

# EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE



**FUNDING  
THE SHIELD**

**The economics  
of NATO's defence**



April 2024

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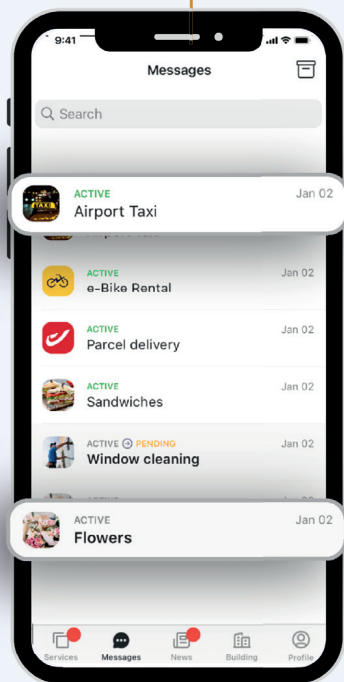
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*Nikola Hendrickx*



# SAVING LIVES OR SAVING MONEY?

**How the contributions of member states towards NATO's running costs fluctuate according to the perceived threat**







Military Committee at the NATO Chiefs of Defence Session, attended by  
NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana (centre)



Only just over a third of the member states of NATO, the western defence alliance against military threats, pay as much for their mutual protection as they should. The actual figure is just 35%, although at a guess I'd say most of them would expect their allies to turn up in force and well-armed if they found themselves being invaded. The fear of that threat has grown considerably greater since Vladimir Putin decided he should run Ukraine as well as Russia and invaded it. He told the world (and his troops) that they were needed to overcome Ukraine's Nazis. It didn't have any but that was his excuse. That concern over foreign adventurism is reflected in a modest (but unprecedented and welcome) increase in defence spending overall. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told a meeting of NATO defence ministers in February that since they had made the Defence Investment Pledge in 2014, European allies and Canada have added an impressive \$600-billion (almost €550-billion) to their spending on defence. He was also expecting 18 of the allies to spend around 2% of their countries' GDP on defence in this year (2024) alone. Whether or not that would be enough to deter another gamble by Russia's ambitious president, Vladimir Putin, remains to be seen.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. In 2023, Germany spent 1.57% of GDP on defence, well short of the 2% target. Recently, Olaf Scholz insisted that his country would meet the 2% spending target "in the 2020s, in the 2030s and beyond"

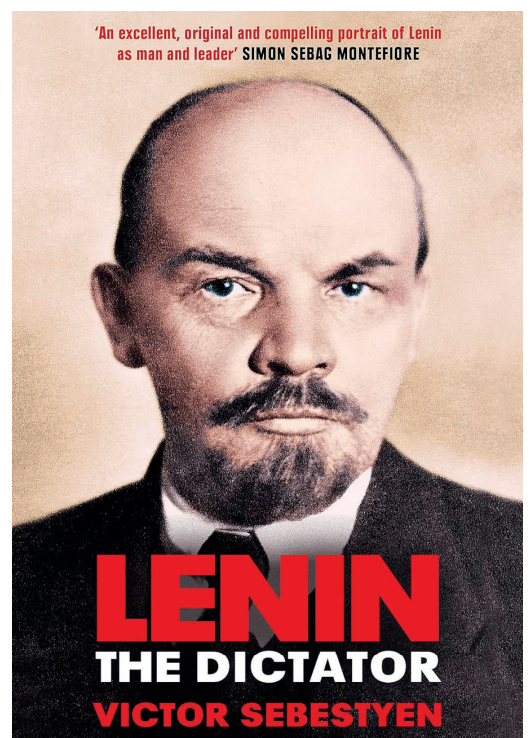
NATO has described Russian aggression against Ukraine as posing "the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades". The need for a military alliance among Western allies has never been clearer. There has been speculation as to exactly why Putin is doing what he's doing. Firstly, he claims that the expansion of NATO eastwards, especially allowing former Soviet Union countries to join, is a threat to Russia. Putin has said that accepting countries on Russia's border into the alliance is a "provocation", despite assurances that it is purely a defensive alliance. He has also accused Ukraine of acts of genocide against ethnic Russians, despite a total absence of any evidence. It's true, however, that Russian nationals living in the Donbas region have been fighting Ukrainian forces, but rather than seek to calm things down, Putin took the unprecedented action of recognising the separatist regions as being independent from Ukraine, ordering Russian troops to enter as "peacekeeping forces".

Putin has argued, however, that Ukraine is not a separate country but is, in reality, a part of Russia that was given its independence by Vladimir Lenin. In speeches, Putin has stated that Ukraine

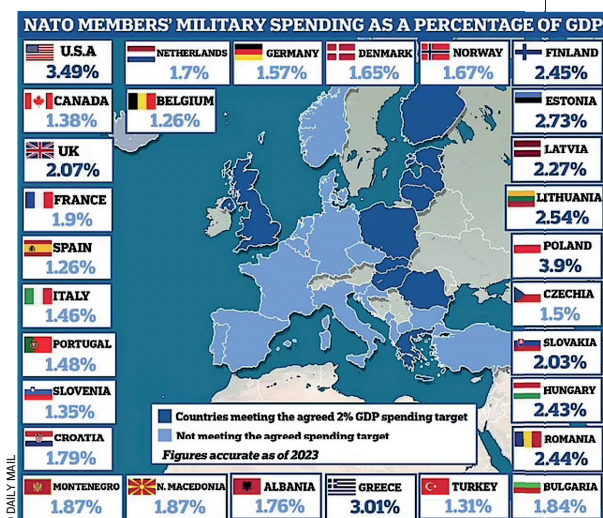


The Ukrainian parliament, under Soviet authority at the time, proclaiming Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991

"isn't a real country" and has never had "sustainable statehood". There is ample evidence that Ukraine was recognised as an independent country even before the Russian revolution. Putin has stated that it was Russia that gave Ukraine the right to break away, despite the fact that the Ukrainian people voted overwhelmingly in a referendum in 1991 to break away. According to the Washington Post, 84% of eligible voters took part in that referendum and more than 90% of them chose independence. Despite this, Putin has stated that "Ukraine for us is not just a neighbouring country. It is an integral part of our own history, culture, spiritual space." Historically, that is simply a lie. One of Putin's band of supporters has also said that there is no real Ukraine, just what he called "Ukrainianism", which he described as "a kind of mental aberration." But it's impossible to do away with a country through







simple semantics. Its physical existence is not in any doubt, whatever Putin's pals may think.

The claim that Ukraine isn't real is no more true than Putin's talk about Nazis running the place. His troops were told that they would be welcomed in Ukraine for "liberating" the country, but instead they encountered ordinary people, including elderly ladies, lying down in front of his tanks to halt their progress. Russia clearly wasn't welcome there, whatever Putin may claim. Perhaps he thinks they're all Nazis. Ukraine had certainly known hardship, including the famines on 1906 and 1925, while an even worse one in 1891-92 had been witnessed at first hand by Vladimir Lenin, who had seen crop failure in 1920 but who nevertheless made the food shortages worse by requisitioning grain, despite some two million people dying of starvation. A quarter of Russia's peasants were starving, but Lenin continued to stockpile grain to prevent future famines, despite the people turning to cannibalism and also an outbreak of revolts by peasants. In fact, between March and November 1921 there was scarcely a day on which a Red Army detachment was not dealing with "internal disorders", according to Victor Sebestyen in his fascinating biography, simply entitled "Lenin".

It's been reported that Putin loathes Lenin and would prefer to deny him his place in history. He has a place in history, of course, although he died relatively young in 1924. For his part, it seems unlikely that Lenin would have supported Putin's adventurism, saying at the time that it would be wrong to send troops to fight on foreign soil. "We can't make revolution abroad at the point of a bayonet," he said. As it was, Ukraine, along with Belorussia, both Soviet republics, had only joined the Russian Soviet Republic in the famous Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1922. For its part, Russia had been through a lot to reach that point, with a revolution and a civil war and the famine that followed, long before the start of the Cold War that dominated the childhoods of many (including me).

Strangely, Putin has expressed a belief that Kyiv has the knowledge and desire to obtain nuclear

weapons, despite no evidence being presented. Contrarily, Ukraine voluntarily surrendered all the nuclear weapons on its territory following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Putin has claimed it poses a threat to Moscow and has talked up a variety of conspiracy theories. In fact, Ukraine obtained a security guarantee from Russia, the United States and the UK in return for giving up its nuclear arsenal. It was this entirely fictional "fear" of Ukraine trying to bomb Moscow that Putin used to justify his invasion. "If Ukraine acquires weapons of mass destruction," he told a meeting: "the situation in the world and in Europe will drastically change, especially for us, for Russia." In fact, US officials and NATO have repeatedly sought to reassure Moscow that there are no plans to arm Ukraine with nuclear weapons, while Kyiv has at no time requested such a thing.

## Talking Turkey (among other places)

Let's hope he's not really quite that ambitious. Or bloodthirsty. Putin's claims that Ukraine has itself been committing genocide are simply lies. Whatever excuse Putin may use to explain his invasion, most observers think that the real reason is both more prosaic and simpler (if also scarier). As President Biden explained it: "He wants, in fact, to re-establish the former Soviet Union. That's what this is all about." The US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, made similar comments at a meeting of the UN Security Council a few short years ago, arguing that Putin wants to go back even further in time, to the days of the Russian Empire. If she's right, that would mean including Finland, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, with an option on parts of Poland and Turkey. She added that Putin cannot make the world go so far back in time, to when empires ruled, "but the rest of the world has moved forward," she said, "It is not 1919, it is 2022." In fact, the real Russian empire goes back rather further in time: from 1721 to 1917.



Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations



The facts of history don't seem to impinge on Putin's consciousness nor to influence his thinking. It would seem that he's simply aware that Russia used to have an empire once upon a time and he'd like to get it back, by fair means or foul. It is already having an effect on the wider world. Sweden has now joined the alliance after years of neutrality, with the Swedish flag being added to those flying outside its Brussels headquarters alongside those of its 31 allies. Whatever Putin would like, NATO is not about to go away; it will celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024, after all. In a somewhat pointed remark, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reminded guests of the long-standing alliance between Europe and North America, adding that: "Joining NATO is good for Sweden, good for stability in the North, and good for the security of our whole Alliance." It's rather less popular in Moscow, of course. Another event triggered by Putin's warlike posturing is pressure from some members of the British parliament to increase the spending on defence. The UK Security Minister, Tom Tugendhat, and Foreign Office minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan have said that Britain should "lead the way" in reaching the government target of spending 2.5% of Britain's GDP on its defence. In a separate development, Defence Secretary Grant Shapps has also appealed to have the military spending budget raised to 2.5% from 2.2% "as soon as conditions allow". The UK is already the highest spender on defence in Europe. At £50-billion (€45.78-billion), Britain is the second biggest defence spender in NATO. Only the United States spends more.

## I Warning signs



The 2021 Zapad exercise took place simultaneously on 14 training ranges and stretched from the Baltic Sea to Central Asian regions of Russia



Fragments of a Russian bomb in a destroyed building in Kyiv, Ukraine

NATO has already described "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine" as the "gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, shattering peace in Europe and reinforcing the need for NATO to ensure that its deterrence and defence posture remains credible and effective." How far it has progressed along that road will largely depend on the view from the Kremlin. Certainly, there has been a response: at an extraordinary NATO summit in March 2022, NATO leaders agreed to deploy four battalions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in addition to these already sited in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Putin may just be posing, as he does in those pictures featured in his macho "look at me" calendars, but he's being taken seriously, or at least viewed with suspicion and alarm, which amounts to much the same thing.

At the 2022 Madrid summit, NATO leaders agreed to deploy extra combat-ready forces to the Alliance's eastern flank, scaled up from battalion-sized battle groups to full brigade-sized units, wherever required. The leaders built upon those plans at the 2023 summit in Vilnius, agreeing to modernise NATO for a new era of collective defence. Putin must be made to realise that any moves towards rebuilding the Russian empire would come at enormous cost. The leaders also agreed a new Defence Investment Pledge, committing at least 2% of their Gross Domestic Product annually to defence. Since 2014, the European allies, together with Canada, have invested an extra US\$450-billion (€412.26-billion) in defence, with the latest estimates showing an increase of 8.3% in 2023 alone.

NATO's overall aim is, of course, to protect the freedom and security of all its members by political, but also military (if necessary) means. It was never likely to be easy and would seem to be getting harder. According to CNN, Russia is producing almost three times as much artillery ammunition as Europe and the United States combined can get to Kyiv. According to an anonymous NATO intelligence official, the Kremlin is keeping its plants for producing artillery shells running around the clock. It predicts that the imbalance will soon become decisive. NATO's policy is based primarily on deterrence, trying to prevent war, but it seems not to be a view shared by Putin and his generals. NATO continuously tries to adapt its plans to achieve maximum deterrence, with its Readiness Action Plan (RAP) agreed at a summit held in Wales in 2014. This was built upon further at the Warsaw Summit of 2016, which provided Alliance leaders with a range of options in the event of an all-out attack. NATO leaders agreed to set up an "Enhanced Forward Presence in the Eastern part of the Alliance. This led in 2017 to the deployment of four multi-national battlegroups, deployed to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, with additional measures to reinforce the Alliance's presence in the region of the Black Sea .





Finnish and Swedish marines conducting joint amphibious exercises with other NATO member countries in northern Norway

Russia is, of course, increasing its own spending on armaments and the military, despite the fact that it is not under threat (whatever Putin may say). Putin's most recent initiative should generate and additional RUB 2.5-trillion to fund his military adventurism. (if you're curious, according to a currency conversion website I looked at, 10,000 Russian roubles supposedly equals just 100.08 euros, but is very subject to fluctuation). As part of the military spending plan, the tax rate for individuals is being raised for those earning more than a million roubles per year from 13% to 15%. Russian media reports that citizens earning 5-million roubles per year will see their tax rate rise from 15% to 20%, which is quite a steep increase. Why does it matter? Russia has doubled its 2023 defence spending target to more than \$100 billion - a third of all public

expenditure. Will they still support Putin's desire to be the whole world's czar? Who knows, but it seems doubtful, especially with virtually every country apart from Russia opposed to the idea. Putin clearly sees military expenditure as his highest priority. Russia spent 19.2% on defence in the first six months of all its initially planned budget expenditure for 2023 as a whole. For a country that isn't really wealthy, Putin's economic policies would appear to be insane.

Putin was set to extend his 24 years as the ultimate ruler of Russia in an election on March 15-17 and



Vladimir Putin aboard the guided missile cruiser 'Marshal Ustinov' during joint exercises of the Northern and Black Sea Fleets



Map showing the movement of Russian forces during the invasion of Crimea in 2014



had promised more than 11.5 trillion roubles in infrastructure and social spending over the next six years. Kindly Mr. Putin? Not really. Defence spending will account for almost one third of Russia's total budget expenditure in 2024, the government's draft plans show, as Moscow diverts ever more resources towards prosecuting its war in Ukraine. Amazingly, Russia also plans to ramp up state borrowing to help fund what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine in the coming years and is counting on a recovery in oil and gas revenues to pre-invasion levels to do so. Why? Well, you'd have to ask Putin. Russia is not under threat. No-one is menacing its borders and no foreign military forces are lined up against it. I suppose we just have to assume that Putin likes wars and is determined to fight one, whether Russia really requires it or not.

## Putting your money where your mouth isn't

Putin is not afraid of spending a lot of Russia's budget on defence. Or should that be offence? According to the latest figures, defence makes up 29.4% of 2024 budget spending, with the minister responsible saying it includes "everything needed for victory". Putin is prepared to spend however much it takes to kill his supposed enemies or anyone he believes is standing in the way of victory. It means an effective freeze on spending for Russia's education and health, too. Putin is also ramping up its defence spending to almost a third of the country's total expenditure in order to fund what Putin still calls his "special military operation" in Ukraine. His unmerited invasion, in other words. In the year before Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, defence spending totalled 3.57 trillion roubles or 14.4% of overall spending.

It rose to 17.7% in 2022, after which a veil was drawn over the country's spending plans. In 2023, it rose to 21.2%, allocating 6.41-trillion roubles, with defence (would "offence" be more appropriate?) spending rising to 9.7-trillion roubles. Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said: "The budget's structure shows that the main emphasis is on ensuring our victory. The army, defence capability, armed forces, fighters – everything needed for the front, everything needed for victory is in the budget." He



Russian military parade marking the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII Victory Day



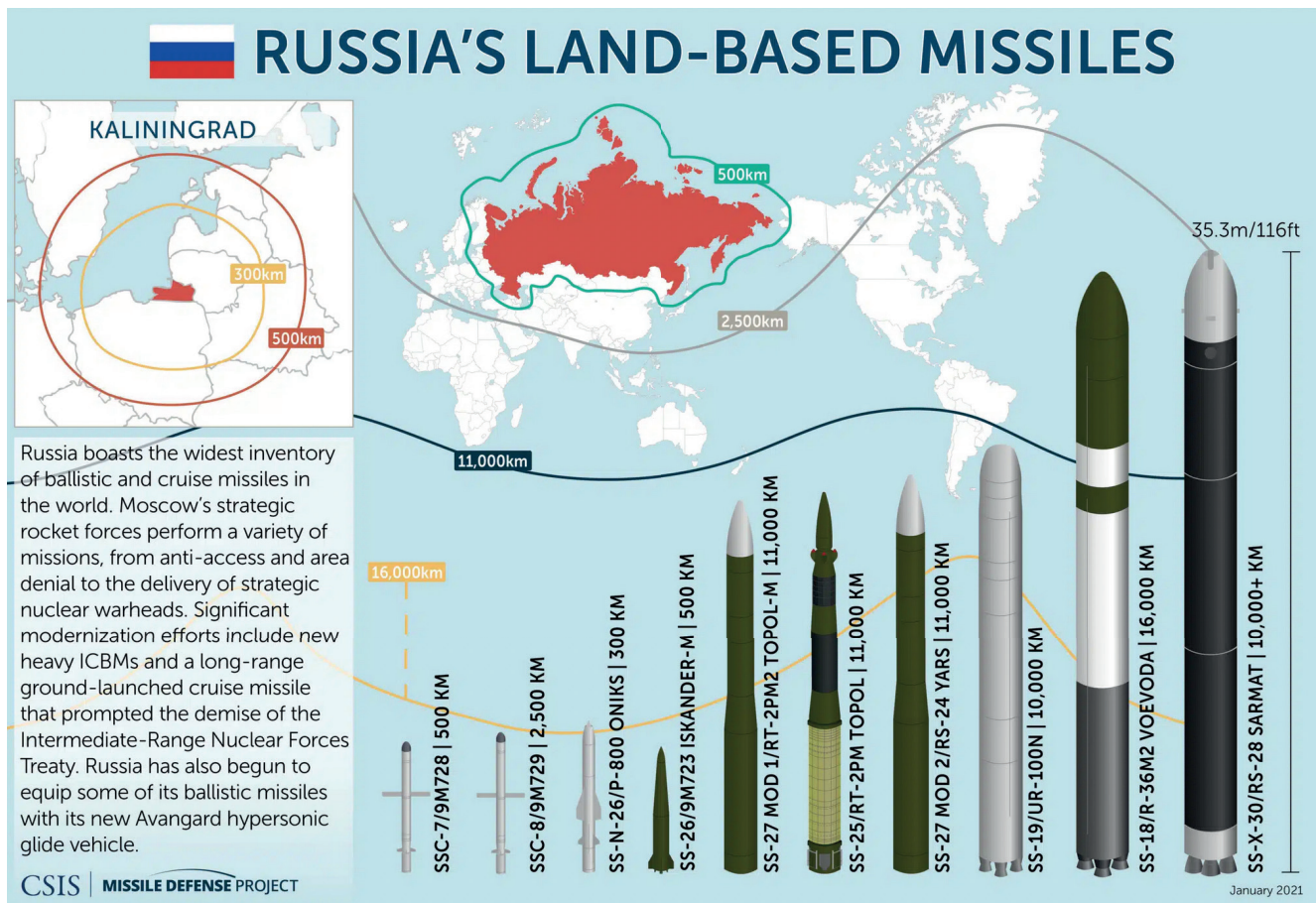
NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

also admitted: "This is a big strain for the budget, not a small one, but it is our absolute priority." He offers no justification, even though Russia is not under attack. Putin's sole aim is to conquer and take over a neighbouring country, whatever the cost. It's utterly extraordinary, with defence spending in 2024 tripling from pre-invasion levels. The money devoted to "national security" including law enforcement agencies is also rising and expected to reach 9.2% in 2024. To meet the cost, Moscow is freezing the spending on education and healthcare. It's clearly much more important for Putin to kill as many people as possible than to save lives. Why? Well, Moscow claims the West is waging war on Russia and it must respond.

Contrast this with the effect Josef Stalin had on education in what became the Soviet Union. The educational system Stalin engendered turned Russia into a superpower, in stark contrast with the country before the 1917 revolution. Education was free and comprehensive: Stalin believed in learning, while the children's clubs for his "Pioneers", a sort of Soviet Boy Scouts, encouraged collecting used paper, recycling metals and helping the elderly. Stalin's laudable aim was the very antithesis of what Putin is trying to do. The founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin, called the day nurseries and kindergartens he helped to create "the sprouts of Communism." According to him, these facilities "could actually liberate a woman, in reality diminish and eliminate her inequality to a man through enhancing her role in social production and social life." Sadly, Putin doesn't see things that way.

The USSR pumped money into higher education, too, also accepting students from friendly developing countries. Students at higher education facilities were also expected to turn their hands to manual labour on Soviet construction





sites. The Soviet Union was also committed to providing free medical care to citizens. "Education," said Stalin, "is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed." Putin seems to say much the same about weapons of mass destruction. "I'm not saying Stalin was a nice man: in the period 1937 to 1938 alone he had 700,000 people executed, although he praised education in verse. He wrote some pretty dire poetry in praise of education and of Georgia, the country of his birth, such as:

"Exult, country of Georgians,  
And you, Georgian,  
Gladden your motherland with learning."

That was reproduced in Oleg V. Khlevniuk's fascinating book, "Stalin: New biography of a dictator." I warned you the poem wasn't great!

One has to wonder why Putin thinks the West of today poses a bigger threat than it did during the Cold War. Twenty NATO member states were expected to spend less than 2% of their GDP on defence, according to 2023 estimates. Those with the lowest expectations for defence spending were Luxembourg (0.72%), Belgium (1.13%) and Spain (1.26%), while five other countries, including Canada, failed to meet the 1.5% mark. It really doesn't look very scary for Russia, especially when countries like Turkey were only proposing to spend 1.31%. Putin's switching of financial support away from education and health really makes no sense and would certainly have infuriated both Stalin and Lenin, especially when other countries pose so little threat to Russia's well-being. During the Cold War, the Soviet state diverted

more financial support and encouragement to the sciences, especially mathematics, setting up special schools to encourage the gifted. It helped boost Russia's success in space exploration, while a network of special clubs (all free) encouraged students to engage in the out-of-hours study of a range of topics, from photography to aviation design. One thing that may encourage Putin is the attitude of the man arguably most likely to win the White House, Donald Trump. When he was asked if a United States ruled by him would go to the aid of a NATO member attacked by Russia, he said that if they didn't pay their share, he would encourage Putin to attack. So, any country paying under 2% could expect Putin's tanks to come calling, unopposed and probably unannounced.

Although it's hard to believe, it seems as if the West was safer when Stalin ruled the Communist bloc. He may not have been a nice man in the traditional sense, but it looks as if he cared more about the country and its longer-term future than the current occupant of the Kremlin. At least Stalin believed that Russia and its allies and satellites should have a future. Not that anyone will dare to tell Putin that. It's now against Russian law to criticise Putin or his war in any way.

*Jim Gibbons*



# NEWS IN BRIEF



## CITYAIRBUS NEXTGEN MAKES ITS DEBUT

Airbus has presented its full electric CityAirbus NextGen prototype to the public, ahead of its maiden flight later this year. The two-tonne class CityAirbus, with a wing span of approximately 12 metres, is being developed to fly with a 80 km range and to reach a cruise speed of 120 km/h, making it perfectly suited for operations in major cities for a variety of missions.

The unveiling coincided with the opening of the new CityAirbus test centre in Donauwörth, Germany, which will be dedicated to testing systems for electric vertical takeoff and landing vehicles (eVTOLs). The centre, which is part of Airbus' ongoing and long-term investment in Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), began its operations with the CityAirbus NextGen's power-on in December 2023 and it will be now used for the remaining tests required before the prototype's maiden flight later in the year. These tests cover the electric motors with their eight rotors as well as the aircraft's other systems such as flight controls and avionics.

"Rolling out CityAirbus NextGen for the very first time is an important and very real step that we are taking towards advanced air mobility and our future product and market. Thank you to our community, team and partners all over the world for helping us make this a reality," said Balkiz Sarihan, Head of Urban Air Mobility at Airbus.

At the same time, Airbus is expanding its global network and partnerships to create a unique ecosystem that will foster a

successful and viable AAM market. Airbus recently signed a partnership agreement with LCI, a leading aviation company, to focus on the development of partnership scenarios and business models in three core AAM areas: strategy, commercialisation and financing.

## FIRST-EVER EUROPEAN DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY TO ENHANCE EUROPE'S READINESS AND SECURITY



A German Tiger helicopter

The European Commission and the High Representative have presented the first-ever European Defence Industrial Strategy at EU level and proposed an ambitious set of new actions to support the competitiveness and readiness of its defence industry.

With Russia's unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, high-intensity conflict has returned to the European continent. This is why a new, first-ever European Defence Industrial Strategy has been put forward. It sets a clear, long-term vision to achieve defence industrial readiness in the European Union.

To support Member States in achieving these goals, the European Defence Industrial Strategy presents a set of actions aiming at:

- Supporting a more efficient expression of the Member States' collective defence demand. This will be based on existing instruments and initiatives, such as the Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). It will be supported by incentivising Member States' cooperation in the procurement phase of defence capabilities;

- Securing the availability of all defence products through a more responsive EDTIB, under any circumstances and time horizon. Investments by Member States and the European defence industry in developing and bringing to market tomorrow's state of the art defence technologies and capabilities will be supported. Measures are also proposed to ensure that the EDTIB has at its disposal what it needs even in crisis periods, thereby increasing the EU's Security of Supply;





- Ensuring that national and EU budgets support with the necessary means the adaptation of the European defence industry to the new security context;

- Mainstreaming a defence readiness culture across policies, notably by calling for a review of the European Investment Bank's lending policy this year;

- Developing closer ties with Ukraine through its participation in Union initiatives in support of defence industry and stimulating cooperation between the EU and Ukrainian defence industries;

- Teaming up with NATO and our strategic, like-minded and international partners, and cooperating more closely with Ukraine.

The Strategy sets indicators, aimed at measuring Member States' progress towards industrial readiness. Member States are invited to:

- Procure at least 40% of defence equipment in a collaborative manner by 2030;

- Ensure that, by 2030, the value of intra-EU defence trade represents at least 35% of the value of the EU defence market;

- Make steady progress towards procuring at least 50% of their defence procurement budget within the EU by 2030 and 60% by 2035.

"Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has brought back high intensity warfare to Europe. After decades of under-spending, we must invest more on defence, but we need to do it better and together. A strong, resilient, and competitive European defence industry is a strategic imperative and a pre-condition to enhance our defence readiness. We must also step up our military support to Ukraine, including by supporting its defence industrial base. This Strategy marks a paradigm shift towards a Union that is a strong security and defence actor and a better partner, in line with objectives of the Strategic Compass," says *Margrethe Vestager*, *Executive Vice-President for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age*.

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S USE OF MICROSOFT 365 INFRINGES DATA PROTECTION LAW FOR EU INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES



Wojciech Wiewiórowski, European Data Protection Supervisor

Following its investigation, the EDPS has found that the European Commission (Commission) has infringed several key data protection rules when using Microsoft 365. In its decision, the EDPS imposes corrective measures on the Commission.

The EDPS has found that the Commission has infringed

several provisions of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, the EU's data protection law for EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies (EUIs), including those on transfers of personal data outside the EU/European Economic Area (EEA). In particular, the Commission has failed to provide appropriate safeguards to ensure that personal data transferred outside the EU/EEA are afforded an essentially equivalent level of protection as guaranteed in the EU/EEA.

Furthermore, in its contract with Microsoft, the Commission did not sufficiently specify what types of personal data are to be collected and for which explicit and specified purposes when using Microsoft 365. The Commission's infringements as data controller also relate to data processing, including transfers of personal data, carried out on its behalf.

Wojciech Wiewiórowski, EDPS, said: "It is the responsibility of the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies (EUIs) to ensure that any processing of personal data outside and inside the EU/EEA, including in the context of cloud-based services, is accompanied by robust data protection safeguards and measures. This is imperative to ensure that individuals' information is protected, as required by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, whenever their data is processed by, or on behalf of, an EUI."

The EDPS has therefore decided to order the Commission, effective on 9 December 2024, to suspend all data flows resulting from its use of Microsoft 365 to Microsoft and to its affiliates and sub-processors located in countries outside the EU/EEA not covered by an adequacy decision. The EDPS has also decided to order the Commission to bring the processing operations resulting from its use of Microsoft

365 into compliance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725. The Commission must demonstrate compliance with both orders by 9 December 2024.

The EDPS considers that the corrective measures it imposes are appropriate, necessary and proportionate in light of the seriousness and duration of the infringements found.

Many of the infringements found concern all processing operations carried out by the Commission, or on its behalf, when using Microsoft 365, and impact a large number of individuals.

The EDPS also takes into account the need not to compromise the Commission's ability to carry out its tasks in the public interest or to exercise official authority vested in the Commission, and the need to allow appropriate time for the Commission to implement the foreseen suspension of relevant data flows, and to bring the processing of data into compliance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

The measures imposed by the EDPS in its decision of 8 March 2024 are without prejudice to any other or further action that the EDPS may undertake.

The European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) is the independent supervisory authority for the protection of personal data and privacy and promoting good practice in the EU institutions and bodies.

He does so by:

- monitoring the EU administration's processing of personal data;

- monitoring and advising technological developments on policies and legislation that affect privacy and personal data protection;

- carrying out investigations, including in the form of data protection audits/inspections;

- cooperating with other supervisory authorities to ensure consistency in the protection of personal.



## EU INTRODUCES NEW RULES ON TRANSPARENCY AND TARGETING OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING

The Council has adopted a new regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, aimed at countering information manipulation and foreign interference in elections.

The regulation will make it easy for citizens to recognise political advertisements, understand who is behind them and know whether they have received a targeted advertisement, so that they are better placed to make informed choices. It will also ensure that political advertising takes place in full respect of the right to privacy and that the freedom of opinion and freedom of speech are protected.

### Main elements of the new regulation

The new rules cover the transparency and targeting of political advertising in relation to an election, referendum, or a legislative process at EU level or in a member state. They do not affect the content of political advertisements nor other aspects of political advertising, such as the conduct of political campaigns, which remain subject to the specific national rules of member states.

Content under editorial responsibility, as well as views expressed in a personal capacity, are not covered.

According to the rules:

- Political advertisements must be made available with a transparency label and an easily retrievable transparency notice. These must clearly identify political advertisements as such and provide some key information about them, including their sponsor, the election or referendum to which they are linked, the amounts paid, and any use of targeting techniques.
- Targeting political advertising online will be permitted only under strict conditions. The data has to be collected from the data subject and it can be used only after the data subject have given explicit and separate consent for its use for political advertising. Special categories of personal data, such as data revealing racial or ethnic origin or political opinions, cannot be used for profiling.
- To prevent foreign interference, there will be a ban on the provision of advertising services to third country sponsors three months before an election or referendum.

The regulation will now be signed, published in the EU's Official Journal and enter into force 20 days later. Most of its provisions will start to apply 18 months after the regulation's entry into force, i.e. in autumn 2025.

**La France a tous les atouts  
pour être ce paradis  
énergétique, au service des  
Français, de nos entreprises  
et de nouveaux projets  
industriels et agricoles, à la  
condition qu'elle s'en donne  
les moyens et prenne des  
décisions fortes.**

Jordan Bardella - 01/02/2024

**VIVEMENT  
LE 9 JUIN**

**Rassemblement  
National**

An electoral poster of the French political party 'Rassemblement National', for the upcoming European Parliament elections

## TIME IS UP FOR CRIMINAL ORGANISATION COUNTERFEITING LUXURY WATCHES IN ANTWERP



**15 suspects arrested in Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Israel for producing and importing fake watches to the "Diamond District"**

Europol has supported a large-scale operation led by Belgian law enforcement authorities to dismantle an Israeli organised criminal group. The criminal organisation allegedly produced and imported counterfeit luxury watches and diamonds to Antwerp's "Diamond District". The successful operation led to the arrest of 15 suspects in Belgium (11), Israel (2), Netherlands (1) and Slovakia (1).

During the action day on 12 March, authorities also conducted 26 searches in Belgium, Israel, Netherlands and Slovakia, resulting in the seizure of:

- 165 luxury watches with certificates, jewellery and other counterfeit products;
- 200 diamonds;
- EUR 209 000 in cash;
- Crypto ledgers;
- Weapons;
- 14 kg of drugs;
- Multiple electronic devices, including phones and computers;
- Credit cards and financial documentation.

### Additional involvement in drug trafficking

The investigation started in 2022, when the police intercepted a package containing 600gr of cocaine in Brussels destined for Israel. Thanks to a subsequent investigation, it was revealed that a large criminal organisation which engaged in drug trafficking also counterfeited luxury items. According to law enforcement authorities, the criminal network manufactured fake luxury watches outside the EU by mixing original parts with fake components to mislead potential customers.

Once the watches were produced, they would import them to Belgium and introduce counterfeit diamonds and watches into the market. Besides confusing buyers, this modus operandi also undermines the reputation of Antwerp's "Diamond District" and calls into question the unique certification applied to these luxury



items in which customers place their trust.

The suspects also trafficked cocaine and synthetic drugs across the world. They also laundered money through complex schemes, including cryptocurrencies, illegal banking systems and reinvestments in real estate, notably in Portugal.

#### Europol's role in the investigation

Europol deployed specialists with expertise in cryptocurrencies and OSINT capabilities to Antwerp on the action day. The agency supported the investigation by fostering the exchange of information, organising operational meetings, and providing operational coordination and analytical support.

The operation was supported by the @ON Network, funded by the EU Commission and led by the Italian Anti-mafia Investigation Directorate (DIA).

## A FERRARI F50, AMONG OVER \$60 MILLION WORTH OF HYPERCARS AND ICONIC CARS AUCTIONED BY SOTHEBY'S IN TORONTO, MIGHT BE SOLD FOR MORE THAN 4 MILLION EUROS

The Ferrari F50 is widely considered to be one of Maranello's most expressive modern hypercars, combining 1950s-style aesthetics with competition-developed performance technologies. Starting with a lightweight carbon fiber tub, Pininfarina mounted curvaceous new coachwork molded from carbon fiber, Kevlar, and Nomex honeycomb. The cockpit could be completed with either a removable soft top or a separate hard top stored in an accompanying road case, which allowed the F50 to strike the pose of a barchetta or berlinetta, encapsulating the best of both worlds.

European-spec car delivered new via Garage Francorchamps in Belgium and originally owned by a Monaco-based collector for 13 years



1996-Ferrari-F50 Darin Schnabel

Driven 20,910 km (-12,993 miles) at cataloguing and importantly accompanied factory-issued flight case for the removable hardtop; certified in 2015 by Ferrari Classiche to retain its numbers-matching chassis, engine, and transaxle.

A new naturally aspirated 4.7-liter V-12 was dropped into this spectacular marriage of body and chassis in a mid-rear architecture that ensured optimal weight distribution. The type F130B engine began life in Ferrari's 1992 Formula One car before undergoing further development in the 4-liter 333 SP sports car, which won numerous driver's and constructor's championships in IMSA GT and FIA sports car racing. With an enlarged displacement of 4.7 liters and yet detuned for more reasonable revving and tractable road manners, the new high-compression V-12 developed 513

horsepower and 347 pound-feet of torque, capable of launching the F50 to 60 mph from standstill in just 3.6 seconds, while achieving a top speed of 202 mph.

Stopping power was provided by Brembo brakes with huge rotors (14 inches in front and 13.2 inches at the rear) anchored by aluminum pistons. Although the F50 abounded in Formula One-specification equipment, from the racing-style fuel bladder to the LCD dashboard instruments, the model was still appointed with creature comforts such as leather-trimmed seats, air conditioning, and adjustable ride height.

More refined than the brutal F40, yet not as cossetting as contemporaries such as the McLaren F1, the F50 was a difficult car to pigeonhole; this was a machine built for pure experience, rather than the pursuit of any specific, granular performance benchmark.

Built from 1995 through 1997, the breathtaking F50 was earmarked for an official production cap of only 349 examples, ensuring a rarity that instantly established the model as a bona fide collectible. The F50 remains a favorite of marque-focused collectors, often serving as the centerpiece of modern Ferrari collections, and as a critical component of the illustrious "Big Five" hypercar portfolio that is relished by dedicated Maranello enthusiasts today.

#### An F50 in Monaco

This fabulous F50 claims fastidious single ownership by a Monaco-based collector for 13 years prior to a period of care by one of the world's foremost Ferrari specialists, resulting in a highly desirable example. As confirmed by its production plate, chassis number 106400 is the 182nd example built, and in July 1996 the car was issued a manufacturer's certificate of origin (a copy of which is on file).

According to a deep file of documentation that includes former registrations, bills of sale, a Marcel Massini history report, and a Ferrari Classiche Red Book and corresponding Certificate of Authenticity, this beautiful European-specification F50 completed assembly in July 1996, finished in Rosso Corsa over a Nero leather interior with red seat inserts. Retailed through the well-known preferred distributor Garage Francorchamps in Belgium, the Ferrari was immediately sold to a local enthusiast who relocated to Monaco in 1999. Over the following nine years the car was regularly serviced by marque dealer Groupe Cavallari's respected Monaco Motors. In early 2010 the owner sold the F50 to DK Engineering, the highly respected Ferrari specialist in the UK, and DK continued to intermittently service the car over the next four years.

Dare to Dream Collection by RM SOTHEBY'S, Toronto 31 May - 1 June 2024

## ANNUAL PROFITS FROM FORCED LABOUR AMOUNT TO US\$ 236 BILLION, ILO REPORT FINDS

The new study on forced labour in the private sector reveals a 37 per cent rise in illegal profits from forced labour since 2014.

Forced labour in the private economy generates US\$236 billion in illegal profits per year, a new report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) has found.

The total amount of illegal profits from forced labour has risen by US\$64 billion (37 per cent) since 2014, a dramatic increase that has been fuelled by both a growth in the number of people forced into labour, as well as higher profits generated from the exploitation of victims.





The ILO report, *Profits and Poverty: The economics of forced labour*, estimates that traffickers and criminals are generating close to US\$10,000 per victim, up from US\$8,269 (adjusted for inflation) a decade ago.

Total annual illegal profits from forced labour are highest in Europe and Central Asia (US\$84 billion), followed by Asia and the Pacific (US\$62 billion), the Americas (US\$52 billion), Africa (US\$20 billion), and the Arab States (US\$18 billion).

When illegal profits are expressed per victim, annual illegal profits are highest in Europe and Central Asia, followed by the Arab States, the Americas, Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

Forced commercial sexual exploitation accounts for more than two-thirds (73 per cent) of the total illegal profits, despite accounting for only 27 per cent of the total number of victims in privately imposed labour.

These numbers are explained by the huge difference in per victim profits between forced commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of non-state forced labour exploitation – US\$27,252 profits per victim for the former against US\$3,687 profits per victim for the latter.

After forced commercial sexual exploitation, the sector with the highest annual illegal profits from forced labour is industry, at US\$35 billion, followed by services (US\$20.8 billion), agriculture (US\$5.0 billion), and domestic work (US\$2.6 billion). These illegal profits are the wages that rightfully belong in the pockets of workers but instead remain in the hands of their exploiters, as a result of their coercive practices.

"Forced labour perpetuates cycles of poverty and exploitation and strikes at the heart of human dignity. We now know that the situation has only got worse. The international community must urgently come together to take action to end this injustice," says ILO Director-General, Gilbert F. Houngbo.

There were 27.6 million people engaged in forced labour on any given day in 2021. This figure translates to 3.5 people for every thousand people in the world. Between 2016 and 2021 the number of people in forced labour increased by 2.7 million.

The report stresses the urgent need for investment in enforcement measures to stem illegal profit flows and hold perpetrators accountable. It recommends strengthening legal frameworks, providing training for enforcement officials extending labour inspection into high-risk sectors, and better coordination between labour and criminal law enforcement.

Yet forced labour cannot be ended through law enforcement measures alone, enforcement actions must be part of a comprehensive approach that prioritizes addressing root causes and safeguarding victims, underlines the report.

## IRREGULAR BORDER CROSSINGS DOWN IN CENTRAL MED, UP IN EASTERN MED AND WESTERN AFRICA

The number of irregular border crossings into the European Union in the first two months of 2024 reached 31 200, similar to the level from a year ago, according to preliminary calculations. The Central Mediterranean saw the biggest drop in detections of irregular crossings among the major routes (-70%), while the Western African and Eastern Mediterranean routes experienced the highest increases (+541% and +117%, respectively).

The **Central Mediterranean** route, which saw the largest number of irregular crossings in 2023, continued to show a downward trend from the recent months, with a year-on-year drop of 70% to slightly above 4 300. In January, there were around 2000 detections on the route.

Meanwhile, the **Western African** route remained the busiest migratory route in the EU, with arrivals in January and February reaching nearly 12 100. This was the highest total for these two months since Frontex began collecting data in 2011.

In recent months criminal groups involved in people smuggling in Mauritania were quick to seize opportunities presented by the increased demand from sub-Saharan migrants transiting their country seeking to enter the European Union via the Canary Islands. People smugglers have been cramming an increasing number of migrants onto Cayuco boats, putting the lives of the people on board in even larger danger.

Last year, the Western African route experienced the biggest percentage rise in irregular crossings.

The second most active migratory route was the Eastern Mediterranean, with the number of detections more than doubling to 9150 in the first two months of the year.

Frontex remains committed to safeguarding the EU's borders, with nearly 2700 officers and staff engaged in various operations. Currently, close to 200 Frontex officers and staff are supporting Spain on the Canary Islands and the Western Mediterranean.

Key highlights for the first two months of 2024 include:

- **Central Mediterranean saw a 70% drop (y/y) in detections, highest among major migratory routes into the EU.**
- **Western Balkans also continued to see significantly lower numbers (-65%).**
- **Western African route recorded the biggest rise, accounting for one of every three detection at the EU's external border.**
- **Arrivals more than doubled Eastern Mediterranean.**
- **Top three nationalities on all routes this year: Mali, Syria and Afghanistan.**

Sea crossings remain fraught with peril for the people undertaking irregular migration. Data from the International





ROUTE	FEB 2024	JAN – FEB 2024	JAN – FEB 2024 / JAN – FEB 2023	TOP NATIONALITIES JAN – FEB 2024
Western African	4878	12 092	+541%	Mali, Senegal, Mauritania
Eastern Mediterranean	4729	9150	+117%	Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt
Central Mediterranean	2022	4315	-70%	Bangladesh, Syria, Tunisia
Western Balkan	1114	3049	-65%	Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan
Western Mediterranean	1048	1867	+48%	Morocco, Algeria, Mali
Eastern Land Border	240	638	-41%	Ukraine
Exits towards the UK	2934	6146	+10%	Unknown

Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that 255 individuals have been reported missing in the Mediterranean so far this year. The vast majority of them were navigating the perilous Central Mediterranean route.

During the January-February period, authorities reported 3050 detections of irregular border crossings on the **Western Balkan** route, down 65% from a year ago.

On the **Channel** route, the number of detections increased by 10% to over 6 100 in the first two months of the year, despite often difficult weather conditions that endanger the lives of the people seeking to reach the UK.

*Note: The preliminary data presented in this article refer to the number of detections of irregular border crossing at the external borders of the European Union. The same person may cross the border several times in different locations at the external border.*

## SWEDISH FLAG RAISED AT NATO HEADQUARTERS



The Swedish flag was raised at NATO Headquarters for the first time in a ceremony to mark the country's membership of the Alliance. Sweden became NATO's 32nd Ally on 7 March upon depositing its instrument of accession to the North Atlantic Treaty with the United States government in Washington D.C.

The Secretary General welcomed Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to NATO Headquarters for a flag-raising ceremony to mark Sweden's accession. Speaking ahead of the ceremony, the Secretary General thanked Prime Minister Kristersson for his strong personal leadership and commitment to leading Sweden into NATO. He said: "Sweden has taken its rightful place at NATO's table under the shield of Article 5 protection – the ultimate guarantee of our freedom and security. All for one and one for all."

Sweden's flag was hoisted to join the flags of the other 31 Allies, as the Swedish national anthem and the NATO hymn were played. Flag-raising ceremonies took place simultaneously at Allied Command Operations (SHAPE) in Mons (Belgium) and Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia (United States). Standing alongside Prime Minister Kristersson, the Secretary General said: "Sweden's accession shows again that NATO's door remains open. No one can close it. Every nation has the right to choose its own path, and we all choose the path of freedom and democracy."

Noting that NATO will mark its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Mr Stoltenberg underlined that the transatlantic bond between Europe and North America has ensured our freedom and security. Sweden will help to build an even stronger NATO at a critical time for Euro-Atlantic security, he said, adding that "joining NATO is good for Sweden, good for stability in the North, and good for the security of our whole Alliance."

## SPACE: EU CARRIES OUT SPACE THREAT RESPONSE ARCHITECTURE 2024 EXERCISE

The EU carried out the Space Threat Response Architecture (STRA-X-24) exercise in the European External Action Service Headquarters in Brussels.

The exercise tested the EU's response capacity to a situation in which EU space assets are subject of an attack targeting space services which are essential for governments, businesses, and citizens. Space assets are essential for the functioning of EU economies and activities, as well as for security and defence.

As part of the exercise, the EU's space threat response mechanisms were activated to mobilise all relevant political, diplomatic, and technical actors, from the Galileo Security Monitoring Centre (GSMC) to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission and the Council.

The STRA exercise addressed both the technical and more high-level policy aspects of the detection, attribution, and responses to space threats. This included information sharing on space threats, as part of the space threat landscape analysis performed by the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), complemented with the geospatial intelligence products provided by EU Satellite Centre (SatCen). Some Member States also contributed Space Domain Awareness (SDA) related information which allows timely responses by the EU when confronted to certain threats.

In the second part of the exercise, the Political and Security Committee held a tabletop discussion where the challenges around detection and attribution of space security incidents, as well as the possible reaction by the EU, were addressed. This discussion also touched upon the invocation of the mutual assistance as enshrined in the EU Treaties (Article 42(7) of the Treaty on the European Union) in case a space related incident would amount to an armed aggression on the territory of one or several EU Member States.

The STRA 2024 exercise was organised by the EEAS in coordination with Member States, EUSPA and the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) at the European Commission.

### Background

The Space Threat Response Architecture Exercise (STRA-X-24) was the sixth exercise of its kind and was organised by the EEAS, together with the Commission and the EU Space Programme Agency (EUSPA).

The EU is increasingly dependent on space-based assets and services for the functioning of its economy, its society and for





AI-generated image depicting a Russian missile taking out a satellite

security and defence. Russia's aggression on Ukraine has emphasised the vulnerability of today's defence forces and economies to threats affecting space services and infrastructure.

Today more than ever, the EU needs to be prepared for a more competitive and contested space environment, marked by a wide range of threats carried out intentionally by strategic competitors, mainly focused on targeting governments and institutions, including their critical infrastructures, and economies that rely on space-dependent services.

Attacks against space infrastructures can have a relevant impact on operation and services delivery but also political and diplomatic consequences, while the attribution of responsibility remains difficult. Such attacks on space services can take various forms including direct attacks on a satellite, cyber-attacks and spoofing or jamming of satellite signals.

The Council Decision (CFSP) 698/2021 on the security of the systems and services deployed, operated and used under the Union Space Programme, defines the responsibilities of the Council and of the High Representative in the event of a threat to, or through, these systems and services. To be better prepared, the EU carries out a yearly exercise on the implementation of the Decision.

This year's exercise, STRA-X-24, consisted of two interconnected parts, addressing different stakeholder groups. As per the previous exercise, STRA-X-24 was based on a hybrid threat scenario, which reflects the current geopolitical landscape and emerging Space threats. The triggering space events corresponded to attacks against EU satellites.

The first part was designed to test the incident detection and information sharing on space threats as well as the triggering of possible responses by the EU in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy.

The second part of the exercise was designed to use the outcomes and material of the first part to run a tabletop discussion with the Political and Security Committee (PSC). The PSC reflected on the reinforcement of the EU Space Threat Response Architecture and on its preparedness for the mutual assistance as enshrined in the EU Treaties (Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union).

STRA-X-24 has contributed to nurturing a common strategic approach to security-relevant situations in space.

## I STI CASES ON THE RISE ACROSS EUROPE

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has published its latest Annual Epidemiological Reports

shedding light on the state of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA).

The findings reveal a troubling surge in cases of syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chlamydia, indicating a pressing need for heightened awareness of STI transmission, and the need to enhance robust prevention, access to testing, and effective treatment to address this public health challenge.

In 2022, the number of reported cases saw a significant increase compared to the previous year, with gonorrhoea cases rising by 48%, syphilis cases by 34%, and chlamydia cases by 16%. In addition, cases of lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) and congenital syphilis (caused by transmission from mother to fetus) have also substantially increased.

These trends underscore the urgent need for immediate action to prevent further transmission and mitigate the impact of STIs on public health.

ECDC Director Andrea Ammon, expressed deep concern over the rising STI rates, saying, "Addressing the substantial increases in STI cases demands urgent attention and concerted efforts. Testing, treatment and prevention lie at the heart of any long-term strategy. We must prioritise sexual health education, expand access to testing and treatment services, and combat the stigma associated with STIs. Education and awareness initiatives are vital in empowering individuals to make informed choices about their sexual health. Promoting consistent condom use and fostering open dialogue about STIs can help reduce transmission rates."

In light of the rise in STI cases across Europe, individuals should take proactive steps to protect themselves and their partners. Testing for STIs, especially for those persons with new or multiple sexual partners, is essential for early detection and prompt treatment. Given that some of these infections can be asymptomatic and transmitted further without knowledge, it is important for sexual partners to get tested before having sex without a condom. If someone suspects they may have contracted an STI, they should immediately seek medical advice, as timely treatment is vital for preventing further transmission and potential complications of the disease.

While sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis, are treatable, they can still lead to serious health complications if left untreated. These include, amongst others, pelvic inflammatory disease or chronic pain. Additionally, chlamydia and gonorrhoea can lead to infertility while syphilis can cause neurological and cardiovascular issues. Untreated syphilis infection during pregnancy can lead to serious adverse outcomes in children.

ECDC emphasises the importance of proactive measures to address the rising STI rates and protect public health. One of the most effective ways to prevent STIs is by practising safe sex, including regular and correct condom use during sexual activity. Moreover, fostering open and honest communication about sexual health with partners can help reduce the risk of STI transmission and promote overall well-being.







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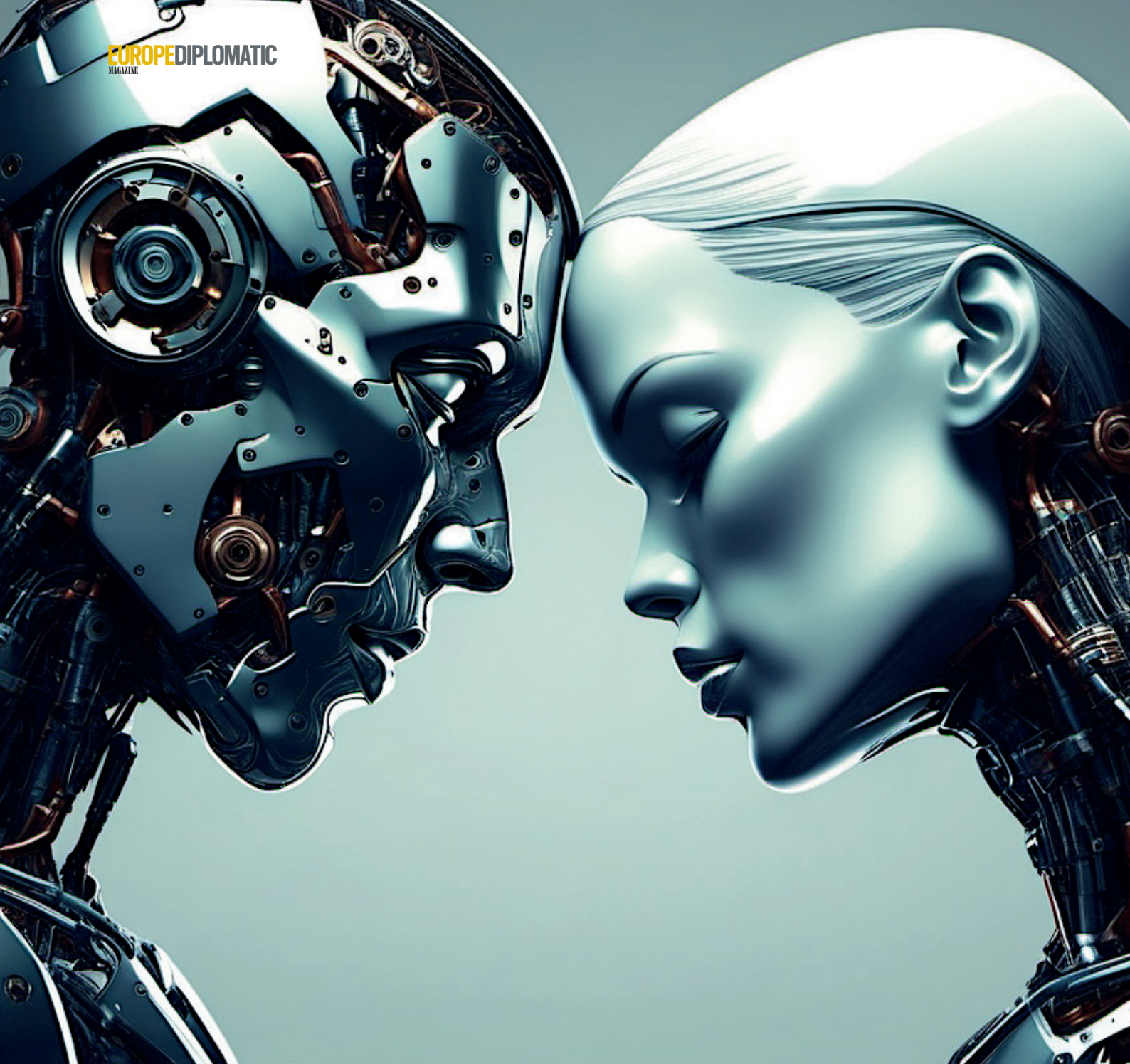


Our staff has been trained to ensure  
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# MINDS AND METAL

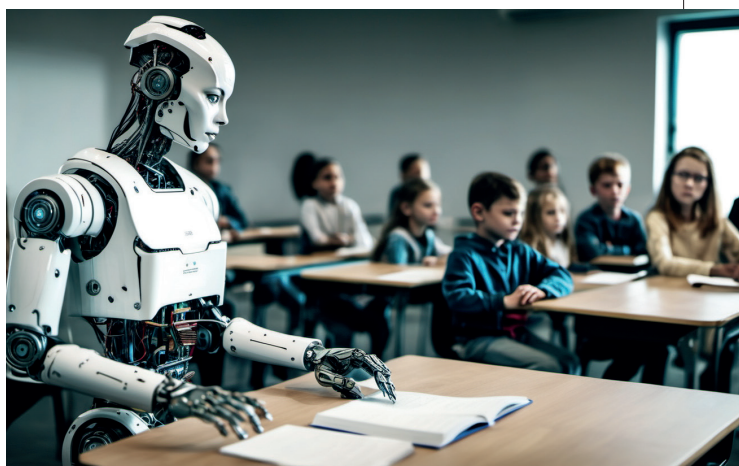
**The fusion of AI &  
humanoid robots**



In the ever-evolving world of technological marvels, an exciting fusion has begun. Artificial intellect, as vast as the cosmos, now nestles in vessels moulded in our image - the human-shaped machines. As calculating skills and empathetic hearts unite, a milestone is being reached on the road to combining thinking flesh with cognitive steel. The gap between soul and circuitry becomes smaller and weaker - an encounter between the mechanical and the mortal mind. With the merging of humanoid and artificial intelligence (AI), a transformation has begun that will reshape the fabric of our communities. How will our world change when robots walk among us, wise in ways that are both strange and painfully familiar? If steel can marvel and ponder as we humans do, what doors will open to an unseen future? The boundaries between human and machine are blurring, the merging of artificial intelligence and humanoid robots is setting in motion a transformative journey that promises to reshape the fabric of our society.

Artificial intelligence, often referred to as the 'brain' of the future, is a branch of computer science that aims to create machines capable of performing tasks that would normally require human intelligence. These tasks include learning, logical thinking, problem solving, perception and language comprehension. Artificial intelligence has already made great strides in various fields, from voice assistants such as Siri and Alexa to self-driving cars and advanced medical diagnoses.

On the other hand, humanoid robots are machines that are modelled on the human body in terms of shape, appearance and functionality. They are equipped with sensors and actuators that mimic the human senses and movements and enable them to interact with their environment in a similar way to humans. Humanoid robots can be used in various fields, such as manufacturing, healthcare, entertainment and even space exploration.



AI-generated image depicting a robot teaching a class

## The convergence: ai & the human factor

The integration of artificial intelligence and humanoid robots is a natural step towards creating machines that function more like humans. By combining the cognitive capabilities of AI with the physical capabilities of humanoid robots, machines can be created that not only think but also act like humans. And the



race is indeed on for the creation of such robots; many leading technology companies, research institutions and universities worldwide are investing considerable resources into this field.

Europe is one of the leading regions in the development of artificial intelligence and humanoid robots. The European Union has identified AI and robotics as key strategic areas for investment and research that have the potential to boost economic growth, improve productivity and tackle societal challenges. At a political level, the EU has published several strategies and guidelines to promote the ethical and sustainable development of AI and robotics. These include the "Coordinated Plan for Artificial Intelligence" and the "Ethical Guidelines for Trustworthy AI". The EU also funds numerous research projects in these areas through programmes such as Horizon 2020 which was the EU's research and innovation funding programme from 2014-2020 with a budget of nearly 80 billion euros. Its successor, Horizon Europe is the largest EU research and innovation funding programme to date, with a budget of 95.5 billion euros for the period 2021-2027.

The main objective of Horizon Europe is to promote scientific excellence, technological innovation and societal impact through funding opportunities for research and innovation projects. It is built on three pillars:

**Excellent Science:** this pillar supports basic research projects, including the European Research Council (ERC) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). It also includes the funding of research infrastructures and the development of research and innovation capacities.

**Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness:** This pillar focuses on tackling major societal challenges and promoting industrial competitiveness by funding research and innovation projects in areas such as health, energy, digital technologies and climate change. It also includes the European Innovation Council (EIC), which supports breakthrough and disruptive innovation.

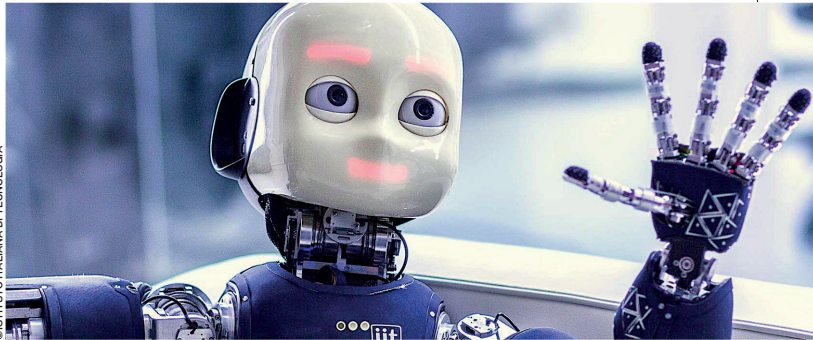
**Innovative Europe:** This pillar aims to promote innovation through the European



Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the European Innovation Council (EIC) and other initiatives to support the commercialisation of research results and the creation of new businesses.

Horizon Europe also includes a new component called “Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area”, which aims to increase the participation of underrepresented countries and regions in the programme and strengthen the European Research Area.

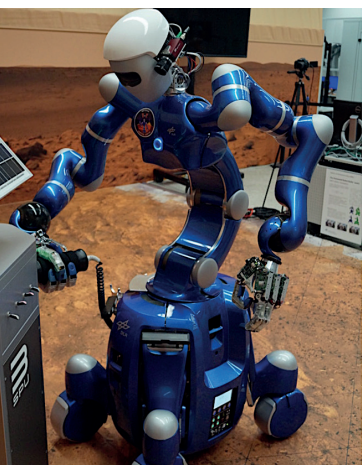
The programme is open to participants from all EU Member States, associated countries and third countries. It offers funding opportunities to a wide range of stakeholders, including universities, research organisations, SMEs and large companies. Horizon Europe is expected to play a key role in realising EU policy priorities such as the European Green Deal and the digital transition, as well as in supporting the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also expected to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



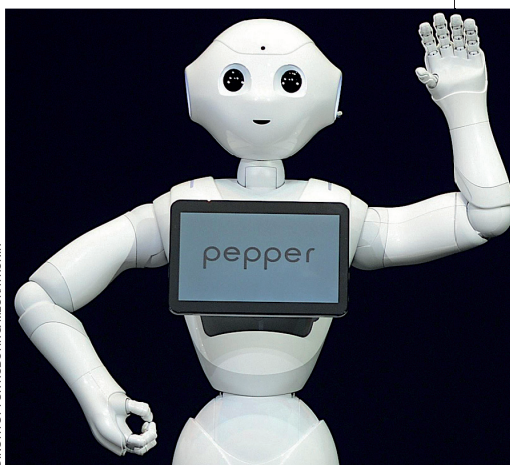
iCub research grade robot

## I AI & robotics

On top of this, there are several leading research institutions and companies in Europe, actively working in the field of AI and humanoid robots. For example, the Italian Institute of Technology has developed the iCub, a humanoid robot that can learn from its environment like a child. The German Aerospace Centre (DLR) has developed the Rollin’ Justin robot, which is able to learn and adapt to new tasks. The French company Aldebaran Robotics (now SoftBank Robotics) has developed



Rollin’ Justin performing ambidextrous manipulation



Pepper affectionate robot



Jeff Bezos at the Los Angeles Air Force Base Space and Missile System Center

Pepper, a humanoid robot for customer service.

However, Europe is also facing challenges in this area. These include competition from other regions such as the USA and Asia, concerns about job displacement and ethical considerations relating to data protection and security. Despite these challenges, Europe remains at the forefront of AI and humanoid robot development, with a focus on ethical and sustainable innovation.

However, the latest groundbreaking initiative in this area has taken place in the United States. In a momentous move, American robotics pioneer ‘Figure’ has recently entered into a cooperation pact with the mighty forces of OpenAI, leading to a significant convergence of minds. Their shared vision? To forge a new era of AI modelling and breathe life into Figure’s humanoid robots.

But the stars are aligning even better, as the company has secured an impressive \$675 million injection of capital. This monumental funding round, involving luminaries such as OpenAI, the indomitable Jeff Bezos, tech titan Microsoft and the formidable Nvidia, heralds a new era of growth and potential.

With this newfound financial vitality coursing through its veins, Figure’s development timetable shoots forward, fuelled by the winds of opportunity. The future holds tantalising prospects as the company uses its expanded resources to blaze a trail of innovation and progress. The stage is set for Figure to scale the heights of success and leave an indelible mark in the annals of technological advancement.

Located in Sunnyvale, California, Figure burst onto the scene in 2022, fuelled by a remarkable \$100 million in seed capital. In a meteoric rise, this robotics company has quickly joined the pantheon of the fastest growing companies of the last decade.

With its unwavering focus on AI-driven humanoid robots, Figure has dared to dream big, pushing the boundaries of innovation and paving the way to a future where machines coexist seamlessly with humans. Against all odds, the bold goal of developing bipedal models was achieved in the blink of an eye - a testament to the relentless dedication and

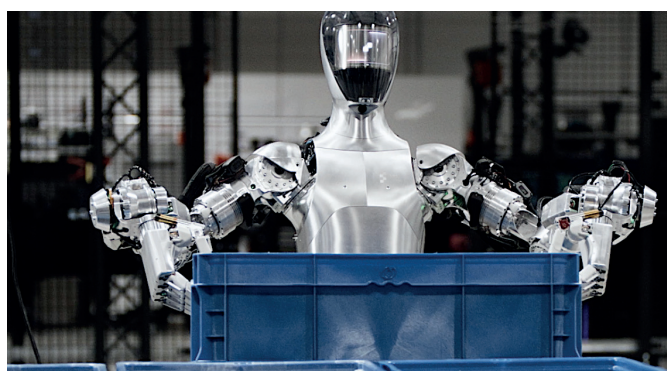


technological prowess that characterises the company.

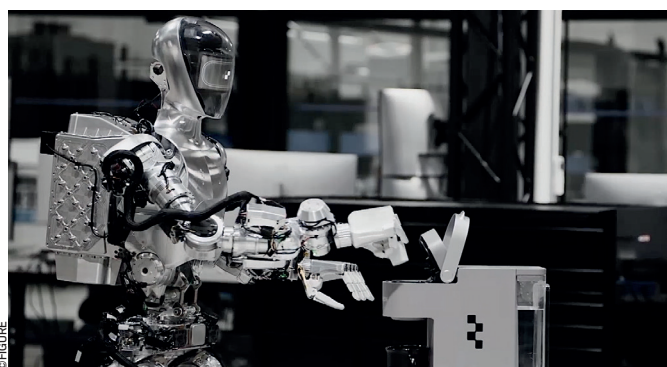
The 'FIGURE 01' prototype took centre stage at the beginning of 2024, captivating the world with its impressive capabilities. Through the power of observation alone, this creation learnt to master tasks with an elegance that defies convention. Figure's relentless pursuit of excellence has produced a marvel that blurs the boundaries between the artificial and the organic, leading us into a future where the unimaginable becomes reality.

Figure's remarkable progress in the field of robotics has attracted the attention of an illustrious consortium of investors, including industry giants such as Microsoft, OpenAI Startup Fund, Nvidia, Amazon Industrial Innovation Fund, Jeff Bezos (via Bezos Expeditions), Parkway Venture Capital, Intel Capital, Align Ventures and ARK Invest. Their resounding vote of confidence has helped Figure soar, culminating in \$675 million in funding - an extraordinary achievement for an up-and-coming startup.

This monumental influx of capital has given Figure a valuation of \$2.5 billion, a testament to the visionary foresight and boundless potential pulsing at the core of the company. With its coffers full, Figure is now poised to unleash its visionary creations on the world stage, reshaping the landscape of robotics and paving the way to a future where humans and machines coexist in harmonious symbiosis.



'FIGURE 01' Robot testing



'FIGURE 01' Robot making coffee

*"Our vision at Figure is to introduce humanoid robots into commercial operations as soon as possible. This investment, combined with our partnership with OpenAI and Microsoft, ensures that we are well-prepared to bring AI into the world and have a transformative impact on humanity," explains Figure founder and CEO Brett Adcock in a statement. "AI and robotics are the future, and I am grateful to have the support of investors and partners who also believe in being at the forefront," he added.*



Brett Adcock, Founder & CEO, Figure AI

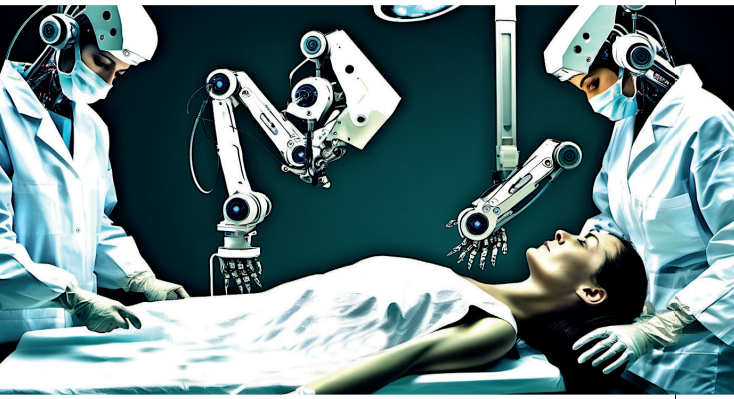
## A boost for the use of human robots

Figure's groundbreaking alliance with OpenAI gives Figure's robots an unrivalled technological edge in the field of generative AI. While other technology groups have made remarkable progress in developing powerful, large-scale language models, the groundbreaking pioneers behind Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) models continue to lead the field.

Furthermore, Figure's collaboration with OpenAI goes beyond the use of existing technologies. It includes the development of customised models that are explicitly tailored to improving the capabilities of humanoid robots. These specialised models are designed to give robots an unparalleled ability to quickly understand and infer natural language, paving the way for seamless and intuitive interactions with their human counterparts. This targeted endeavour is a strategic step forward in bridging the gap between humans and machines. By equipping Figure's robots with enhanced language processing capabilities, the collaboration with OpenAI sets the stage for a future in which human-robot interaction transcends boundaries and enables a harmonious coexistence between the artificial and the organic.

Figure's remarkable advances have caught the attention of OpenAI and sparked a shared vision of seamlessly integrating humanoid robots into everyday life and represents a shared commitment to pushing the boundaries of humanoid robotics and harnessing the power of advanced multimodal models. This partnership has the potential to unlock new possibilities and enable humanoid robots to fulfil a variety of tasks and integrate seamlessly into different aspects of daily life.

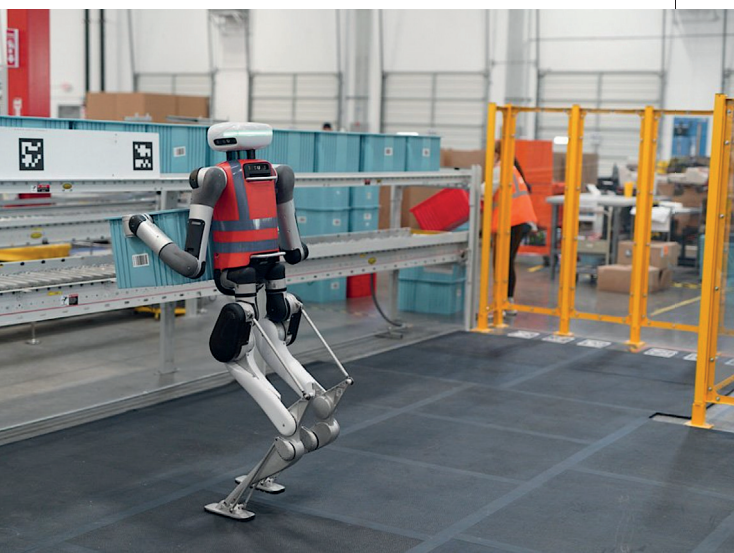




AI-generated image of two robots performing a medical procedure on a patient

In addition, Figure will benefit from the robust infrastructure, training and storage capabilities of Microsoft Azure. By working with Microsoft's cloud computing platform, Figure can realise the full potential of its AI models and provide the necessary computing resources for training and storage. By utilising the impressive capabilities of Microsoft Azure, Figure can accelerate its research and development efforts and drive the integration of humanoid robots into our daily lives.

As Figure continues its pioneering work in the field of humanoid robotics, it is important to recognise the impressive progress made by other companies in this dynamic field. Sanctuary AI, a Canadian company, has received widespread recognition for its remarkable creation, Phoenix, which has pushed the boundaries of what humanoid robots can achieve. Meanwhile, Tesla has made a splash with its own impressive creation, Optimus, attracting attention with its ground-breaking features and capabilities. Agility Robotics is not far behind and has generated considerable excitement with its Digit model, which demonstrates the remarkable potential of agile and dexterous robotic platforms.



An Agility Robotics Robot

© AGILITY ROBOTICS

In a significant collaboration, Agility Robotics has joined forces with industry giant Amazon, setting the stage for groundbreaking advances in humanoid robotics. Behind the partnership are ambitious plans to build the world's first mass production facility dedicated solely to humanoid robots. This upcoming milestone is of great significance and represents a key moment in the development of robotics that will reshape entire industries and redefine the limits of what machines can do.

The construction of such a facility represents a paradigm shift and marks the transition from limited scale production of humanoid robots to a new era of large-scale manufacturing. The potential impact is far-reaching, paving the way for greater accessibility and the use of these advanced robotic systems in various sectors.

By combining Agility Robotics' expertise in developing cutting-edge humanoid robots with Amazon's vast resources and far-reaching influence, this partnership promises to catapult the field of robotics to unprecedented heights. The planned mass production facility represents a transformative leap forward, unlocking the potential for greater integration of humanoid robots into various applications, revolutionising industries and charting a bold new course for the future of automation.

As the field of humanoid robotics continues to expand, each company brings its unique vision and expertise, bringing us closer to a future where these remarkable creations integrate seamlessly into our daily lives.

Strengthened by recent agreements with prestigious investors, Figure is in a position to realise its ambitious development plans. Even before the official launch of the first fleet of robots, the company has already signed a significant commercial alliance with BMW Manufacturing. This ground-breaking collaboration sets the stage for Figure's humanoid robots to revolutionise the automotive manufacturing landscape.

With the capital infusion, Figure is able to intensify artificial intelligence training, enhance the robots' capabilities, expand the engineering team and accelerate commercial deployment efforts. These strategic investments lay the foundation for a future full of possibilities.

The convergence of artificial intelligence and humanoid robots is a ground-breaking combination that holds great promise for the future. As these technologies evolve, we are on the cusp of a new era in which intelligent machines integrate seamlessly into our daily lives.

With their ability to perceive, learn and interact, these humanoid robots equipped with artificial intelligence have the potential to revolutionise industries, change labour markets and redefine our relationship with automation. The combination of artificial intelligence and humanoid robots opens up a world of unlimited possibilities and paves the way for a future in which humans and machines – if able to coexist harmoniously – could push society to new frontiers of innovation and progress.

Nevertheless, we must be careful on this transformative journey and take into account the ethical considerations that accompany such profound advances. The path to harmonious coexistence requires a delicate balance that fosters innovation while protecting the values that define our humanity.

*Hossein Sadre*

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Louissette  
Azzoaglio

# LOUISETTE AZZOAGLIO LÉVY-SOUSSAN

**19 years in the  
service of Princess  
Grace, and much  
more besides!**



**At the age of 88, the founder of CREM and President of Action Innocence Monaco Association has agreed to retrace her exceptional life's journey, from her years with Princess Grace to her current philanthropic and charitable commitments.**

**You have held Monegasque citizenship for decades. Could you say a few words about your origins and your arrival in the Principality?**

I am of Italian descent, my parents are Italian, but I was born in Monaco. As it happens, both my father and grandfather were also born in Monaco, but they retained their Italian citizenship.

**Tell us about your work with Princess Grace. How did you cross paths with her?**

I was already working in the Palace as secretary to the Governor of the Princely House, Colonel Ardant (father of Fanny Ardant), who said to me one day: *"Louisette, from tomorrow you will have to replace Princess Grace's Canadian secretary, because her mother is seriously ill and she is leaving in three days' time. As you speak fluent English, the Princess requests that you to replace her until she has found another secretary"*.



Princess Grace of Monaco

I was very touched by this suggestion because I did not know the princess at the time; I had only met her in passing in the corridors of the palace but had not yet had any direct contact with her. To my great delight, the princess seemed pleased with my work and I was happy to work for her. At the same time, I continued to do the secretarial work for Colonel Ardant, but after a month I asked him if it was possible to find a permanent secretary for the Princess, as this double secretarial work was difficult to manage in the long term. He replied: *"Don't worry, I will find myself a new secretary, the Princess wants to keep you!"* And so, I remained her personal secretary for 19 years until her tragic accident.

**What impressed you the most in your work with Princess Grace? Is there a particular event that comes to mind?**

Many events have left their mark on me in terms of her life, what she was and what she achieved.

One event that deeply touched me was when I lost my husband, and the Princess herself took me and my children to Paris where they enrolled in school, as she resided there during the winter for the studies of Princesses Caroline and Stéphanie. At that time, Prince Albert was attending university in the United States. After a few months, I was still greatly affected by the loss, and everything became too overwhelming for me – my work, my children.

So, I asked the Princess if she would allow me to take two or three months off so that I could regain my balance. During that period, I had no idea what to do with my life anymore. The

Princess immediately agreed, and this gesture deeply touched me. After spending those three months in London, where I had found temporary employment, the Princess welcomed me back by her side. I was incredibly happy to return, and I felt immense gratitude towards her.

**Could you recall the Princess, as you knew her?**

I need not describe the beauty of the Princess; everyone who had the good fortune to meet her was impressed by her. She radiated such charm and such purity of soul and features that her aura was almost visible to the naked eye.

This woman, who was endowed with great intelligence, also possessed a rare sensitivity and curiosity in all domains. She shared the Prince's desire to make the Principality shine in as many areas as possible and worked tirelessly to promote the social, cultural and international aspects, attracting numerous personalities from the most diverse fields to Monaco.

Despite the limited time her commitments left her, she insisted on taking a personal interest in the upbringing of her children and respecting family values. Her Irish roots certainly contributed to her exceptional sense of family and empathy for others. She led an extraordinary life and had an illustrious career. Everything she touched was successful: the cinema, which she shaped with her elegant style, and her office as Princess of Monaco, which she dedicated to her family and her new country.

She was a role model for me and had a lasting influence on my life and my world view.

**You have been involved in various associative and charitable projects for many years. Could you say a few words about these experiences?**

After the death of the Princess, I was not sure what direction my life would take. Prince Albert, who had returned from the United States, offered me the opportunity to set up his secretariat, which I did until his accession to the throne, after the death of his father, Prince Rainier III. After that, I retired but remained connected to the palace.



Prince Rainier III and Princess Grace at the White House in 1961



One day, a friend suggested setting up a “Lions Club for Women” in Monaco, which already existed in Italy but not in the Principality. At that time, these clubs were exclusively for men and did not accept women. I was not used to being involved in clubs, apart from what I had experienced alongside the Princess. I agreed to my friend’s suggestion and together we founded the Monte-Carlo Women’s Lions Club, which I chaired for several years.

During this time, I also had the idea of founding another club called “Stradivari” together with the pianist Michael Desjardins, as I had always regretted not being able to play a musical instrument properly. For me, music is not just a collection of sounds, but a companion in everyday life, a reflection of beauty and creation. The aim of this association was to support young violinists and pianists at the beginning of their careers and we organised several concerts, sometimes with the participation of renowned musicians.



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Louisette Lévy-Soussan Azzoaglio presiding a charity auction for “Action Innocence Monaco”

In addition, Valérie Wertheimer, the president of the Action Innocence France association, contacted me one day and asked me if I would be willing to found Action Innocence in Monaco. At that time, this association already existed in France and Switzerland, but not yet in the Principality. I said yes because it is a prevention organisation for young people that deals with the dangers of the Internet. The Internet is undoubtedly a wonderful means of communication, but it was already a danger for children when it first appeared. Today, children are much better informed than they were 22 years ago. Back then, they were an easy target, so it was necessary to educate them about the various risks. Action Innocence’s motto is: “Yes to the Internet, no to its dangers.” Even today, our psychologists still give lessons in schools in the Principality and neighbouring municipalities to educate students about the dark side of this indispensable tool.

Action Innocence is also extending its efforts to the fight against the increasing harassment that is a new dark side of the Internet. Anonymity on the internet is causing great harm in schools and can even lead to children committing suicide. We have intervened in numerous cases to tackle these problems and prevent such tragedies. Our psychologists support distressed children who have experienced bullying and help them to regain their balance. After a suicide attempt, these young people and their families often go through such emotional turmoil that they become completely unbalanced and lose faith in themselves.

As I was unable to take on both presidencies, I left both the Lions Club and “Stradivari” as I could not find anyone to replace me, especially as Michael Desjardins, with whom I had founded the



© LOUISETTE AZZOAGLIO LÉVY SOUSSAN

Louisette Azzoaglio Lévy-Soussan pictured with her two sons, Guy-Thomas Lévy-Soussan (left) and Criss Roux

club, had an accident during this time. I therefore decided to concentrate fully on Action Innocence.

#### What advice would you give to parents?

I think that modern life doesn’t make family life any easier, because parents today have to reconcile this family life with a very demanding professional life, especially women. When a working mother comes home, all the domestic chores are waiting for her, unless she can afford to hire an assistant. Tired parents have little time in the evening to devote to their children and give them the attention they need.

I advise parents to talk to their children every day, despite the pressures of modern life and their work. I think it’s important to return to the family as often as possible. It’s very tempting to get distracted by things that you imagine or that are happening elsewhere, but we need to get back to our community. Globalisation has created challenges and problems for which often no solution has been found.

#### How are the projects of Action Innocence Monaco financed?

As we receive no subsidies and only a few members pay modest contributions, we have



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Louisette Azzoaglio Lévy-Soussan with their Serene Highnesses Princess Charlene, Prince Albert II, and her son, Guy-Thomas Lévy-Soussan



decided to create a flagship event: the Christmas tree auction, which provides us with the financial means to continue our activities. This also includes paying school psychologists, as all our activities are free of charge. We also distribute numerous prevention materials free of charge. To organise this auction, major companies in the Principality, particularly from the fashion and decoration sectors, but also well-known hotels in Monaco and private individuals, design, create and decorate Christmas trees that are auctioned off once a year in the lobby of the Hotel de Paris for the benefit of Action Innocence. This event always attracts many people, and H.S.H. Prince Albert has honoured us with his presence time and again over the years to show his support.

**Would you advise children in the Principality who are in distress, suicidal or being harassed at school to contact your organisation directly for help?**

Yes, I would. But today, the Department of Education, Youth and Sport of Monaco, together with the government, has set up a hotline for emergency calls. However, we often follow closely the families who are distressed by these events and need to be accompanied and supported to deal with the aftermath of a tragedy.

In my speech at this year's Christmas tree sale, I said to parents: Talk to your children! Children are often ashamed and do not dare to say anything. They are very vulnerable during such events and it is important that parents talk to them. Families are devastated by these events, and Action Innocence endeavours to support them and help them overcome these dramatic events.

**Then, more recently, you created CREM (Club des Résidents Étrangers de Monaco). How did that idea come about?**

That was an idea that had occurred to me a long time ago. I had realised that many foreigners live in Monaco, but often you only find out about their existence when you read about their death in the newspaper! So I thought it would be good to create a place that would be their "new home", as they had left their homeland. Newcomers to Monaco can sometimes feel lost. That's why I thought of creating a club for them... a kind of "second home". We started very humbly with meetings of a few friends who subscribed to the idea.

Our team consisted of H.E. Mr Henri Fissore, my son Guy Thomas Lévy-Soussan, Vanessa Tubino, Georges Cardona, Martine Deplanche, and Michel Dotta.

However, the initial phase was a challenge, as we spent four years looking for an affordable locale. It was particularly difficult to find suitable premises in the Principality. One day, I presented the idea to Prince Albert, who found it fascinating and supported us in realising it.

The English bankers Frederic and David Barclay, the owners of the "Mirabeau" building, agreed to make premises available to us. It was a former restaurant which, after some renovation work,



HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco at the inauguration of the new salons of the CREM

became the headquarters of CREM. The renovation work was carried out by Patrice Pastor, who provided us with completely renovated premises.

We had a locale, but the club still lacked a name. One day I had an inspiration and decided to string together the initials of the Club des Résidents Étrangers de Monaco, which led to the acronym CREM.

I wanted an ambience reminiscent of a British club, but as I did not know much about interior design, I did not know where to start. Knowing the remarkable design talent of Lady Tina Green and in particular her commitment to philanthropic causes in the Principality, I approached her. I presented her with the project details and floor plan of the space and conveyed to her the ambience I envisioned for the club.

Three months later, I received a call. The club was beautifully decorated, right down to the customised furniture. Lady Green's contribution was a gift, we just had to cover the cost of the high-quality, customised furniture.

So, we recruited some donors and five sponsors came on board and became honorary members of CREM. The new premises were inaugurated in June 2010 by H.S.H. Prince Albert and the then Minister of State Michel Roger.

Initially it was a kind of makeshift operation, but since 2010 the club has grown and is currently run by a director and three colleagues, two of whom have been with us from the beginning.



Louissette Azzoaglio Lévy-Soussan with HSH Princesse Charlene of Monaco, HSH Prince Albert II and Guy-Thomas Lévy-Soussan



**As of 2024, how many members do you have?**

Still around 500. Some leave, others return; it fluctuates. Over time, we have established contacts with the government, local businesses, artists and writers. Our aim was to create a place for foreigners living in Monaco where they could come every day to catch up on news, entertain their guests, have a drink, organise small meetings, attend lectures and concerts. During the year, we even organised outings and receptions in prestigious or unexpected places, which were much appreciated by our members.

The club brings together people from over 45 different countries and fosters friendships based on common interests. We also help them integrate into Monegasque society.

I hope that CREM can continue to bridge the gap between old and new residents of the Principality for many years to come and provide them with a home where they can flourish.

Given my age, I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to fulfil the role of President. At the moment, my eldest son, Chris Roux, is Vice President and will hopefully take over the leadership.

My youngest son, Guy Thomas Lévy-Soussan, helped me set up the foundation at the beginning. I'm grateful for their tireless support.



© LOUISETTE AZZOAGLIO LÉVY-SOUSSAN

Louise Azzoaglio Lévy-Soussan with HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco

**Could you say a few words about your love of animals and your commitment to the animal shelter in Monaco?**

Animals have always been a part of my life; I've had dogs and a few cats too, although not many. Most of my dogs have been exceptional, not because of their breed, but because of their "human" qualities. My current dog is called Joy, and like many of my four-legged companions, I adopted her from the shelter of the Monegasque Society for the Protection of Animals (SPA).

A dog adopted in this way becomes a lifelong companion and, unlike humans, they often know how to express their gratitude for the new life they have been given.

These animals depend on us and it is our duty to provide them with love and support. I believe that they are also wonderful companions for people who are alone or unwell. In Monaco, there is an association called "Les chiens de coeur", of which I am a member. We visit sick and elderly people in care homes to comfort them and bring them joy.

I can only encourage everyone to visit animal shelters from time to time. Many people favour purebred dogs, but if that is not a priority, there are many animals that need rescuing and will repay your kindness a hundredfold.

In Monaco, a new shelter with more space for animals to play is being planned.

The Principality and the ruling family have always been committed to the protection of domestic and wild animals. I recently joined



© LÉVY-SOUSSAN

Guy-Thomas Lévy-Soussan with his mother, Louise Lévy-Soussan and his children (grandchildren of Louise Lévy-Soussan) Edmond, Mila, and Tobata

the Board of Directors of the Monaco SPA and hope that I can make a positive contribution to this organisation.

**What are your passions and hobbies in your private life? Who is "Louise" when she is not busy with her various charitable activities?**

I tend to my garden and cultivate friendships. At a certain age, it's a blessing to have so many friends, even if I have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. But nowadays, young people have so many different activities that the role of grandmother is less active due to lack of time.

We see each other often, especially for our traditional Wednesday lunches, and we also spend a lot of time in our country house. Even though my love of travelling has diminished with age, I enjoy immersing myself in classical music. I also love opera and anything to do with art. But nothing compares to the joy of gardening, which I do as often as possible in Monaco or in the countryside. The joy of nurturing those tiny seeds that one day reward you with beautiful flowers or trees is a pleasure I never tire of savouring.

I also enjoy family-style cooking. I have had the privilege of watching my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Mila, Tabatha, Edmond and Adem Melina, grow up almost to adulthood. They never cease to amaze me. And one of them is developing into a promising musician, which I really appreciate.

**What are your plans for 2024?**

At my age, you don't make so many long-term plans! I can only hope that my family will experience as much happiness as possible in this increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

I hope that I can continue my charity work for a while longer, because it motivates me a lot. My priority is to cause as few problems as possible for my family and friends and to share many more happy moments together, because they mean everything to me. I think I've been more faithful in friendship than in love!

*Antoinette Champclos*





# DOUBLE TROUBLE

**How fake information  
feeds Russia's  
propaganda war**





© NRP

A tactical nuclear weapon being packed for shipment from Ukraine to Russia in 1992

How does propaganda work and how effective is it? Well, here is the opinion of someone who used it quite effectively for a long time: “The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflagging attention. It must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over. Here, as so often in this world, persistence is the first and most important requirement for success.” That was the view of Adolf Hitler, a man who was certainly no stranger to the art of spreading disinformation pretending to be truth. Perhaps it’s what Shakespeare’s “Three Witches” were attempting in his Scottish play, *Macbeth*: “Double, double, toil and trouble, Fire burn and cauldron bubble” as they sought to cast their evil spell. I can’t imagine Vladimir Putin is a fan of Shakespeare or anything else that originated in Britain. He’d be more likely to choose Chekhov, Tolstoy, Pushkin or Dostoyevsky, I imagine, all of them admirable playwrights, of course, from a country that has produced a prestigious number of them. But “double, double” is especially prescient, since that’s what Putin’s agents are doing, pretending to be known and respected journalists and broadcasters, mainly identifiable by name, whilst disguising themselves as their “doubles” and hiding behind their identities to put out anti-Ukraine (and totally untruthful) propaganda stories worded to damage Ukraine and its leadership. This is a very, very dirty war, and the source of all that dirt is Vladimir Putin and his cronies.

This is just the sort of thing that Putin is up to with regard to Ukraine. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine voluntarily gave up

its nuclear armaments in return for a security guarantee from the United States, the UK, and Russia itself.

Whether or not Moscow ever intended to abide by its promise we may never know, but that is a matter of no concern to Putin, who, despite a lack of evidence concerning nuclear weapons, claims to believe that Ukraine still has the knowledge and technology needed to produce them. He told the Russian people that if Kyiv were to obtain nuclear weapons it would change everything. He even used that claim to justify his invasion, despite assurances from NATO and the United States that there were no plans to provide such weapons to Ukraine.

Another purported reason for Putin’s decision to invade is a desire to rebuild an empire, restoring Russia’s control over parts of Europe and Asia that it enjoyed during the Cold War. US President Joe Biden has even accused Putin of imperialist intentions. “He has much larger ambitions than Ukraine,” Biden told an audience. “He wants to, in fact, re-establish the former Soviet Union. That’s what this is about.” He could be right; it’s not easy to imagine what ambitions exist within Putin’s dreams of glory. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has gone further, suggesting that Putin is seeking to recreate the pre-Soviet Russian Empire, which would include not only Ukraine but also Finland, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as parts of Poland and Turkey. Any attempt to achieve such a goal would, of course, meet with fierce resistance. Is Putin that stupid? Probably (hopefully) not, but the evidence so far reflects his lust for glory and his territorial ambitions. He may, deep down, believe he can turn back the clock to 1919 but there’s little proof that he really could, however ambitious he may be.

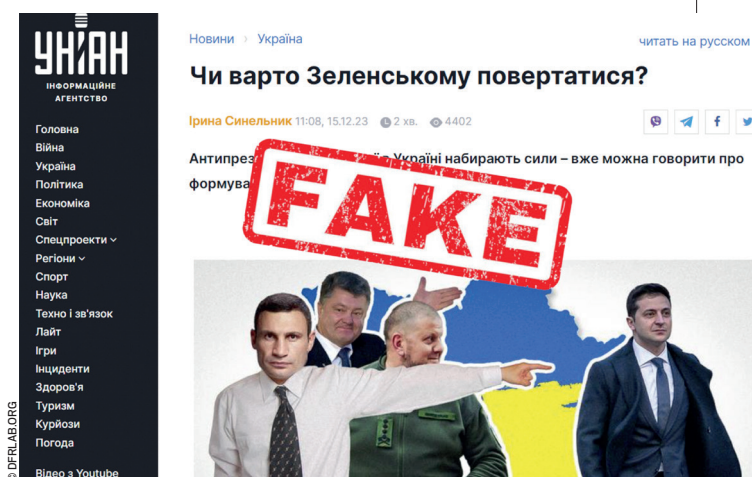


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## I Goolies and ghosties

Meanwhile, Putin’s far-reaching campaign of misinformation, known as *Doppelgänger*, carries on regardless, a vital element in his ambitious plans. It’s been described as a Russian-aligned “influence operation”. It has been especially active in Germany where it has been trying to undermine the sitting government, spreading lies and misinformation aimed at influencing public





Fake version of the Ukrainian news site UNIAN, part of the Russian information operation known as Doppelgänger

opinion before the upcoming German state, municipal and European Parliament elections in the hope of getting the German people to blame at least some of their problems on Ukraine. Doppelgänger targets running news stories about geopolitical and socio-economic topics, employing a wide range of aggressive tactics, aimed at weakening support for Ukraine. Its agents are also spreading their malicious activities to the US, Israel, and France. They seem to rely on the frequent repetition of their malign message, apparently believing, as Hitler clearly did, that constantly repeating a message of hate will get through to people eventually. German media observers believe that aim in Germany's case is to erode support for the federal government, which has shown itself sympathetic to Ukraine's plight. What exactly is a doppelgänger? The word doesn't appear at all in my 1852 Walker's Dictionary but my much more recent Chambers Dictionary defines it as meaning "a ghostly double of a human person, an apparition, a wraith",

which makes it sound distinctly sinister and unworldly. Wikipedia describes it as meaning: "A ghostly double of a living person", just as Cambers does, but it adds: "especially one that haunts such a person" and also "an evil twin". There is an old Scottish (or possibly Cornish) prayer that goes like this:

"From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggedy beasties

And things that go bump in the night

Good Lord, deliver us!"

I've never personally been troubled by ghoulies and ghosties, nor do I believe they exist, but if anyone could summon one to carry out his evil deeds for him, it would be Vladimir Putin, Master of the Macabre.

SentinelLabs and Clear Sky Cyber Security have been tracking Doppelgänger's activities since the campaign of untruthful propaganda began towards the end of 2023. Most of the lies being put out by Doppelgänger focus on spreading potentially damaging untruths about Ukraine. Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned about Doppelgänger's activities. Doppelgänger's activities include the widespread and clearly well-co-ordinated attacks on Ukraine and its sympathisers overseas, using the "X" (formerly Twitter) network. These accounts pick up on anti-Ukraine news stories from third-party websites, so that it appears to be repeating widely-held anti-Ukrainian beliefs that were, in fact, created only in Russia and not widely held at all. It's true that Donald Trump once described Putin as "a nicer person than I am", but perhaps that says more about Trump than it does about Putin.





Putin is an admirer of the old KGB and has been since childhood. A mistake many observers make is to describe him as “ex-KGB”. There is no “ex” about it: he is KGB through and through, to the very core, and always will be. It was in 1999, however, when he was Prime Minister and soon to be elected President, that he attended an event at the KGB’s notorious old headquarters, the Lubyanka (ironically built originally to house an insurance company) in order to commemorate the creation of the Cheka, the original Bolshevik political police.

“Dear comrades,” he said as he raised a toast, “I can report that the group of agents you sent to infiltrate the government has accomplished the first part of its mission.” These were the words of someone who so loved the concept of the KGB that he tried to join it while still at school. He made the offer (or was it an application?) at the KGB’s regional headquarters in Leningrad, seemingly oblivious to the fact that its cellars had once flowed with the blood of Stalin’s enemies. Putin’s offer was not accepted and he was told to go and complete his military service. Joining the KGB had to wait until after he’d achieved his law degree at Leningrad State University in 1975, but membership left its mark. In Mark Galeotti’s frightening book, “We Need to Talk About Putin”, there is a quote from American Senator John McCain, who said after meeting Putin, “I looked into Mr. Putin’s eyes and I saw three things: a ‘K’, a ‘G’, and a ‘B’.” Putin has only a few friends, its said, but he retains links with other Chekists and fellow KGB-veterans. The Chekists, by the way, are the people back in the old Soviet Union who believed that the secret police should be in charge of every sphere of society. They did not favour personal freedom. Galeotti points out Putin’s tough childhood, being raised in Leningrad in a cramped one-room apartment without a bath or access to hot water. It must have left a deep and lasting impression on the young Putin. Galeotti also points out that there is no such thing as a former KGB officer, but also mentions that Putin remains on friendly terms with the Rotenberg brothers, millionaires with whom he practised martial arts, and with Sergei Roldugin, a prominent cellist.

## I Vote now, vote often



Vladimir Putin's Stasi identification card when he was assigned as a KGB agent in Dresden in 1985

Doppelgänger is apparently engaged in doing Putin's will, which doesn't include playing the cello. There is a great deal about it that is deeply sinister but with no sign of ghosts or other supernatural entities. There would appear to be little connection with Marxist politics, either, but then Putin is no Marxist and would not have got on well with the historical Karl Marx. It is only a handful of sentimental leftists in the West who believe that Russia still harbours old far-left ideology. Putin has put an end to that. The original followers of Karl Marx with his beliefs in equality were sure that history was on their side. They thought that Communism was not only perfect but inevitable. Part of that was because of education, something the revolutionaries believed in, albeit with a caveat: “The education of all children, from the moment they can get along without a mother's care, shall be in state institutions.” Even so, Marx believed that everyone should enjoy life, at least as much as possible: “Surround yourself with people who make you happy,” he wrote, “People who make you laugh, who help you when you're in need. People who genuinely care. They are the ones worth keeping in your life. Everyone else is just passing through.” Marxism, of course, is not the inevitable end of the road. It would take work and dedication to build a perfect and fair state. Remember what Vladimir Lenin said: “Truth is the most precious thing. That's why we should ration it.” That seems to be a policy followed by a great many governments these days.

Perhaps we should remember an old Soviet joke: “Question – What is the difference between capitalism and socialism? Answer – Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man, and socialism is its replacement by its opposite.” Yes, I know: it may have had Soviet citizens rolling in the aisles back in the old days but it wouldn't have raised a giggle in the West, then or now. So what does Putin really believe in. For a detailed examination, I recommend Galeotti's book, but it seems clear that Putin firmly believes that security and respect depend upon a state being strong, in the military sense. In Putin's case, his belief is in having him in charge of everything. Russia may be a capitalist state today but it is very much affected by corruption and the part being played by oligarchs and the greedy monopolies. Putin has so far shown no sign of wanting to change that fundamentally. As long as he remains in sole and unchallenged control, everything is fine, he thinks.

Galeotti writes that Putin “believes in power and pragmatism, rather than philosophy. As long as he can get what he wants from the existing system, he's content.” He seems to envy the United States and its “exceptionalism”, which allows it to do whatever it likes, whenever it wants to. That, according to Galeotti, is what Putin wants for Russia: boundless, unrestricted power over everything.

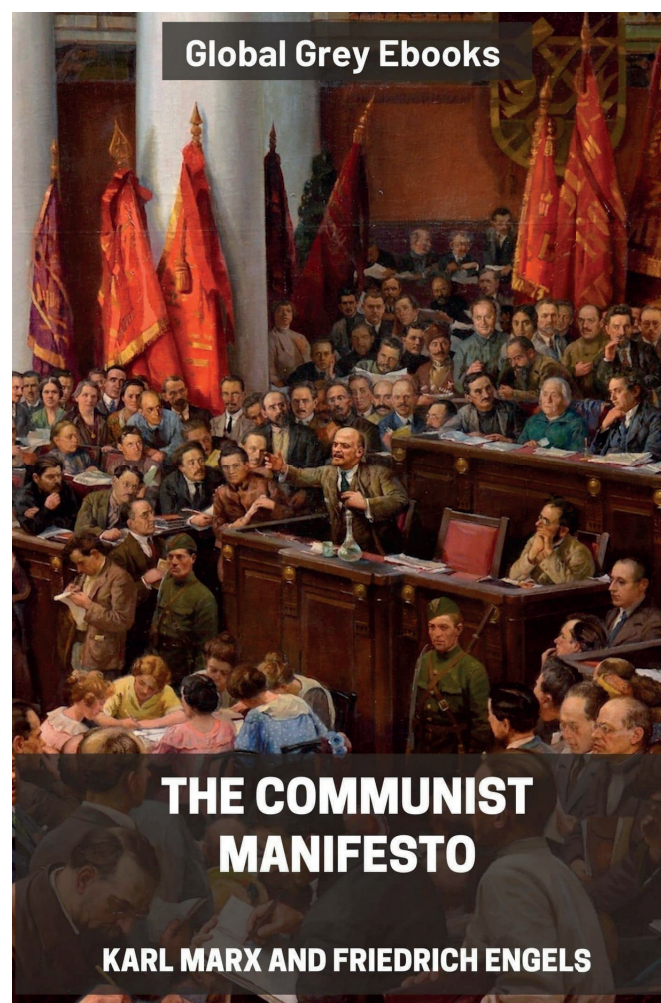




Mark Galeotti

All the Marxists wanted, at least in theory, was the overthrow of capitalism, but the Communist Manifesto had an enormous, almost incalculable impact on so many things. "It is difficult to imagine," wrote the author Umberto Eco, "that a few fine pages can single-handedly change the world." But they did, although it seems unlikely that they impinged on Putin's consciousness. Total equality for all is not one of his aims. It seems, or if it is, then it's total equality for all those inferior to him, by which he would doubtless mean "everybody". He is not, nor ever was, an idealist; all he wants is personal power, it seems. Oh, and he wants everyone to recognise that Russia is at the top of the world, and that he runs it. We shouldn't forget, however, that the Communist Manifesto is adamantly against nationalism. "Working people," it insists "have no country", although that particular quotation is often cited as proving that the Manifesto seriously underestimates the tenacity of nationalism in the popular psyche. According to the Manifesto, the continuation of nationalism gives rise to racism and supremacism, whilst hampering the free movement of workers, thus allowing employers to reduce wages and cut back on workers' rights and privileges. Those on the Left insist that nationalism must be overcome and defeated. In China Melville's brilliant book about the Communist Manifesto, "A Spectre Haunting", there's a claim that Marxism has failed to tackle the nationalism issue. "For tradition(s) of Leninist politics, international solidarity is promoted by the insistence on the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. This is honourable in principle and tactically persuasive as far as it goes but (i) the latter only at a fairly abstract level and (ii) right or not, it has little to say about the origin and sheer tenacity of the nationalism it opposes". In other words, we are all human beings with human frailties, including built-in biases with regard to nations and nationhood.

Perhaps this explains Putin's endless self-serving lies about Ukraine not really being a nation. After all, Putin won the most recent elections with a convincing majority, which involved fraud on a massive scale. Putin sees nothing wrong in that, as long as it ensures he retains the keys to the Kremlin. Putin's United Russia party is credited with gaining almost half of all the votes cast, but his biggest critic was recently murdered and others not sympathetic to his egocentric style were prohibited from taking part in the election at all. There were also claims of forced voting and ballot-stuffing. As a result, Putin's party will have more than two thirds of the seats in the Duma. In fact, Putin is quite popular with quite a lot of Russians who have seen him standing up to the West. Certainly, the party faithful were delighted with the outcome. The Communist Party, which came second, saw their tally dwindle as electronic votes came in. An EU spokesman spoke about widespread fraud, but the independent monitoring group, Golos, has been branded "a foreign agent" by the Kremlin, which means nobody can take any notice. Even so, although their views will not be reported in Russia, the US, Germany and the UK reported that the elections were neither free nor fair. Golos claimed that large numbers of Russians had contacted the organisation alleging that their employers had pressurised them to vote and one Muscovite told the BBC that she saw no point in voting because "it's all been decided for us anyway". Some election observers said they had been threatened. Welcome to the Putin version of democracy.



A free, downloadable version of 'The Communist Manifesto'



## The massacre of katyn - a Soviet historical disinformation campaign



The Katyn massacre – a historic Soviet disinformation campaign

An example of Soviet propaganda and disinformation disseminated by certain Western Communists during decades refers to the Katyn massacre, a sequence of large-scale killings of around 22,000 Polish military commanders and intellectuals who were prisoners of war, conducted by the Soviet Union, notably the NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) in Poland in 1940 when Poland was still under Soviet control.

The directive to execute prisoner members of the Polish officer corps was covertly issued by the Soviet Politburo under the leadership of Joseph Stalin.

The authorities supporting the Soviet Union after the Soviet takeover in the aftermath of the war concealed the incident in line with the official Soviet propaganda, intentionally suppressing any sources that could reveal knowledge about the atrocity. The Soviets attempted to eliminate the remembrance of the Katyn massacre.

Moreover, the concealment of the killings for 50 years, involving several Western governments, renders it the most effective Soviet and Russian disinformation and fake news campaign in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## A propaganda war (Russia is winning)

Whilst ensuring that he would win in Russia (there was never any doubt, given his unfair and undemocratic tactics), Putin has also had agents

in other countries, from English country towns to Canadian universities. Their effects on public opinion may seem insignificant, but these agents do sometimes emerge in public institutions, companies, and in local, regional and national governments. It's probably not so much a case of seeking influential power as of undermining confidence in existing systems and personnel. Moscow has plenty of money at its disposal to pour into its vote-buying operations. Sometimes, the money ends up in the hands of individuals, on other occasions it helps fund political organisations or parties. It's believed in some quarters that Putin helped to fund the "Vote leave" campaign to get the UK to leave the European Union on the grounds that it would weaken it. I'm sure that the anti-EU media that carried the propaganda did not realise (or did not care?) that they were carrying out the wishes of Moscow. I'm sure the readers didn't know. Expressions such as "let's all support Putin" would seem out of place in such right-wing newspapers as the Daily Mail or the Daily Express, however right wing Putin himself may be.

As for Ukraine, Putin's unprovoked war continues, largely fuelled by his ego. He seems to be relying on the growing weakness of Western governments when confronted by an organised propaganda campaign, such as Doppelgänger's. Western governments also seem to be reluctant to pour money into countering it. There's no point in trying a similar approach in Russia, where foreign media and websites are banned. The Russia military calls the actions of outfits like Doppelgänger "information-psychological warfare", where it is aimed at sapping the enemy's energy and willingness to respond. So it is that Russia bombards the West with an out-and-out barrage of fake, adapted "real" (almost) and misrepresented news stories. It works, too: in the first year of Putin's war in Ukraine, accounts linked to the Kremlin got more than 16-billion viewings, intended not only to weaken support for Ukraine but also to damage Western democratic systems. It's a very dirty form of warfare and Russia is very practised and expert at it. It's even been suggested that Western government are turning a blind eye to what Russia is doing, while the social media companies seem to be ignoring it, despite their promises to act. Instead, viewers in the US were subjected to two hours of Putin's outright lies on You Tube at "X" (formerly Twitter) in which he spoke very untruthfully about the history and ownership of Ukraine. It was an exercise in the incorrect interpretation of the past, expertly conducted. That interview conducted by Tucker Carlson, has had more 120-million views in the US.

Putin has been in charge of Russia either as its prime minister or president since 1999. The country's 1993 constitution was supposed to impose limits on how long anyone could remain in charge, but amendments since then have allowed Putin to stay in power. At the age of 71, he still enjoys favourable approval ratings while Russia has survived the economic sanctions applied by the West in response to his invasion of Ukraine without lasting damage. With no free media, no-one can legally oppose Putin, and even his "critics" have voiced their support for his war against Ukraine.

There is a reason for Putin's continued occupation of the Kremlin: the Russian people see him as strong, someone who is making Russia a force to be reckoned with in the world. Putin is a clever man, even if many people in West see him as someone to be feared for his ruthless ambition.

Now that Putin has prolonged his sole authority in Russia following a carefully orchestrated election without any credible and legitim opposition the world better be prepared for the worst.

**T. Kingsley Brooks**

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The Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre in Salmiya, Kuwait is a 18-hectare site making it the world's largest museum complex

**PRESERVING THE  
PAST, SHAPING  
THE FUTURE**

**The importance of  
national cultural  
institutes**



‘A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people’ (Mahatma Gandhi)

**Countries have long used soft power to influence other nations, shape global narratives and achieve their foreign policy goals without resorting to military force or economic coercion. Whether we are talking about public diplomacy, which uses various channels of communication to influence perceptions, dispel misunderstandings and build goodwill, or educational exchanges, economic cooperation, development aid, sports diplomacy, global leadership and cultural diplomacy, soft power is present in many forms and influences global reality on a daily basis.**

Many countries have recognised the potential of such instruments and have mastered the art of using them. Overall, soft power strategies aim to cultivate positive perceptions, build networks of influence and enhance a country’s reputation and credibility on the world stage, ultimately contributing to the achievement of its foreign policy goals and national interests.

Building and supporting institutions such as cultural centres and language schools that can effectively promote national values abroad has become a priority for many countries, which provide generous annual funding to support these institutions.

National cultural institutes serve as important instruments of cultural diplomacy. They facilitate the exchange of ideas, promote co-operation and mutual understanding and contribute to building relationships between nations. Cultural institutes promote their country’s heritage, art, language and traditions abroad by showcasing the richness and diversity of their culture through exhibitions, performances, language courses and other cultural events.

All of this is ultimately intended to contribute to the positive perception of the country and its people and to achieving the country’s strategic goals. By bringing artists, performers, intellectuals, educators and students from their home country into contact with people from other countries, these programmes promote intercultural dialogue, collaboration, openness and appreciation of different perspectives.

Meanwhile, cultural institutes often serve as hubs for building interpersonal relationships, offering people from different backgrounds the opportunity to interact and learn from each other. Many cultural institutes offer language



© BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council

courses, educational programmes, scholarships and academic exchanges to promote the language and educational system of their home country abroad. They often organise popular international festivals, exhibitions and conferences in collaboration with local partners.

At the same time, cultural institutes work closely with diplomatic missions, government agencies and non-governmental organisations to run cultural exchange programmes and promote foreign policy objectives, thereby supporting wider cultural diplomacy initiatives of their home country’s government.

The world’s first national cultural institute, the “Institut de France” (1795), which brought together five academies, including the Académie Française, played an important role in promoting cultural and intellectual development at home, but also contributed to France’s cultural influence internationally. The Alliance Française was also founded in Paris in 1883 to promote the French language and culture worldwide through language courses, cultural events and educational programmes.

Today, there are 143 French institutions and French cultural centres outside France that are under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and promote French values, traditions and art.

France has also skilfully extended its cultural influence through another organisation, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (francophonie.org), an international organisation representing countries and regions where French is the lingua franca or common language, where a significant proportion of the population is francophone or where there is a notable affiliation with French culture.

**The British Council** was founded in the United Kingdom in 1934 with the aim of



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Institut de France, Paris





## European Spaces of Culture Taking EU cultural relations to the next level

An international jury of four independent experts, established as a Preparatory Action by the European Parliament and coordinated by EUNIC through the European Commission, has selected pilot project proposals for eight new European Spaces of Culture to be implemented between June 2024 and October 2025

promoting British culture, education and the arts abroad. The English courses in particular, which are organised for various age groups, attract many people.

**The Goethe-Institut**, founded in Munich in 1951, has applied a similar formula and promotes the German language and culture on an international level with its 140 branches in more than 70 countries.

Spain founded the **Instituto Cervantes** in

1991, which today has 88 centres in 45 countries dedicated to Spanish and Hispanic-American culture and the Spanish language.

One year later, it was Greece's turn. Founded in 1992, **the Hellenic Foundation for Culture** is a cultural and educational organisation based in Athens with branches and representatives in Berlin, Alexandria, London, Vienna, Brussels and Washington.

**The Italian Cultural Institute**, founded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promotes Italian culture, language and heritage through its 85 branches worldwide.

**The Austrian Cultural Forum**, founded in 1945 in New York City, USA, promotes Austrian culture, art and ideas abroad. In recent years, Central and Eastern European countries have recognised the enormous promotional potential that these institutions can have. Poland established its **Polish Cultural Institute** in 2000 and since then it has organised a variety of cultural events and initiatives showcasing different aspects of Polish art, literature, music, cinema and heritage. It also provides resources and support to foreign institutions, organisations and individuals interested in Polish culture.

Similarly, the **Romanian Cultural Institute (Institutul Cultural Român)**, founded in 2004, organises and supports a wide range of cultural events outside Romania, including exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, literary readings and theatre performances. It also promotes co-operation between Romanian artists and their foreign colleagues. In addition, the institute offers Romanian language courses, scholarships and grants to support international students, researchers and artists who want to learn more about Romanian culture.

These are just a few examples of European cultural institutes; there are many more throughout Europe. They play an important role in promoting European culture, supporting intercultural dialogue and strengthening international cooperation. These institutions are often founded and funded by European governments to showcase the diversity and richness of European heritage, art, languages and ideas.



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The Austrian Cultural Forum in New York, USA

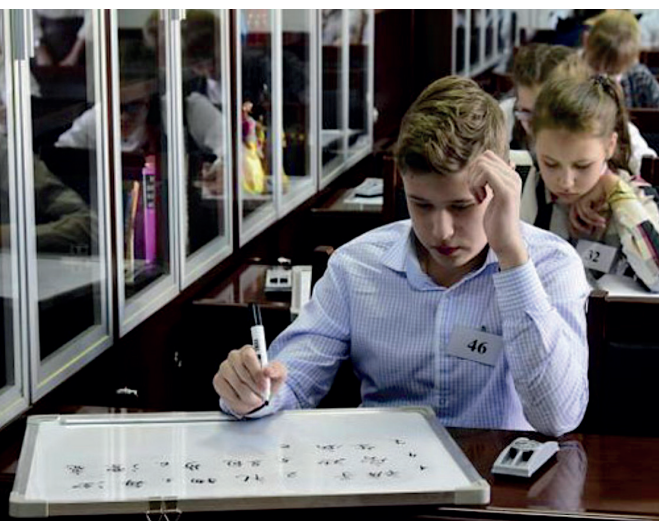


The European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) is a European network of organisations dealing with cultural relations, bringing together most of the national institutions mentioned above. Its declared aim is to promote European cultural co-operation in more than 100 countries worldwide through a network of 139 clusters, benefiting from the extensive experience of its members from all EU Member States and associated countries.

*'EUNIC advocates a prominent role for culture in international relations and is a strategic partner of the EU, actively involved in the further definition of European cultural policy. EUNIC is a platform for knowledge sharing and for capacity building amongst its members and partners. EUNIC strives to build trust and understanding between the people of Europe and the wider world and make culture count in international relations.'* (Source: eunicglobal.eu)

A few years ago, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Policies conducted a study on European cultural institutes abroad to better understand what role the national cultural institutes of EU Member States could play in a European cultural strategy that supports the EU's cultural diplomacy approach. It analysed whether their activities have a European dimension and how they could support the EU in further promoting its priorities and core values outside the EU. (Source: www.europarl.europa.eu)

The European Union is currently considering a European strategy for cultural diplomacy, even if the process is still at an early stage. It is clear that the EU should utilise its cultural and creative resources to increase its global influence and promote its values and priorities. Mechanisms for systematic cultural co-operation are currently being developed to improve mutual understanding and trust between the EU and other countries.



Western children writing Chinese characters on whiteboards in a Chinese language dictation contest at a Confucius Institute

The above-mentioned study showed that the cultural institutes of the EU Member States could potentially play an important role in a new European strategy for cultural diplomacy, which is why a workable model of co-operation with the EU institutions is recommended. It was also noted that *"they have a diverse and extensive network of offices both inside and outside the EU. In total, they have 914 offices in the EU and 1,253 offices outside the EU."*

Although the mission of European national cultural institutes is not explicitly to promote the EU and their main objective is to represent and promote their national interests, they are often also involved in activities that support the EU. The immense potential of these institutes should not be underestimated and should be considered when developing a more comprehensive European cultural diplomacy policy. There is a lack of a common European approach or vision when it comes to cultural diplomacy and cultural relations, and there are often budgetary or orientational constraints. Through collaboration and knowledge sharing, these institutes can work with other European organisations and networks to strengthen the EU's global presence and make the most of its scale.

The Chinese Confucius Institute has one of the largest networks in the world, with 530 institutes in dozens of countries on six continents. These institutes, named after the famous Chinese philosopher, are usually affiliated to universities and colleges in China and operate under the direction of the Office of Chinese Language Council International, a non-governmental organisation under the umbrella of the Chinese Ministry of Education. They organise Chinese language courses, cultural workshops, traditional Chinese festivals, art exhibitions, calligraphy demonstrations and performances of Chinese music and dance. They also facilitate academic exchange, scientific research and co-operation between Chinese and foreign institutions and serve the Chinese government in spreading its message and strengthening its influence in the world.

In South Korea, there is the 'Korea Foundation', a national cultural institute established in 1991 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which carries out numerous educational initiatives to promote Korean culture, art, language and heritage to audiences around the world. It also supports students by providing resources and funding for academic research and exchange programmes related to Korean studies. In recent years, we have seen a veritable offensive of Korean cultural diplomacy, be it through music, films or food. The country has gained significant popularity and trendiness in the global arena, particularly among the younger generations. These efforts have certainly had a positive impact politically and economically.

American cultural diplomacy was already being pursued in a conscious and organised manner at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the real impetus for such activities only came after the Second World War.

Through music, art, the Hollywood film industry, clothing, top athletes and food, America has become a benchmark, a dream for many people. The American way of life, the famous "American dream", became a coveted standard of living. Today, the United States also has a network of national cultural institutes abroad. American Centres, or American Spaces as they are known, are run by the US State Department and are usually located in US embassies, consulates or partner institutions in various countries around the world.

They often offer a wide range of programmes and resources, including English language classes, educational counselling,





A fusion-style traditional Korean music concert tour in Timisoara, Romania organised by the Korea Foundation

cultural events, film screenings, workshops and lectures on American culture, history, society and democratic values. In addition, the US supports virtual American spaces with online resources, digital programmes and virtual engagement opportunities for individuals who want to learn more about the United States. The US government also supports cultural exchange programmes that bring artists, musicians, performers and cultural figures from the US to other countries and vice versa, as well as educational and academic exchange programmes, such as the Fulbright Programme. Overall, cultural diplomacy has become an integral part of US foreign policy.

Many countries have also recognised that national cultural institutes can play a crucial role in maintaining links between diaspora communities and their home countries.

Cultural events often offer diaspora members the opportunity to reconnect with their cultural roots, share experiences and strengthen their sense of identity. Language courses and training programmes for diaspora members, various community forums, digital platforms, websites and other online resources provide access to cultural content and foster a sense of belonging and connection.

Moreover, cultural institutions can often support and fund artists, musicians and writers from the diaspora to participate in cultural events and collaborate with artists from the home country. Recognising talent from the diaspora strengthens cultural ties and promotes creative exchange, but can also serve the interests of the countries of origin.

Today, however, the question also arises of how to attract young people to national cultural institutions. This could be achieved through different strategies that match their interests, preferences and lifestyles.

Cultural institutions need to offer a more diverse and dynamic programme that appeals to young people's interests, including contemporary art exhibitions, live music, film screenings, interactive workshops and digital art installations; they need to create more interactive experiences that allow young visitors to actively engage; maintain an active presence on popular social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok or X; collaborate with youth-focused organisations and influencers; create inclusive spaces and accessible programmes that celebrate diversity and promote equality and inclusion; and always ask for feedback and fresh ideas for new initiatives.



A fusion-style traditional Korean music concert tour in Timisoara, Romania organised by the Korea Foundation

The relationship between people and cultural institutions is of crucial importance. After all, these institutions were created by people and for people. They appeal to our sensibilities and touch the heart of our national identity. To summarise, national cultural institutes play a central role not only in promoting the interests of their respective countries, but also in promoting the global cooperation, understanding and tolerance that are so important in today's world. Through their diverse programmes, exchanges and initiatives, these institutions can serve as bridges between nations, enriching societies while promoting mutual respect and cooperation on an international level. Ultimately, they embody the shared values of humanity and transcend borders to create a more connected and harmonious world.

*'Every man's ability may be strengthened or increased by culture' (John Abbot)*

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Seized counterfeit cosmetics and perfumes

## COUNTERFEIT GOODS COST CLOTHING, COSMETICS AND TOY INDUSTRIES

**€16 billion & nearly 200,000 jobs per year in Europe**

### Counterfeit goods cost clothing, cosmetics and toy industries €16 billion & nearly 200,000 jobs per year in Europe

• In the EU, Germany is the country most affected by counterfeits in the toy and clothing sector, while France is the most affected in the cosmetics sector.

• The clothing industry suffers the most from counterfeit goods, losing almost €12 billion of annual revenue (5.2 % of sales)

• The cosmetics sector and toy industry also have significantly lower sales due to counterfeit products with losses of €3 billion (4.8 % of sales) and €1 billion (8.7 % of sales)

• Fake goods mean fewer jobs: 160,000 fewer in the clothing sector, 32,000 fewer in cosmetics and 3,600 fewer in the toy sector

Clothing, shoes, cosmetics and toys – these gifts are on many consumers wish lists throughout the holidays and now in the sales period. But while these consumer goods generate turnover of hundreds of billions of euro in the European Union every year, they also fall victim to counterfeit goods, which can also have serious health and safety issues for consumers.

Fake goods in these sectors cost genuine manufacturers €16 billion in annual sales and, consequently, eliminate nearly 200,000 jobs in the legitimate economy. These findings come from a study published by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) that looks at the economic impact of counterfeiting on the clothing, cosmetics and toy sectors.

### A hidden cost with a big impact

Drawing on data from 2018-2021, the EUIPO study found that sales of legitimate clothing and footwear, cosmetics and toys suffered annual losses of



Seized counterfeit toys and goods



€12 billion, €3 billion and €1 billion, respectively.

Collectively across these sectors, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Austria incurred the largest losses, with nearly €8 billion in reduced sales of genuine goods.

However, knock-off goods impact some countries more than others, with significant differences across the types of goods.

The toy sector is the most affected by counterfeits; the report indicates that across the EU, the sector incurs an overall loss of 8.7 %, with double-digit percentages in more than half of EU countries. Malta (16.2 %), Croatia (14.2 %), Cyprus (14.1 %), Hungary (13.7%) and Slovenia (13.1 %) are five countries where toy sales are most susceptible to counterfeit goods.

With 334 million in lost sales, Germany is the country most impacted by fake toys and accounts for one-third of all lost sales in the EU in the toy sector.

The clothing and footwear industry, the largest sector the study analysed in terms of sales, faces a loss of around 5 % in Europe, with Cyprus (10.7 %), Ireland (10.2 %), Luxembourg (9.2 %), Lithuania (9.1 %) and Estonia (8.7 %).

Of the three sectors studied, the cosmetic sector suffered the least from counterfeit goods.

The EUIPO report found losses to genuine cosmetics producers amounting to slightly less than 5 % of total sales in the EU. The French cosmetics industry is the most affected in absolute terms, with €800 million in annual lost sales. The report found the highest losses in Bulgaria (8.7 %), Cyprus (7.9 %), Romania (7.9 %), Portugal (7.7 %) and Hungary (7.6 %).

In addition to monetary losses and impacts on the job market, the report notes that counterfeiting in the cosmetics and toys sectors, in particular, can pose significant health and safety risks for consumers. Such potentially harmful products account for 15 % of counterfeit articles seized at the EU's external borders, according to a 2022 EUIPO threat assessment of IP crime.

## I Counterfeit goods & jobs

The EUIPO's study of sales trends in these three sectors highlights the scale of counterfeiting for legitimate businesses, which suffer from decreased sales and, as a direct consequence, employ fewer people.

Germany, as the largest consumer market in the EU, loses out on nearly 40,000 jobs, according to the report. Other large countries experience losses in their clothing, cosmetics and toy sectors including Italy (24,241), Poland (18,244), Spain (15,044) and France (14,427).

The Executive Director of the EUIPO, João Negrão, said: "Counterfeit goods have real costs – for consumers, for brands and for our economies."

*This latest study shows the very real costs when it comes to lost revenue and jobs in the EU. The findings on counterfeiting highlight the valuable work the EUIPO is conducting through the Observatory and the important collaboration we have with EUROPOL, the European Anti-Fraud Office OLAF and the European Commission to identify and stamp out fake goods in the EU."*

## I Underlying factors

One important variable is EU consumers awareness and perceptions of fake goods. According to the EUIPO's IP Perception Study from June 2023, a third of Europeans find it acceptable to buy fakes when the price of the genuine product is too high. The proportion rises



João Negrão, Executive Director of the EUIPO

© CEPI/EDU

to half when it comes to young people. The study considers the share of people that acknowledge buying counterfeit goods, whether misled or intentionally in each country.

Additionally, the study relies on data from a joint EUIPO-EUROPOL report focused on polycriminality, which demonstrates that IP crime has links to other serious crimes, as well as an annual report published together with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union with data on border and internal detentions of counterfeit goods.

## I About the EUIPO

The EUIPO is one of the largest decentralised agencies of the European Union, based in Alicante, Spain. Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the EU Intellectual Property Office manages the registration of EU trade marks since 1994 and designs since 2003, both of which are intellectual property rights that cover the 27 Member States of the European Union. In 2023, another IP right, craft and industrial geographical indications, was added to the agency's portfolio. The EUIPO also carries out cooperation activities at EU and international level to create a level playing field in the world of IP and hosts the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights.



© EUIPO/EUROPA EU/PNG

The EU Intellectual Property Office's headquarters in Alicante, Spain



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023: EPPO WARNS THAT SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME CONTINUES TO FEAST ON EU REVENUE

**More than 330  
investigations into serious  
cross-border VAT fraud,  
with €11.5 billion worth of  
damage**

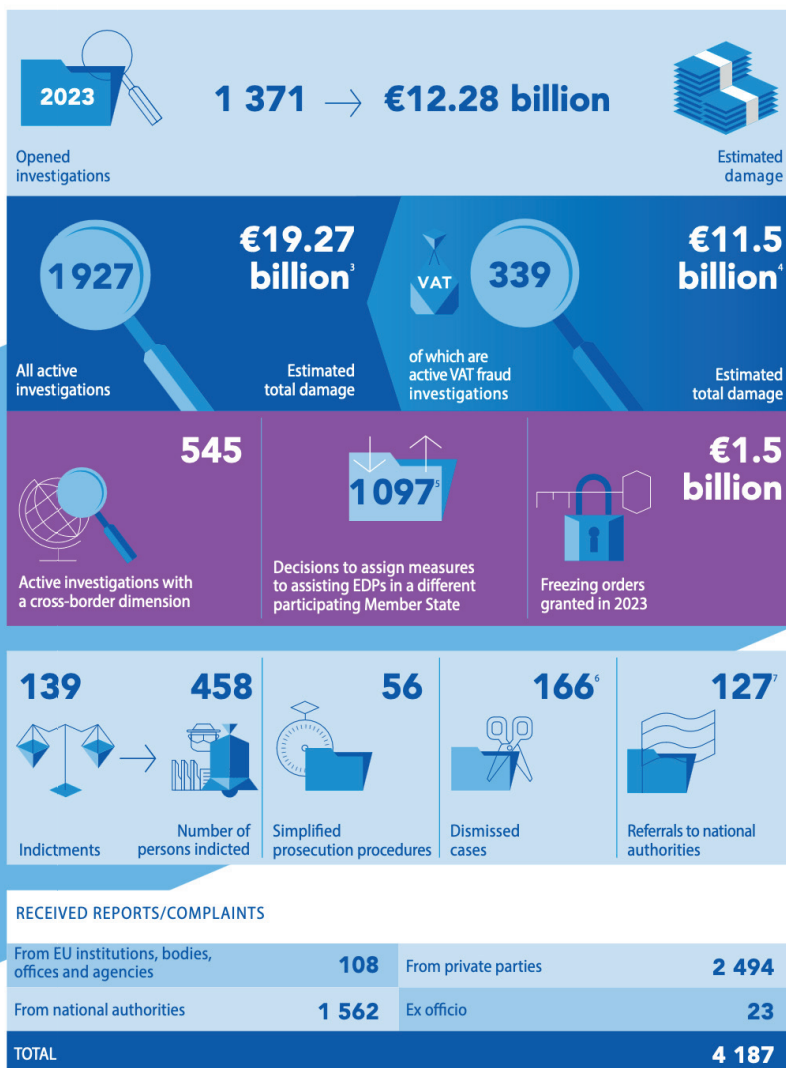
The latest Annual Report of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) shows that at the end of 2023, it had a total of 1 927 active investigations, with an overall estimated damage to the EU budget of €19.2 billion – 59% of which (€11.5 billion, corresponding to 339 investigations) was linked to serious, cross-border VAT fraud. This type of fraud often involves sophisticated criminal organisations, and is nearly impossible to uncover from a purely national perspective.

New sources of EU funding are also being targeted by fraudsters. By the end of 2023, the EPPO had 206 active investigations relating to the first NextGeneration EU funding projects, with an estimated damage of over €1.8 billion. This represents approximately 15% of all cases of expenditure fraud involving EU funds handled by the EPPO during the reporting period, but in terms of estimated damage, it corresponds to almost 25%. This number can only increase, in the context of the accelerated implementation of NextGenerationEU funding. In 2023, the EPPO also began to identify organised crime groups involved in this type of fraudulent activity.

## Organised crime is fuelled by defrauding the EU budget

*'The scale of fraud affecting the financial interests of the EU, in particular on the revenue side of the budget,*

### OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY DATA VALID ON 31 DECEMBER 2023





can only be explained by the heavy involvement of serious organised crime groups', warns European Chief Prosecutor Laura Kövesi.

*'In our investigations, we see serious organised crime groups financing VAT fraud operations with money obtained from their other criminal activities. We see the same specialised operators laundering money from VAT fraud and the other criminal activities of these groups. Our strategy should be to cripple the financial capacity of the serious organised crime groups.'*

In ongoing EPPO investigations, participation in a criminal organisation is most often found in connection with VAT carousel fraud schemes, or with customs fraud. However, criminal organisations also operate in the field of fraud involving EU funds, both in non-procurement fraud (for example, organised defrauding of agricultural funds), or procurement fraud (such as unlawful participation in multiple large-scale procurement procedures).

## Improved detection and performance

In 2023, the EPPO received and processed 4 187 crime reports, which is 26% more than in 2022. This increase has been driven mainly by reports from private parties (2 494 – 29% more than in 2022), as well as from national authorities (1 562 – 24% more than in 2022). This evolution proves that the level of detection of fraud affecting the financial interests of the EU in the participating Member States has further improved.

Last year, we opened 1 371 investigations, which is 58% more than in 2022 – corresponding to damage estimated at €12.28 billion. This is mostly the result of the combination of improved cooperation between the EPPO and the relevant national authorities, and the EPPO's determination to target criminal organisations particularly active in subsidy fraud (non-procurement expenditure fraud) and revenue fraud (VAT and customs).

In 2023, with 139 indictments filed (over 50% more than in 2022), the EPPO started to bring more perpetrators of EU fraud to judgment in front of national courts.

In line with its objective to focus on damage recovery, judges granted European Delegated Prosecutors freezing orders worth €1.5 billion, which is over four times more than in 2022.

However, this is still only a fraction of the vast illicit profits of criminal networks, which could exceed hundreds of billions annually, according to recent estimates. In light of this, the European Chief Prosecutor urges that the performance of the EPPO 'is not only a matter of elementary economic interest, it is also a matter of internal security'.

## Recovery of the proceeds of criminal activity

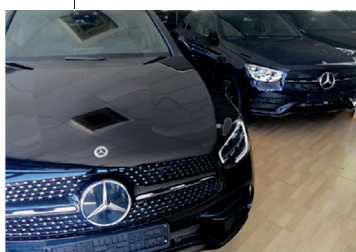
In 2023, 475 recovery actions took place in 19 of the participating Member States (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain). In total, the EPPO requested more than €1.53 billion to be seized, and the seizure of €1.5 billion was granted.

Final confiscations of more than €60 million were ordered by courts in definitively resolved cases. The single highest seizure was more than €9.9 million in monetary instruments. In eight cases, a total of more than €7.5 million was recovered before trial. Extended confiscation was requested in 22 instances, in order to restrain assets towards which some protective measures had been taken by the suspects to avoid confiscation. The EPPO made extensive use of value-based confiscation to enable recovery. The EPPO also made several confiscation requests (41) with the intention of securing possible civil actions.

The main assets seized were bank accounts, followed by real estate properties, vehicles, cash as well as shares, cryptocurrencies, gold and silver bars, paintings and luxury items. Criminal merchandise – such as electronic devices, machinery, equipment, clothing products, household goods, toys or e-bike components – has been seized and removed from the market, effectively depriving the criminals of the benefit of their illicit activities.



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# TIMELESS CHIC

## STANDOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY TRENDS

### FLORAL OR FRUITY

What fragrance will  
adorn your spring  
season?

Spring awakens  
and colours the air  
with fresher, lighter  
scents. Amid some of  
the legendary icons  
of perfumery and the  
blooming novelties of  
2024, you will find our  
selected bouquet of  
spring fragrances.

### | FLORAL SCENTS

The current trend in floral fragrances is a far cry from the image of grandmotherly perfumes. It's about reinvigorating classic floral notes and giving them an edgy and intense edge that is revolutionising the fragrance family. Imagine Victorian roses and striking irises mingling with vibrant light: they are blended with modern fruity accents and unexpected elements, giving an undeniable sense of modernity.

#### | Lavande 31 – Eau de Parfum (Le Labo)



Top, middle and base notes: Neroli, Bergamot / Lavender / Musk, Tonka, Amber.

Scent portrayal: This exquisite fragrance is for those who normally shy away from wearing scents. The harmonious blend of notes, never overpowering, gives it a gentle aura and its impeccably balanced composition culminates in a beautiful, gender-neutral finish.

([lelabofragrances.com](http://lelabofragrances.com))

#### | Inflorescence – Eau de Parfum (Byredo)



Top, middle and base notes: Pink freesia, Rose / Magnolia, Lily of the valley / Jasmine.

Scent portrayal: Rejoicing in the blossoming treasures of early spring. This floral fragrance captures the strength and fragility of wild garden blossoms as their awe-inspiring beauty unfurls.

([byredo.com](http://byredo.com))

#### | Daisy – Eau de Toilette (Marc Jacobs)



Top, middle and base notes: Wild berries / White violet, Jasmine / Sandalwood.

A single spritz and you're whisked away to a sun-drenched paradise of pure bliss... Such is the enchanting allure and effortless charm of this iconic scent from the famous 'Daisy collection' of perfumes.

([marcjacobsfragrances.com](http://marcjacobsfragrances.com))



#### | Red hibiscus – Cologne Intense (Jo Malone)

Top, middle and base notes: Mandarin / Red hibiscus, Jasmine sambac / Vanilla.

Scent portrayal: An exotic solar floral masterpiece born from an unexpected encounter with a vibrant and elusive flower in the middle of a tropical forest. The seductive essence of vibrant red hibiscus blends gracefully with the delicate allure of jasmine sambac, while a hint of sensual vanilla adds a touch of irresistible allure.

([jomalone.com](http://jomalone.com))







# TO VISIT

## THE NUMISMATIC COLLECTION OF VITTORIO EMANUELE III

On 9 May 1946, **Victor Emmanuel III**, who was about to go into exile, wrote to the then-Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi stating his desire to leave his collection of coins to the Italian people.

Held at the Quirinal Palace and then at the Italian Institute of Numismatics, the collection was transferred to the National Roman Museum by means of a Decree-Law of 5 November 1968. It was moved to the Museum and acquired by the Coin and Medal Collection in July 1971.

The collection represents a unique record of extraordinary historical and economic interest: it comprises more than **110.000 Italian minted coins**, from the **medieval** and **modern eras**, and a significant number of monetary weights, proofs and mint scraps.



Papal States. Silver half piastra depicting the Port of Ripetta in Rome (reverse), 1706  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Papal States. Silver bianco with standard-bearing lion (reverse), 1686  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Kingdom of Sardinia. Silver 5 lire coin with portrait of King Charles Felix (1821-1831) (obverse), 1821  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Kingdom of Italy. Gold 100 lire coin with portrait of King Victor Emmanuel III (obverse), 1912  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Lordship of Camerino. Silver gross with anchored cross (obverse), ca. 1458-1470  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Marquisate of Montferrat. Gold 4 ducat coin depicting a crouching deer (reverse), 1494-1518  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Papal States. Gold quadruple with portrait of Pope Urban VIII (obverse), 1634  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Principality of Bozzolo. Gold 4 doppia coin with portrait of Prince Scipione Gonzaga (obverse), 1639  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Kingdom of the Lombards. Gold tremisse with portrait of the sovereign, 7th century AD  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Patriarchate of Aquileia. Silver denarius of Volchero (Wolfer von Erla) with temple (reverse), 1204-before 1212  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Principality of Massa. Gold 2 doppia coin with portrait of Prince Alberico I Cybo-Malaspinga (obverse), 1588  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum



Duchy of Mirandola. Silver ducatone with depiction of Fortune (reverse), 1617  
Coin and Medal Collection of the National Roman Museum

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Opening hours

**Tuesday-Sunday**  
From 9.30 am to 7 pm

The first Sunday of each Month, the entrance to Italian State Museums is free of charge.  
The ticket office closes at 6.00 pm.

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