is the highest level in the entire available time series.

The overall tax-to-GDP ratio, meaning the sum of taxes and net social contributions as a percentage of GDP, stood at 40.0% in the EU in 2023, a decrease compared with 2022 (40.7%). In absolute terms, in 2023, revenue from taxes and social contributions increased by €308 billion in the EU compared with 2022, to stand at €6 883 billion. The tax-to-GDP ratio varied significantly between EU countries in 2023, with the highest shares of taxes and social contributions as a percentage of GDP being recorded in France (45.6%) and Belgium (44.8%), the lowest in Ireland (22.7%) and Romania (27.0%).

SECTORS

The European aircraft manufacturer Airbus intends to lay off 2.5 thousand employees in the defense and space division, where a total of 35 thousand people work.

Britain is ending coal-fired electricity generation after 142 years. The last coal-fired power station in Britain, located in Ratcliffe-on-Soar near Nottingham, has ceased operation.

In 2022, life expectancy at birth in the EU for women (83.3 years) was 5.4 years higher than for men (77.9 years).

In 2022, a total of 83.4 million tonnes of packaging waste was produced in the EU, or 186.5 kg per inhabitant. Compared with 2021, this represents a decrease of 3.6 kg per inhabitant, but an increase of 31.7 kg compared with 2012. Out of all the packaging waste generated in the EU, 41% were paper and cardboard, 19% was plastic, 19% glass, 16% wood and 5% metal.

In 2022, an average of 36.1 kg of plastic packaging waste was generated for each person living in the EU and out of this, 14.7 kg were recycled. Between 2012 and 2022, the amount of generated plastic packaging waste increased by 7.6 kg per capita, while the recycled amount

FOCUS ON TRANSPORT

In 2023, 429 billion passenger-kilometres (pkm) were registered via rail, up from 386 billion in 2022 (+11.2%). This is the highest number reported by main rail undertakings since the start of the data collection in 2004. Out of 8 billion rail passengers recorded in 2023 in the EU, almost half were travelling in Germany (33.9%) and France (15.0%).

In 2023, the EU registered a total of 2.9 billion nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments, up from 2.8 billion in 2022. Almost 1.6 billion nights were spent by domestic tourists and close to 1.4 billion by international guests. Between 2022 and 2023, the share of nights spent by international guests from regions outside Europe rose from 12.6% to 15.6%.

London is planning a major expansion of airport capacity. Five of London's six airports are planning to expand significantly. If all the plans come to fruition, an additional 84 million passengers will be added to the current total capacity of 173 million passengers. For comparison, Prague Airport handled 14 million passengers last year.

EU CALENDAR

Meetings of EU institutions

- *Plenary Session of the European Parliament on 13 - 14 November*
- *Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 15 November*
- *Foreign Affairs Council on 18 November*
- *General Affairs Council on 19 November*
- *Trade Council on 21 November*
- *Plenary Session of the European Parliament on 25 - 28 November*