

## IN THIS EDITION

The dust is settling on the German Federal election and the EU and the world is anticipating what the agreed coalition will be. Meanwhile, many are taking the opportunity to look back at the Merkel era and the resounding impact it had on the EU. This month covers a variety of new developments in the EU, demonstrating that beyond the leading role of Germany under Merkel, strong leadership is required bloc wide for future success.

The Foreign Affairs & Security section covers the controversial AUKUS pact and the implications for the French—Australian relationship and the potential EU—Australia Free Trade Agreement.

The Environment Section covers the rising prices of energy in the EU across the past month and the potential implications of the German Federal Election on Nord Stream 2.

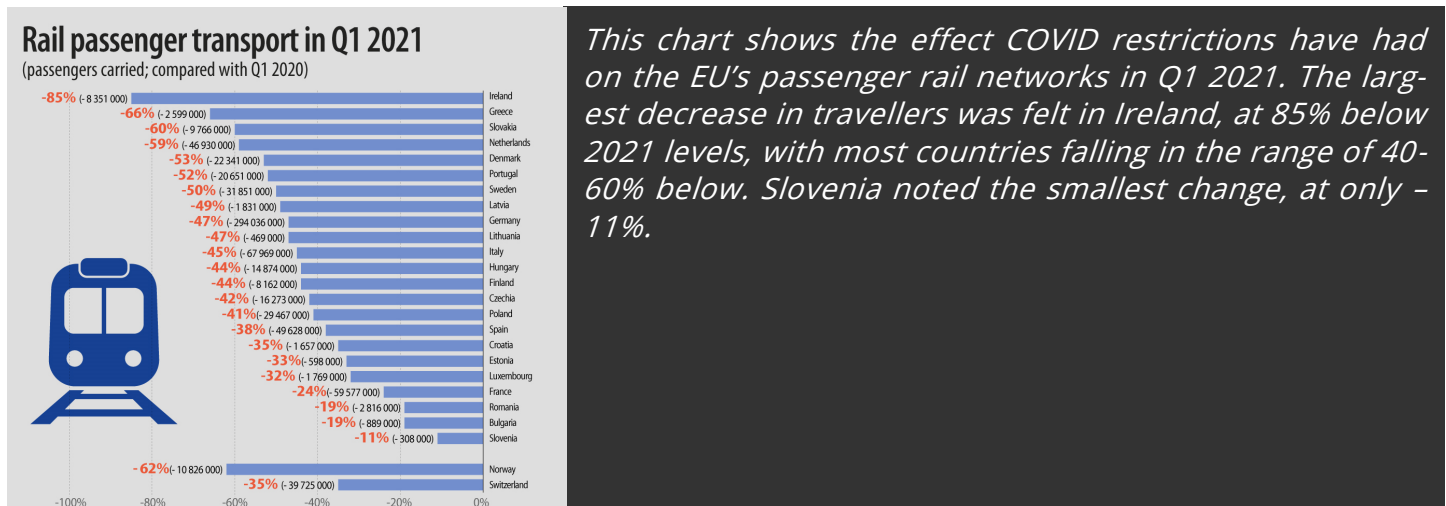
The Democracy & Governance section covers the International Day of Democracy: Joint statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Vice-President Dubravka Šuica



highlighting key themes of free and fair elections and the rule of law.

The Migration section covers the growing humanitarian crisis regarding irregular migrants.

## KEY FIGURE



# FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY

Polen Türkmen—Research Associate

One of the most significant events in the EU's foreign and security domain this month was the [announcement of the Aukus Pact](#) and the consequent submarine dispute between France and Australia. Australia cancelled an order for conventional submarines from France and instead agreed on a deal with the US and British to build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell claimed that they ["were caught by surprise by this announcement"](#) and that "more cooperation, more coordination, less fragmentation" was necessary to achieve stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

EU ambassadors [reacted](#) to this development by postponing preparations for a trade and technology council on 29 September, signalling a critical moment for transatlantic relations. European Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen further defended France claiming, "One of our member states has been treated in a way that is not acceptable, so we need to know what happened and why" and demanded an apology from Australia over its treatment of France. The Aukus pact's announcement has also threatened a delay in a key free-trade deal between the EU and Australia.

On 9 September, the EU held an [inter-parliamentary conference](#) on the EU's common foreign and security policy as part of Slovenia's EU presidency. It called for a more united approach by the EU towards global issues. Josep Borrell pointed to the Afghanistan crisis, exemplifying it as a type of conflict that could catalyse further integration while Slovenian President Borut Pahor urged for a fast and effective integration to prevent the EU's power and attractiveness from waning. The call joins the many voices speaking in favour of a more united European foreign and security policy that grew stronger upon the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the Aukus pact incident.

This was also reflected in this year's annual [State of the Union Address](#) on 15 September. The address included many important aspects for the progression of EU's foreign and security policy, with a special section dedicated to 'The European Defence Union'. A Path for Europe analysed its implications in a [recent PFEU commentary](#) by Letitia Roman and Polen Türkmen. In reflection to the



growing number of voices in support of strengthening the EU's foreign and security policy, PFEU's EU Foreign and Security Affairs team held a Coffee Conversation event on 21 September with a preeminent diplomat and expert in global foreign affairs, ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger to discuss the creation of a European army.

On 24 September, the EU [threatened Russia](#) with action over an alleged cyberattack campaign, "Ghostwriter" undertaken against a number of its member states. The campaign involved a malicious cyberattack against a number of member state parliaments, officials and civil society. It mostly involved "accessing computer systems and personal accounts and stealing data". The EU called on Russia to "adhere to the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace", and that it would discuss the issue in upcoming meetings. What further steps the EU could take on the matter was left to these meetings. However, without action, the threat remains limited in credibility.

Besides the EU, Germany also accused Russia of conducting cyberattacks and attempting to influence the German election that took place on 26 September. It resulted in the launching of an investigation after the government claimed it had ["reliable information"](#) that the cyberattacks could be attributed to Russia's military intelligence service GRU. The results of the German elections, which will be followed by lengthy coalition negotiations, were also closely observed by officials and politicians across the EU. However, none of Germany's three chancellor candidates have thus far discussed clear plans for the EU. It is therefore yet to be seen how a new German government could shift the mood in EU's relations with a number of countries.

# ENVIRONMENT

Vlad Surdea-Hernea—Permanent Author

The European Union has faced rapidly increasing energy prices over the last month, leading to multiple governments [deciding](#) to enact emergency measures in an attempt to alleviate the social effects of this problem. The [causes](#) of the current situation are manifold, including soaring natural gas prices and the low productivity of wind and solar over the last few weeks. There are [suspicions](#) that Russian, Europe's largest supplier of natural gas has manipulated natural gas markets in order to push for the finalization of the controversial Nord Stream 2 project. While representatives of Gazprom [have denied](#) that they are doing anything but fulfilling current contractual obligations given the limitations of their existing supply chain, [critiques](#) have come from multiple member states of the European Union.

After the German elections of 27<sup>th</sup> September, decision makers across Europe look forward to the formation of a new government coalition that

could engage directly with Russia on the topic of Nord Stream 2 and adjacent energy policies. Nevertheless, before that happens, EU officials [have announced](#) they are working on a functioning toolbox for addressing this crisis and preventing a tough winter.

In parallel, the European Commission [has continued](#) the process of officially accepting National Recovery and Resilience Plans, which should aid member states in their post-COVID-19 recovery while at the same time directing investments towards the green transition of the entire continent. The funding comes from the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), part of the large and ambitious NextGenerationEU framework. The main areas of improvement in which European funds are to be used by member states are the energy efficiency of buildings, the deployment of renewable energy and hydrogen production facilities, the sustainable mobility sector, and biodiversity restoration.

# DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Katrin Hermann—Permanent Author

During the month of September, the EU celebrated the International Day of Democracy, promising to uphold its stance on human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles at home and abroad. The Conference on the Future of Europe, which took place from the 24 to the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, included a citizen's panel that brought up the need for more inclusion and the protection of democracy and the rule of law. More positively, in response to the threat of losing EU funds, several Polish regions have now withdrawn their anti-LGBT declarations.

Though a [joint statement](#) by High Representative Josep Borrell and Vice-President Dubravka Šuica highlighted the EU's stance on free and fair elections, press and media freedom and the rule of law, but internally more work must be done to uphold these values. The [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) is one way to bring together citizens into the policy-making sphere and for them to vocalize key issues important to them. The citizen's panels themselves have also emphasized the importance of building a European identity, strengthening the voices of citizens and protecting democracy and the rule of law. Poland and Hungary con-

tinue to be the main offenders when it comes to these issues.

At the beginning of September, the European Commission has requested the Court of Justice [impose financial penalties](#) on Poland relating to the Disciplinary Chamber of its Supreme Court. It also sent a letter of formal notice in regards to Poland not complying with the Court of Justice's judgement of July 2021, that ["that Polish law on the disciplinary regime against judges is not compatible with EU law"](#). Several Polish regions, including the southern Malopolska, have [withdrawn their anti-LGBT declarations](#), opposing LGBT ideologies. Statements by officials in Malopolska have cited the need of EU funds for local development, though mention is still made of the region's rich Christian tradition built on a certain kind of family values. The European Parliament had already voted in [favour of a resolution](#) calling for sanctions against Poland for these harmful declarations, making the decision all the more timely. Though the removal of these anti-LGBT declarations is positive, it does not remove the discrimination that the Polish LGBT communities are experiencing at the hands of their own government.



# MIGRATION

Michela Pellegatta —Research Associate

In recent years, the number of irregular migrants crossing the [Western Mediterranean](#) has increased significantly. Since the beginning of 2021, more than [10,000 migrants](#) have arrived in Spain and the Balearic Islands. In this same time period, at least 238 migrants have died trying to cross this western stretch of the Mediterranean. Indeed, on [September 19](#), the bodies of eight migrants, thought to be of North African origin, have been found on beaches in southern Spain, among them one child and three women. This, however, is not the only way through which migrants attempt to reach Spain. Indeed, many of them try to enter the small Spanish military enclaves present in African territory, to ask for asylum. However, here, violations of international law seem to occur regularly. On September 20, according to various [Spanish NGOs](#), a group of 125 migrants was pushed back from the Spanish enclave of Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera to Morocco, even though most of them expressed the intention to seek asylum. According to [Spanish daily El País](#), most of them were of various African nationalities, which, according to Eurostat data, makes them likely to receive international protection. This is just the most recent case of a breach of law which, unfortunately, occurs frequently along European borders.

The situation at the Polish and Lithuanian borders with Belarus has not improved over September. As a response to [“unfriendly actions”](#) undertaken by the EU and its member states during the last months, the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that the government could further suspend cooperation with the European Union on migration. According to the agreement, signed in 2020, Belarus should take back refugees that entered the EU via Belarus, if they violated



the conditions of their stay. However, Lukashenko has now submitted a [draft law](#) on the suspension of the obligation to accept returning refugees to the parliament. At the other side of the border, Lithuania and Poland are undertaking measures to contrast the increasing illegal migration flow coming from Belarus. [Poland](#) has declared a state of emergency in two regions bordering Belarus, whereas [Lithuania](#), with the financial support of the Czech Republic, is constructing a border fence. In the meanwhile, migrants are paying the price of this situation. Being stuck at the border between those European countries and Belarus, they are living in [extremely harsh conditions](#), with limited access to drinking water and food, medical assistance, sanitation facilities and shelter. Not surprisingly, [four people](#) were found dead, from hypothermia and exhaustion, on the Polish side of the border on September 18, and the body of a woman was seen on the Belarus side the day after. How long are we going to stare at this humanitarian disaster before taking action?

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In September PfEU had the privilege of hosting Chairman of the Munich Security Conference and esteemed German diplomat Prof. Wolfgang Ischinger for a conversation, moderated by PfEU's Polen Türkmen on the topic of a 'European Army'.

It was an insightful and engaging discussion, which you can catch, including full Q&A, on PfEU's YouTube Channel @pathforeurope!

Keep your eyes out for upcoming events!

