

Chronologies

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2022

Faced with the rise in infections of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, many EuroMediterranean countries step up measures to increase the percentage of their populations that have been vaccinated. Portugal holds elections. France assumes the six-month European Presidency. Sergio Mattarella is reelected as President of Italy. The OECD begins the process for Croatia's membership. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is unrest during the celebrations of the Day of Republika Srpska. Serbia approves judicial reform. Kosovo bans the mining of cryptocurrencies. North Macedonia approves the new government. In Albania, rows break out over the expulsion of Sali Berisha from the Democratic Party (PDS, conservative). The Greek government survives a confidence vote. In Türkiye, an increase in taxes and energy and fuel prices comes into effect and the Justice Minister resigns. There is a change at the head of the Cypriot Foreign Ministry. In Syria, Daesh carries out a major assault on Hasaka and the country joins China's Belt and Road Initiative. In Lebanon, the former Prime Minister Saad Hariri withdraws from politics, amid ongoing protests against the political elite. Political repression intensifies in Tunisia.

Portugal

- On 15 January Lisbon's City Hall is fined 1.2 million euros for giving Russia access to personal data of Russian opposition figures who were picketing in the Portuguese capital during the mandate of the socialist Fernando Medina (2015-2021).
- On 30 January Portugal holds early legislative elections in which Antonio

Costa's Socialist Party wins with 41.68% of the vote and an absolute majority of 117 seats. The far-right Chega (Enough) party becomes the third strongest in the Parliament increasing its seat count from one to 12.

France

- On 1 January France takes over the six-month Presidency of the EU with the priorities of relaunching a European project that goes beyond mere cooperation to create a Europe that is "powerful in the world and fully sovereign" and reform the Schengen Area to better protect the external borders.
- On 3 January France, the US, UK, Russia and China reaffirm their commitment to further strengthen measures for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of atomic energy.
- On 8 January thousands take to the streets, as they have every Saturday since July 2021, in protest against the government's measures to put pressure on unvaccinated people to receive the Covid-19 vaccination.
- On 12 January new parliamentary groups in the National Assembly (lower house) decry the increase in hate demonstrations and violent acts against the political class.
- On 13 January a general strike in the education sector denounces a lack of resources and failings in the Covid-19 school protocol.
- On 17 January the far-right presidential candidate Eric Zemmour is fined 10,000 euros for inciting racial hatred.
- On 20 January France announces the deployment, as of February, of its naval and air-defence mission in the Mediterranean, Clémenceau-22, which includes

the participation of Spain, Italy, Greece, Germany, Belgium, the US and Canada.

- On 25 January the Parliament adopts a bill to outlaw "conversion therapies" which aim to impose heterosexuality on the LGBTQ+ community.
- On 31 January Mali gives the French Ambassador 72 hours to leave the country following the French Foreign Minister Jean Yves Le Drian's remarks accusing the Malian military junta of being "illegitimate."

Italy

- On 7 January Gioacchino Gammino, a member of the Cosa Nostra's Agrigento clan, is arrested in Galapagar, Spain, after 20 years on the run.
- On 7 January Italy approves fines for people over 50 who refuse to be vaccinated against Covid-19 and new restrictions for unvaccinated people, to deal with the rise in Omicron variant infections.
- On 29 January the Christian Democracy party's Sergio Mattarella is reelected President for a second seven-year term.

Malta

- On 14 January the Finance Minister Clyde Caruana announces staff cuts for Air Malta which affect almost 50% of its employees, who will be offered alternative jobs in the public sector.

Croatia

- On 25 January the OECD initiates the process for Croatia's accession as a member state.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 January the state prosecutor accuses the former general Milenko Zi-

vanovic of planning and directing the activities of the Bosnian Serb army's Drina Corps in attacks against Bosniak civilians in Srebrenica and Zepa in 1995.

- On 5 January the US expands its 2017 sanctions against the Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik for undermining the Dayton Accords.
- On 9 January unrest breaks out in several Bosnian Serb cities during the celebration of the Day of Republika Srpska, despite festivities being banned by the federal Constitutional Court. The EU threatens the Bosnian Serb leaders with sanctions for "inflammatory rhetoric" against other communities and glorification of war crimes.

Montenegro

- On 17 January the coalition government enters a crisis when the pro-Serbian coalition member For the Future of Montenegro (ZBCG), a member of the Democratic Front (DF) coalition, demands a cabinet reshuffle to allow its non-affiliated, technocratic members to join one of the coalition's political parties.

Serbia

- On 3 January environmental activists block roads in several locations in Serbia in protest against the plans of the multinational Rio Tinto to open one of the biggest lithium mines in Europe in the country. Faced with the persistent protests, which began in 2021, on 20 January the government scraps the project.
- On 16 January Serbia votes yes in a national referendum on a constitutional amendment to reform the judiciary giving it greater independence, in line with EU standards.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 11 January the police seize 272 machines used for cryptocurrency mining, a practice that consumes enormous amounts of energy and which has been banned in an effort to address the energy crisis the country has been grappling with since December. The practice has become popular among the Kosovo

Serb population, which, since it does not recognize Kosovo's statehood, refuses to pay for their electricity.

- On 15 January the Kosovo police denies entry into Kosovo to a Serbian electoral official and two trucks carrying ballot papers, amid rising tensions over the constitutional referendum to be held in Serbia on 16 January, in which the Kosovo Serb population fear they will not be able to cast their vote.

North Macedonia

- On 16 January the Parliament elects Dimitar Kovacevski, from the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), Prime Minister and backs his coalition government.
- On 18 January Bulgaria accepts the name of North Macedonia, no longer considering it to be linked with possible territorial claims. For its part, North Macedonia confirms before the United Nations that its new name does not imply territorial claims.

Albania

- On 8 January several people are injured in Tirana when hundreds of supporters of the former Prime Minister and former leader of the opposition party, PDS, Sali Berisha, try to storm the party headquarters to oust the current leader, Lulzim Basha, in response to Berisha's expulsion as member of the party after, in May 2020, the US declared him persona non grata, accusing him of corruption.

Greece

- On 10 January Greece lifts its ban on men who have had homosexual relations donating blood.
- On 17 January Greece starts fining the unvaccinated over 60s as part of a tightening of measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 Omicron variant.
- On 30 January the conservative government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis (New Democracy, ND) survives a confidence vote tabled by the leader of the Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA), Alexis Tsipras, over its management of the Storms Elpis and Diomedes, the Covid-19 pandemic, the energy crisis and Defence matters.

Türkiye

- On 1 January with inflation standing at 21%, an increase in electricity, gas and fuel prices comes into effect, along with a 36% hike in fines and certain taxes and fees.
- On 3 January Türkiye launches Turkovac, its own Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 14 January Türkiye and Armenia meet in Moscow for a first round of talks to normalize ties.
- On 17 January Mesale Tolu, the journalist accused of belonging to a terrorist organization, is acquitted of all charges after four and a half years in prison.
- On 21 January Türkiye claims that more than a million refugees have returned to Syria, 450,000 of them to Idlib, overseen by various armed groups, such as Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS).
- On 25 January the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rules that Türkiye violated the human rights of Deniz Yücel, a correspondent for *Die Welt*, detained on charges of terrorism and sedition.
- On 28 January the Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül resigns for unstated reasons. He is replaced by his predecessor, Bekir Bozdağ.
- On 29 January the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dismisses the chairman of the Statistics Institute (TÜİK), Sait Erdal Dincer, after the agency publishes data on inflation that differ greatly from those published by other agencies.
- On 29 January the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan decrees measures against "harmful content" that "have a negative impact on the physical or psychological development of children and young people" in the media and on social networks to avoid social "degeneration" and the "foreignization of the national culture."

Cyprus

- On 8 January Cyprus reports the detection of up to 25 cases of a combination of Delta and Omicron variants of SARS-CoV-2, named "deltacron."
- On 10 January Ioannis Kasoulidis is appointed Foreign Minister after the previous day's resignation of Nikos Christodoulides amid rumours about his candidacy to run in the 2023 presidential elections.
- On 23 January elections are held in the north of the island. The outgoing Na-

tional Unity Party (UBP, Turkish nationalist, conservative) wins with 39.54% of the vote.

Syria

- On 3 January Syria reports the delivery from China of a million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 12 January Syria and China sign a memorandum of understanding on Syria's incorporation into the Belt and Road Initiative.
- On 13 January Anwar Raslan, a former colonel in the Syrian intelligence service, is sentenced by a court in Germany to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity in the world's first trial for abuses committed by the Syrian regime.
- On 17 January the ports of Syria and Crimea, annexed unilaterally by Russia, sign economic cooperation agreements.
- On 23 January at least 123 people are killed in four days of fighting between Daesh and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), following a jihadist attack on the Ghwayran prison in Haska, the biggest since Daesh was defeated in 2019. On 26 January, the SDF take back control of the area.
- On 26 January the President Bashar al-Assad announces a general amnesty granted to all army deserters since the beginning of the war in 2011.

Lebanon

- On 5 January the President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Nayib Mikati agree to hold an extraordinary parliamentary session and call a government meeting to try to unblock the political crisis sparked in 2021 when Hezbollah and the also Shiite Amal Movement began a boycott of government work to demand the dismissal of the judge Tarek Bitar, who is investigating the August 2020 Beirut port blast.
- On 10 January a new drop in the Lebanese pound against the dollar leads to an increase in tensions and protests against the price hikes on basic goods.
- On 18 January the US sanctions businessmen Adel Diab, Ali Mohamad Daoun and Jihad Salem Alame for raising and embezzling funds for Hezbollah.
- On 24 January the former Prime Minister Saad Hariri announces he is leav-

ing politics and calls on the members of his party, al-Mustaqbal (Future Movement, Sunni), to emulate him.

- On 26 January Lebanon announces an agreement to receive electricity from Syria and Jordan to ease the country's power crisis.

Jordan

- On 3 January the House of Representatives approves an amendment to the title of the second chapter of the Constitution from "Rights and Duties of Jordanians" to "Rights and Duties of Jordanian Men and Women." Amendments are also approved to improve the legal protection and political participation of people with disabilities and increase the empowerment of women and young people. A fourth amendment stipulating that "the King become the chairman of the National Security Council and Foreign Policy" is rejected.

Egypt

- On 4 January after two and a half years in pre-trial detention, Egypt announces that it will release and deport Ramy Shaath, son of the former Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Egypt, arrested in 2019 for supporting terrorism and spreading false news.
- On 26 January after a 46% fall in European exports to Egypt since 2016, the EU challenges the import restrictions imposed by Egypt at the WTO.
- On 30 January ten members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Yehia Moussa, the former spokesman of the Health Ministry, are convicted for "hostile attacks and vandalism of public property" between 2013 and 2015.

Libya

- On 2 January Libya reduces its daily crude oil production by 200,000 barrels due to a damaged pipe between the Samah and Dhurha camps, two weeks after the militias in the country's east close down the al-Sharara camp.
- On 5 January, according to French reports, some 300 mercenaries withdraw from eastern Libya in the first move

of this nature within the context of the October 2021 ceasefire agreement.

Tunisia

- On 5 January the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) criticizes the road map announced by President Kais Saied in December 2021 to lead the country out of its political crisis since he suspended the Parliament, sacked the Prime Minister and assumed executive authority. Tunisia's biggest union says that the plan, which includes a constitutional referendum on 25 July following a public consultation and parliamentary elections at the end of 2022, does not guarantee Tunisia's return to democracy.
- On 5 January 19 opposition leaders are summoned by a Tunisian court over "electoral violations," including the former President Moncef Marzouki, who was convicted *in absentia* in December 2021 for assaulting state security. The summons comes amid rising repression by President Saied.
- On 10 January the UGTT expresses its opposition to the government's plans to freeze salaries and new jobs in the public sector for five years.
- On 12 January the new governor of Tunisia Kamel Fekih announces that the demonstrations planned for 14 January in commemoration of the 2011 Revolution will not be authorized, due to the increase in Covid-19 infections. Nevertheless, on 14 January, after Ennahda calls for a day of mobilizations faced with the "emerging dictatorship" of President Saied, the Friday demonstrations continue, which have been taking place since Saied suspended parliament and dissolved Hichem Mchichi's government in July 2021. On 21 January, the al-Jomhour, Ettakatol and Democratic Current parties file a complaint against the Interior Minister Taoufik Chaferdin for the repression of the protests on 14 January.
- On 25 January the head of the presidential cabinet Nadia Akacha resigns citing "fundamental differences" with President Saied.

Algeria

- On 9 January the Council of the Nation (upper house) announces the creation of a commission for "shortages and

speculation in staple food products" to deal with Algeria's latest food crisis.

- On 12 January Algeria says it has intercepted 474 irregular migrants trying to reach Spain since 1 January.

Morocco

- On 4 January the state prosecutor orders the pre-trial detention of a teacher from the Higher School of Translation of Tangier, after reports by several female students of sexual harassment. This adds to other similar cases reported in 2021 at the Hassan I University in Settat and the National School of Business and Management in Oujda.

EU

- On 11 January the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) reveals that irregular migrant arrivals have returned to pre-pandemic levels, reaching almost 200,000 in 2021.
- On 14 January the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell highlights the support of European foreign ministers, gathered in Brest, for the creation of a European military force.
- On 18 January the Maltese Roberta Metsola, from the European People's Party (EPP, centre-right), is elected President of the Parliament, taking over from the Italian David Sassoli, from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), who passed away on 11 January.

Arab League

- On 23 January the Arab League, in an emergency meeting, calls for the international community to classify Yemen's Houthi rebel group as a terrorist organization after their attack on the UAE.

February 2022

The escalation and subsequent Russian invasion of Ukraine mark the month for the EU, whose response to Moscow is decisive and coordinated. In Spain, the Labour Law reform is approved and the main opposition party is beset by infighting. France confirms its withdrawal from Mali. Slovenia apologizes to the

Yugoslavian "erased." The Croatian Construction Minister is arrested. The Republika Srpska ends its boycott of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian federal institutions, but its Parliament approves initiating a separation from the federal judicial system. The Montenegrin government collapses. The Albanian Constitutional Court overturns the impeachment of President Ilir Meta. Tensions remain between Greece and Türkiye. In Türkiye, an opposition alliance is forged to stand against the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist). In Syria, the US kills the leader of Daesh. Libya's eastern Parliament elects a new prime minister, fueling fresh division in the country. The Tunisian President dissolves the country's top judiciary body. Morocco signs an agreement with Spain to guarantee energy security.

Spain

- On 4 February the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and United We Can (UP) receive parliamentary approval for the Labour Law reform which came into effect on 1 January following an agreement between the government, employers and trade unions.
- On 14 February Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta agree on a strategy to unblock negotiations on the European Pact on Migration and Asylum.
- On 22 February the row within the People's Party (PP, conservative) between its leader Pablo Casado and the president of the Madrid region Isabel Díaz Ayuso over reports of the party spying on Ayuso following allegations her brother benefitted from a contract, trigger a wave of dismissals, primarily including Teodoro Garcia Egea as the party's secretary-general, and the mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, as the party's national spokesperson.

France

- On 5-6 February the first summit is held of France's Forum of Islam, an initiative of President Emmanuel Macron to combat Islamic extremism, which replaces the French Council of the Muslim Faith, set up by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2003.
- On 10 February a large-scale police deployment is launched to prevent the

entry into Paris of a march organized by the Freedom Convoy group composed of anti-vaxxers, former yellow vests and members of aggrieved social sectors.

- On 17 February France confirms the withdrawal of its troops and those of its western allies from Mali, due to the lack of cooperation of the military junta in the fight against terrorism. Paris announces that the new centre of military efforts in the Sahel will be Niger.

Italy

- On 1 February 176 people rescued in the Mediterranean disembark from the Aita Mari rescue ship in Lampedusa.
- On 3 February a court in Naples provisionally suspends the former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte as leader of the Five Star Movement (M5S, populist) along with the new leadership of the party redesigned by Conte, ruling that the online consultation to modify the party's statutes excluded thousands of party supporters.
- On 11 February the Council of Ministers approves a ban on magistrates that have occupied political posts from returning to their judicial roles.
- On 15 February the Constitutional Court rejects a petition to hold a referendum on euthanasia describing it as a practice that does not protect human life.
- On 18 February thousands of students protest in Italy, with fierce clashes breaking out in Turin and Rome, over the death of two interns while undertaking compulsory work placements for high school students.
- On 22 February 53 Cosa Nostra members are arrested in Messina.
- On 27 February Sea Watch 4 docks in Porto Empedocle with 129 migrants aboard.
- On 28 February Italy declares a state of emergency until 31 December over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Slovenia

- On 21 February Slovenia raises most of its Covid-19 restrictions.
- On 27 February the President Borut Pahor issues a formal apology to 25,671 Yugoslavians that were illegally removed from the Slovenian register of permanent residents in 1992, following Slovenia's independence.

Croatia

- On 19 February the Construction Minister Darko Horvat is arrested and sacked as part of an investigation into illegal subsidies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 1 February the Parliament of the Republika Srpska votes in favour of allowing Bosnian Serb representatives to re-take their place in the federal institutions on the condition they represent the decisions adopted by the governing bodies of the Serb-dominated entity. This puts an end to the six-month Bosnian Serb boycott on the country's central institutions.
- On 10 February the Republika Srpska Parliament backs a draft law to set up a judicial system separate from that of the rest of the country.
- On 24 February NATO and the EU announces increasing the peacekeeping force from 600 to 1,100 troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina in light of the deterioration of the situation in both the Balkans and Ukraine.

Montenegro

- On 4 February just 14 months after its appointment the government of Zdravko Krivokapic collapses following a successful no-confidence vote tabled following the withdrawal from the government coalition of the Black on White bloc led by United Reform Action (URA, progressive green liberalist), whose leader Dritan Abazovic will try to form a minority government, but one tolerated by the main opposition party, Milo Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS). On 7 February, the parliamentary majority formed by Black on White and the opposition successfully ousts the Parliament Speaker Aleksa Becic (DM).
- On 10 February the mayor of Pljevlja Igor Golubovic resigns over the controversy surrounding his opposition to the removal of graffiti celebrating the Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladic.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 February the special prosecutor indicts the former Infrastructure Minister

Pal Lekaj over the additional payment of 53 million euros made to the Turkish-US consortium Bechtel & Enka for delays in the payment of the construction of the motorway between Kosovo and North Macedonia.

North Macedonia

- On 11 February Bulgaria and North Macedonia reestablish a commercial air link between Sofia and Skopje, after 13 years of interruption.

Albania

- On 16 February the Constitutional Court rules that the President Ilir Meta complete his mandate, declaring that he did not violate the constitution by participating in the election campaign in April 2021, contrary to the government's claims. The Parliament's vote on 9 June 2021 to impeach Meta is thereby overturned.

Greece

- On 16 February the Parliament backs a draft law to step up defence spending in view of the increased tensions with Türkiye in the Aegean Sea. The EU, meanwhile, warns Türkiye that Greece's sovereignty is unquestionable following provocative comments made by the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in which he accuses Athens of "militarizing" the territorial dispute between both countries.

Türkiye

- On 1 February the ECHR rules that Türkiye violated the freedom of expression of lawmakers from the People's Democratic Party (HDP, pro-Kurdish) by stripping them of their parliamentary immunity so they could stand trial.
- On 7 February the newspaper *Hürriyet* reports that in 2021 Türkiye rescued a total of 23,676 irregular migrants in the Aegean Sea, of which 15,794 were pushed back by Greece, according to data of the Turkish Coast Guard.
- On 8 February Türkiye says it has rescued 100 migrants in the Aegean Sea and again accuses Greece of expelling several vessels from its waters.
- On 12 February six opposition parties meet in Ankara as a first step to the

creation of a broad political alliance to remove the AKP from power and return the country to a parliamentary system.

- On 15 February the Court of Istanbul upholds the prison sentences handed down to three journalists for reporting the presence of the Turkish military in Libya and thereby revealing state secrets.
- On 27 February Türkiye announces it will apply the Montreux Convention prohibiting Russian and Ukrainian warships from transiting the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.

Cyprus

- On 1 February Cyprus signs an agreement with the EU to regulate the return of migrants in light of the surge in asylum applications in the country, 1,335 in January alone. On 21 February, the European Commission strengthens its support for Cyprus.
- On 8 February the businessman Halil Falyali is murdered in Kyrenia. In May 2021, Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker claimed that Falyali was involved in drug trafficking and money laundering in the north of the island.

Syria

- On 2 February at least four civilians are killed in an attack attributed to the PKK terrorist organization in al-Bab, an area controlled by Turkish forces.
- On 3 February the US confirms the death of the Daesh leader Hajji Abdullah, in a joint operation with Syrian Kurdish forces in Atma, Idlib.
- On 6 February Türkiye reports the death of 22 members of the Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) in the last two days in Turkish military operations in Syria.
- On 24 February at least six people are killed in airstrikes attributed to Israel on pro-Iranian targets near the Damascus airport.
- On 24 February Syria reiterates its support for Russia both in its recognition of the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk and in the invasion of Ukraine.

Lebanon

- On 2 February the judge Ghada Aoun issues a summons for the governor of the Central Bank Riad Salamé after his

failure to appear on three occasions in the context of investigations into alleged corruption.

- On 10 February the government approves the state budget for 2022 with a 17% deficit and the possibility of considerable tax hikes.

Egypt

- On 9 February the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi appoints Boulos Fahmy Eskandar head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, as the first Copt to lead the body.
- On 21 February Egypt slams Ethiopia's "unilateral" decision to start electricity production in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance (GERD).

Libya

- On 10 February the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (Parliament) appoints the former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha interim Prime Minister. However, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, the Prime Minister of the Tripoli-based government declares that he will not resign.
- On 28 February, the House of Representatives declares Dbeibah's term in office over and confirms the election of Bashagha.

Tunisia

- On 6 February Tunisia announces the rescue of 170 migrants off the coast of Sfax, who were trying to reach Italy.
- On 6 February the Islamist Ennahda party leads demonstrations against President Kais Saied's "violations of rights and freedoms."
- On 7 February security forces block access to the High Judicial Council, two days after President Saied announces its dissolution. The Tunisian Judges Association announces a two-day national strike in response. On 12 February, Saied appoints a new interim Council.
- On 15 February Tunisia lifts the Covid-19 state of health emergency.

Morocco

- On 2 February Madrid agrees to Rabat's request for the regasification in Spain of liquid natural gas purchased by

Morocco, thus guaranteeing its energy security in the crisis with Algeria. The decision is part of efforts to ease the political crisis between the two countries since Spain allowed entry to the Polisario leader Brahim Ghali in April 2021.

- On 17 February Casablanca's Appeal Court upholds the five-year prison sentence for sexual assault handed down to the journalist Soulaïman Raïssouni, a columnist of the closed-down Akhbar al-Youm newspaper.
- On 21 February Morocco announces the creation of a new military zone along the Algerian border covering 1,559 kilometres.

EU

- On 16 February the CJEU supports the Commission's conditionality mechanism, under which a Member State can only receive European funds if they are seen to be respecting human rights and the founding values of the Union, thereby giving the green light to sanctioning procedures against Poland and Hungary.
- On 22 February the EU approves economic sanctions against Moscow and its banks, and their exclusion from the SWIFT system. On 27 February, the Commission announces the first ever activation of a directive that allows entry into the Community of an unlimited number of people who are fleeing catastrophe. On 28 February, the Union closes its airspace to Russian airlines and approves the financing of arms purchases for the Ukrainian army, after, on 24 February, Russia launches its invasion of Ukraine after recognizing the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

March 2022

The EU responds to the invasion of Ukraine with heavy sanctions on Russia and by accelerating the accession processes of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. In Portugal, the new government takes office. Spain has to deal with strikes by food producers and transport companies and assaults on the border in Melilla, coinciding with a turnaround of Spain's stance on Western Sahara. In France, there is major unrest in Corsica. Italy, facing a sharp

rise in inflation, joins Spain, Greece and Portugal to demand gas and electricity prices be decoupled. Malta holds legislative elections. The Montenegrin President orders the formation of a new government. In Albania, the PDSH leader resigns. Türkiye begins its mediation between Russia and Ukraine and approves a reform of the election law. In Lebanon, sentences are handed down over the assassination of Rafik Hariri. The UN makes efforts to form a committee of representatives of rival powers in Libya. In Tunisia, President Saïed dissolves the Parliament. Algeria makes a major oil and gas discovery. In Morocco, the prison sentence handed down to journalist Omar Radî is upheld. The President of Mauritania asks the Prime Minister to form a new government.

Portugal

- On 17 March Portugal reiterates its military support for Mozambique in the fight against terrorism in Cape Delgado.
- On 18 March the former Minister of Culture Manuel Maria Carrilho is sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for domestic violence against his wife.
- On 30 March the new government takes office, led by Antonio Costa in his third consecutive term as Prime Minister. This is the first majority female cabinet in Portugal's history with nine of its 17 ministries led by women.

Spain

- On 2-3 March some 3,800 sub-Saharan migrants storm the Melilla border fence, sparking fresh tensions with Morocco.
- On 14 March the Platform in Defence of the Transport Sector begins a strike in protest against the sharp increase in fuel prices and is joined days later by farmers and fishermen.

France

- On 5 March the Secretary of State of Education Nathalie Elimas resigns following accusations of "moral harassment."
- On 6 March France calls on the British government to grant visas to hun-

dreds of Ukrainian refugees waiting in Calais to cross to the United Kingdom, where they have been promised refuge. The increasing arrivals of people fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine reignites friction between Paris and London over the management of migration across the English Channel.

- On 9 March at least 27 people are injured in demonstrations in Corsica in solidarity with separatist Yvan Colonna, who was seriously injured by a fellow inmate at a prison near Arles, where he was serving a life sentence for the murder of the prefect Claude Erignac in 1998. The ongoing unrest intensifies on 22 March following Colonna's death.
- On 16 March the Prime Minister Jean Castex presents a resilience plan to mitigate the effects of the war in Ukraine, which includes measures for energy savings and efficiency and financial aid for the fishing and farming sectors.
- On 16 March France ends its ban on gay men donating blood.

Italy

- On 14 March Rome hosts a meeting for senior security officials from the US and China to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine, over fears the conflict may cross NATO's borders and in view of Russia's request for military assistance from China.
- On 18 March Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal agree in Rome on a joint proposal to present to the European Council to address the energy price hikes and reduce dependence on Russian gas, decoupling electricity and gas prices.
- On 31 March the Covid-19 state of emergency comes to an end two years after it was introduced.
- On 31 March the inflation rate increases from 5.7% in February to 6.7% in March, the biggest rise since 1991.

Malta

- On 2 March Malta suspends its programme of citizenship sales in exchange for investments for Russians and Belarusians.
- On 26 March Malta holds general elections in which, for the first time, young people between 16 and 18 years of age can vote. These are also the first

elections since the amendment to the election law to increase the proportion of women in the Parliament. The Labour Party (PL) led by Robert Abela wins (55.04%, 37 seats) ahead of Bernard Grech's conservative Nationalist Party (PN) (42.12%, 28 seats). On 30 March the new government takes office.

Slovenia

- On 15 March the prime ministers of Slovenia, Poland and Czechia visit the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to show their support following the Russian invasion.

Croatia

- On 3 March Russia summons the Croatian defence attaché to the Russian Defence Ministry over allegations that 200 Croatian mercenaries had gone to fight in Ukraine.
- On 10 March a Soviet-era drone loaded with explosives crashes in Zagreb.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 17 March the Russian ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Kalbukhov warns that Moscow reserves the right to respond if, like Ukraine, the Balkan country decides to join NATO, something that Sarajevo condemns as a "clear threat."
- On 25 March the European Council calls on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian leaders to deliver on its constitutional and electoral reforms, amid the country's ongoing political crisis.

Montenegro

- On 3 March the President Milo Djukanovic tasks the acting Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Black on White bloc Dritan Abazovic with the formation of a new coalition government without the presence of the pro-Serbian DF. On 7 March, the Socialist People's Party (SNP) announces its support for the new government.
- On 3 March the Interior Minister Sergej Sekulovic demands the state prosecutor launch a wider-ranging investigation into the tobacco theft at the Port of Bar.

- On 18 March Vladimir Novovic is appointed chief special prosecutor to replace Miliwoje Katnic, dismissed on 17 February by the new government over alleged links with criminal groups and the former ruling DPS party.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 10 March the authorities proceed with the closure of two supermarket warehouses in Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje and Gracanica suspected of hoarding basic products like sunflower oil to manipulate and push up prices, in view of the situation in Ukraine.
- On 14 March at least 50 border police and customs officers are arrested on charges of taking bribes, in a mass raid as part of the Pika investigation.

North Macedonia

- On 30 March the results of the national census carried out in September 2021 show a sharp drop in the population by 9.2%, with 1,836,713 inhabitants, 185,834 fewer than were recorded in the 2002 census. According to the new figures, Slavo-Macedonians and ethnic Albanians account for 58.44% and 24.3%, respectively.

Albania

- On 9 March at least 16 people are arrested during protests over the rise in oil and gas prices. The protests continue throughout the following days.
- On 22 March Lulzim Basha resigns as leader of the PDS, due to the party split following the expulsion from the party of the former President and former Prime Minister Sali Berisha.

Greece

- On 4 March Greece and Frontex intercept a vessel carrying 120 migrants trying to reach Kos. On 14 March, Greece rescues more than 100 migrants off the coast of Paros.

Türkiye

- On 10 March Antalya hosts a meeting of the Russian and Ukrainian foreign min-

isters in an attempt to resolve the conflict between the two countries. On 29 March, Istanbul hosts a second round of talks.

- On 15 March, following the historic rapprochement at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Armenia declares it is ready to establish diplomatic relations and open its borders with Türkiye, almost thirty years after Ankara took the unilateral decision to suspend all ties over the first war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- On 21 March the public prosecutor issues arrest warrants for 150 people over their alleged ties with the preacher Fetullah Gulen.
- On 31 March the Parliament approves a legal reform put forward by the AKP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, far-right), which reduces the votes threshold needed for a party to enter the Parliament from 10 to 7%.

Cyprus

- On 18 March Dimokritos Zervakis is reelected chief of the National Guard.
- On 22 March the government approves a fourth dose of the Covid-19 vaccine for teenagers, the over 70s and immunosuppressed people.

Syria

- On 8 March the US includes Tawhid wal Jihad (KTJ) on its list of terrorist organizations.
- On 10 March Daesh appoints Abu al Hassan al-Qurashi its new leader after confirming the death of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi on 3 February.
- On 21 March a new round of talks begins in Geneva in an effort to reach an agreement on a new constitution and put an end to a war that, after 11 years, has already claimed more than 610,000 lives.
- On 28 March the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reports that Iraq has begun the construction of a wall along its border with Syria, in response to the threat from Daesh.

Lebanon

- On 10 March Hassan Habib Merhi and Hussein Hassan Oneissi are sentenced on appeal for the 2005 murder of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, after their acquittal was overturned.

- On 15 March the assets of Bank of Beirut, Bank Audi, SGBL, Blom Bank and Bankmed, which were directly involved in the 2019 financial crisis, are frozen by order of Judge Ghada Aoun.
- On 21 March the Central Bank governor Riad Salameh and his brother Raja are charged with illicit enrichment and money laundering.

Egypt

- On 15 March the UN condemns the execution on 8 March of people accused of terrorism and denounces verdicts “issued without meeting the standards of a fair trial.”
- On 21 March the Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly announces fixed prices for unsubsidized bread to control the rising prices following the invasion of Ukraine.

Libya

- On 4 March Hafd Gaddur, the Foreign Minister of Fathi Bashagha’s new government is released by the militia that abducted him the previous day.
- On 4 March Stephanie Williams, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Libya, proposes creating a committee with members from the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and Tripoli’s High Council of State to enable joint parliamentary elections to be held in December 2021 and overcome the country’s dual-governance situation.
- On 7 March Libya’s National Oil Corporation (NOC) suspends oil production at al-Sharara and al-Feel, after an armed group closes the valves allowing the flow of crude oil.
- On 12 March Libya’s eastern forces withdraw from their positions close to Tripoli following an *in extremis* agreement between Fathi Bashagha and the Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity Abdul Hamid al-Dbeibeh.
- On 25 March the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses his concern for a “deepening of repression” against Libyan civil society.

Tunisia

- On 2 March the former chairman of Tunisia’s National Bar of Lawyers Ab-

derrazak Kilani is arrested on charges of disturbing the public order, threats and obstructing the application of the law. Kilani is a member of the defence team of Nouredine Bhiri, Ennhadha’s deputy leader under house arrest on charges of terrorism and who is released on 8 March.

- On 8 March the President Kais Saied announces measures against the illegal hoarding of and speculation on basic food stuffs in the context of the crisis sparked by the invasion of Ukraine.
- On 30 March Kais Saied dissolves the Parliament after 124 MPs organize an online meeting to annul the decrees enacted by Saied since he declared a state of emergency in July 2020. Meanwhile, the Sunday demonstrations against the presidential decisions continue.

Algeria

- On 1 March Algeria announces that its national oil output will increase to over a million barrels per day in April at the OPEC ministerial meeting, which approves a world increase in production amid rising prices resulting from the post-pandemic recovery and invasion of Ukraine.
- On 20 March the Algerian-Italian Sonatrach-Eni partnership announces an oil and gas discovery in Berkine, which may yield 140 million barrels of crude oil.
- On 30 March the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visits Algiers on his tour of Israel, Palestine, Algeria and Morocco, to discuss Algeria’s opposition to efforts to legitimize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. The visit comes at a time when Algerian gas may be key to boycotting Russian gas exports after the invasion of Ukraine.

Morocco

- On 4 March an appeals court in Casablanca upholds the six-year prison sentence handed down to the journalist and activist Omar Radi for spying and rape.
- On 13 March at least 44 migrants die in a shipwreck off the coast of Tarfaya.
- On 31 March the Moroccan authorities arrest 231 sub-Saharan migrants in Laayoune and Tarfaya, who were get-

ting ready to make the crossing to the Canary Islands.

Mauritania

- On 8 March Mauritania summons the country's Malian ambassador after several Mauritians disappear on the border between both countries.
- On 30 March, in a sign of renewed confidence, the President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani entrusts the formation of a new government to the Prime Minister Mohamed Ould Bilal, who had handed in his resignation over Ghazouani's criticisms of the outgoing cabinet.

EU

- On 1 March the European Parliament approves the acceleration of Ukraine's accession to the EU in response to the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signing an application for membership the previous day. On 3 March, the President of Moldova Maia Sandu and the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili also apply for EU membership. On 7 March, the European Council makes a unanimous call for the Commission to grant the three countries candidate status.
- On 2 March the EU adopts fresh sanctions on Belarus for its involvement in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- On 3 March the EU agrees to grant temporary protection lasting up to three years to anyone fleeing Ukraine into Europe, in what is now the biggest exodus in Europe since World War II.
- On 9 March Sweden and Finland cite the mutual defence clause in the event of a military attack as outlined in the EU treaty, following Moscow's warning against their joining NATO.
- On 21 March the European Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers approve the so-called Strategic Compass, which gives the EU the strategic autonomy to provide international security of up to 5,000 troops.

April 2022

Numerous European countries expel dozens of Russian diplomats. In Spain, the PP elects a new leader. France, Slo-

venia and Serbia hold elections. Italy signs a deal under which the country will have a privileged partnership with Algeria for gas exports. Montenegro unveils a new cabinet. In North Macedonia the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski is convicted. Greece completes its repayment of IMF loans from the 2008 crisis. Türkiye seeks to shelve the case of the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, launches a new operation against the PKK terrorist organization and sentences Osman Kavala to life in prison. Lebanon signs a deal with the IMF for financial assistance in exchange for draconian reforms. In Egypt, Mahmoud Ezzat is sentenced to life in prison. Libya's state oil company halts production and exports due to the country's dual political divide. In Tunisia a front emerges in opposition to President Kais Saied, who issues a decree to amend the basic law of the Elections Commission. In Algeria, there is a national strike.

Spain

- On 1 April Galicia's regional president Alberto Nuñez Feijoo is proclaimed leader of the opposition PP at the party's congress in Seville. On 29 April, Nuñez Feijoo submits his resignation as president of Galicia, and is succeeded by the regional vice-president Alfonso Rueda.
- On 19 April the government of Alfonso Fernandez Mañueco (PP) is formed in Castile and Leon, marking the first time the far-right Vox party has entered a regional government.

France

- On 10 April France holds the first round of presidential elections. The President Emmanuel Macron, from the Republic on the Move party (LREM, liberal) and Marine Le Pen, from the National Rally (RN, far right) go through to the second round. Jean-Luc Melenchon, from France Unbowed (LFI, far left) comes third. The results confirm the collapse of the traditional parties, Valerie Pécresse's Republicans (LR, right-wing, Gaullist) and Anne Hidalgo's Socialist Party (PS), relegated to fifth and eighth position, respectively. On 24 April, the second round is held, in which Macron (58.54%) defeats Le Pen (41.46%).

Italy

- On 11 April the Prime Minister Mario Draghi travels to Algeria to meet with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and sign a bilateral strategic and energy deal that classes Italy as a privileged partner of Algeria, after Algiers decides to "review its agreements with Spain in all areas" in light of the change in Madrid's policy of neutrality on Western Sahara.
- On 20 April the police arrest 36 members of the Moccia clan in the Camorra near Naples.

Malta

- On 6 April Malta rejects the EU's calls for it to suspend its sale of citizenship in exchange for investments arguing that it is a national competence and not a Community one.

Slovenia

- On 24 April Slovenia holds legislative elections in which Robert Golob, from the Freedom Movement (Svoboda!, green liberalist) wins 34.5% of the votes and 41 of the 90 seats in the National Assembly, thereby putting an end to the mandate of Janez Jansa's Democratic Party (SDS, conservative), which takes 23.5% of the votes and 27 seats.

Croatia

- On 11 April Croatia reports the expulsion of 24 employees of the Russian embassy in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 11 April the United Kingdom announces sanctions against Bosnian Serb politicians Milorad Dodik and Zeljka Cvijanovic, accusing them of undermining the legitimacy and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 13 April the international community's High Representative to Bosnia Christian Schmidt orders the suspension of a state property law approved in February by the Parliament of the Republika Srpska, which allowed it to take over state-owned property in Bosnian Serb territory.

Montenegro

- On 20 April the former president of the Supreme Court Vesna Medenica is arrested on charges of abuse of power in connection with cocaine and tobacco trafficking in Bar.
- On 28 April the Parliament approves a new minority government comprising moderate and pro-European parties, led by Dritan Abazovic (URA), thereby putting an end to the three-month mandate of Zdravko Krivokapic's pro-Serbian and pro-Russian government, after it was defeated in a motion of no confidence on 4 February. Although not a participant in the coalition, the DPS lends its backing to the new formation.

Serbia

- On 3 April Serbia holds presidential and legislative elections. Aleksandar Vucic holds onto the presidency with 59.2% of the votes, making a second round unnecessary. The legislative elections are won by Vucic's populist Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which takes 121 of the 250 seats.
- On 5 April Slobodan Malesic, the Novi Sad police chief, is arrested, accused of influence peddling.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 April Kosovo applies for membership of the Council of Europe.

North Macedonia

- On 15 April North Macedonia expels six Russian diplomats.
- On 21 April the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski is sentenced *in absentia* to seven years' imprisonment for stealing from his own party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), and using the money to acquire properties.

Albania

- On 27 April the European Commission highlights the need to accelerate the accession process of North Macedonia and Albania.

Greece

- On 4 April the government announces it has fully repaid its debt to the IMF from the 2010 crisis, two years ahead of schedule.
- On 6 April Greece announces the expulsion of 12 Russian diplomats.
- On 27 April Greece denounces more Turkish violations of its airspace.

Türkiye

- On 7 April a Turkish court rules to suspend the trial for the murder of the Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018.
- On 15 April the state prosecutor files a lawsuit against *We Will Stop Femicide*, the country's biggest feminist group, which it accuses of crimes against morality.
- On 18 April, in spite of protests from Iraq, Türkiye launches "Operation Claw-Lock" against the PKK in Iraq Kurdistan.
- On 23 April Türkiye announces the closure of its airspace to Russian planes carrying troops from Russia to Syria.
- On 25 April, after four and a half years in administrative detention, the philanthropist Osman Kavala is sentenced to life in prison, accused of attempting to bring down the government by financing the protests in 2013.
- On 28 April Türkiye says it has rescued 100 migrants in the Aegean Sea, accusing Greece of pushing back boats from its waters.

Cyprus

- On 13 and 21 April a total of 24 Russian nationals, mostly oligarchs, have their Cypriot citizenship revoked.
- On 16 April the Russian Commercial Bank, Cyprus' third biggest and 46.29% of which until February was controlled by the Russian VTB bank, becomes a fully Cypriot-registered company after having ceased its banking operations in March following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- On 17 April Andreas Mavrogiannis, the Cypriot government's negotiator for the island's reunification, resigns citing the lack of progress in negotiations.

- On 20 April Faiz Sucuoglu's cabinet resigns, two months after taking over the leadership of Northern Cyprus' government, because of disagreements over his appointment with the leader Ersin Tatar.

Syria

- On 15 April Syria accuses Israel of a missile attack on the outskirts of Damascus which, according to the SOHR, is the eighth attack so far in 2022.
- On 29 April Ali Mahmoud Abbas is appointed Defence Minister to replace Ali Abdullah Ayoub.
- On 30 April Bashar al-Assad announces an amnesty to dozens of political and ordinary prisoners on the occasion of the feast of Eid al-Fitr.

Lebanon

- On 7 April Lebanon reaches an agreement with the IMF on the delivery of 3 billion dollars over the next four years in exchange for Beirut carrying out a severe economic reform, completely restructuring its banking sector and national debt, unifying exchange rates and drafting a capital control law.
- On 24 April at least six people are killed and 50 rescued after a boat carrying migrants capsizes near Tripoli.

Jordan

- On 29 April the UN urges Jordan to release 12 human rights activists, two of them on hunger strike, placed under administrative detention in February and March under the Crime and Cybercrime Prevention Law.

Egypt

- On 18 April Mahmoud Ezzat, the former acting supreme guide of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, is handed down a life sentence for storming prisons during the 2011 Revolution and collaborating with Hamas.
- On 27 April the President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announces the release of 3,273 inmates on the occasion of Sinai Liberation day, celebrated on 25 April.

Libya

- On 10 April the army rescues 195 migrants in Bani Walid who had been kidnapped by human traffickers.
- On 18 April the NOC announces the closure of the country's main oil field, al-Sharara, and suspension of oil exports from the ports of Melita and el-Fil due to tensions sparked by the House of Representatives' decision to appoint Fathi Bashagha Prime Minister and thereby returning the country to dual governance.
- On 22 April Fathi Bashagha's parallel government holds its first official meeting in Sebha and calls for the unification of Libya's institutions under his authority, which is opposed by the Government of National Unity in Tripoli.
- On 29 April the UN Security Council extends the Libya Support Mission (UN-SMIL) until July.

Tunisia

- On 8 April the Finance Ministry publishes figures according to which Tunisia recorded a public debt of around 33.2 billion euros at the end of 2021, the equivalent of 85.9% of its GDP, 16% higher than in 2020 and 30% higher than in 2019.
- On 23 April the President Kais Saied approves the amendment to the law regulating the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), whose members will be appointed on 9 May by the country's Presidency.
- On 27 April the opposition parties to President Saied, among them Ennahda and Amal, announce the establishment of a National Salvation Front and call for a transitional government.

Algeria

- On 3 April the President Abdelmajid Tebboune pardons more than 1,000 prisoners to mark the start of Ramadan.
- On 11 April the government approves a pension increase of between 2 and 10%. This measure, long demanded by unions and pensioners in view of the rise in the cost of living, is added to the approval in March of the first unemployment benefit programme in the country's history.
- On 14 April the newspaper *Liberté* closed down after 30 years. Although

its owner, Issad Rebrab, cites economic reasons, the closure is seen as a consequence of pressures from the regime to silence one of the most critical media outlets in the Arab World.

- On 26-27 April a public sector national strike demands salary hikes in view of the 40% drop in purchasing power.
- On 27 April Algeria threatens to break its contract to supply Spain with gas if part of this gas is redirected to Morocco.

Morocco

- On 18 April the Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch appears before the Parliament to explain the government's measures to control the inflation caused by the invasion of Ukraine and soaring fuel prices, amid criticism from the opposition, which accuses him of inaction due to his ownership of Afriquia, Morocco's biggest fuel distributor.
- On 20 April Morocco announces drilling to extract oil and gas some 100 km from its sea border with Spain, parallel to talks between Madrid and Rabat over the delineation of territorial waters in the Atlantic seaboard.
- On 29 April the activist Saida el-Alami, detained since 23 March for using Facebook to criticize the General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance, is sentenced to two years' imprisonment on charges of insulting public officials.

Mauritania

- On 26 April Mauritania announces it will start drilling four wells in the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim gas field, which could contain 15 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas reserves for 2023.

EU

- On 5 April the EU expels 19 Russian diplomats following reports of the massacre carried out by Russia in the Ukrainian town of Bucha. This action adds to similar decisions taken from the start of the invasion of Ukraine by Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Georgia, Norway, the United Kingdom, the US, Canada, Australia and most of the Union's Member States. Furthermore, on the same day, the Commission approves the first sanctions against

Russian energy with a ban on Russian coal. On 7 April, the European Parliament calls for these sanctions to extend to oil, nuclear fuel and gas.

- On 5 April the Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen confirms the start of an infringement procedure against Hungary for violations of the rule of law, marking the first time it has used its mechanism of conditionality for the receipt of European funds, two days after Viktor Orban is reelected for the fourth time as the country's Prime Minister.
- On 11 April the EU suspends its military training mission in Mali, which it has been running since 2013, due to the presence alongside the Malian armed forces of mercenaries from the Russian Wagner group, who it blames for the civilian massacres of recent months, such as the one in Moura in late March.
- On 29 April Fabrice Leggeri, the head of Frontex, resigns amid a rising number of investigations and complaints regarding the so-called hot returns of illegal migrants.

May 2022

Spain reopens its border with Morocco and sacks its intelligence chief. In France, while a left-wing coalition is being formed that can absorb a PS in decline, LREM changes its name to "Renaissance" and President Macron appoints a Prime Minister. A plan for reducing energy dependency on Russia enters into effect in Italy. The consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine sparks a confrontation between the Croatian President and Prime Minister. Serbia expresses its opposition to applying sanctions on Russia. Kosovo applies for membership of the Council of Europe. Albania fails to elect a president. In Türkiye, a prominent opposition politician is jailed. Lebanon holds elections. In Jordan, Prince Hamzah is placed under arrest. In Libya, the government appointed by the Tobruk-based Parliament withdraws from Tripoli. Protests in Tunisia continue against Kais Saied, who announces the launch of "national dialogue." Algeria strengthens relations with China and Russia. Morocco hosts the Summit of the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh.

Portugal

- On 10 May the police raid Setubal City Hall and the offices of the Association of Migrants from Eastern Europe (Edinstvo), run by someone with links to the Kremlin after, in April, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Portugal, Inna Ohnivets, denounces the infiltration of Russian agents in the country's Ukrainian refugee support programmes.
- On 29 May Luis Montenegro claims victory over Jorge Moreira da Silva in the primary elections for the leadership of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, conservative).

Spain

- On 10 May the Director of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) Paz Esteban is sacked after a security breach is revealed that enabled Pegasus spyware to be used to hack the mobile phones of the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Defence and Interior Ministers Margarita Robles and Fernando Grande-Marlaska, respectively.
- On 17 May Spain reopens its border with Morocco in Ceuta and Melilla after some 10,000 irregular migrants were allowed to enter Spanish territory by Rabat, amid a diplomatic crisis sparked in April 2021 by the hospitalization in Logroño of the Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali.

France

- On 1 May large-scale demonstrations take place in different cities against the growing social divide in France, giving rise to unrest and arrests.
- On 2 May a left-wing coalition is announced between LFI and Europe Ecology – The Greens (EELV) to run in the legislative elections in June. On 4 May a divided PS joins the project, sparking the party's most serious internal crisis since the Epinay Congress in 1971.
- On 5 May LREM announces it is changing its name to "Renaissance" to form a political alliance that brings together conservative, liberal, centrist, independent and social democratic parties and politicians.
- On 16 May Emmanuel Macron appoints the socialist Labour Minister

Élisabeth Borne Prime Minister. On 20 May, the new cabinet is unveiled. Bruno Le Maire, Gérald Darmanin and Eric Dupond-Moretti stay on as Ministers of Economy and Finance; Interior; and Justice, respectively. In new positions are Catherine Colonna, as Foreign Minister, Pap Ndiaye, in Education; Sébastien Lecornu, in Defence and Rima Abdul Malak, as Culture Minister.

Italy

- On 1 May "Operation Thermostat" comes into effect, which, until 31 March 2023 aims to save around 4 billion m³ of gas to reduce dependence on Russia.
- On 3 May the Italian Parliament announces an investigation into the presence of Russian propaganda in the country's media.
- On 17 May some 450 migrants travelling from Libya disembark in Pozzallo.
- On 24 May Italy and Croatia agree on the demarcation of their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

Malta

- On 27-28 May the PN holds its congress, in which Bernard Grech is elected party leader, as the sole contender in the elections.

Croatia

- On 5 May the President Zoran Milanovic threatens to veto Sweden and Finland's entry into NATO, against the interests of Andrej Plenkovic's government. The imposition of sanctions is also a source of friction between Plenkovic, who is in favour of them, and Milanovic, who is not.
- On 26 May the High Administrative Court rules that same-sex couples have the right to adopt children.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 12 May the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Christian Schmidt urges the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to defend the Dayton Accords, amid rising intercommunal tensions over the possible with-

drawal of the Republika Srpska from the federal institutions and ahead of the October elections.

Montenegro

- On 9 May the president of Montenegro's Commercial Court Blaz Jovanic is arrested as part of an anti-corruption probe.
- On 26 May Montenegro temporarily scraps visa requirements for Saudi citizens to help the country's tourist industry following the international sanctions on Russia.

North Macedonia

- On 20 May the Skopje Criminal Court sentences the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski to nine years' imprisonment for abuse of power when he ordered the demolition of a building under construction, owned by a rival politician, in 2011.

Albania

- On 16 May the Parliament fails to elect the country's new President after the voting session ends without any party nominating a candidate.

Greece

- On 1 May the gross minimum wage is increased by fifty euros to 713 euros. This is the second rise in 2022, following the approval in January that brought it up from 650 to 663 euros.
- On 3 May Greece and Bulgaria begin the construction of a terminal south of Alexandroupolis to transport up to 5.5 billion m³ of liquified natural gas as of the end of 2023.
- On 20 May Greece denounces the violation of its airspace by two Turkish fighter jets.
- On 27 May Greece and Cyprus express their support for Ukraine's accession to the EU, but oppose a fast-track process if this does not also include the Western Balkans.
- On 27 May Iran seizes two Greek oil tankers in the Persian Gulf amid bilateral tensions, following Greece's seizure of an Iranian oil tanker at the request of the US.

- On 29 May Greece announces it will extend its 35-kilometre border fence with Türkiye by 80 kilometres to stop irregular entries.

Türkiye

- On 1 May at least 164 people are arrested in Istanbul during unauthorized 1st May demonstrations.
- On 4 May the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan unveils plans to resettle a million Syrian refugees in Idlib.
- On 10 May Iran and Iraq oppose Turkish plans to build several dams on the Aras, fearing they will reduce their water supplies.
- On 12 May the opposition condemns the ruling of the Court of Cassation which upholds the almost five-year prison sentence handed down by a local court to Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the provincial leader in Istanbul of the Republican People's Party (CHP, Kemalist) for insult. On 21 May thousands of people demonstrate in Istanbul against the ruling.
- On 25 May Türkiye says it has neutralized over 100 members of the PKK terrorist organization in Iraq so far this year.
- On 27 May a law protecting women and medical workers from gender-based violence comes into effect, which for the first time defines the persistent stalking of women as a crime.
- On 31 May ECHR describes the arrest in Türkiye in 2017 of the former chairperson of Amnesty International Taner Kilic on charges of having ties with Fethullah Gulen as "unlawful and arbitrary."
- On 31 May some 170 people are arrested in Istanbul during the commemoration of the ninth anniversary of the Gezi Park protests.
- On 31 May Türkiye summons the German and French ambassadors over recent demonstrations in both countries in support of the PKK.

Cyprus

- On 17 May the new Supreme Court judge Stalo Hadjiyianni-Christodoulou is sworn into the post.
- On 18 May livestock farmers protest in Nicosia demanding greater protection

for halloumi cheese, owing to its status as a designation of origin product and faced with the drop in the price of milk with respect to production costs.

- On 27 May the central committee of the opposition Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) announces it will back the independent candidate Andreas Mavroyiannis in the 2023 presidential elections.

Syria

- On 10 May the 6th EU conference on Syria secures pledges to the value of 6.4 billion euros in 2022 to help the Syrian people and neighbouring countries hosting refugees from the conflict.
- On 31 May the EU extends sanctions on the President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian regime.

Lebanon

- On 15 May Lebanon holds legislative elections marked by popular discontent over the crisis which began in 2019 and has seen the value of the Lebanese pound drop by 90% and left 80% of the population living below the poverty line. The Free Patriotic Movement (MPL) of the President Michel Aoun loses its position as the biggest Christian party, having been surpassed by Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces. With this change the Hezbollah, Amal and MPL bloc loses its parliamentary majority, now holding 66 seats, down from 71, out of a total of 128.
- On 27 May judges begin a national strike joining those declared by pharmacists and hospitals over the worsening of the crisis and inflation caused by the sustained drop in the pound, which has now lost 95% of its value.
- On 31 May the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri is reelected for a seventh term.

Jordan

- On 19 May the Royal Palace issues a decree placing Abdullah II's half-brother Hamzah Bin Husein under house arrest for sedition, after he renounced his title as prince in April, a year after allegedly orchestrating a plot against the monarch.

Egypt

- On 3 May the US calls on Egypt to launch an investigation into the death in police custody of Ayman Hadhoud, an economist critical of the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who went missing on 5 February and whose death was reported a month later and attributed to "natural causes."
- On 29 May Mahmoud Ezzat, former supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood and former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Fotouh are sentenced to an additional 15 years' imprisonment for spreading "false news" and "undermining state security."

Libya

- On 11 May the Prime Minister-designate of the House of Representatives, Fathi Bashagha, announces the end of the blockade on several oil fields by groups calling for the resignation of the unity government's Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh.
- On 14 May Libya's eastern Parliament Speaker, Aguila Saleh, orders NOC revenues to be frozen until guarantees can be established for their proper management.
- On 17 May the parallel government appointed by the Tobruk-based Parliament and backed by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar announces its withdrawal from Tripoli, also the seat of the Government of National Accord, after clashes break out on its arrival in the city.

Tunisia

- On 2 May the President Kais Saied announces the launch of "national dialogue," which will include the participation of the UGTT trade union, the UTICA employers' association, the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) and the Tunisian Bar Association, and excludes political parties, who Saied blames for the country's political and economic crisis.
- On 15 May around 2,000 people demonstrate against Kais Saied in the first protest organized by the National Salvation Front, headed by the left-wing opposition leader Ahmed Najib Chebbi and which has been joined since its

creation in April by eight parties, including Ennahda and Qalb Tounes.

- On 18 May leading professionals and intellectuals announce the creation of a National Authority, chaired by the lawyer Ayachi Hammami, to defend rights and democracy.
- On 25 May 76 migrants travelling from Zawara, Libya, go missing off the coast of Sfax.
- On 25 May the UGTT reiterates its refusal to participate in the national dialogue proposed by the President Kais Saied, describing it as a unilateral and exclusionary process. The LTDH, however, announces it will participate under certain "conditions."
- On 28 May a court issues a travel ban on the Ennahda leader Rached Ghannouchi, accusing him of plotting against President Saied.

Algeria

- On 1 May Karim Tabbou leader of the Democratic and Social Union (UDS) and prominent figure in the Hirak movement, is released after his previous day's arrest for accusing the government of complicity in the death of the jailed opposition figure Hakim Debbazi.
- On 12 May the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune sacks Noureddine Mokri, along with his deputy Hamid Hocine, as Director General of External Security and Documentation and appoints Djamel Kehal to the post. The dismissals come following an investigation that revealed a plot to destabilize other institutions to the benefit of the clan Hocine belongs to.
- On 28 May the oil and gas company Sonatrach and Chinese Sinopec Oil & Gas Limited (SOOGL) announce a 25-year oil production-sharing deal.

Morocco

- On 11 May Marrakech hosts the meeting of the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh, in which Morocco and the US call for technical and financial aid for the fight against terrorism, considered to be the driving factor behind 1.4 million displaced people in Africa, a continent that suffers 48% of global deaths from terrorism and 41% of all Daesh attacks.

EU

- On 5 May Warsaw hosts an international donor conference for Ukraine which raises 6.5 billion dollars in pledges.
- On 11 May Ukraine announces that it is suspending the flow of Russian gas via Sokhranivka and Novopskov, through which almost a third of the EU's supply is delivered, after it loses control of both stations due to the Russian invasion.
- On 12 May the Russian gas company Gazprom announces the interruption of gas supplies to Europe through the Yamal pipeline in response to western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine and in light of Finland and Sweden's historic application for NATO membership, which is submitted on 18 May.
- On 18 May the Commission unveils the REPowerEU plan, which will mobilize up to 300 billion euros to reduce European energy dependency, particularly on Russia.
- On 18 May the Commission announces an additional 9 billion euros for the reconstruction of Ukraine and the acceleration of its European accession.
- On 31 May the European Council agrees on the urgent need for joint defence purchases to replenish weapons stocks.

June 2022

In Spain, Andalusia holds elections and Madrid hosts the NATO summit. France and Malta hold legislative elections and Italy local elections. Slovenia unveils a new cabinet. Croatia is given approval to adopt the euro in 2023. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international High Representative urges parties to end the political deadlock so elections can be held in October. Bulgaria lifts its veto on the opening of accession talks with North Macedonia. Türkiye announces a new military operation in Syria and its Parliament approves extending the deployment of Turkish troops in Libya. The Cypriot Labour Minister dies. Nayib Mikati is appointed Prime Minister and asked to form a government in Lebanon. The new draft Constitution is published in Tunisia. Algeria suspends its friendship treaty with Spain and signs bilateral cooperation agreements with

Mauritania. In Morocco, at least 23 irregular migrants die during an assault on the barrier along the Spanish border in Melilla.

Spain

- On 1 June over 300 migrants have arrived in the Canary Islands over the last 48 hours.
- On 8 June the European Commission authorizes the "Iberian Exception," which acknowledges Spain and Portugal's condition as energy islands, allowing them to set a cap on the price of gas used to produce electricity.
- On 19 June Andalusia holds regional elections in which the PP wins by an absolute majority, increasing its seat count from 36 to 58.
- On 29-30 June Madrid hosts the NATO summit, which approves the New Strategic Concept for the Alliance which, after the invasion of Ukraine, defines Russia as the main threat to the world order and China as a disturbing element; strengthens the southern Mediterranean flank; and approves Sweden and Finland's entry after Türkiye lifts its veto after Stockholm and Helsinki agree not to lend their support to the PKK, the YPG or followers of Fetullah Gulen.

France

- On 11 June France captures a senior figure in Daesh, Oumeya Ould Albakaye, on the border between Mali and Niger, during an operation carried out by the Barkhane force.
- On 12 and 19 June France holds the two rounds of its legislative elections in which the centre-right alliance Ensemble (Together) of President Emmanuel Macron wins 245 seats, way short of the 289 needed for an absolute majority, and therefore facing a challenging situation in view of the major gains by NUPES, the far-left coalition of Jean-Luc Melenchon (131 seats) and the far-right RN of Marine Le Pen (up from 8 to 89 seats). The traditional Gaullist right-wing is relegated to fourth position with 64 seats.
- On 21 June the Council of State upholds the rejection of Grenoble City Council's ruling to allow Muslims to wear full-body burkini swimsuits at public swimming pools.

Italy

- On 12 and 26 June Italy holds local elections in 971 of its municipalities. After a first round dominated by the centre-right with victories such as those in Genoa and Palermo, the second round saw the centre-left come to the fore, retaining power in Parma and taking the traditional right-wing strongholds of Verona, Monza, Alessandria, Piacenza and Catanzaro.
- On 21 June the Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio confirms he is leaving M5E, along with other party members, to create the party Together for the Future. His departure comes following a dispute with the party leader and former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, over the sending of weapons to Ukraine.

Malta

- On 9 June Malta is elected as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.
- On 17 June the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, announces that Malta is no longer on its grey list, where it has been included since June 2021.

Slovenia

- On 2 June the members of the new centre-left government of Robert Golob are sworn into office. On the same day, two senior civil servants are replaced, linked with the previous cabinet led by Janez Jansa: the Federal Police chief Anton Olaj and head of the Government Communication Office Uros Urbanija, brought into question over decisions deemed to restrict free expression and press freedoms.
- On 20 June Slovenia announces that it will push for Bosnia and Herzegovina to obtain accession candidate status after the European Commission and Council's favourable stance on Ukraine and Moldova's candidacies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 6 June the US sanctions Marinko Cavara, President of the Bosnian-Croat entity, and Alen Seranic, Health Minister

of the Republika Srpska, for undermining the 1995 Dayton Accords.

- On 7 June the High Representative Christian Schmidt uses the "Bonn" powers to impose a decision to allocate funds to the Central Election Commission to organize the October general elections after repeated attempts by the Federal Council of Ministers to approve funds, which have failed due to vetoes by Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Croat delegates.
- On 12 June the Federal Parliament and the tripartite Presidency agree to commit to maintaining peace and the rule of law in the country, as well as their stance on EU accession.

Montenegro

- On 8 June the Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic says, at the Open Balkan summit in Ohrid, he is considering Montenegro joining the Open Balkan initiative, aimed at creating a common Balkan market, which already includes Serbia, North Macedonia and Albania.

North Macedonia

- On 24 June the Bulgarian Parliament ends its veto on opening accession talks between North Macedonia and the EU, under the condition that efforts are made to include Bulgarians in North Macedonia's constitution and the accession process does not include Bulgaria's recognition of the North Macedonian language.

Albania

- On 5 June the Parliament elects the former Chief of Staff Bajram Begaj as the country's new President to replace Ilir Meta.

Greece

- On 10 June Thessaloniki hosts the South-East European Cooperation Process summit in which its 13 member states sign a declaration to strengthen the accession perspective of countries who are not yet EU members.

Türkiye

- On 1 June Türkiye announces a new military operation in Syria to establish a

30-km security zone along the border, stoking tensions with NATO and the US.

- On 7 June the European Parliament says Türkiye's European accession talks should remain frozen, due to Ankara's lack of commitment on fundamental rights and democratic standards.
- On 21 June the governors of Istanbul's Kadikoy and Beyoglu districts ban all Gay Pride events to "prevent crime and ensure peace and safety." On 26 June, more than 200 people are arrested at a demonstration against the measure.
- On 22 June the Parliament extends Turkish troop deployment in Libya by a further 18 months, at the request of the head of Libya's unity government, Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh.
- On 24 June Sumeyye Gulen, the niece of the preacher Fetullah Gulen, is arrested in Edirne making an illegal attempt to cross the border into Greece.
- On 25 June the Turkish secret services (MIT) announce that the army has neutralized Delal Azizoglu, the head of the PKK's women's branch.
- On 30 June Türkiye rescues over 180 migrants off the coast of Izmir and Mugla, accusing Greece of pushing them back towards Turkish waters.

Cyprus

- On 6 June the Labour Minister Zeta Emilianidou dies in Athens from a brain aneurysm she suffered on 15 May. Her duties were handed over on 19 May to the Transport Minister Yiannis Karousos.
- On 11, 12 and 13 June the Northern Cyprus leaders receive the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to discuss the financial aid protocol signed in May with Ankara and which has led to protests in Northern Cyprus due to its inclusion of provisions unrelated to the economy and which restrict free expression.
- On 15 June the former negotiator for reunification talks Andreas Mavroyiannis presents his candidacy for the 2023 Cypriot presidential elections.

Syria

- On 10 June Syria suspends all flights to and from the international airport in Damascus after Israeli airstrikes reach the south of the Syrian capital.

- On 28 June the UN estimates that nearly 307,000 civilians were killed during the more than ten years of conflict in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 6 June Lebanon denounces the entry of an Israeli gas rig at the Karish field, in a disputed maritime area, as a “hostile act.”
- On 16 June the Special Tribunal for Lebanon convicts Hezbollah members Hassan Marei and Hussein Oneissi in absentia to life imprisonment for their involvement in the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.
- On 21 June the Prime Minister Nayib Mikati threatens to expel Syrian refugees in Lebanon, faced with its incapacity to continue to bear its costs without support from the international community.
- On 23 June the acting Prime Minister Nayib Mikati is elected to remain in the post. On 29 June, Mikati presents the President Michel Aoun with his proposed government.
- On 30 June the UN condemns the rise in discrimination against the Lebanese LGBTIQ+ community, following the Interior Minister Basam Maulaui’s decision to ban its demonstrations, at the request of the country’s religious leaders.

Libya

- On 20 June the United Nations representative in Libya Stephanie Williams announces the end of the third round of talks with the committee to establish a constitutional framework and warns of persistent deep differences currently blocking progress towards holding elections in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 3 June the President Kais Saied sacks 57 judges accusing them of corruption, falsification and protecting criminals. The measure is contested by the Association of Tunisian Judges which calls a judges’ strike, saying that the dismissals came following the magistrates’ refusal to enact injunctions that run counter to the principle of the sovereignty of the law.

- On 6 June Ennahda announces a boycott of both the 25 July constitutional referendum and the 17 December parliamentary elections.

- On 30 June the proposed new 139-article constitution is published, drafted in less than a month and to be put to a referendum on 25 July. The text proposes a super-presidentialist system in which the Parliament will become bicameral, its powers reduced over the cabinet led by a President, whose powers will be expanded.

Algeria

- On 6 June Said Bouteflika is sentenced to eight years’ imprisonment for the illicit financing of the election campaign of his brother Abdelaziz Bouteflika, for the 2019 elections, suspended over the wave of protests which ousted Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power. Arrested in May 2019, Said Bouteflika was sentenced in January 2020 to 15 years in prison in another trial for conspiring against the State and government, but was acquitted on appeal in January 2021.
- On 8 June the President Abdelmajid Tebboune announces the immediate suspension of the friendship treaty signed with Spain in 2002, in response to Madrid’s sudden support of Morocco’s autonomy plan for Western Sahara.
- On 15 June the former Energy Minister Chakib Khelil is sentenced on appeal to 20 years’ imprisonment and Mohamed Meziane and Abdelhafid Feghouli, former chairman and former vice-chairman respectively of the state-run oil and gas company Sonatrach, have their five and six-year prison sentences upheld.

Morocco

- On 24 June at least 23 people are killed during an assault on the border fence outside the Spanish city of Melilla, as a result of the Moroccan police response. Clashes also break out between migrants and police in Nador.

Mauritania

- On 8 June Mauritania and Algeria sign a series of memoranda to strength-

en bilateral cooperation in energy and mines, and which consider the possibility of building a gas pipeline between both countries.

- On 8 June the European Parliament authorizes the updating of the fisheries agreement between the EU and Mauritania for a further six years.

- On 21 June Mauritania ratifies the treaty on friendship, cooperation and good neighbourliness signed with Spain in 2008 and frozen following the coup that year in the North African country.

EU

- On 1 June Denmark approves joining the EU’s defence strategy in a national referendum, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

- On 1 June the German Manfred Weber is elected president of the EPP, succeeding the Polish Donald Tusk, at the party congress in Rotterdam.

- On 2 June the Commission announces the release of European post-pandemic recovery funds for Poland, after Warsaw backtracks on its judiciary reform, which Brussels described as running counter to community legislation and the rule of law.

- On 2 June the EU approves the sixth package of sanctions against Russia after Hungary green-lights it in exchange for its exemption from the partial embargo on Russian oil and for removing the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill from the sanctions list.

- On 9 June the CJEU rules that when the United Kingdom left the EU on 1 February 2020, British nationals lost European citizenship and the rights this entails, despite being residents or registered in a Member State.

- On 10 June the EU Home Affairs Ministers Council agrees on a compulsory solidarity mechanism to relocate refugees as foreseen by the migration pact launched by the Commission in September 2020, and which stipulates that any states not wanting to collaborate must make an economic or financial contribution to other members. The agreement also includes the Spanish request for the inclusion of the West African migration route.

- On 15 June the Commission launches two infringement proceedings against the United Kingdom, in addition to the one initiated in 2021, for violating the Northern Ireland protocol negotiated during Brexit, after London passed a law unilaterally suspending the deal.
- On 15 June the Commission agrees with Israel and Egypt on an increase in their gas exports to the EU to further reduce its dependency on Russia.
- On 23 June the 27 Member States unanimously support the favourable ruling of the Commission to Ukraine and Moldova's EU accession, both countries becoming official candidates.
- On 30 June the Takuba European military force in Mali officially ceases operations.

July 2022

The heat waves and droughts suffered across the region lead to devastating wildfires in many Mediterranean countries. France announces a cabinet shuffle. In Italy, the Prime Minister Mario Draghi resigns. Croatia receives the final green light for adopting the euro. The normalization agreement between the Montenegrin government and the Serbian Orthodox Church sparks protests in Montenegro. North Macedonia starts EU accession negotiations after reaching an agreement with Bulgaria. Albania also starts accession talks, the same month as anti-government protests take place, led by the conservative opposition leaders and a controversial judicial reform is approved. Fresh tensions mount between Greece and Türkiye in the Aegean Sea. Türkiye reaches a deal with Russia, Ukraine and the UN on the coordination of grain exports from Ukrainian ports. In Syria, the lead of Daesh in the country is killed. In Lebanon, the Parliament approves a World Bank loan to finance wheat imports. In Libya demonstrators set fire to the Parliament in Tobruk and fierce clashes break out in Tripoli. In Tunisia, the new constitution is approved. Algeria celebrates 60 years of independence amid a crisis with Spain and Morocco. Morocco receives an Israeli army chief for the first time.

Portugal

- On 3 July Luis Montenegro is confirmed as leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, centre-right).
- On 6 July a large parliamentary majority rejects the no-confidence motion tabled against the government by the far-right Chega party.
- On 12 July Portugal declares a state of contingency faced with the most serious wave of wildfires since those of Pedrogao Grande in 2017. 30,000 hectares have been burnt so far this year, surpassing the 28,000 throughout 2021.

Spain

- On 8 July the Labour Minister and Second Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Diaz launches the left-wing political platform Sumar, with the intention of running in the 2023 parliamentary elections.
- On 17 July the number of hectares burnt so far in 2022 reaches 78,759, in wildfires across Spain, which are particularly intense in Galicia, Asturias, Castile and Leon, Extremadura, Andalusia, Valencia, Aragon and Navarra, amid a heat wave and record temperatures approaching 50°C.

France

- On 4 July a shuffle of Elisabeth Borne's new government is announced, which does not affect the main ministerial positions, with the exception of François Braun's replacement of Brigitte Bourguignon as Health Minister. Olivier Veran takes over as the new government spokesperson.
- On 11 July the National Assembly rejects the no-confidence motion tabled by NUPES against the Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne.
- On 25 July France decrees an alert in 86 departments faced with its worst drought since 1959. There are also fierce wildfires, which are particularly devastating in Aquitaine, where 10,000 people have to be evacuated.
- On 26 July the Parliament adopts a bill that, as of 1 August, ends the exceptional Covid-19 measures like the health pass, lockdown and curfew.
- On 28 July after visiting Greece on 26 July, Mohammed bin Salman is re-

ceived in Paris by President Emmanuel Macron, in the Saudi Crown Prince's first European tour since the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. The increase in energy cooperation between Europe and Saudi Arabia and the increase in its production of crude oil to stabilize prices are the main topics discussed on the tour, to the backdrop of the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine.

Italy

- On 4 July Italy decrees a state of emergency in Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont over the persistent drought, for which aid is announced to the value of 36.5 million euros.
- On 8 July the mayor of Lampedusa Filippo Mannino calls for an urgent meeting with the Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese to address the collapse of the migrant reception facility on the island, which has a capacity of 350 people, but where 1,878 are currently being held due to the sharp increase in arrivals – 30,000 so far in 2022, compared with the 23,000 landings recorded in 2021.
- On 14 July the Prime Minister Mario Draghi submits his resignation as Prime Minister to the President Sergio Mattarella, after M5S goes through with its threat to withdraw its support from the cabinet, abstaining from voting in the Senate on the government decree on aid of 23 billion euros, aimed at alleviating the crisis, and abstaining from voting on the no-confidence motion tabled against the national unity government, the success of which leads to Mattarella's acceptance of Draghi's resignation on 21 July. On 22 July, the Regional Affairs Minister Mariastella Gelmini and Public Administration Minister Renato Brunetta leave Forza Italia after the party's refusal to support Draghi during the no-confidence motion in the Senate.
- On 22 July the number of wildfires recorded for the month reaches 30,000, in the hottest July Italy has experienced since 1800. The country is also struggling with its worst drought in 70 years.
- On 24 July over 1,500 migrants arrive on Italian shores in a matter of hours, with another 500 aboard rescue ships.

- On 27 July the government unveils a social aid package of 14.3 billion euros to counter the economic crisis unleashed by the rise in inflation.

Slovenia

- On 24 July Slovenia deploys 2,000 troops to tackle serious wildfires in Karst.

Croatia

- On 12 July the European Council gives the final green light to Croatia's entry into the eurozone on 1 January 2023.
- On 17 July Croatia's decision to ban the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic from undertaking a private trip to a former World War II concentration camp where tens of thousands of Serbs were murdered by the pro-Nazi authorities in Croatia sparks a bilateral diplomatic dispute.
- On 26 July the bridge that connects the county of Dubrovnik-Neretva with the rest of Croatia opens to traffic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 6 July demonstrators take to the streets of Sarajevo in protest against the sharp rise in inflation and accusing the government of inaction.

Montenegro

- On 8 July the Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic signs a fundamental agreement on relations between the government and the Serbian Orthodox church. Meanwhile a protest is staged in Podgorica against the agreement amid claims it represents Montenegro's dependence on Serbia.

Serbia

- On 21 July clashes break out in Novi Sad between the police and demonstrators demanding to be represented at the meeting of the city's Assembly, which was to adopt the controversial urban plan for 2030.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 7 July Kosovo's special police force dismantle "illegal facilities" in

Strpce. Serbia, for its part, decries this as an act of intimidation against the Kosovo Serb population.

North Macedonia

- On 2 July thousands of demonstrators protest in Skopje against the French proposal to end the country's dispute with Bulgaria, which has brought North Macedonia's accession process to a standstill, on the basis of the nationality of certain historical figures and the status of the North Macedonian language in Bulgaria. On 17 July, Foreign Ministers from North Macedonia and Bulgaria formally sign a bilateral protocol to facilitate the end of the dispute. On 19 July, North Macedonia's EU accession talks finally get underway.

Albania

- On 8 July thousands of people, led by the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha, protest in Tirana against Edi Rama's socialist government, accusing it of corruption and authoritarianism.
- On 19 July Albania's EU accession negotiations officially get started.
- On 20 July the number of wildfires recorded throughout June and July in 42 of the country's 61 municipalities reaches 220, with at least 3,000 hectares burnt and temperatures rising to 36°C.
- On 21 July the government approves the reform proposed by the High Judicial Council, which, among other cuts, reduces the number of courts of first instance from 22 to 13, despite protests held by lawyers, magistrates and human rights organizations, who claim that it will reduce people's access to the justice system and make it more costly.
- On 22 July the Parliament adopts a resolution presented by the ruling Socialist Party to condemn the 2011 report by Swiss senator Dick Marty for the European Council, over what it describes as baseless declarations of war crimes committed by senior Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) officials.

Greece

- On 2 July Greece denounces up to 760 violations of its airspace by Turkish military aircraft in June.

- On 4 July the Corinth Canal reopens after being closed since a landslide in January 2021.

- On 22 July Russia includes Greece on its list of hostile countries, together with Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Denmark.

- On 23 July an intense heat wave begins with temperatures of up to 42°C, which adds to the hundred or so wildfires declared throughout Greece, the fiercest of which are in Lesbos, the Peloponnese and the National Park of Dadia.

- On 27 July around a hundred migrants are rescued off the coast of Rhodes by the Greek authorities.

Türkiye

- On 1 July Türkiye and Armenia agree to reopen their border for third-country nationals, within measures to normalize their relations.

- On 4 July the security forces arrest around twenty alleged members of Daesh in Istanbul.

- On 7 July the health sector holds demonstrations in different cities to denounce the increase in violence against medical workers, following the previous day's deadly attack on a cardiologist, and to call for the resignation of the Health Minister Fahrettin Koca.

- On 7 July Ukraine summons the Turkish ambassador in Kyiv in protest against the release of the Russian ship Zhibek Zholy after it was held for three days by Türkiye at the request of the Ukraine's general prosecutor, which claims the ship is transporting 4,500 tonnes of wheat stolen by Russia.

- On 15 July the US Congress approves the inclusion of major restrictions on the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye in the US' defence spending bill for 2023. At the same time, Washington and Athens reach an agreement to increase military cooperation and on the sale of F-35 fighter jets.

- On 18 July Türkiye announces it has "neutralized" Necati Utku Kiraz, a senior member of the PKK and wanted by Interpol, in the province of Diyarbakir.

- On 22 July Türkiye announces a deal with the UN, Russia and Ukraine in Is-

tanbul on the export of Ukrainian grain and Russian fertilizers through the Black Sea and to set up a coordination centre based in Istanbul, which begins operations on 27 July.

- On 23 July the army announces it has “neutralized” 290 PKK members during the first three months of its new Claw-Lock operation in Iraq.

Cyprus

- On 7 July the Parliament approves a law that makes femicide a distinct crime punishable with life imprisonment.

Syria

- On 12 July Maher al-Agal, the leader of Daesh in Syria, is killed in a US drone strike in the country’s northwest.
- On 13 July after overcoming the Russian veto the UNSC secures a six-month extension on its mechanism to deliver humanitarian aid to Syria via Türkiye.
- On 18 July, following an agreement with the SDF, Syria deploys troops in Ain Isa and Ain al-Arab, border towns with Türkiye, in view of a possible new offensive by Ankara.
- On 20 July Syria announces the rupture of diplomatic ties with Ukraine, three weeks after Kyiv did the same in response to the decision taken by Damascus to recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk.
- On 22 July at least seven people are killed in a Russian airstrike in Idlib, shortly after another Israeli attack on Iranian and Hezbollah targets.

Lebanon

- On 14 July approval is given for a World Bank loan of nearly 150 million euros to pay for wheat imports, in view of the country’s serious economic crisis.
- On 19 July the offices of the Central Bank of Lebanon are raided by order of Judge Ghada Aoun as part of a probe into the institution’s governor Riad Salameh, accused in March of illicit enrichment and money laundering. Salameh is also under investigation by Switzerland, France, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, under the same charges.

Jordan

- On 20 July, despite the agreement signed in October 2021, Syria denies Jordan’s request for the supply of 30 million m³ of water due to the “meteorological circumstances and water scarcity in Syria.”

Libya

- On 1 July demonstrators storm and set fire to the Parliament building in Tobruk calling for its dissolution and demanding unity elections.
- On 12 July Tripoli’s 444 Combat Brigade claims to have released 110 Bangladeshi migrants abducted in Libya, who had been tortured and held to ransom.
- On 16 July following an agreement with the so-called Oil Crescent Group, close to the Tobruk-based Parliament, the new NOC chairman, appointed by the Government of National Unity, Farhat Bengdara, announces that oil production will be resumed amid a new crisis sparked by his predecessor Mustafa Sanallah’s refusal to step down from the post.
- On 19 July the IOM announces that at least 10,465 migrants have been returned to Libya so far in 2022, after being rescued by the coast guard off the Libyan coast.
- On 22 July at least ten people are killed in Tripoli in clashes between militias, amid rising tensions over the worsening political and economic crisis.
- On 29 July a federal court in Virginia finds commander Khalifa Haftar, also a US citizen, guilty in absentia of war crimes.

Tunisia

- On 25 July a national referendum is held on the new Constitution proposed by the President Kais Saied, which is approved by 94.6% of the voters, although with a turnout of just 28.12% and amid strong objections from citizens and opposition groups.

Algeria

- On 5 July Algeria celebrates the 60th anniversary of its independence, with a large military parade unlike anything seen since the 1980s and amid tensions with Spain and Morocco. The President

Abdelmadjid Tebboune announces measures to pardon 15,000 prisoners, including those arrested in the anti-government protests which began in 2019.

- On 15 July the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune appoints Brahim Djamel Kassali as the new Finance Minister to replace Abderrahmane Raouya, who was dismissed on 14 June amid the crisis with Spain.
- On 18 July Italy and Algeria sign a series of agreements on energy and the fight against corruption, as well as a deal to purchase 4 billion m³ of Algerian gas.
- On 26 July the state oil company Sonatrach announces it has made three oil and gas discoveries in southern Algeria, one of them in collaboration with the Italian company Eni.
- On 29 July Algeria, Niger and Nigeria reach an agreement for the construction of a trans-Saharan gas pipeline.

Morocco

- On 13 July Morocco announces the creation of three bodies to represent Morocco’s Jewish community.
- On 18 July Morocco hosts the first ever official visit of an Israeli army chief, general Aviv Kohavi, as part of efforts to increase bilateral defence cooperation.
- On 21 July Morocco announces that it has rescued around 235 migrants in recent days, adding to the other 257 announced on 12 July.
- On 23 July the Royal Household announces it is postponing the Throne Day Festivities scheduled for 30 July, with the exception of Mohammed VI’s speech, due to a spike in Covid-19 infections.
- On 27 July over 10,300 hectares are burnt in particularly fierce fires in Laarayech, Ouazzane, Taza and Tetouan, made worse by the strong winds and high temperatures affecting the country.

EU

- On 1 July Czechia assumes the Presidency of the European Council with the refugee crisis, Ukraine’s recovery, energy security, the strengthening of defence capabilities, strategic economic resilience and democratic institutions as priorities.
- On 15 July the EC denounces Hungary before the European Court of Justice over its anti-LGBTQ law approved

in June and Budapest's refusal to renew Klubradio's broadcasting licence, a radio station critical of both Victor Orban's government and his party, Fidesz.

- On 18 July the EU and Azerbaijan sign an agreement to double the supply of Azeri gas to 20 billion m³ per year in 2027, through the corridor that connects the country to the Union through Türkiye.
- On 22 July the governments of Spain, Portugal, Poland, Cyprus and Greece reject the European Commission's proposal to reduce gas consumption, in an effort to avoid the German economy being badly hit by a possible cut in its Russian gas supply.
- On 26 July the EU Member States reach a "political agreement" on a plan to voluntarily reduce natural gas demands by 15% at the request of the Commission, and on the possibility of triggering a "Union alert" on security of supply.

August 2022

In Portugal, the Health Minister resigns. The Montenegrin government collapses. France considers the possibility of applying restrictions on its electricity supply. Serbia and Kosovo agree to the mutual recognition of their identity documents. The Greek intelligence chief resigns. Türkiye begins a new drilling mission in the eastern Mediterranean. The Egyptian President shuffles the cabinet. The Libyan military prosecutor's office issues an arrest warrant for the eastern Libyan Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha. A diplomatic crisis erupts between Tunisia and Morocco. In Algeria, the former Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui is jailed and the country reaches an agreement with France to relaunch bilateral ties.

Portugal

- On 23 August according to the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests, the wildfires in Portugal have claimed over 100,000 hectares so far this year.
- On 30 August the Health Minister Marta Temido resigns following the controversy sparked by the death of a pregnant tourist in Lisbon as a result of its neonatology unit being full.

Spain

- On 25 August the Parliament approves the Guarantee of Sexual Freedom Law, which will enter into effect in October. Backed by the government and known as the "only yes means yes" law, because it establishes explicit and conscious consent as a deciding factor in sexual relations, the text classifies sexual crimes as sexual aggression.

France

- On 14 August the United Kingdom publishes figures according to which more than 20,000 people have tried to cross the English Channel from France since the beginning of 2022, doubling those for the same period in 2021.
- On 15 August France announces the withdrawal of its last troops in Mali, six months after announcing the end of its anti-jihadist operation in Barkhane.
- On 29 August the Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne urges companies to draw up plans to reduce energy consumption by 10%, in view of a possible need to ration the supply over the energy crisis with Russia. The warning comes days after the government announces it is considering restricting the use of private planes when there are viable rail alternatives.
- On 29 August France criticizes the European Commission's support of the pan-European association Femyso, considered to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood and at odds with France's secular values.

Italy

- On 1 August 387 migrants disembark from the Ocean Viking rescue ship in Salerno.
- On 11 August the Sea Watch 4 rescue ship receives authorization to allow 87 migrants to disembark in Pozzallo.
- On 11 August the leaders of Italia Viva and Action, Matteo Renzi and Carlo Calenda, announce a centrist alliance for September's parliamentary elections.

Montenegro

- On 19 August after just four months in power, Dritan Abazovic's government

collapses after losing a no-confidence motion over the signing of the controversial agreement that regulates ties between the State and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

- On 20 August a massive cyberattack begins, affecting basic services, government and state administration platforms and the country's internet connections. Podgorica blames Russia for the attack.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 27 August Serbia and Kosovo agree, under EU mediation, to allow citizens from both countries free movement across their borders using only their respective identity documents.

Greece

- On 5 August the intelligence chief Panagiotis Kontoleon resigns following allegations the Agency used the illegal Predator spyware to hack the phones of politicians and journalists, among them the leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) Nikos Androulakis and CNN Greece journalist Thanassis Koukakis. On 29 August, the Parliament approves a committee to investigate the scandal.
- On 20 August Greece officially exits the enhanced surveillance of its economy, carried out by the European Commission to monitor the reforms adopted following the bailout package.

Türkiye

- On 6 August over 75 Lebanese migrants are rescued after their ship sinks off the Turkish coast.
- On 9 August Türkiye confirms the departure of the Abdulhamid Han drillship to carry out hydrocarbon exploration in the eastern Mediterranean, amid mounting tensions in the area with Greece and Cyprus.

Syria

- On 24 August the US carries out airstrikes in Deir-ez-Zor to repel attacks on its bases launched by Iran-backed groups.

- On 26 August Syria denounces several airstrikes in Hama and Tartus, for which it blames Israel.
- On 26 August an investigation by the Syrian British Consortium (SBC) concludes that Bashar al-Assad's regime and allied forces committed war crimes in Daraya, where over 700 people were massacred in 2012.
- On 28 August the Asayish Kurdish militias arrest alleged members of Daesh during a raid on the al-Hawl refugee camp, home to 56,000 people, more than half of them minors, and where the increase in violence led to 90 murders in 2021 and over 40 so far in 2022, according to United Nations data.

Lebanon

- On 20 August the Lebanese authorities confirm the arrest of the grand-nephew of the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein over his possible participation in the massacre at Iraq's Camp Speicher military academy by Daesh in 2014.

Egypt

- On 12 August despite Egypt and Sudan's reiterated opposition, Ethiopia announces it has completed the third filling of the GERD.
- On 13 August the President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announces a major reshuffle of the Council of Ministers, affecting 13 ministerial positions. The changes include: Mohamed Ayman Ashur taking over as Higher Education Minister; Khaled Abdul Ghaffar as Health Minister; Suha Samir Nashed as Immigration Minister; Ahmed Issa as Tourism and Antiquities Minister; and Ahmed Samir Ali Sale as Trade and Industry Minister.

Libya

- On 28 August the Military Prosecutor's Office issues an arrest warrant for the eastern Libyan Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha, over his role in the previous days' fierce clashes between rival militias in Tripoli, which claimed at least 23 lives and left around a hundred injured. Bashagha had threatened on 21 August to enter Tripoli, depose the

unity Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibe and take control of the country. For his part, Dbeibe accuses external and internal actors of being behind the fighting.

Tunisia

- On 10 August Tunisia's Administrative Court reinstates around 50 judges expelled by presidential decree accused of corruption and terrorism-related offences.
- On 27 August Tunisia recalls its ambassador in Rabat in response to the same measure adopted by Morocco after it is revealed that Tunisia extended an invitation to the Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali to attend the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).

Algeria

- On 1 August the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune states Algeria's interest in joining BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- On 22 August the death toll rises to 43 from the wave of wildfires ravaging Algeria in August in Taref, Souk Ahras, Setif, Skikda, Guelma and Mostaganem.
- On 24 August Noureddine Bedoui, the former Prime Minister of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is jailed for corruption.
- On 27 August Algeria and France end their months-long diplomatic crisis declaring in Algiers a "new irreversible dynamic" in their bilateral relations, with particular emphasis on energy, historical ties and political development, and which will culminate in the creation of a High Council for Cooperation.

Morocco

- On 5 August the Israeli and Moroccan police chiefs announce that both countries will collaborate to track down Israeli criminals in Moroccan territory.
- On 17 August the EU announces an increase in the funds allocated to Morocco for migration cooperation from between 346 and 500 million euros until 2027.

September 2022

The EU urges Spain to put an end to its political stalemate regarding the renewal of its judicial body. Italy holds legislative elections. Tensions increase in North Kosovo over the licence plate crisis. Albania breaks diplomatic ties with Iran. Greece calls for international support in view of Türkiye's stance in the Aegean Sea. The arms embargo on Cyprus is lifted. In Syria, the regime holds local elections. In Lebanon, a new judge is appointed to investigate the 2020 explosions in Beirut, the Central Bank ends the subsidy on fuel imports, banks declare an "indefinite" closure of their branches and the Parliament approves the national budget for 2022, while postponing the election of the new President of the Republic. In Tunisia, there is an agreement on a salary hike, the new electoral law is passed and the former Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh is provisionally released. Algeria shuffles its cabinet and invites the King of Morocco to attend the Arab League summit in Algiers. In Mauritania, the former President Ould Abdel Aziz is released from jail.

Portugal

- On 6 September the Prime Minister Antonio Costa announces 2.4 billion euros in aid for households, to help them deal with the rising inflation and energy crisis.
- On 29 September the police raid the Presidency of the Council of Ministers as part of a corruption probe.

Spain

- On 29 September the European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders visits Madrid to urge the government and opposition to reform how the members are elected to the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ), Spain's top judiciary body, whose renewal has been blocked since 2018 because of the failure of the two biggest parties, PSOE and PP, to reach an agreement on its makeup.

France

- On 2 September a court in Valenciennes issues a European arrest warrant

for the Moroccan imam Hassan Iquiousen, accused of anti-semitic and misogynistic hate speech, after the Council of State approves his expulsion from the country on 30 August.

- On 8 September, despite the opposition boycott, the President Emmanuel Macron inaugurates the National Council for Refoundation (CNR), which will bring together political parties, trade unions, business organizations and citizens' associations, and which is seen by the opposition as a mechanism for eluding the Parliament.
- On 13 September the number of irregular crossings of the English Channel during 2022 surpasses 28,500, thereby exceeding the figure for the whole of 2021.
- On 14 September the ECHR condemns France for failing to properly review and ensure repatriation for women and children being held in jihadist detention camps in Syria, and says the country must reexamine these requests immediately.
- On 27 September the Paris prosecutor's office launches an investigation into the former LR presidential candidate Valerie Pécresse over the alleged illegal financing of her election campaign.

Italy

- On 7 September the Geo Barents rescue ship is given authorization to allow 270 migrants to disembark in Taranto.
- On 12 September at least 93 migrants arrive in Lampedusa.
- On 25 September Italy holds early legislative elections with a turnout of 63.91%, and which are won by Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy, FdI, far right) with 26% of the vote and 119 seats in the lower house. The other parties suffer sharp declines: the Democratic Party, with 19% of the votes, loses 43 seats, retaining just 69. Its leader Enrico Letta announces that he will not run for reelection as party leader; Giuseppe Conte's M5S obtains 15.4% of the votes and wins just 52 seats, losing 175; Matteo Salvini's Lega, with 8.6%, wins 66 seats, losing 59; Forza Italia, with 8.1%, wins 45 seats, losing 59, and its leader and former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi returns

to the Senate, from which he was expelled in 2013 after being sentenced to four years in prison for tax fraud in the Mediaset case.

- On 27 September the Commission approves the release of the second 21-billion-euro tranche of Italy's European recovery fund.
- On 30 September some 700 migrants disembark in Messina, Catania and Augusta.

Malta

- On 26 September a raid is carried out in Paola and Fgura on immigrants without papers, which ends with 25 arrests, adding to the 76 arrested in Marsa, 24 in Gozo and 40 in Hamrun, in operations performed in August and September.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 6 September the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina sign the country's membership of the European Civil Protection Mechanism.
- On 27 September the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina acquits Djordje Ristic, the former Serb leader in the district of Brcko, charged with the murder, detention, torture and forcible disappearances of Bosniaks and Croats in 1992.
- On 27 September the US Treasury Department sanctions the Bosnian state prosecutor Diana Kajmakovic for "brazen" corruption, links to organized crime and undermining democratic processes.

Montenegro

- On 20 September the President Milo Djukanovic proposes early elections after the deadline expires for presenting a majority government to replace the coalition that collapsed in August, whose members sign an initiative on 22 September for a no-confidence vote to be held against Djukanovic, accusing him of violating the Constitution in his failure to evaluate the candidacy of Miodrag Lekic for Prime Minister, citing a lack of formal support. The initiative is blocked as it cannot be confirmed by the Constitutional Court, which, on 20 September, loses the quorum after Judge Miodrag Ilickovic resigns, following in the footsteps of three of his six colleagues.

Serbia

- On 19 September the far-right movement Dveri (Doors) condemns the Prime Minister Ana Brnabic's authorization of the Gay Pride Parade on 17 September in Belgrade, claiming that it contravenes a court order and the Interior Ministry's ban on its celebration.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 September demonstrations and roadblocks are organized on the Jarinje and Brnjak border crossings in protest against the Kosovan regulation that requires Serbian licence plates on Kosovan vehicles to be replaced with plates issued by Kosovo.

North Macedonia

- On 13 September VMRO-DPMNE, the main opposition party, accuses the Parliament speaker Talat Xhaferi of breaking the Constitution after he blocked the party's motion for a referendum to annul the 2017 friendship treaty with Bulgaria.

Albania

- On 7 September Albania breaks diplomatic ties with Iran and gives Iranian diplomats 24 hours to leave the country, following an investigation that concludes that Iran was responsible for the large-scale cyberattack in July 2022.

Greece

- On 7 September Greece formally requests support from NATO, the UN and the EU, in view of Türkiye's "extremely aggressive" stance, following insinuations made by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of potential military action in the Aegean Sea, after accusing Greece, on 3 September, of having a military presence on islands which, according to Ankara, should be demilitarized in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne and are under Greek "occupation."
- On 21 September Greece accuses Türkiye of orchestrating an attempt by some 1,500 migrants to cross into its territory across the Evros. Türkiye then

accuses Greece on 28 September of pushing back boats carrying 120 migrants from its waters.

Türkiye

- On 1 September the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sacks Serkan Taranoglu, one of his aides, because of his alleged connections with a corruption scandal involving the mafia boss Sedat Peker.
- On 9 September Türkiye confirms the capture in Istanbul of Bashar Khat-tab Ghazal al Sumaidai, a senior member of Daesh.
- On 15 and 16 September Türkiye attends the summit in Samarcanda of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and expresses the country's intentions to become a member.
- On 27 September nearly 25 alleged Daesh members are arrested in different operations in Istanbul and Mersin.

Cyprus

- On 12 September the former president of the Parliament Demetris Syllouris is charged in the scandal over the irregular issue of passports to big investors.
- On 17 September the US announces the definitive end of the arms embargo on Cyprus, in place since 1987, after Nicosia agrees to stop Russian ships from docking in its ports.

Syria

- On 6 September at least three people are killed in an airstrike on Aleppo International Airport, for which Syria blames Israel.
- On 7 September a French court confirms the four-year prison sentence handed down to the Syrian President's uncle Rifaat al-Asad for money laundering and embezzlement.
- On 14 September the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria Imran Riza expresses serious concern over the cholera epidemic affecting Syria since August, particularly in the Euphrates Basin.
- On 18 September the Turkish army kills Mehmet Gurbuz, a senior YPG officer, in Ayn Issa.
- On 18 September the Syrian regime holds local elections in which no opposition parties run.

▪ On 23 September at least a hundred migrants die after the boat they were travelling in sinks off the coast of Tartus.

Lebanon

- On 7 September after months of lawsuits that have blocked Judge Tarek Bitar's investigation, the High Judicial Council announces the appointment of a replacement judge to investigate the explosions in August 2020 in the port of Beirut.
- On 12 September the Central Bank lifts its subsidy of US dollars for fuel importers, as part of the process to gradually end state subsidies on basic goods.
- On 19 September banks order a three-day closure of their branches, which, on 22 September, is extended "indefinitely," in protest against recent violent incidents in various branches in which customers have attempted to recover their savings by force, faced with the limits on cash withdrawals due to the severe economic crisis. As a reaction, there are fierce protests and unrest, especially in Tripoli.
- On 26 September the Parliament approves the 2022 budget, one of the IMF's central demands to set in motion the bailout of the Lebanese economy.

Egypt

- On 26 September the Islamist preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi, seen as the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, dies in exile in Doha.

Libya

- On 3 September the Senegalese Abdoulaye Bathily is appointed Special Representative of the UN and head of UNSMIL.
- On 12 September 108 migrants are rescued off the coast of Libya.
- On 28 September a report by the World Organization against Torture (OMCT) claims that between January 2020 and March 2022 there were more than 580 cases of torture and extrajudicial executions of civilians in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 15 September faced with an inflation rate of 8.6%, the government and

the UGTT reach an agreement on a 3.5% salary hike for some 700,000 public sector workers and a 7% increase in the minimum wage.

- On 16 September the President Kais Saied approves a new electoral law reducing the powers of the Parliament and political parties, under the constitutional reform passed in July. On 19 September, the left-wing parties, the Republican Party, Democratic Current, Popular Front, Workers' Party and Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Ettakatol) announce they will boycott December's legislative elections.
- On 22 September the former Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh is provisionally released, after being detained on 20 September in the investigation into allegations he sent jihadists to Syria, a process that Laarayedh denounces as politically motivated.
- On 26 September the mayor of Mornag is arrested after the suicide on 24 September of Mohamed Amine Dridi, an unlicensed fruit seller whose weighing scales were seized by police, in a case reminiscent of Mohamed Bouazizi, whose suicide in December 2010 sparked the protests against the regime of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

Algeria

- On 9 September the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune reshuffles the cabinet. Kamel Beldjoud moves from the Interior Ministry to Transport. Brahim Merad takes over as Interior Minister; Abdelhak Saihi as Health Minister; Kamel Bidari as Higher Education Minister; Lakhdar Rekhroukh as Public Works Minister; and Ali Aoun and Pharmaceutical Industry Minister. On 15 September it is announced that 19 provincial governors will also be replaced.

Morocco

- On 9 September in a letter sent by Morocco to the United Nations Human Rights Council in response to its "excessive and lethal use of force" against migrants at the Melilla border fence in July, Rabat asserts that "Morocco has no land borders with Spain" defining the Spanish autonomous city of Melilla as an "occupied prison."

Mauritania

- On 8 September the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz is released after being held for over a year on corruption charges.

EU

- On 9 September Frontex announces a 75% increase in irregular entries into the EU between January and August, as compared with the same period in 2021.
- On 12 September the suspension of the EU's visa facilitation agreement with Russia enters into effect, as one of Europe's responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- On 18 September the Commission proposes freezing up to 7.5 billion euros of cohesion funds earmarked for Hungary faced with Viktor Orban's democratic backsliding and accusations of corrupt practices with European funds. On 21 September, in light of the precarious state of Hungary's public finances, Orban agrees on a series of anti-corruption measures demanded by Brussels.
- On 19 September the Irish judge Siofra O'Leary becomes the first female president of the ECHR.
- On 27 September the EU, US and NATO describe the gas leaks in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines as acts of "sabotage," thereby insinuating Russia's responsibility.
- On 27 September Frontex announces that almost 66,000 people have fled Russia towards the EU after the Kremlin's announcement on 21 September of a partial mobilization to compensate for war casualties and the country's faltering progress in its invasion of Ukraine.

October 2022

In Spain, the president of the General Council of the Judiciary resigns and the Historical Memory Law is passed. France has to deal with a strike by oil refinery workers and demonstrations against the government's economic policies. Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina hold elections. In Malta, the two prime suspects in the trial for the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia are convicted. Slovenia

approves same-sex marriage. Montenegro and Lebanon see their deep institutional crises worsen. Serbia announces a new government. In Kosovo, the former minister Ivan Todrosijevic is sentenced to one year in prison. Türkiye approves a disinformation law, reaches an agreement with Russia on gas distribution and carries out new arrests of supporters of Fethullah Gulen. In Syria, HTS takes control of Afrin. Libya signs major cooperation deals with Türkiye.

Spain

- On 5 October the Senate gives its final approval of the Democratic Memory Law presented by the government of Pedro Sanchez and which the centre-right opposition condemns as a biased vision of history that opens old wounds and which for the government's left-wing partners fails to repeal the 1977 Amnesty Law.
- On 10 October the president of the Supreme Court and General Council of the Judiciary Carlos Lesmes resigns over the long deadlock in the renewal of both bodies due to a lack of political agreement.
- On 14 October Europe's biggest drug-trafficking network is dismantled in Madrid, mainly comprising Syrian nationals and operating in cryptocurrencies in around 20 different countries.

France

- On 1 October the indefinite strike by the CGT trade union in Total Energies calling for salary improvements, joins the strike which began on 20 September by workers at Exxon Mobil, leaving France struggling with its petrol supply. On 11 October, the government announces the forced return to work for striking refinery workers that are blocking the country's fuel supply. On 18 October, the crisis intensifies with an interprofessional strike and demonstrations throughout France.
- On 3 October the Paris prosecutor's office indicts Alexis Kohler, the Elysee chief of staff, for the misuse of public funds and influence peddling and the Court of Justice of the Republic orders Eric Dupond-Moretti, the Minister of Justice, to stand trial for conflict of interest.
- On 16 October thousands of people are called by left-wing parties to dem-

onstrate in Paris against Emmanuel Macron's economic policy and the high cost of living.

- On 19 October the Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne announces that the government will use Article 49.3 of the Constitution to approve the 2023 state budget, without parliamentary debate. On 24 October, the government survives no-confidence motions tabled by the leftist alliance Nupe and the far right against the article's invocation.
- On 29 October a large environmentalist demonstration in Saint-Soline, in protest against government plans to build 16 reservoirs with a capacity of 650,000 m³ of water for farming purposes, comes to an end leaving 91 people injured.

Monaco

- On 6 October following the resignation of the National Council president Stephane Valeri, on 28 September, the vice-president Brigitte Boccone-Pages becomes the first woman to be elected to preside over Monaco's legislative body.

Italy

- On 13 October one of the founders of the Brothers of Italy, Ignazio La Russa, is elected president of the Senate. On 14 October, the League's Lorenzo Fontana is elected speaker of the Parliament's lower house.
- On 21 October Giorgia Meloni accepts the task given to her by the President Sergio Mattarella to form a government. On 22 October, Meloni is sworn into the post and unveils her coalition government, which includes the former president of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani (FI) at the helm of the Foreign Ministry; Matteo Salvini (League) as Infrastructure Minister; Giancarlo Giorgetti (League) as Economy Minister; Guido Crosetto (Fdl) as Defence Minister; Raffaele Fitto (Fdl) as European Affairs, Cohesion and Recovery Minister; and Carlo Nordio (Fdl) as Justice Minister.

Malta

- On 14 October the brothers George and Alfred Degiorgio, the prime suspects in the trial for the murder of jour-

nalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, are sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment.

Slovenia

- On 4 October the Parliament approves the Family Law reform, allowing same-sex couples to marry, after on 8 July the Constitutional Court gave the green light to its amendment.

Croatia

- On 25 October Zagreb hosts the first parliamentary summit of the International Platform aimed at bolstering the international response to Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 October Bosnia and Herzegovina holds general elections at the country's most delicate time for its survival as a single state since the 1995 Dayton Accords. In the legislative elections to the Federal Parliament, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD, Serb nationalist) and Party of Democratic Action (SDA, Bosniak nationalist) are the most voted parties winning 17.46% and 16.36% of the votes, respectively. Noteworthy in the elections to the Parliament of the Republika Srpska is the resounding victory of the SNSD with 42.13% of the votes. As regards the elections for the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most voted parties are the SDA with 25.06% and the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH, conservative, Croatian nationalist) with 15.54%. The winners of the elections for the federal tripartite Presidency are the Bosniak Denis Bećirović from the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Bosnian Serb Zeljka Cvijanović (SNSD) and the Bosnian Croat Zeljko Komsić, from the Democratic Front (DF, social democrat, unionist). In the elections to the Presidency of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik (SNSD) retains his post for a third mandate promising secession for the Bosnian Serb entity. Coinciding with the elections, the US Treasury Department sanctions the outgoing President of the Bosnian Croat entity Fadil Novalić, for

use of confidential data on pensioners for sending out election propaganda. On 6 and 9 October, representatives of the Bosnian Serb opposition Banja Luka call for a vote recount in the Republika Srpska, over suspicions of electoral fraud. On 11 October, Dodik files a lawsuit against the Central Election Commission for its decision to recount the votes for the Republika Srpska.

Montenegro

- On 5 October the customs director Rade Milošević resigns after the Special State Prosecutor launches an investigation into tobacco smuggling in Nikšić.
- On 21 October despite calls from the EU and after an initial attempt on 27 July, the Parliament fails to appoint the nine members of the country's Constitutional Court, after the DPS refuses to support any of the proposed candidates, claiming their selection is politically motivated.
- On 22 October the pro-European social democratic Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, Ranko Krivokapić and Rasko Konjević, respectively, are voted out of Parliament by pro-Serbian MPs, accused of working against government interests by the caretaker Prime Minister Dritan Abazović (URA), whose initial pro-Western stance became more pro-Serbian after his rise to power with April's change of coalition government.
- On 23 October Montenegro holds local elections in 14 of its municipalities, in which President Djukanović's DPS is defeated, only winning in Bar, Bijelo Polje, Rozaje and Plav. In contrast, the coalition, which ousted the DPS from power in August 2020, wins in Podgorica, Pljevlja, Kolasin, Danilovgrad, Zabljak, Zeta, Budva, Tivat, Pluzine and Savnik. These elections are added to those held in March in Ulcinj, where the DPS emerged victorious, and Berane, won by the SNP.

Serbia

- On 13 October the European Parliament adopts a recommendation for Serbia's enlargement strategy, according to which accession negotiations will only start when the reforms laid out by

Brussels are implemented and Serbia aligns with the sanctions against Russia.

- On 20 October right-wing parliamentary parties, Dveri (Doors), the New Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Zaštitnici (Oathkeepers) and the Movement for the Renewal of Kingdom of Serbia (POKS), form a coalition to reattach Kosovo to Serbia.
- On 25 October the President Aleksandar Vučić announces the composition of the new coalition government between his party, the SNS, and the socialists of the SPS. With Ana Brnabić at the head of 25 ministries for a third term, the new cabinet once again reveals the priority to balance relations with the EU and Russia and settle the thorny issue of Kosovo.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 October Kosovan teachers put an end to a long strike which began on 25 August, calling for a salary hike.
- On 19 October the former minister Ivan Todorović is sentenced to a year in prison for inciting ethnic and religious intolerance, after claiming that the massacre of Kosovo Albanians in Račak/Rečak in 1999 was staged.

North Macedonia

- On 13 October the European Council approves the signing of a border cooperation agreement between Frontex and North Macedonia.

Albania

- On 21 October the socialist parliamentary majority approves fresh investigations into civil servants suspected of having collaborated with the secret police during the communist era, although it blocks a DPS proposal to declassify all Sigurimi files.
- On 27 October the Democratic and Freedom parties agree to form a right-wing coalition to run together in the May 2023 local elections.

Greece

- On 14 October the police and Frontex rescue 92 migrants found totally naked on the Greek bank of the Evros,

where they had been taken, according to Athens, by the Turkish authorities.

- On 26 October Greece reports a violation of its airspace by a Turkish drone flying over Kinaros, days after, on 10 October, Athens reports 60 Turkish violations of Greek airspace in a single day.

Türkiye

- On 7 October the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defines LGBT rights as “a perversion.”
- On 18 October the Amendment Law concerning the Press Law and Certain Laws is passed in Türkiye, which makes punishable with prison sentences of between one and three years.
- On 19 October Türkiye confirms an agreement with Russia to become the main supply hub of Russian gas to the West, as discussed at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), held in Astana.
- On 19 October at least 543 people are arrested in different cities, charged with belonging to the network of the cleric Fethullah Gulen.
- On 26 October Sebnem Korur Fincanci, the head of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) is arrested, accused of making propaganda for terrorists.

Cyprus

- On 7 October Paphos hosts the Interior Ministers meeting of the Med5, which brings together Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta and Cyprus, to address the worrying rise in migration flows across the Mediterranean. In the case of Cyprus, according to the EU Migration and Asylum report from 6 October, the country has seen an 122% increase in arrivals in the first six months of 2022, as compared with the same period for 2021.
- On 14 October the Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides condemns the plans for a partial reopening of the area of Ayios Memnonas, in Varosha, in violation of the 1984 UNSC Resolution 550.

Syria

- On 7 October Abu-Hashum al-Umawi, a senior Daesh official, is killed in a US airstrike.

- On 13 October HTS, formerly the al-Nusra Front, the Syrian affiliate of al-Qaeda, seizes control of Afrin from the SNA.
- On 21 October Syria reports airstrikes south of Damascus, which it attributes to Israel. On 22 October, Israel reports the destruction of an Iranian drone factory on Syrian territory.

Lebanon

- On 5 October Lebanese banks announce the indefinite closure of their branches a day after their reopening, in light of new heists carried out by citizens trying to recover their savings.
- On 6 October the Health Ministry confirms the first case of cholera in Lebanon in almost three decades.
- On 26 October hundreds of Syrian refugees leave Lebanon as part of a repatriation plan, criticized by a number of NGOs, under which some 15,000 people are expected to leave Lebanon on a monthly basis.
- On 30 October the President Michel Aoun signs a decree accepting the caretaker government’s resignation and leaves the presidential palace a day before his six-year term expires and without Parliament having found a successor.

Egypt

- On 7 October the President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi pardons more than 1,500 prisoners to mark the 49th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War.
- On 25 October Egypt releases the opposition figure Ziad el-Eleimy.
- On 31 October some 70 people are arrested over the calls to protest on 11 November during the United Nations Conference on climate change in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Libya

- On 3 October Libya and Türkiye sign an energy cooperation agreement in Tripoli based on the Memorandum of Understanding on the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean signed by both countries in 2019. Greece and the EU ask Ankara to clarify, considering the memorandum “does not comply with the Law of the

Sea and therefore cannot lead to legal consequences for third party states.”

- On 7 October at least two police officers are killed in an attack on a headquarters of the eastern Libyan government’s security services in Rebiana.
- On 26 October the Libyan Government of National Unity and Türkiye sign two military cooperation agreements in Istanbul.
- On 28 October the UNSC extends the UNSMIL mandate by another year.

Tunisia

- On 13 October the death of the young man Malex Slimi from injuries suffered when trying to flee from police in August causes several nights of clashes between police and demonstrators in Cité Ethadamen, Tunisia.
- On 18 October a large demonstration takes place in Zarzi in protest against the circumstances that led to a shipwreck on 21 September, in which 18 migrants lost their lives.

Algeria

- On 5 October a court upholds the eight-year prison sentence handed down to the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s brother Saïd Bouteflika for corruption.
- On 10 October France and Algeria sign 11 cooperation agreements in Algiers in the fifth session of the intergovernmental committee between both countries, announced in August.
- On 12 October the Energy and Mines Minister Mohamed Arkab meets during the Russian Energy Week in Moscow with the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak to strengthen bilateral ties in hydrocarbons, electricity, renewable energy and mining.
- On 19 October the journalist Mohamed Mouloudj is released after being held in pre-trial detention for 13 months for belonging to the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie (MAK).

Morocco

- On 12 October the Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Michoustin announces that Russia and Morocco have signed a bilateral civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement.

- On 18 October Morocco becomes the first country in the neighbourhood to sign a green partnership agreement with the EU, aimed at creating an external dimension of the European Green Deal.

Mauritania

- On 15 October Mauritania and Senegal sign up for the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP) offshore construction project.

EU

- On 5 October the EU agrees on a new round of sanctions against Russia after Moscow declares it has annexed the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.
- On 6 October the first meeting of the European Political Community (EPC), proposed by France, takes place in Prague, bringing together all European countries except Russia and Belarus.
- On 7 October the EU announces that it will send a civilian mission to the Armenian border with Azerbaijan to work on a peace agreement following the escalation that began in September in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- On 13 October the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) finds serious irregularities in Frontex's management of irregular migration.
- On 13 October Frontex reports that in the first nine months of 2022, almost 228,240 migrant arrivals were recorded in the EU, 70% more than for the same period in 2021.
- On 20 October the Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize to the people of Ukraine.
- On 20 October Spain, France and Portugal announce the creation of the BarMar green energy corridor between Barcelona and Marseille, which will connect the Iberian Peninsula with the rest of the Union, as an alternative to the MidCat project, which has been definitively abandoned.

November 2022

In France, the Paris Stock Market overtakes London to become Europe's biggest, and the country tries to deal with

its cooling of relations with Germany over the energy supply crisis. Italy refuses to allow entry to migrants rescued in the Mediterranean, sparking the first confrontation with France since Giorgia Meloni took over the government. Slovenia holds the second round of its presidential elections and a referendum on the independence of its public broadcaster RTV. The Montenegrin Parliament approves a controversial law that paves the way to electing a new government and resolving the political crisis the country has been grappling with. Serbia and Kosovo reach an agreement on the so-called licence plate crisis after weeks of negotiations and protests. North Macedonia becomes a member of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). New anti-government protests take place in Albania. In Greece, there are violent scenes in demonstrations against the rising cost of living. Türkiye forgives 1.61 billion dollars in debt with the State amassed during the pandemic and launches new anti-terror operations in Syria and North Iraq after an attack in Istiklal Avenue in Istanbul, attributed to the PKK. In Egypt, Sharm el-Sheikh hosts COP-27 and the activist Alaa Abdel Fattah ends his hunger strike. In Tunisia, two opposition leaders are banned from leaving the country. In Algeria, jail sentences are handed down to numerous former senior government figures, the country applies to join BRICS and Algiers hosts the Arab League summit. In Morocco, the former Human Rights Minister Mohammed Ziane is released.

Portugal

- On 12 November Paulo Raimundo is elected the new general secretary of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), replacing Jeronimo de Sousa.

Spain

- On 7 November the health union Amyts starts an indefinite strike against the precarious state of the health system in the Madrid region. In addition to the strike, on 13 November a demonstration takes place involving tens of thousands of health workers and patients in the Spanish capital.

- On 21 November the Interior Minister announces it is boosting police presence until 15 January 2023 and tightening its surveillance of social networks and internet forums, faced with the rise in youth gang violence.

France

- On 5 November Jordan Bardella is elected leader of the far-right RN, to replace Marine Le Pen.
- On 14 November France and the United Kingdom sign a new agreement to curb irregular migration across the English Channel, under which maritime patrols will be stepped up and the police will be better equipped.
- On 14 November the Paris Stock Exchange, with a total capitalization of 2.823 billion dollars, becomes Europe's biggest stock market, overtaking London (2.821 billion dollars).
- On 20 November the National Assembly approves a police reform that will provide an additional 8,500 police officers and increase the internal security budget by 15 billion euros, faced with the rise in violence and crime in the country.
- On 25 November as part of the moves taken by the Elysee Palace to overcome the cooling of relations with Germany over the EU's energy crisis, the Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne travels to Berlin and, together with the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, signs a joint declaration on energy solidarity, under which France commits to continuing to supply gas to Germany in exchange for receiving German electricity. Both countries also decide to drive forward with the agreement on 24 November of the European Council of Ministers for the joint purchase of gas, the reform of the electricity market and cooperation in strategic and vulnerable sectors.
- On 28 November the State Secretary for Territorial Communities Caroline Cayeux resigns over irregularities in her declaration of assets.

Italy

- On 2 November Italy announces it will not allow entry to migrants rescued by ships belonging to various NGOs, claiming they should be hosted by the countries whose flags the ships fly. One of the

first affected is the Ocean Viking, with 234 migrants aboard, sparking the first stand-off between Giorgia Meloni's government and France, which in reprisal, on 10 November, suspends its migrant deal with Rome to take in 3,500 refugees currently in Italy. In addition, on 12 November, Paris allows the Ocean Viking to disembark in Toulon. On 13 November a joint letter from the Interior Ministers of Italy, Greece, Malta and Cyprus calls for the development of a new European migration and asylum policy and an equal distribution of migratory responsibilities among all Member States of the Union.

- On 20 November the coast guard rescues 500 migrants some 70 miles off the coast of Sicily.

Slovenia

- On 13 November Slovenia holds the second round of its presidential elections between the two most voted candidates from the first round, held on 23 October. The independent liberal candidate, Natasa Pirc Musar, wins with 54% of the votes against the first-round winner, Anze Logar (SDS).
- On 27 November a referendum sees Slovenians back a bill proposed by the centre-left coalition government to reduce political influence and restore editorial independence to Slovenia's public broadcaster RTV.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 November the UNSC extends the mandate of the EU peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina by another year to ensure the application of the 1995 Dayton Accords.

Montenegro

- On 1 November the Parliament approves a new law on the President's power, opening the way to elections for a new government by obliging the President to propose a prime minister-delegate if the candidate has the support of 41 of the 81 members of Parliament. If there is no such majority, the President has to organize a second round of consultations with political parties and propose another candidate. The text also allows a majority of MPs to sign a petition

and so propose a prime minister-designate if the President refuses to propose a candidate. A number of civic organizations criticize the new law saying it violates the constitution. On 8 November, the parliament speaker Danijela Djurovic urges the parties to overcome the political crisis, while nationalist organizations and opposition parties, led by President Milo Djukanovic's DPS, stage an anti-government protest in Podgorica. On 17 November, over 10,000 people called by the Ima Nas (We Are Many) movement, backed by the DPS, protest outside the Parliament to demand early elections and for the new law on the President's power to be revoked.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 November thousands of Kosovo Serbs protest in Mitrovica against a regulation requiring Serb licence plates to be replaced by those issued by Kosovo. The ten MPs from Srpska Lista hand in their resignation, replaced on 17 November by new party members. Hundreds of police officers, judges and other Kosovo Serb public workers have been leaving their posts since the beginning of the month in protest against the measure. On 22 November, the EU fails in its attempt to reach an agreement between Serbia and Kosovo to settle the dispute, Brussels' proposal being rejected by the Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti for failing to include the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the Serbian President Alexander Vucic. On the same day, Kurti delays the regulation's implementation by 48 hours and on 24 November the parties finally reach an agreement that puts an end to the dispute – for the time being –, and under which Serbia will cease to issue licence plates with Kosovo cities's denominations and the Kosovan authorities will not insist on the replacement of Serb plates already on vehicles.

North Macedonia

- On 3 November Bulgaria voices "serious concerns" over the amendments in North Macedonia to the laws on Associations and Foundations and on Political Parties, approved in response to

the opening of Bulgarian clubs in the country named after World War II Nazi collaborators.

- On 7 November Islam Abazi, the public prosecutor in Gostivar, is elected as the head of the Organized Crime and Corruption Prosecution.
- On 24 November North Macedonia becomes a member of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Albania

- On 4 November an Albanian court orders Ora News, a television network critical of the government, to be transferred to state ownership, after accepting prosecutors' claims that its owner, Ylli Ndroqi, cannot justify the legitimate origin of his fortune.
- On 13 November thousands protest against the PS and Edi Rama's government, called by the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha and the opposition PD.
- On 18 November Albania joins the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Greece

- On 1 November a vessel carrying at least 68 migrants sinks off the coast of Evia, leaving only 12 survivors.
- On 2 November an initiative developed by the Ministry of Development and Investment is launched, aimed at helping citizens to buy basic food products in the face of a 12% inflation rate.
- On 8 November the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis confirms the cancellation of the sale of 67% of Alexandroupolis Port, given its great strategic importance as an energy hub. He also confirms the start of gas exploration, southeast of Crete.
- On 9 November large-scale marches during the second day of strike called in 2022 against the rising cost of living, pay cuts and widespread layoffs end with episodes of violence with the police and Molotov cocktails being thrown at the Parliament.

Türkiye

- On 2 November a national teachers' strike calls for higher pay and better rights.
- On 2 November Russia announces it is rejoining the deal with Ukraine and

Türkiye on grain exports from Ukrainian ports, two days after the country's withdrawal following an attack on Russian ships in Sebastopol, attributed to Ukraine.

- On 4 November the government forgives around 1.61 billion dollars in debts with the State after writing off student loan interest rates and late fees, Covid-19 fines and unpaid utility bills of below 107 dollars.
- On 12 November the European Commission rejects Türkiye's plans to include Northern Cyprus as an observer in the Organization of Turkish States.
- On 13 November an attack attributed to the PKK terrorist organization in Istiklal Avenue, Istanbul, leaves at least eight dead and 81 injured.

Cyprus

- On 7 November the Archbishop Chrysostomos II, the head of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, dies.
- On 23 November workers at the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC) go on strike, calling for new job positions, the diversification of its energy offerings towards renewable sources, reductions in production costs and the better management and modernization of its plant in Dhekelia.

Syria

- On 4 November at least two people are killed in demonstrations in Sweida against the rise in fuel prices, during which demonstrators set fire to the provincial government building.
- On 20 November at least 45 Kurdish militants and Syrian government soldiers are killed in around 25 airstrikes as part of Türkiye's new Operation Claw-Sword, launched in the SDF-held semi-autonomous region, in response to the attack on 13 November on Istiklal Avenue in Istanbul. On 22 November, Türkiye reports that at least 184 people have been killed or wounded in the operation. On 23 November Türkiye estimates that over 250 PKK and YPG members have been neutralized in Syria and Iraq.
- On 30 November Daesh reports the death of its leader Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi during a US operation in Idlib, and names his successor Abu Hussein al-Husseini.

Lebanon

- On 1 November a new official exchange rate comes into effect, increasing the rate of the Lebanese pound from 1,507 to 15,000 to the dollar, as a step prior to the unification of the different exchange rates in the country, in line with IMF demands.

Egypt

- On 4 November the acting leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Ibrahim Munir dies in London, after four decades in exile.
- On 7 November the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-27) begins in Sharm el-Sheikh, which concludes on 20 November with a resolution that foresees the creation of a fund to finance the climate damage suffered by the countries most vulnerable to global warming. However, the summit fails to redefine a plan for further reducing the use of fossil fuels.
- On 15 November Alaa Abdel Fattah, one of the leaders of the 2011 revolution, breaks the hunger strike he began on 2 April in protest against his arrest in September 2019 and subsequent five-year prison sentence handed down in 2021 for spreading fake news.
- On 22 November the President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, agree to resume bilateral ties after their handshake in Doha at the start of the Football World Cup in Qatar, following years of tension since the downfall of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt.

Tunisia

- On 18 November the police disperse protesters demonstrating for migrants' rights in Zarzis, a day before the Francophonie summit begins on the nearby island of Djerba.
- On 17 November the government confirms that the Afek Tounes party leader Fadel Abdelkafi has been banned from leaving the country, shortly after, on 11 November, a court issues a travel ban on the Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi, as part of an investigation into corruption allegations against him.
- On 25 November Leila Trabelsi, the widow of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, is hand-

ed down a new sentence *in absentia* of six years' imprisonment for corruption.

Algeria

- On 7 November Algeria officially submits its application to join BRICS, a group comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- On 7 November it is revealed that Algeria's hydrocarbon export revenues have increased from 24.2 to 42.8 billion euros between January and September, a 76.7% increase on the same period in 2021.
- On 22 November the Algerian Parliament adopts an increase in the Defence budget in the Finance Law for 2023, in a context of renewed tensions with Morocco.
- On 25 November the mass trial comes to an end against around 100 suspects charged with murder for beating musician Djamel Ben Ismail and burning him alive, after mistaking him for a pyromaniac while he was collaborating as a volunteer firefighter to help put out the fierce wildfires in Kabylie in 2021. 49 of the defendants are sentenced to death.
- On 28 November the former minister Abdelkader Khomri is charged in an investigation into possible embezzlement while he was the head of the National Publishing and Advertising Agency, between 1999 and 2004.

Morocco

- On 21 November the former minister, founder of the Liberal Party and critic of Mohammed VI, Mohammed Ziane, is jailed after a court in Rabat confirms the three-year prison sentence handed down in February for 11 crimes that range from insulting national institutions to adultery and sexual harassment.

European Union

- On 3 November Berlin hosts the Western Balkans summit, in which the commitment to accession is renewed, although the need is highlighted for greater progress on rule of law and environmental protection. The six candidate countries sign three agreements

for the mutual recognition of identity documents, university qualifications and professional qualifications and the Commission announces 1 billion euros in aid to deal with the energy crisis in the region.

- On 14 November the Council of the EU approves new sanctions against 29 individuals and three entities for repression in Iran after the death on 16 September of Mahsa Amini, while being detained in police custody for not wearing her hijab according to regulations.
- On 16 November the Commission asks the Council to allow Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania to fully enter the Schengen Area.
- On 21 November the Commission proposes an action plan for addressing irregular migration in the central Mediterranean, which has increased by 50% since 2021, used by over 90,000 migrants so far this year, following the stand-off between France and the Italian government.
- On 23 November the European Parliament declares Russia a state sponsor of terrorism and asserts the reform of the decision-making process regarding future enlargements should be accelerated, replacing the principle of unanimity with that of a qualified majority. It also asks for the current accession negotiations to be concluded before 2030.
- On 25 November the European Home Affairs Council underlines the importance of strengthening the community's migration and asylum system to enhance support and cooperation between states and improve search and rescue capabilities, in line with the 20 measures proposed by the Commission to deal with the migration crisis.

Arab League

- On 1 November the Arab League summit gets underway in Algiers, marked by the absence of the King of Morocco Mohammed VI, announced the previous day, despite the fact that he was officially invited by Algeria in a gesture of rapprochement. On 2 November, Mohammed VI invites the Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to visit Rabat for "dialogue" on Algeria-Morocco relations.

December 2022

In Portugal, the procedure begins for amending the Constitution and there are two ministerial resignations. In Spain, after months of institutional crisis the Constitutional Court is finally partially renewed. France announces the end of the visa crisis with Algeria and Morocco. The European Council approves Croatia's entry into the Schengen Area. The electoral law reform reignites the political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the same month the country receives candidate status for EU accession and the country's first female Prime Minister takes office. In Montenegro, a number of senior officials are arrested for corruption and the governance crisis continues. The licence plate crisis and resignations of Kosovo Serb public workers in North Kosovo stokes tensions between Belgrade and Pristina. In Greece, there are clashes following the death of a Roma teenage boy in a police chase and the Parliament approves the intelligence service reform. In Türkiye, the mayor of Istanbul is convicted and banned from politics and the activist Osman Kavala is sentenced to life in prison. In Cyprus, the headquarters of the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) is attacked. Cholera infections increase in Syria and Lebanon. In Syria, Jordan and Morocco there are demonstrations over the price of fuel. Lebanon reaches the end of 2022 without having elected a new president. In Egypt, the journalist Ismail Alexandrani is released from jail. A failure to agree on holding legislative elections further deepens the political crisis in Libya. Tunisia holds the first round of its legislative elections. A number of former ministers and former senior officials receive jail sentences in Algeria.

Portugal

- On 16 December the census conducted every 10 years by the National Statistics Institute reveals that between 2011 and 2021 there was a 2.1% decline in the Portuguese population, in other words, by 2020, more than 2 million Portuguese were living abroad. This is the second population drop since

1864, the year the population census began, the first coming between 1961 and 1971 when Portugal lost 2.54% of its population.

- On 21 December the Parliament begins the procedure for an eighth amendment to the current Constitution with the aim of adapting it to the new realities and rights.
- On 28 December the Treasury State Secretary Alexandra Reis and Infrastructure Minister Pedro Nuno Santos both resign after it is revealed that Reis received severance pay of half a million euros after leaving his post at TAP, the national airline bailed out by the State.

Spain

- On 9 December Alicante hosts the meeting of the nine Mediterranean EU countries – Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus – which asks the European Commission for a common response to the Inflation Reduction Act approved by the US, considering it harmful for European industry due to its high level of protectionism. In the context of the summit, Spain, Portugal and France launch the H2Med energy corridor project, which will join the Iberian Peninsula with France, promoting energy security and autonomy for the Union.
- On 15 December the Organic Law on Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy is approved by votes from left-wing parties.
- On 22 December the Congress of Deputies approves the law on equality of trans people and to guarantee the rights of LGBTI people, which recognizes the self-determination of gender.
- On 22 December a majority in the Senate, comprising PSOE, UP and the pro-independence parties, approves the Penal Code reform that includes lower sentences for misuse of public funds, penalties for illicit enrichment for public officials, tougher sentences for the breach of labour legislation, guarantees for peaceful protest and the removal of the crime of sedition, replacing it with the less serious crime of "aggravated public disorder." By order of the Constitutional Court on 19 December, the law is debated in the Senate without includ-

ing the amendments aimed at reforming the system for electing judges to the High Court itself, to overcome the blockage on the renewal of two of its members in the CGPJ. On 27 December, almost four months after the expiry of the deadline for its renewal, the CGPJ Plenary reaches a unanimous agreement with the backing of the two main national parties, to designate the two new members of the Constitutional Court.

France

- On 6 December France bans short-haul flights that can be replaced by train journeys of less than two and a half hours, under the Climate Law approved in 2021.
- On 11 December Eric Ciotti is elected as leader of LR.
- On 13 December Adrien Quatennens, the former LFI coordinator who resigned on 19 September after being reported by his wife for repeated abuse, is handed a four-month suspended jail sentence. The trial, added to Quatennens' replacement by Manuel Bompard, opens an internal split between the parties that comprise the NUPES coalition.
- On 16 December France confirms the withdrawal of its last soldiers from Central Africa following the end of its military cooperation with Bangui due to the presence in the country of members of the Russian Wagner mercenary group.
- On 18 December France announces the end of the visa crisis with Algeria after a year and a half of reduced visa quotas to Maghrebi citizens, to encourage Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco to take back nationals that have been expelled from France. The normalization adds to that achieved with Tunisia in August and Morocco on 16 December.
- On 19 December at least 227 people are arrested for disturbances registered in different places in the country after France loses the Qatar World Cup 2022 to Argentina.
- On 23 December at least three people are killed in a shooting at a Kurdish cultural centre in Paris, carried out by a pensioner with a history of attacks on foreign nationals.
- On 30 December a French national and a Libyan man found in possession of nine gas cylinders are arrested trying

to carry out an attack on the Parisian Montparnasse train station.

Italy

- On 12 December the Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni allows three ships carrying over 500 migrants to enter Italian ports.
- On 23 December over 100 migrants disembark from the Sea Eye-4 rescue ship in Livorno.
- On 25 December the former minister and former European commissioner Franco Frattini dies.
- On 28 December Italy approves a decree for the management and simplification of asylum applications and to regulate the actions of NGOs operating in the Mediterranean.

Malta

- On 19 December the Parliament votes in favour of an amendment that legalizes abortion only when the woman's life or health are at grave risk.

Croatia

- On 8 December the European Home Affairs Council approves Croatia's entry into the Schengen Area on 1 January 2023.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 December the Constitutional Court abolishes the Republika Srpska's law on Medicines as it provides for the creation of a Medicines Agency that is independent from the authority of the State.
- On 2 December the Constitutional Court rejects the appeal of the Croat member of the federal presidency Zeljko Komsic to suspend the changes to the election law ordered by the High Representative of the International Community Christian Schmidt after the October elections. The controversial amendment, which ignites tensions between Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks, raises the number of MPs in the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its election system in favour of the Bosniak quota and introduces a deadline for the forming a government after elections.

▪ On 6 December the federal Minister of Human Rights and Refugees Milos Lucic is arrested for abuse of office and embezzlement.

- On 15 December the Council of the EU confirms accession candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the Commission's recommendation made on 12 October.
- On 22 December Borjana Kristo, the vice-president of the Bosnian Croat HDZ is elected chair of the Federal Council of Ministers.

Montenegro

- On 9 December the special prosecutor Sasa Cadjenovic is arrested by order of the state prosecutor Vladimir Novovic for belonging to the Kavac gang and after being accused on 20 November for abuse of office and cooperating with criminal organizations by one of the DF leaders, Milan Knezevic.
- On 12 December clashes break out in Podgorica during a demonstration organized by the opposition movement Ima nas (We are many), after Parliament adopts an amendment that gives the parliamentary majority presidential powers.
- On 21 December the former customs chief Rade Milosevic is arrested under orders of the Special State Prosecutor's Office, accused of creating a criminal organization in connection with an investigation into the theft of a million euros' worth of tobacco in Niksic.
- On 31 December the citizenship by investment programme comes to an end, which Montenegro has decided not to renew in May, in line with requests from Brussels.

Serbia

- On 1 December Serbian teachers protest during a day of strike, calling for measures against school violence and to be given civil servant status.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 December the Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic accuses her Kosovo counterpart Albin Kurti of violating

the Brussels Agreement when, after the mass resignation of Kosovo Serb officials over the licence plate dispute and Pristina's failure to meet its promise to create an association of Serb-majority municipalities, he named the leader of Kosovo's ethnic Serb Progressive Democratic Party, Nenad Rasic, Minister for Communities and Returns, despite his poor results in the 2021 elections. On 10 December, tensions increase with a stun grenade attack on a patrol of the EU's mission in Kosovo (EULEX) close to Rudare and the raising of barricades near the Bernjak and Jarine border crossings over the arrest of the former Kosovo Serb police officer Dejan Pantic, following his resignation in protest against Rasic's appointment. On the same day, the President of Kosovo Vjosa Osmani announces that the local elections scheduled for the same month in North Kosovo to replace the resigned Kosovo Serb politicians have been postponed after several attacks against election officials. The Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic announces that he will make a request to the NATO-led peace-keeping force to allow the deployment of Serbian forces in Kosovo. On 22 December, Kosovo Serb demonstrators demand the withdrawal of Kosovo police from North Kosovo. On 29 December Aleksandar Vucic suspends the order given two days previously to put the army on high alert after reports of Pantic's release.

- On 14 December the European Council and Parliament agree on visa exemption for Kosovo passport holders.
- On 14 December Kosovo submits its official application for EU membership.
- On 16 December seven years after its creation to try former members of the UÇK in the context of the Kosovo War, the Kosovo Special Chambers in The Hague issues its first verdict. The defendant, former UÇK officer Salih Mustafa, is sentenced to 26 years in prison.

Albania

- On 6 December Tirana hosts the EU-Western Balkans summit, which concludes with a full commitment to the region's accession to the Union and of-

fers candidate countries specific aid to accelerate the process and thereby distance them from Russian and Chinese influence.

- On 27 December Albania signs a deal with China to scrap the visa regime between both countries, joining Serbia, which made the same decision in 2020, in a move that might damage both countries' EU perspective.

Greece

- On 8 December there are violent incidents during demonstrations by the Roma community in Athens, Thessaloniki, Messinia and Agrinio over the death in Thessaloniki on 5 December of a teenage Roma boy fleeing from the police after leaving a petrol station without paying his bill.
- On 9 December the Parliament passes a government bill to reform the intelligence services (EYP) and ban the sale of spyware, in the context of a court investigation following a complaint filed in August by the PASOK leader Nikos Androulakis against the EYP, in which he accused the body of spying on him in 2021 using surveillance software.
- On 16 December Pope Francis I announces the return to Greece of three fragments of the Parthenon in Athens .
- On 16 December around 100 migrants are rescued near the island of Kea.
- On 17 December the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announces a 10% subsidy on household food bills for the next six months.

Türkiye

- On 2 December Sweden extradites to Türkiye Mahmut Tat, a man sentenced in Türkiye to over six years in prison for belonging to the PKK. This is the first extradition from Sweden of a Kurdish fugitive wanted by Türkiye, and is part of negotiations for Ankara to allow Sweden's entry into NATO.
- On 7 December Türkiye threatens to invade the Greek islands if Athens refuses to demilitarize them.
- On 13, 20 and 27 December Türkiye claims to have rescued 160, 260 and 400 migrants in the Aegean Sea, respectively, and accuses Greece of

pushing them back towards Turkish waters.

- On 14 December the mayor of Istanbul Ekrem Imamoglu is sentenced to more than two years in prison for "insulting public officials," when, in 2019, he described the Election Board as idiots after it annulled the local election results, which his CHP party had won, following complaints by the AKP. Imamoglu is thereby disqualified from being elected or holding public office, and will not be able to stand in presidential elections.
- On 20 December over 100 retired army generals who signed a letter in 2021 against Türkiye's possible withdrawal from the Montreux Convention are cleared of coup-plotting charges.
- On 26 December Türkiye announces the discovery of 58 billion m³ of natural gas in the Black Sea.
- On 29 December a Turkish court upholds the life sentence handed down in April to the activist Osman Kavala, accused of financing anti-government activities and having ties with the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 29 December the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the end of a retirement age requirement, which will allow over 2 million people to retire immediately. The announcement comes days after, on 22 December, the President announced a 55% rise in the minimum wage to 430 euros for 2023.
- On 31 December the police force announces the arrest of two alleged Daesh members who were planning an attack in Istanbul on New Year's Eve.

Cyprus

- On 8 December a demonstration to commemorate Georgios Grivas, the former leader of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA), a nationalist paramilitary organization that fought against British rule in Cyprus and for enosis with Greece, ends in violent unrest outside the Parliament, while the country's 2023 budget is being passed inside, and an attack on the headquarters of the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK).
- On 21 December Cyprus announce the natural gas discovery with the Zeus-

1 well, 162 km southeast of the island, with an estimated volume of 2 to 3 trillion cubic feet.

- On 24 December the Archbishop of Paphos is elected the highest authority of the Cypriot Orthodox Church, going by the name of Georgios III, following the death on 7 November of Archbishop Chrysostomos II.

Syria

- On 4 December the Health Ministry announces the launch of a vaccination campaign in the north of the country against the cholera outbreak which has left a hundred dead and more that 35,000 suspected cases since late August.
- On 4 December two people are killed in demonstrations in Sweida against the rise in fuel prices.
- On 21 December the President Bashar al-Assad approves an amnesty for army deserters if they turn themselves in to the authorities in the next four months.
- On 29 December the Defence Ministers of Türkiye and Syria meet in Moscow for the first time since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011 to address the refugee situation, the presence of Kurdish militias in northern Syria and areas of economic cooperation through which Bashar al-Assad's regime is seeking to break its international isolation.
- On 30 December the US reports the elimination of some 700 Daesh members throughout 2022 in Iraq and Syria.

Lebanon

- On 4 December more than 650 confirmed cases of cholera have been reported since the outbreak in October, the first of its kind for 30 years in Lebanon.
- On 15 December an Irish UN peacekeeper is killed in an attack on a convoy of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- On 15 December the Parliament fails for the tenth time in its attempt to elect a new president of the Republic, 2022 therefore coming to a close without a head of state to replace Michel Aoun, whose term expired on 31 October.

Jordan

- On 17 December at least 44 people are arrested over the recent days' protests against the increase in fuel prices, during which the deputy police chief of Maan Abdul Razzaq Dalabeh is shot dead.

Egypt

- On 5 December the journalist Ismail Alexandrani leaves prison after serving a seven-year sentence for reporting on military operations in North Sinai.

Libya

- On 16 December militias from Zawiya launch an incursion to capture a senior figure of the armed groups of Sabratha, identified as Ahmed Danbashi, amid weeks of fighting between both groups, brought to a temporary halt on 18 December with a ceasefire agreement.
- On 24 December general Khalifa Haftar, army commander for the eastern Libyan authorities, gives an ultimatum for establishing a schedule for holding elections, after the postponement of the December 2021 presidential elections.

Tunisia

- On 4 December the UGTT rejects the legislative elections scheduled for December, describing them as anti-democratic, and warns of a possible national strike against President Kais Saied.
- On 11 December thousands of Tunisians demonstrate to demand the return of the constitutional process, in a protest called by the National Salvation Front, which brings together a large part of the opposition to President Saied.
- On 17 December Tunisia holds the first round of legislative elections which is boycotted by most parties and sees a record-low turnout of 9%, representing a widespread rejection of the model imposed by Kais Saied.
- On 22 December President Saied approves the 2023 budget, aimed at sealing a 1.9-billion-euro IMF loan, as per an agreement reached in October.

Algeria

- On 2 December the former prime ministers Ahmed Ouyahia, Abdelmalek Sellal and Noureddine Bedoui and former ministers of Industry, Abdeslam Bouchouareb and Abdelhamid Temmar; Water Resources, Hocine Necib and Arezki Berraki; and Finance, Mohamed Loukal; the former Minister of Post and Telecommunications, Houada Imane Faraoun; and former Public Works Minister, Amar Ghoul, are convicted for squandering public funds, abuse of office and influence peddling, receiving sentences of between four and 20 years in prison.
- On 5 December Algeria and China sign two deals for bilateral cooperation in strategic areas and the joint development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Morocco

- On 4 December thousands of people demonstrate in Rabat against the rising cost of living and repression, called by the Moroccan Social Front (FSM).
- On 26 December the Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi announces in the Parliament that the next Penal Code will include sentences of up to five years in prison for the crime of defamation on social media.

Mauritania

- On 28 December the Council of Ministers approves the creation of a government body to regulate the collection and distribution of Zakat al-Fitr, an obligatory, yearly alms-giving in Islam.

European Union

- On 3 December the EU and G7 agree to set a price cap on Russian seaborne oil at 60 dollars a barrel, as a new measure to put pressure on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.
- On 8 December the annual report of the European Defence Agency reveals that joint EU defence spending reached a new high of 214 billion euros in 2021, 6% greater than in 2020.
- On 9 December the vice-president of the European Parliament Eva Kaili is

stripped of her role and becomes the first member of the EP to be arrested, accused of being part of a corruption and money-laundering network, allegedly financed by Qatar. Arrested along with Kaili, who is also expelled from her party, – the Greek Pasok-Kinal –, are her current partner – the parliament assistant Francesco Giorgi – and another four socialist MEPs, the Belgian Marc Tarabella and Italians Andrea Cozzolino and Pier Antonio Panzeri, the latter found to be the brains behind the network, which also took bribes from a second country: Morocco. On 13 December, the European Parliament dismisses Eva Kaili, and on 15 December the European Chief Prosecutor also orders an investigation against her and the Greek conservative MEP Maria Spyraiki for possible tax fraud related to the management of parliamentary allowances. On 16 December, the Italian PD suspends Cozzolino's membership. The so-called Qatargate scandal also implicates the former European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, after it is found out on 18 December that he forms part of the honorary board of the Fight Impunity NGO, founded by Panzeri and which lies at the epicentre of the scandal.

- On 12 December, Hungary raises its veto on sending aid to the value of 18 billion euros to Ukraine, as well on the decision to impose a minimum 15% corporate tax for multinationals. In response, the ambassadors of the Member States approve Hungary's post-pandemic recovery package, set at 5.8 billion euros. At the same time, however, they agree to suspend the payment in 2023 of 6.3 billion euros in cohesion funds to Hungary, in the first ever application of the rule of law conditionality mechanism, a figure below the 7.5 billion proposed by the Commission.
- On 12 December the Commission adds a 220-million-euro package to the 980 million euros it has already earmarked for Türkiye for border management and refugee support.

Gibraltar

- On 1 September Gibraltar confirms an oil link from a bulk carrier stranded

off the coast of Gibraltar after colliding on 29 August with another ship.

- On 10 September the festivities of the National Day of Gibraltar are suspended as a mark of respect following the death on 8 September of Queen Elizabeth II. On 11 September, mourning is interrupted for three hours to mark the proclamation of the new British King Charles III.

Western Sahara

- On 6 January the German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier invites Mohammed VI to visit Germany in a message in which he asserts that the Moroccan proposal of autonomy for Western Sahara is a "serious and credible effort" and a "good basis" for resolving the conflict. The gesture is an attempt by Berlin to settle the diplomatic crisis sparked in March 2021 by Rabat in relation to Germany's stance on the Sahrawi issue.
- On 12 January the new UN envoy for Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura arrives in Rabat to begin an eight-day tour of the region.
- On 18 March Morocco draws a close on its diplomatic crisis with Spain leaving behind 10 months of friction, after Rabat publishes an excerpt from a letter sent by the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to Mohammed VI, in which, departing from Spain's historical neutrality on the Sahrawi conflict, he shows his support to Rabat's proposal of autonomy for a Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty "as the most serious, realistic and credible basis for the resolution of the dispute." In response, Algeria recalls its ambassador in Madrid for consultations, declaring not to have been informed by Spain of its change of stance. The Moroccan ambassador, meanwhile, returns to Spain, while the UN issues a reminder that the Western Sahara conflict must be resolved with a "full commitment to the political process facilitated by the United Nations" and in line with the 2021 Resolution 2602, which upholds the need to provide for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people.
- On 21 March France affirms that Morocco's autonomy plan for the West-

ern Sahara constitutes "a basis" on which "serious and credible" dialogue can take place.

- On 20 March the Polisario Front reports fierce clashes following an attack on Moroccan forces deployed in Mahbes, at the separation wall built by Morocco in Western Sahara.
- On 10 April the Polisario Front announces it is suspending diplomatic contacts with the current Spanish government over its support for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, two days after Madrid and Rabat announce the end of their period of bilateral political crisis.
- On 11 April at least two people are killed in a Moroccan attack in Ain Ben Tili, on the border between Western Sahara and Mauritania.
- On 11 May on the occasion of the 9th summit of the Global Coalition to Defeat IS in Marrakech, the Netherlands recognizes Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara as a "serious and credible contribution to the UN-led process."
- On 22 June the Israeli Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked reaffirms Israel's support of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- On 4 July Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary General, reports that the special envoy for Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura will not visit Sahrawi territory after his visit on 5 July to Rabat to relaunch the dialogue on Western Sahara.
- On 17 July the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the Polisario Front, launches a full-scale attack on Moroccan army positions in Western Sahara.
- On 18 August Peru withdraws its recognition of Sahrawi independence to recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the territory.
- On 20 September South Sudan agrees with the Polisario Front to reestablish diplomatic relations at the highest level.
- On 1 December Guatemala officially opens its consulate in Dajla, thereby joining other countries that back Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- On 15 December the Sahrawi EU representative Oubi Bouchraya sub-

mits his resignation, citing “deep differences” with the Polisario leader Brahim Ghali.

▪ On 16 December the French Foreign Affairs Minister Catherine Colonna affirms that France’s stance on Western Sahara is “unequivocal and clearly favourable” to Morocco, during an official visit to Rabat, thereby putting an end to a year of crisis over the country’s visa reductions for Maghrebi nationals.

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