



European Latitudes

Perspectives on Europe, Italy, and the world.

The press review connecting the key socio-political and economic developments shaping today's debate.

i The non-English articles present in the Europe and International section are translated to English.

Friday, 4 September 2026

Europe

All eyes on Saxony-Anhalt: AfD poised for historic far-right state win The Guardian

Germany's far-right AfD is poised to win Saxony-Anhalt's state election on Sunday, polling at 40–42% and potentially securing an absolute majority—the first far-right state government since WWII. A victory would grant the AfD significant powers over education, culture, and domestic security in the Bundesrat, marking a historic shift in German politics. The party plans immediate deportations of irregular migrants, cultural clampdowns on 'anti-German' offerings, and education reforms including replacing rainbow flags with German flags, mandatory national anthems, and segregated classes for asylum seekers' children. It also proposes banning windfarms, boosting birth rates with financial incentives, and restructuring domestic intelligence. Led by 36-year-old candidate Ulrich Siegmund, the AfD's rise reflects voter frustration with economic stagnation and immigration. However, the 'Brandmauer'—other parties' refusal to cooperate—could still prevent an absolute majority, potentially forcing a CDU minority government with far-left Die Linke support.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/05/saxony-anhalt-far-right-afd-plans-german-state-poll>

Slovakia rejects EU's plan to lock in Russia sanctions for 12 months,
Politico EU

Slovakia has blocked the EU's proposal to extend individual sanctions against Russia for 12 months, preventing the unanimous approval required for adoption. The existing measures, previously renewed every six months to accommodate Hungarian demands under former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, are set to expire on 15 September. While most member states favoured the longer extension to reduce renegotiation burdens, Slovakia's objections created a deadlock during ambassadorial discussions. The talks also addressed adding 27 new individuals and companies to the sanctions list, freezing their EU assets. Technical experts will now re-examine the proposal. The deadlock underscores persistent divisions within the bloc over sanctions policy, though the EU's economic sanctions package was successfully extended for 12 months in June and remains in force until July 2027, marking a partial shift toward more stable long-term measures.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/slovakia-rejects-eu-plan-lock-in-russia-sanctions-12-months/>

EU defence officials resist EU plan to curb reliance on US tech giants,
Financial Times

European defence officials are resisting Brussels' attempts to reduce reliance on US tech giants such as Google, Amazon, and Microsoft, warning that the move could result in inferior systems, heightened cyber risks, and complications in NATO coordination. The European Commission's proposed Cloud and AI Development Act would require domestic technology for the most sensitive systems, with only 1% of Europe's public services expected to meet this standard. Defence officials argue that US platforms hold an 8–10 year lead in cloud and AI defence capabilities. Critical systems, including US-made F-35 fighter jets, currently depend on US cloud services, and defence leaders warn that prematurely abandoning these could compromise security and operational effectiveness amid rising geopolitical tensions.

<https://www.ft.com/content/0e9d714b-f367-4dd7-8ef4-6d4b2c08b79c>

Greenland: EU to shore up Arctic ties with fresh Greenland funding, *Financial Times*

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will announce €200 million in new funding for Greenland during a visit to Nuuk, aiming to strengthen EU-Arctic ties after Iceland rejected closer integration. The 2026–2027 funds will target critical raw materials, renewable energy, undersea cables, satellite connections, and data centres, plus administrative support. This adds to €225 million already allocated, with €530 million more expected by 2034. The initiative counters Trump's annexation threats, positioning the EU as a reliable partner, while a new Arctic policy will link economic investment with security. However, Greenlandic officials cite slow progress due to high costs and logistical challenges.

<https://www.ft.com/content/f8b57972-05a0-4566-9f3c-92b9558b33b0>

Meta blocks dozens of accounts protesting Kushner-linked Albanian resort project, *Politico EU*

Dozens of Instagram accounts used by Albanian activists, journalists, and opposition party leaders have been closed or disabled amid ongoing protests over a luxury resort development linked to Jared Kushner. The demonstrations, dubbed the Flamingo Revolution, have evolved from opposing the resort into broader calls for Prime Minister Edi Rama's government to resign. Those affected insist they have not violated any platform rules, yet received copyright infringement notices for content they created themselves. Digital rights NGO Repro Uncensored reported no violations of Instagram's standards but identified a pattern of coordinated copyright claims leading to account restrictions. Meta has restored some accounts but acknowledges errors. MEPs and opposition figures demand explanations, warning that mass account removals could constitute digital repression, undermining democracy in an EU candidate country.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/meta-blocks-accounts-politicians-journalists-and-activists-protesting-jared-kushner-linked-albania-resort/>

China threat bolsters support for EU industrial policy, *Politico EU*

A surge in Chinese imports threatening key European industries has bolstered support for the European Commission's Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA), designed to counter Beijing's export juggernaut. Industry officials warn

that a second Chinese export shock, following the 2001 WTO shock that devastated labour-intensive sectors, now targets strategic industries like electric vehicles, batteries, steel, and wind turbines. The IAA seeks to limit Chinese investments in critical sectors and impose Made-in-EU requirements for public procurement, potentially excluding Chinese suppliers. Despite initial German reservations over angering China, Berlin's stance has shifted as economic pressures mount, including a €1 billion daily trade deficit with China and a 35% rise in vehicle and auto part imports in the first half of 2026. With broad backing in Parliament, the IAA is increasingly seen as essential to protecting EU industry from Beijing's subsidised competition.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/china-threat-bolsters-support-for-eu-industrial-policy/>

Spain pushes for EU oil and gas tax to pay for climate change response, *Financial Times*

Spain is urging the EU to introduce a permanent levy on oil and gas company profits to fund climate adaptation measures, following a summer of record heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires that caused at least €50 billion in economic damage across Europe. Ecological Transition Minister Sara Aagesen Muñoz has proposed a climate adaptation fund, financed by the tax and additional common debt, to help member states anticipate and collectively respond to climate risks. The call follows a joint letter from finance ministers of Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Poland, and Spain supporting a Europe-wide windfall tax. While the European Commission has resisted EU-level windfall taxes, some member states have implemented national schemes. Oil executives, including ExxonMobil's Darren Woods and TotalEnergies' Patrick Pouyanné, argue such taxes are counterproductive, warning of reduced investments and potential legal action.

<https://www.ft.com/content/86da564e-aec7-4d53-b7b8-93bbdd240061>

*Supplementary information: Windfall taxes are levies imposed by governments on companies that experience unexpected, above-normal profits, often called windfalls, due to external circumstances beyond their control, such as geopolitical conflicts, supply shortages, or energy crises.

Italy

Giorgia Meloni celebrates Italy's longest-serving government since 1945, *Financial Times*

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's right-wing coalition has achieved a historic milestone, becoming Italy's longest-serving government since 1945 with 1,413 days in office, surpassing Silvio Berlusconi's second government. Despite economic headwinds, GDP growth consistently below 1% and public debt rising from 134% to 138% of GDP, Meloni presents stability as vital for national planning and commitment. Critics argue her tenure has lacked structural reforms to address Italy's longstanding economic issues. However, she has navigated geopolitical turmoil, maintained fiscal discipline, and supported Ukraine while toughening migration policies and increasing legal foreign worker permits. Investor confidence has improved under her pragmatic leadership, with bond spreads narrowing to a 15-year low. As elections approach, Meloni's popularity remains stable, buoyed by weak opposition, though economic stagnation and high debt persist.

<https://www.ft.com/content/0c1d2ab0-3f3d-468e-92d5-218ddc23d885>

Elettricità, i produttori: nel 2026 situazione eccezionale, ora più rinnovabili, *Il Sole 24 Ore*

Nel 2026 il prezzo all'ingrosso dell'elettricità in Italia (PUN) ha toccato i 212 euro/MWh, superando il picco di agosto e registrando livelli non visti dal dicembre 2022. La crescita, partita già prima dell'estate (119 euro/MWh a maggio, 180 ad agosto), è dovuta al mix energetico italiano sbilanciato sul gas, penalizzato dalla crisi di Hormuz, e alla maggiore domanda causata dal caldo estremo. Elettricità Futura evidenzia che l'Italia importa circa il 16% dell'elettricità necessaria, principalmente dalla Francia, ma i paesi confinanti hanno ridotto la disponibilità di energia da destinare all'esportazione a causa delle difficoltà climatiche. L'associazione propone quindi di accelerare la generazione da fonti rinnovabili, sbloccando i 150 GW di progetti attualmente fermi per problemi autorizzativi, al fine di aumentare sicurezza e indipendenza del sistema elettrico nazionale.

<https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/elettricit%C3%A0-produuttori-2026-situazione-eccezionale-ora-piu-rinnovabili-AJvUzz0>

International

Super El Niño 2027: Record temperature forecasts and global climate impacts, *Il Sole 24 Ore*

The El Niño climate phenomenon expected in 2027 could reach exceptional proportions, with global temperatures 1.27°C above average, surpassing the 2024 record. According to the WMO and NOAA, winter 2027 will feature extreme thermal anomalies, peaking between January and February. Global impacts include prolonged droughts in Asia, wildfires in Southeast Asia, weakened monsoons in India threatening food security for 50 million people, and unprecedented heatwaves in Europe, where over 30,000 deaths have been recorded. El Niño, amplified by human-induced global warming, acts as a multiplier effect, making the phenomenon even more violent, with 2027 potentially confirming itself as the hottest year on record.

<https://www.ilssole24ore.com/art/super-el-nino-2027-previsioni-temperature-record-e-impatti-climatici-globali-AJYyQU3>

Venezuela: Trump takes control of oil fields previously managed by China and Russia, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, [translated]

US oil company Nabep will take control of 17 Venezuelan oil projects, including fields previously managed by Russian and Chinese firms like China Concord Resources, Sinopec, and CNPC. The move follows President Trump's announcement granting US access to 64 billion barrels of Venezuela's proven reserves. Under the deal, the US government will acquire a 35% stake in Nabep and secure preferential access to 20% of its production at cost price, with first refusal rights over the remaining 80%. Nabep, now controlled by Venezuelan businessman Alejandro Betancourt, will operate the projects, which include 14 concessions taken from Maduro-linked entities. Chevron is also finalising agreements to manage two major Orinoco Belt fields, consolidating US influence over Venezuela's strategic oil sector.

<https://www.ilssole24ore.com/art/venezuela-mani-trump-giacimenti-prima-gestiti-cina-e-russia-AJc17Z0>

US diesel prices hit record \$5.85 per gallon, threatening Trump's midterm prospects *Il Sole 24 Ore*

US diesel prices have surged to a record \$5.85 per gallon, with gasoline reaching \$4.15 per gallon, the highest September levels on record, due to Iran tensions, Hormuz Strait tanker blockades, and reduced Russian refinery supply. Over the past year, diesel prices rose 58% and gasoline 30%, severely impacting transportation and agriculture, which rely on diesel for 75% of US freight transport and critical farming operations. In key swing states like Iowa, Wisconsin, and North Dakota, farmers face doubled fuel costs, with the USDA forecasting a 2.5% real decline in farm incomes for 2026. Rising fuel expenses threaten to drive up food prices and overall inflation, undermining Republican prospects in the November midterms, where they risk losing House and possibly Senate majorities. President Trump, facing declining popularity, has met with oil executives, announced a Venezuela oil deal, and promised investigations into price speculation, but experts doubt these measures will lower consumer prices before the election.

<https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/diesel-record-usa-prezzo-sale-585-dollari-e-mette-guai-trump-AJPp3h3>

World food prices at highest since 2022 as supply risks mount, FAO says, *The Straits Times*

Global food prices rose in August to their highest level since late 2022, with the FAO Food Price Index averaging 133.3 points, up from July's revised 130.8. The increase reflects converging risks: extreme heat and drought in Europe, the threat of a severe El Niño weather pattern, and trade upheaval from the Ukraine and Iran wars, which have unsettled agricultural markets. All major food commodity indices, cereals, vegetable oils, sugar, meat, and dairy, rose in August. The FAO cut its 2026 global cereal production forecast by 3.4 million tonnes to 2.980 billion tonnes, marking the largest annual decline since 2018, with stock levels revised down by 1.1%. Escalating Black Sea conflicts have curtailed grain shipments, while the US-Iran conflict has strained fertiliser flows. Sugar prices jumped 11.9% due to lower production in Brazil's crucial centre-south region.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/world-food-prices-at-highest-since-2022-as-supply-risks-mount-fao-says>

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