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our eye on the EU



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**EU: SOMEWHERE BETWEEN DECLARATIONS
AND REALITY**

April 2026 found Europe tested on five fronts at once. Spain, Ireland and Slovenia called for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, backed by an unprecedented wave of pressure: over a million citizen signatures, nearly 400 former diplomats, UN special rapporteurs and the EU's own finding that Israel is in breach of Article 2 of the Agreement. Germany and Italy blocked the proposal, leaving the gap between citizens and governments more visible than ever. In Hungary, Orbán's defeat opened a window, just as the LIBE Report confirmed that 93% of rule of law recommendations are repeats from previous years, with little substantive implementation. In Iberia, the largest blackout in two decades exposed a grid struggling to keep up with its own transition, while the Strait of Hormuz sent energy prices soaring. In the digital sphere, 127 civil society organisations described the Digital Omnibus as the biggest rollback of digital rights in the Union's history, while the new Gender Equality Strategy launched with the European Institute for Gender Equality itself acknowledging that full equality remains half a century away. Five stories, one question: can Europe turn its declarations into action before it is too late?



ENVIRONMENT

BLACKOUTS, PRICE INTERVENTIONS & GEO-POLITICAL TENSIONS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN ENERGY POLICY

Contribution by Afroditi Gkortsou - political scientist, international security expert

In April 2026, European energy policy faced three simultaneous crises. A major 2025 blackout showed that renewables grew faster than voltage controls and grid investment. National price caps threatened the single market, while the Russian gas ban took effect but not the oil ban. The Strait of Hormuz became nearly impassable, raising prices despite reserve releases. With clean energy investments falling short, the EU must accelerate its transition.



EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PRESSURE IS GROWING TO SUSPEND THE EU-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT, BUT THE EU REMAINS DIVIDED

Contribution by Emma O'Flaherty - communication and advocacy expert

In April, the EU came closer than it has in years to using its strongest lever over Israel. A push by several Member States to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement, backed by growing public support, ultimately failed. But the effort highlights how government positions and public pressure are increasingly aligning in ways that could reshape how the EU and its Member States approach their relations with Israel.



DIGITAL POLICY & CIVIC SPACE

SIMPLIFYING AI REGULATION IN THE EU: WHAT DOES OMNIBUS VII MEAN FOR OUR DIGITAL RIGHTS?

Contribution by Foteini Katsampani - postgraduate student on “Identity, Education and Competences for Democratic Culture”, NKUA

Artificial Intelligence is evolving faster than the rules designed to govern it. Somewhere between innovation and the need for protection, a persistent question emerges: can Europe remain competitive in the digital sphere without compromising its democratic core?



CIVIC SPACE & CIVIL LIBERTIES

THE RULE OF LAW IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: HUNGARY'S POLITICAL AWAKENING AND THE GAP BETWEEN NORMATIVE AMBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Contribution by Elpida Gkoutzoupa - student of International and European Studies

In April 2026, Péter Magyar's defeat of Orbán ended sixteen years of illiberal rule, proving democratic restoration stems also from citizens' will, not EU pressure alone. The LIBE Report A10-0091/2026 simultaneously revealed a systemic crisis: 93% of Commission recommendations repeated from prior years, with only 6% implemented - or none, per Liberties' March 2026 press release. The EU must conclude: monitoring needs real enforceability, and democracy requires civil society, media pluralism, and engaged citizens.



GENDER EQUALITY

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2026–2030 GENDER FRAMEWORK

Contribution by Teana Germeni - postgraduate student at “Media & Refugee/Migration Flows”, NKUA

The European Commission launched its 2026–2030 Gender Equality Strategy on March 5th, 2026. The new Strategy is not starting from scratch: it is turning the March 2025 Roadmap for Women’s Rights into practical measures. The Strategy contains 30 concrete steps structured around specific pillars.



BROADCAST

EP27 | EXPLORING THE COMMON GROUND

Can institutional jargon communicate effectively with civil society talk? Our two protagonists, Ioanna and Dionysis, bring along different viewpoints on a series of burning topics for the European societies: youth representation in the public sphere vs decorative participation, competitiveness vs labour rights, migration and asylum policies vs human rights standards.



PODCAST

EP8 | EU MIGRATION POLICY UNPACKED WITH LEFTERIS PAPAGIANNAKIS

In this episode of Our Eye on the EU, we were joined by Lefteris Papagiannakis, Director of the Greek Council for Refugees, to unpack the EU's migration policy and the forces shaping migration across Europe today. As the EU finalises its Pact on Migration and Asylum, set to take effect in June this year, we discussed where the Pact currently stands right now, how the EU is externalising its protection responsibilities, and the rise of right and far-right alliances across the continent. We also explored illegal practices in Greece, the ongoing loss of life in the Mediterranean, the criminalisation of solidarity, and what the future may hold as conflicts intensify globally.