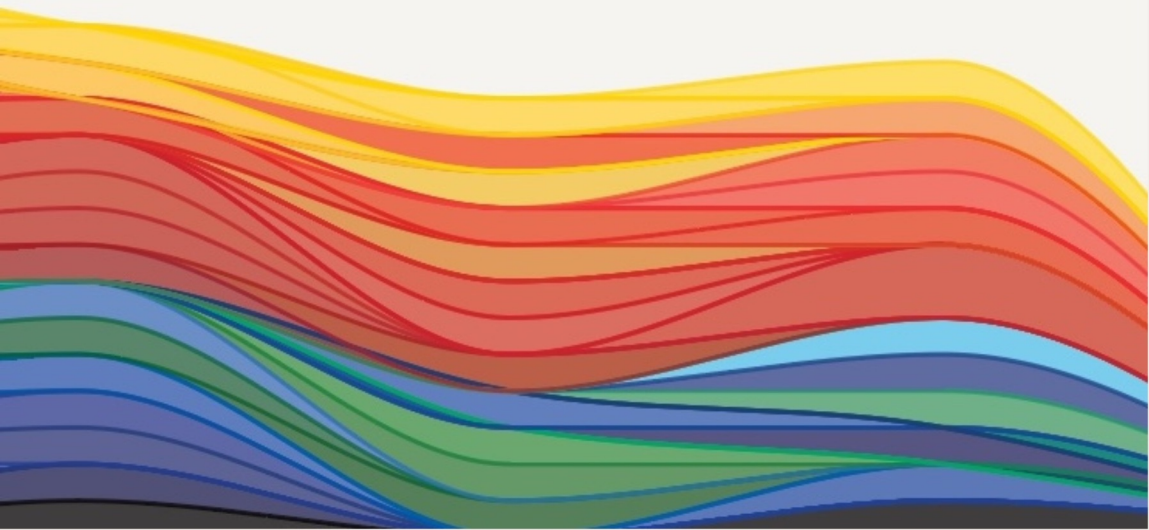


# Europe, visualised

33 data stories that help you  
understand our continent



This book's cover is inspired by the flag colours of each European country per region as defined by The European Correspondent. From the back to the front of the cover: the Balkans, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, and Western Europe.

What happens where you are  
probably started somewhere else.

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Published in Basel, Switzerland, by The European Correspondent.  
First edition, December 2024.

## Dear reader,

In our manifesto, we wrote that Europe must learn to be a continent to survive the challenges of the 21st century. In 2024, they have grown manifold.

Russia's relentless war has worn out Ukraine's defences, while Europe has become sluggish in providing life-saving military aid. Across the Atlantic, a new US president threatens to abandon Europe's security and impose trade tariffs. Meanwhile, 2024 is the hottest year on record, and global temperatures, for the first time, breached the 1.5°C goal.

On the ground, this trend made itself felt through devastating floods in Spain, Austria, Italy, and other countries.

At the same time, right-wing and far-right parties won big in this year's elections, slowing down European integration.

In short, our continent is at a breaking point. To avoid getting lost in the chaos, understanding the trends and ideas shaping our continent is more important than ever. And what better way to do so than through hard facts and figures?

We've compiled 33 visualisations that will help you understand where Europe stands today and where it's headed. It isn't all doom and gloom: read on to learn where women earn more than men, how Europe revolutionised its electricity generation, or who owns the most pets.

Enjoy!

Julius E. O. Fintelmann  
Editorial director

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**Gaps that shape  
lives**

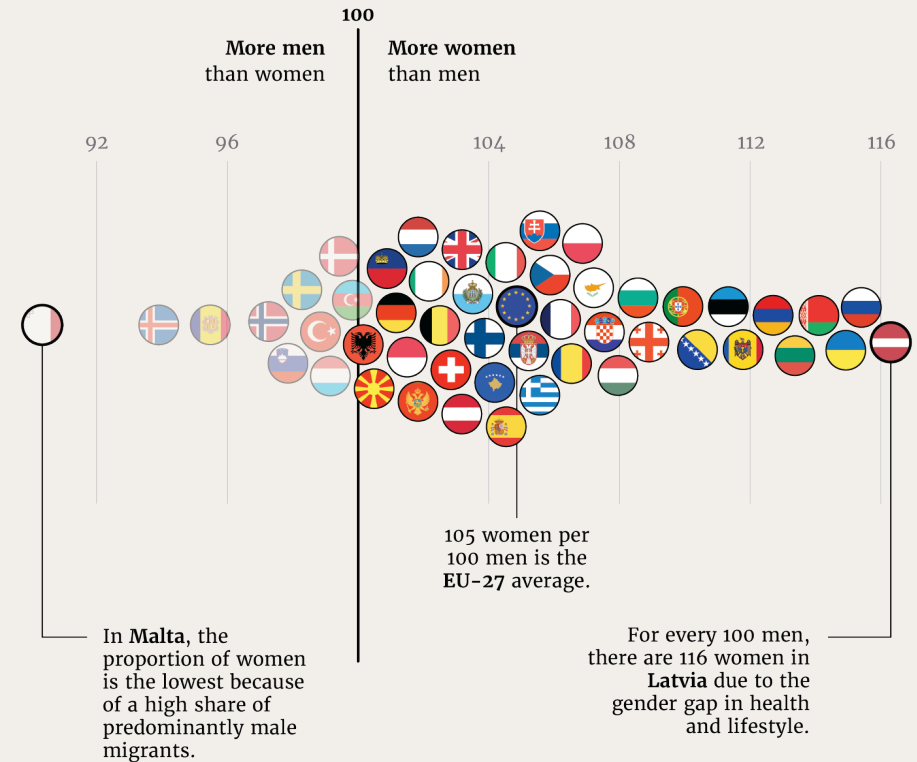
## Demographics

# Europe is female

Ever wondered where women outnumber men? Look no further than Latvia, where there are 116 women for every 100 men, making it one of the most imbalanced European countries when it comes to sex ratios. And Latvia isn't alone – across the EU, there are nearly 5% more women than men. Why the difference? Men tend to have shorter life expectancies due to higher rates of smoking, alcohol use, and suicide.

But flip the script in Malta. There, men outnumber women, with just 90 women for every 100 men. Why? Migration – most newcomers are young men looking for new opportunities.

by Laura Navarro Soler



## Equality

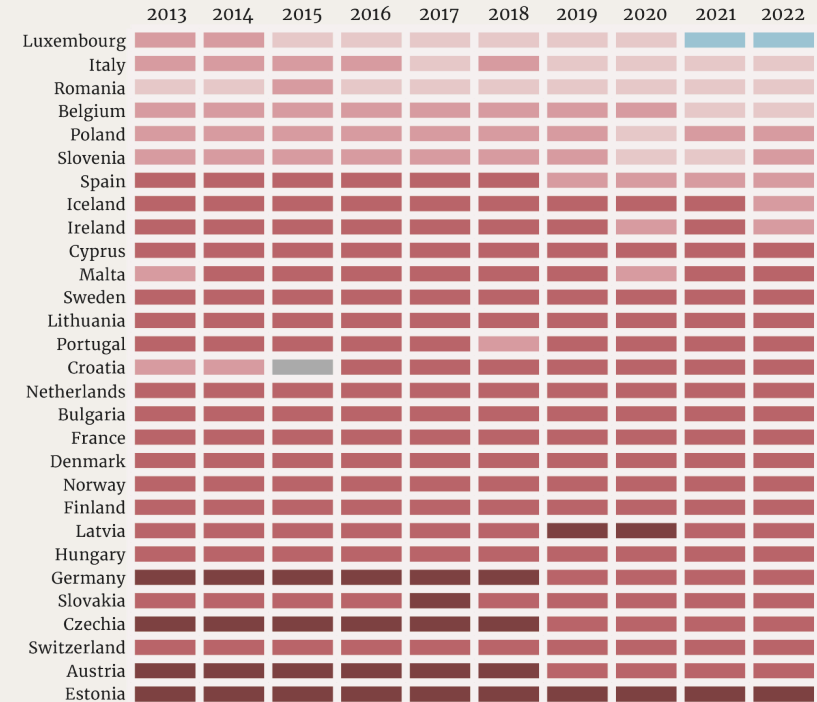
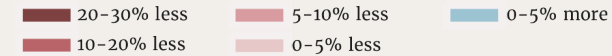
# Only in Luxembourg do women earn more than men

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (the last remaining grand duchy in the world!) is the only place in Europe where women make more money than men.

In this multilingual corner of the world, women earned 0.7% more than their male counterparts in 2022, according to the unadjusted gender pay gap. Luxembourg consistently ranks as one of the world's wealthiest countries per capita, with a strong economy driven by finance, steel, and technology.

by Sebastian Gräff

How much do women earn in relation to men:



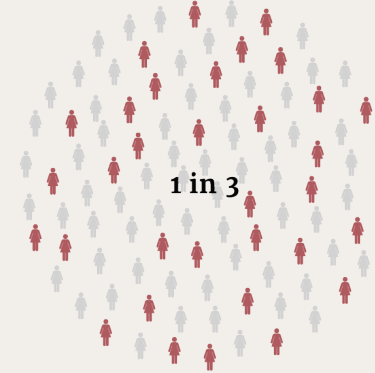
# Violence everywhere

Chances are, you know more than one woman who has endured physical or sexual violence from a partner. You probably even know someone who's been raped. And yet: you might never hear about it.

The real figures on abuse are far worse than what's reported, mainly because of distrust towards the police. That's what a study involving interviews with 42,000 women in all EU member states found.

by Sebastian Gräff

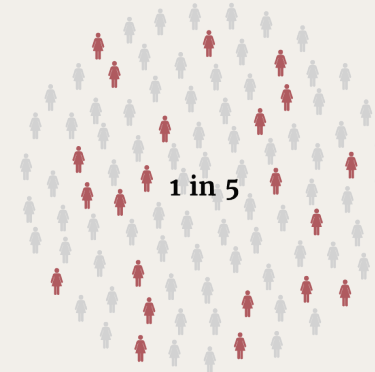
Physical and/or sexual violence



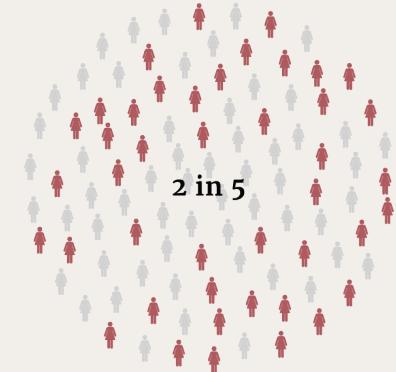
Rape



Physical and/or sexual violence from a partner



Psychological abuse from a partner



## Wealth inequality

# The wealth divide

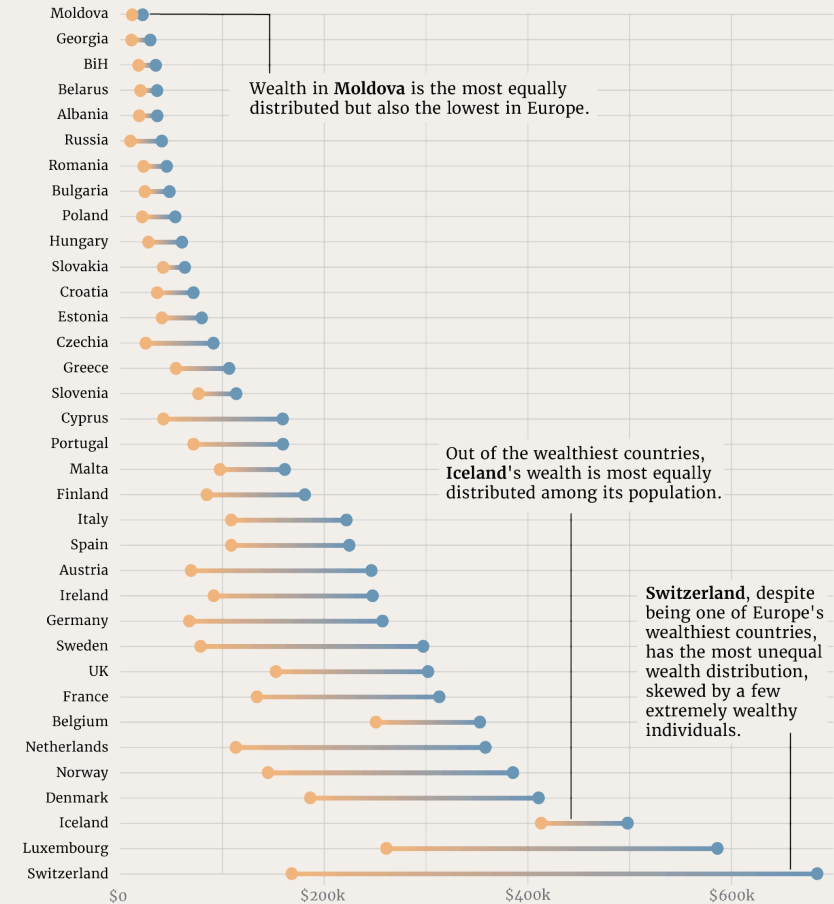
Let's talk about wealth. When measuring who's got how much money, the mean (average) wealth can be wildly misleading, thanks to a handful of billionaire outliers throwing off the numbers. Instead, the median wealth represents the middle point, showing what a typical adult owns.

A wide gap between these two numbers means high inequality – just look at Switzerland. While it's overall wealthy, the ultra-rich tip the scales. But in Moldova, the gap is tiny, hinting at a more level playing field (though the pie is way smaller). And then there's Iceland: rich and somewhat balanced.

The graph visualises wealth before any taxes.

by Mandy Spaltman

The difference between **mean** versus **median** wealth per adult in USD as a measure of wealth inequality.



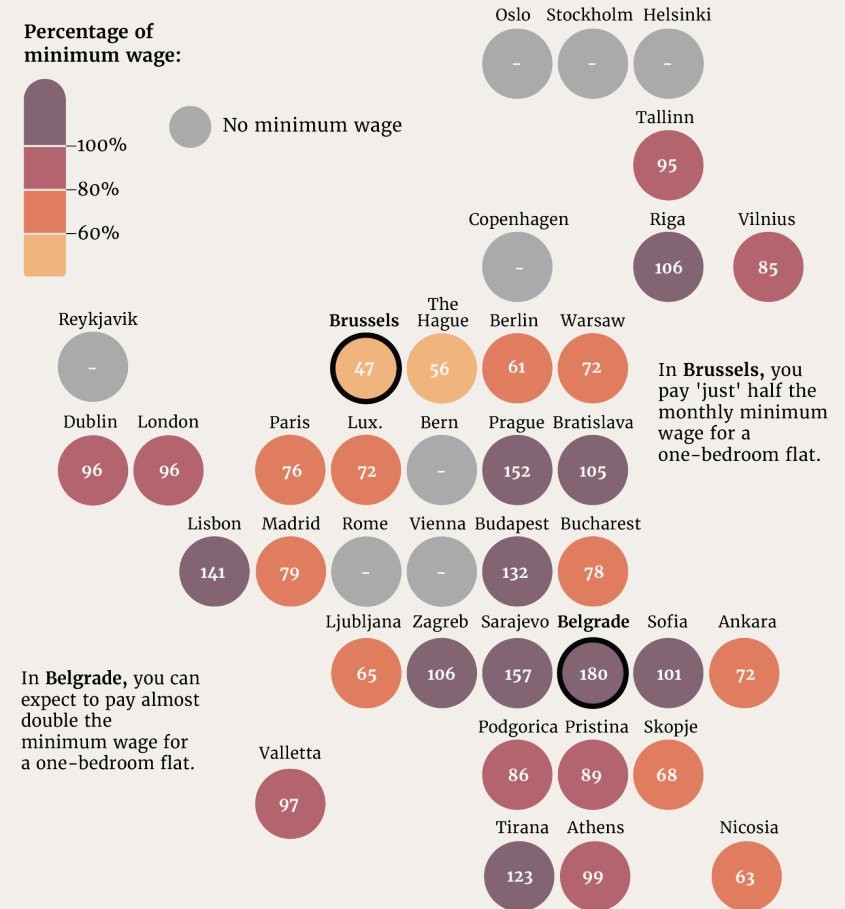
## Cost of living

# Where housing is the most expensive

Housing costs are skyrocketing across Europe, but the burden depends on your zip code – especially for those earning the least. In Belgrade, renting a one-bedroom apartment can swallow nearly double the already low monthly minimum wage.

Some cities have found ways to keep rents low. For example, Vienna invests €450 million annually in affordable housing, mainly through building and renovating subsidised dwellings. It also champions apartments owned by cooperatives formed by residents, which keep private investors out.

by Sebastian Gräff



## European McEconomics

The iconic Big Mac isn't just a fast-food staple; it's also an economic barometer. The Big Mac Index measures purchasing power by comparing the price of McDonald's signature burger across countries.

But here's the crux: even when considering the GDP per capita, the price differences are still hard to swallow. It turns out the cost of a Big Mac can say a lot about a country's economy – and your wallet.

by Hanna Huld

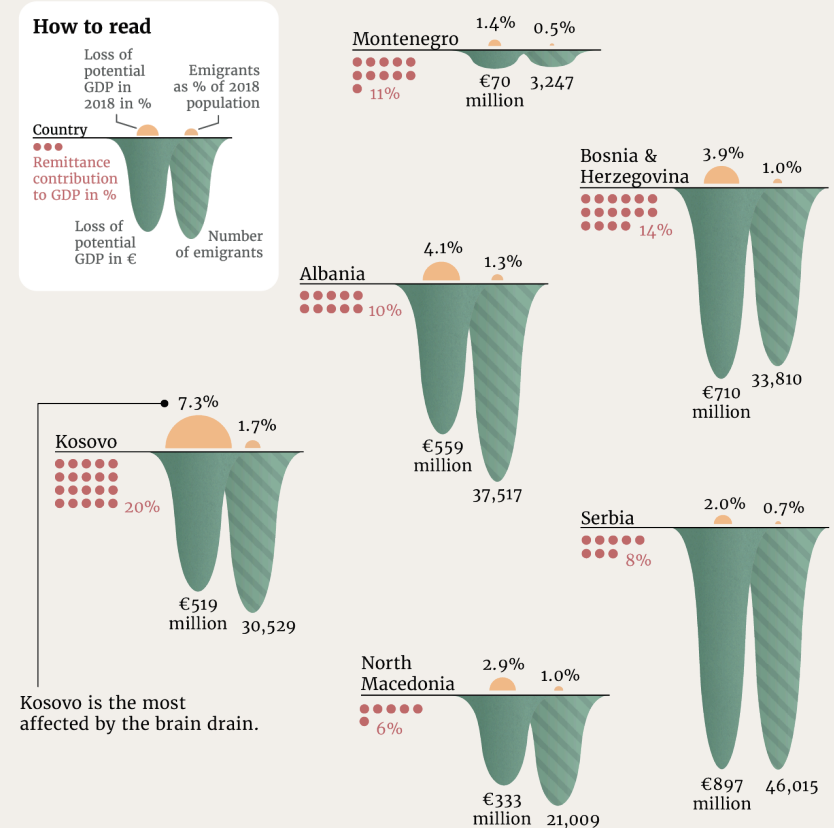


## The costly Balkan brain drain

The Western Balkans are seeing up to one-third of their population pack their bags. Mostly young and educated, they seek better futures abroad, leaving behind economies short-staffed and societies unbalanced.

Remittances help keep the lights on, especially in places like Kosovo, where they make up 19% of the GDP in 2018. But since they go directly to individual families, they only cover daily expenses, not long-term growth. The real question is: how can a region thrive when its greatest asset keeps heading for the exit door?

by Mandy Spaltman





# Europe at war

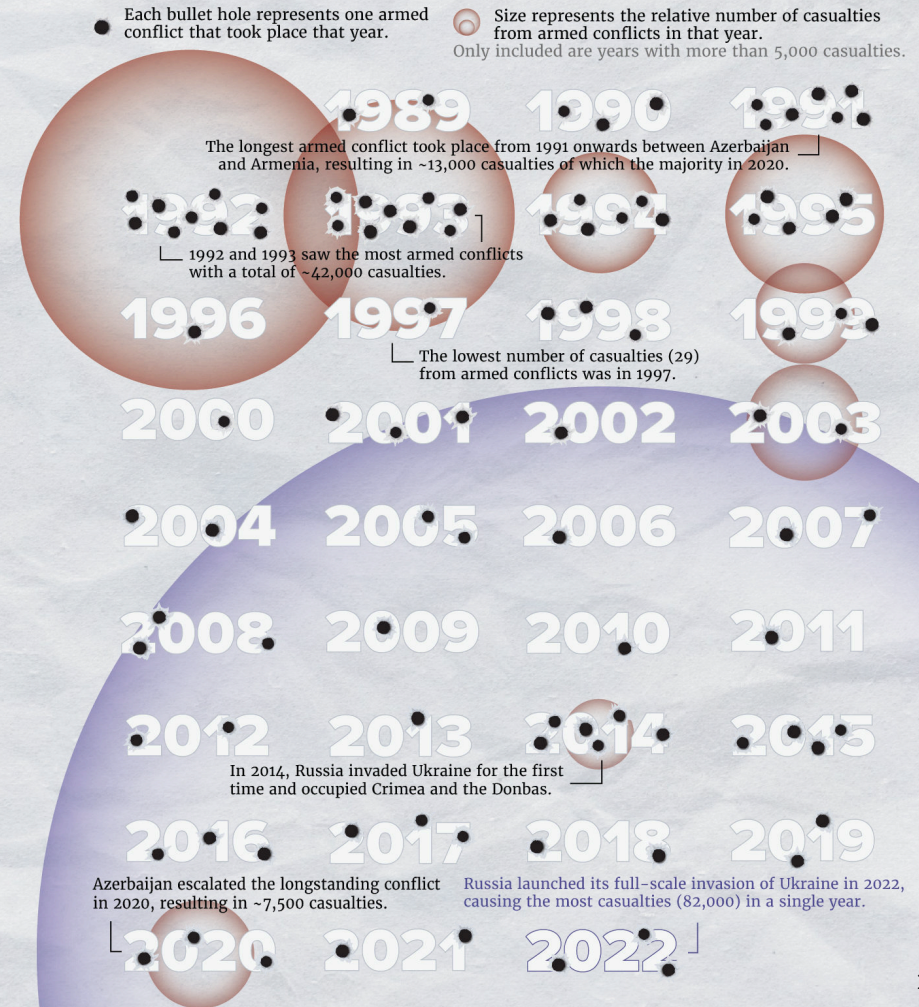
## Conflict

# The recent history of armed conflicts in Europe

Europe has seen many armed conflicts in its day. Since 1989, there have been 31 individual armed conflicts that resulted in at least 200,000 civilian and military casualties. By far the biggest one yet: Russia's war against Ukraine.

Estimating a precise number of casualties is difficult, given authorities' unwillingness to report them accurately and the ongoing occupation of Ukrainian territory.

by Mandy Spaltman



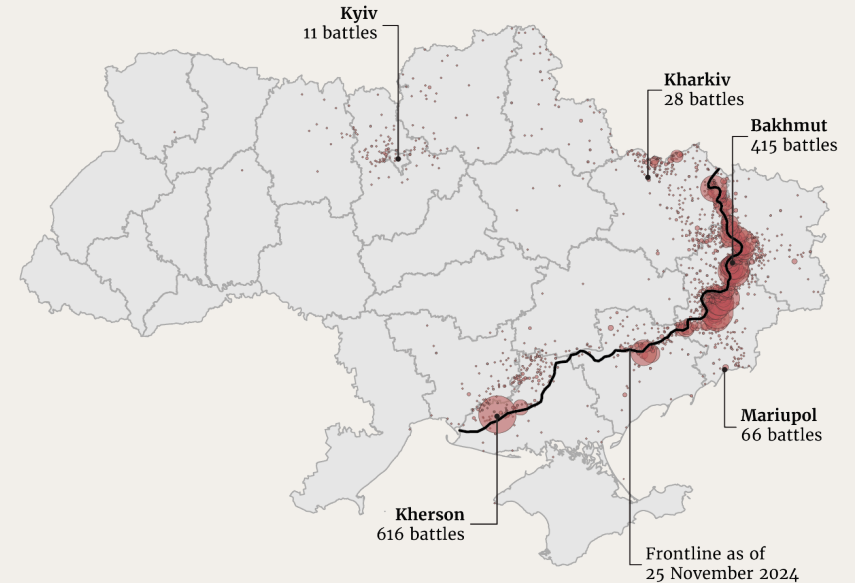
## Continuously waging war

It's a myth that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has, since its start, calmed down. In the fall of 2024, more battles than ever before were recorded. In October alone, the leading NGO on conflict data, ACLED, counted 1,857 battles – an average of 60 per day.

Meanwhile, there hasn't been a single day without missile or drone attacks on Ukraine from September to December 2024, when this book went to print.

by Laura Bejder Jensen and Meike Eijsberg

Number of battles since start of war:



An average of **889 battles** were fought in Ukraine every month since 20 February 2022.

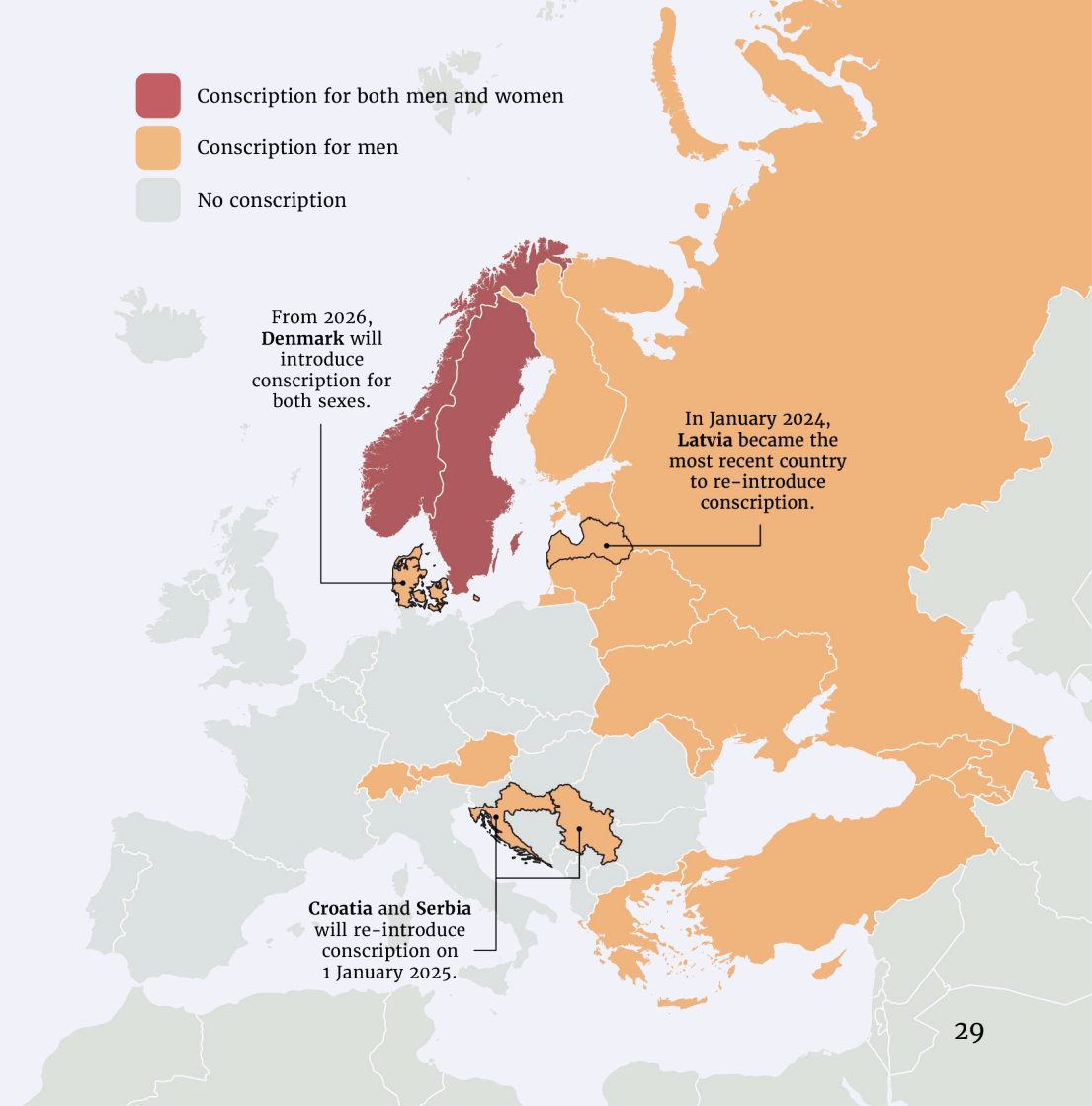
## Conscription

# Where is mandatory military service enforced?

After decades of abolishing mandatory military service, European countries are reintroducing conscription in response to Russia's war in Ukraine. In some countries, this is urgently needed as they face manpower shortages and shrinking army sizes.

Germany's Bundeswehr, for example, had 1,537 fewer service personnel at the end of 2023 than a year before, according to the parliament's army commissioner. Meanwhile, the UK's 2021 defence review concluded that the army was at its lowest strength since 1714. Looks like the era of "lean" armies may be running out of steam.

by Sebastian Gräff



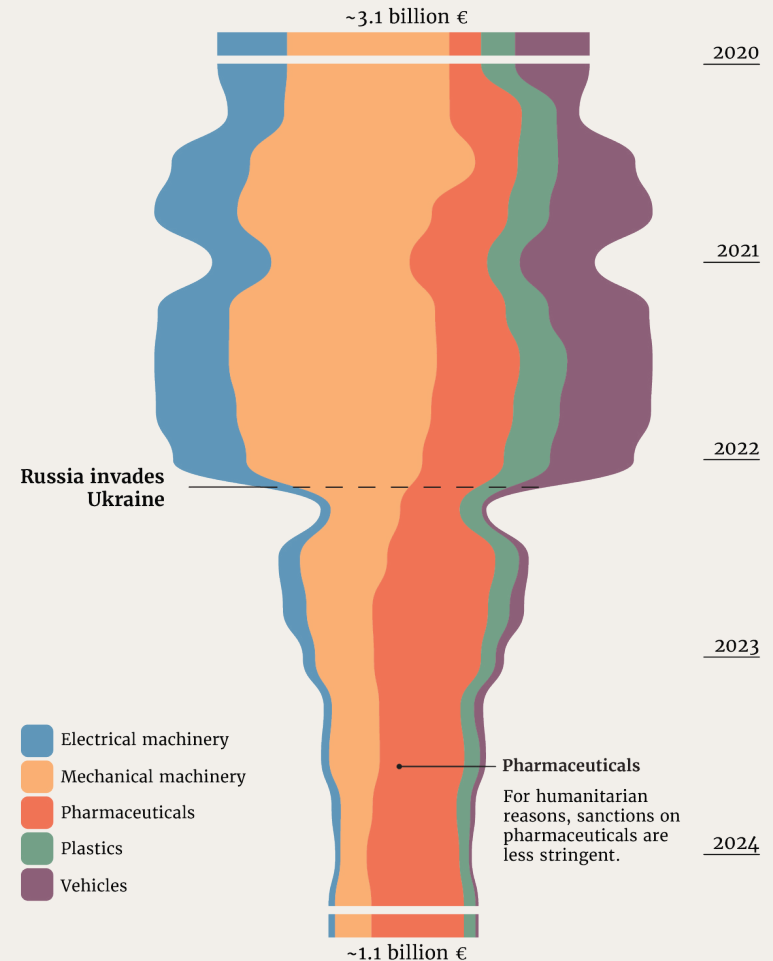
## Sanctions

# How have the EU sanctions affected exports to Russia?

To hit Russia where it hurts, the EU has imposed extensive sanctions on trade. The list of items that can no longer be exported to Russia is as long as the Siberian winter. It includes technology such as advanced semiconductors, chemicals, and equipment related to energy, aviation, and maritime industries, as well as luxury goods.

Exports to Russia totalled €89.2 billion in 2021. This figure dropped to €55 billion in 2022 and further to €38.3 billion in 2023, representing a 57% decrease from 2021. Why hasn't it dropped to zero? According to the EU, humanitarian reasons and the protection of European business interests keep the door slightly open.

by Laura Bejder Jensen, Yanika Borg, and Sebastian Gräff



# **Environment, energy, and E.coli**

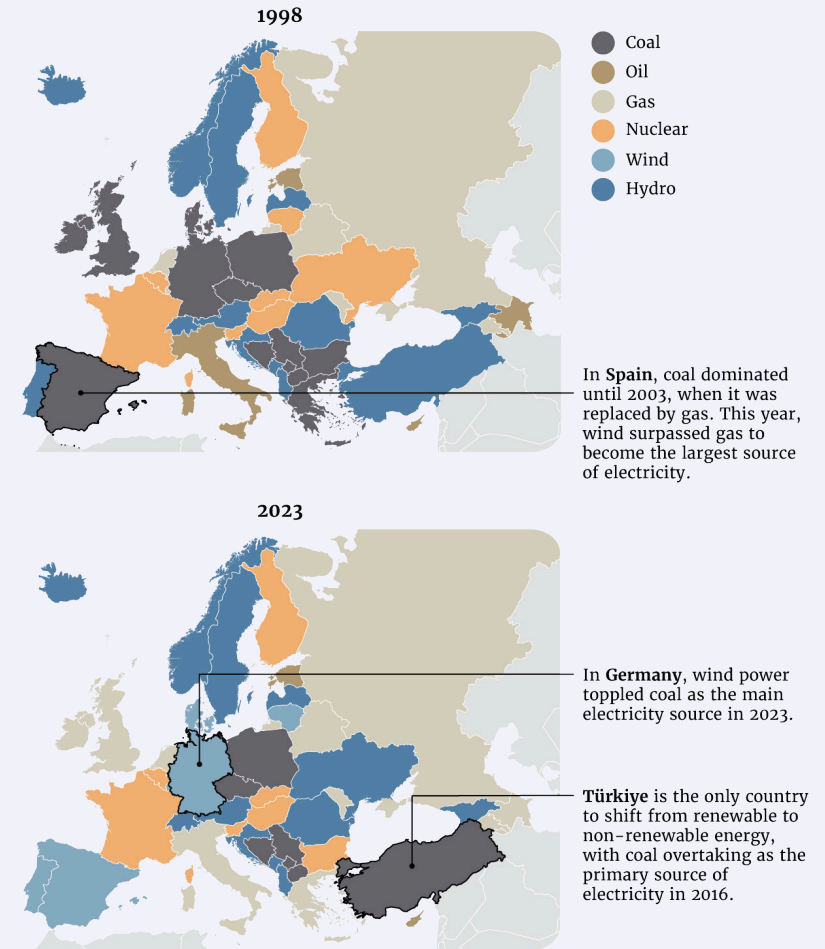
## Transformation

# Europe's energy (r)evolution

The climate crisis demands transformations in virtually every industry, but especially in the energy sector, which is responsible for more than 75% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions. And while we're still far from overcoming the challenges posed by the climate crisis, there's good news: Europe's energy landscape has significantly shifted over the past 25 years.

12 countries have completely transformed their primary electricity source, with many embracing renewables like wind and hydropower. While this transition is monumental, we're just over halfway to the 2030 target of a 42.5% share of renewables in the EU's energy consumption.

by Paula Lago



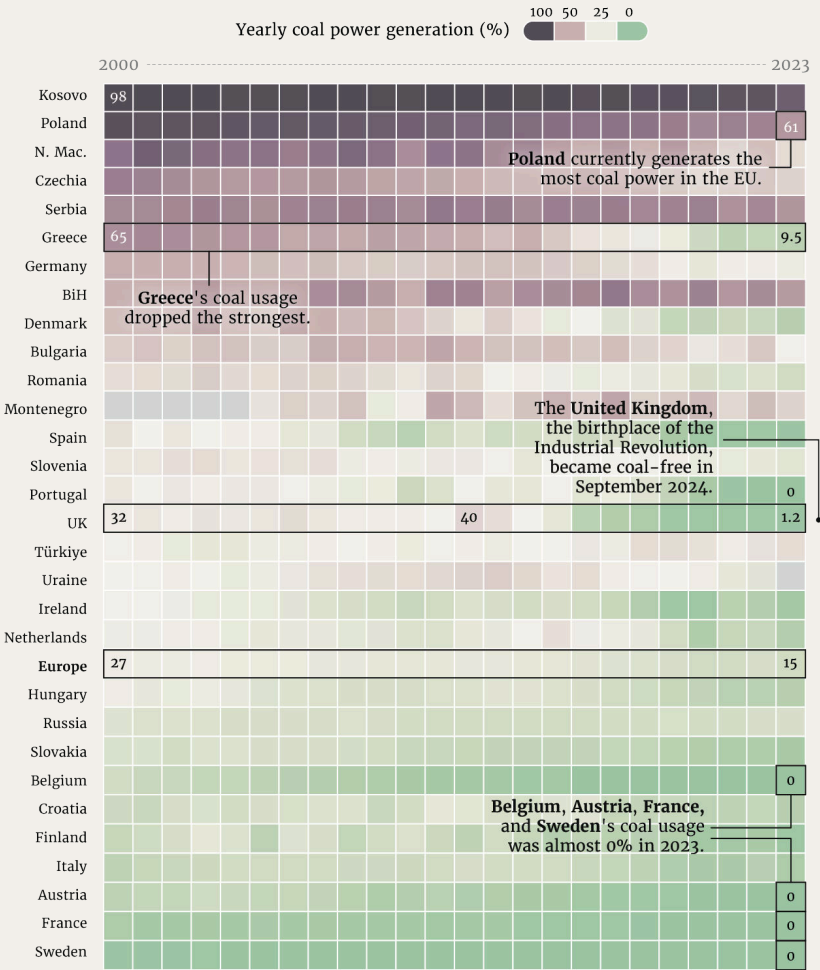


# Road to coal-exit

In 2024, the UK – the cradle of the Industrial Revolution – switched off its last coal-fired power plant, closing a chapter in energy history. Europe's coal dependence has dropped dramatically, from 27% in 2000 to just 12% in 2023. Countries like Austria, Belgium, Portugal, and Sweden have followed the UK's lead, ditching coal entirely.

But coal's story isn't over. In 2023, Kosovo generated a staggering 88% of its electricity from coal, while Poland relied on it for 61%. Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Türkiye are burning more coal now than a few years ago. Still, the transformation across Europe remains enormous.

by Laura Navarro Soler





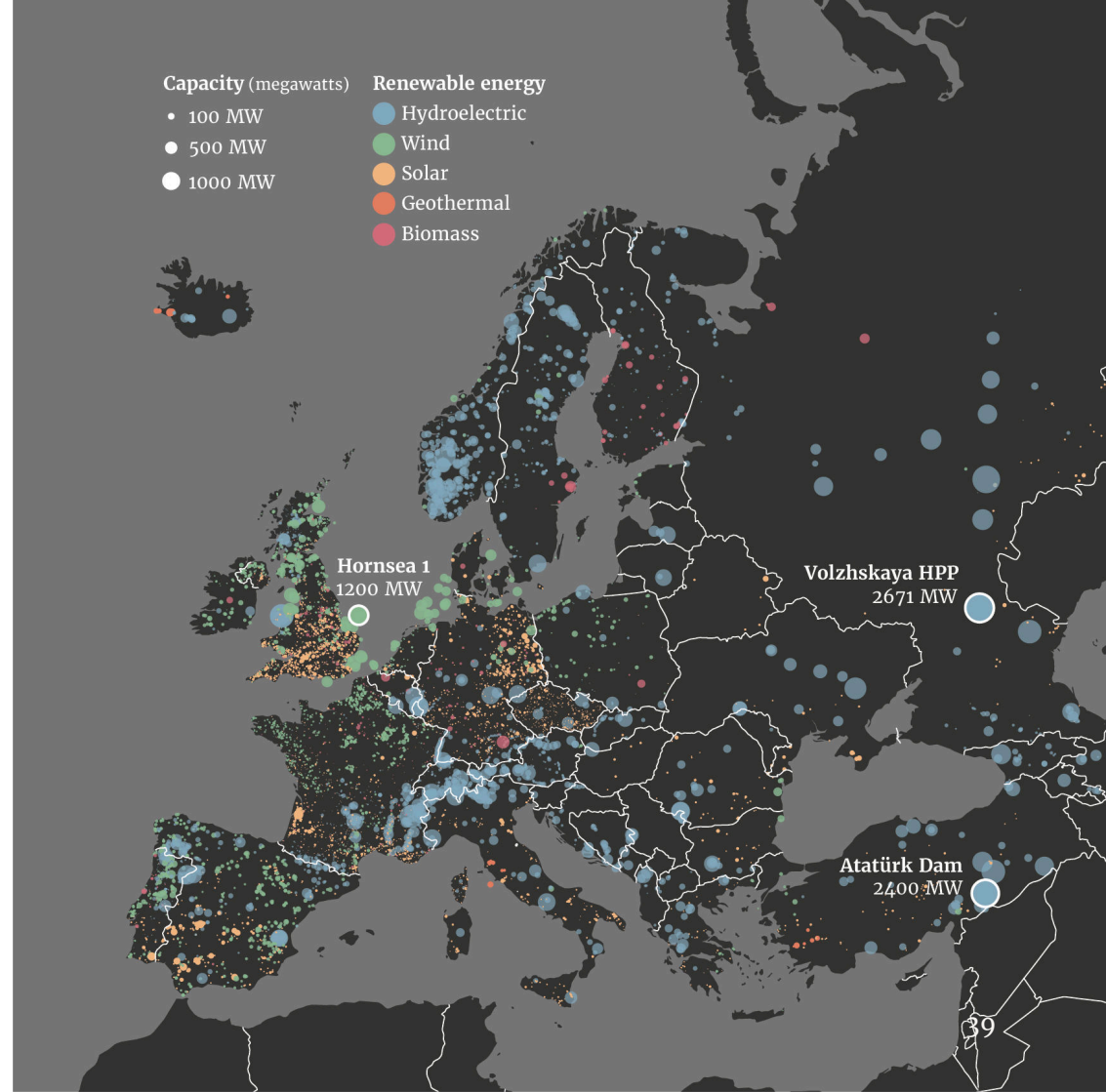
## Renewable energy

# Renewables in Europe

Among the largest renewable energy producers are hydropower plants like Russia's Volzhskaya HPP (2,671 MW) and Türkiye's Atatürk Dam (2,400 MW). These gigantic dams stand in rugged landscapes where rivers can power entire regions.

Meanwhile, wind farms line the North Sea coastline, with projects like the UK's Hornsea 1 (1,200 MW), while sun-soaked fields in Southern Spain and France boast sprawling solar farms.

by Sebastian Gräff



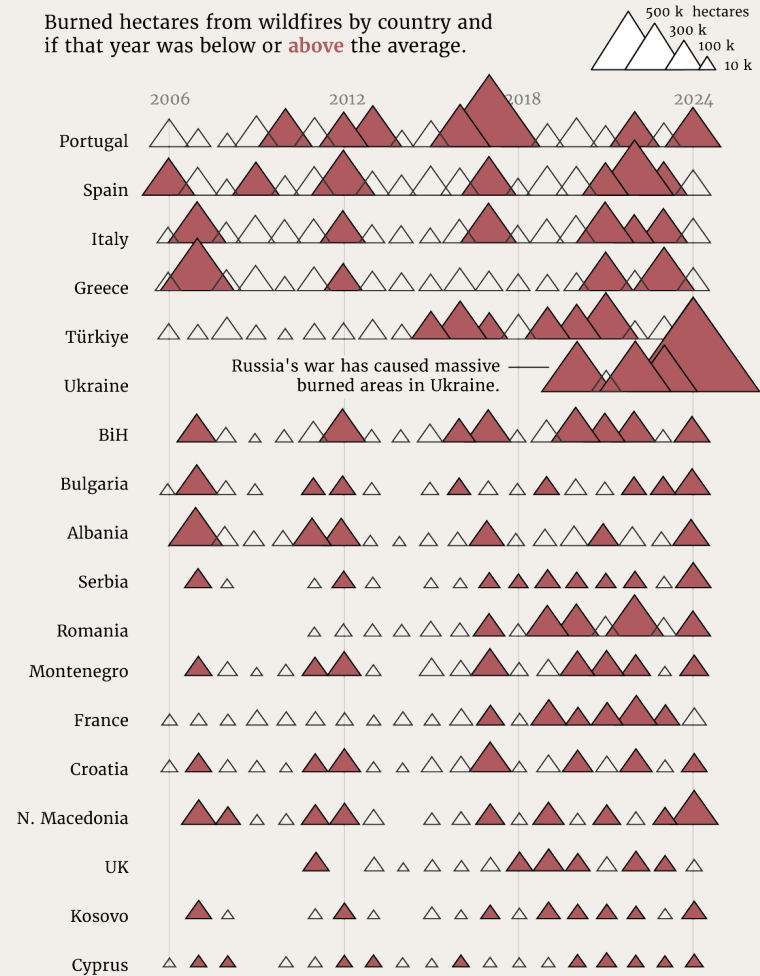
## Wild war fires

Wildfires are always destructive and unpredictable – but wars make them far worse. Military conflict sparks fires through shelling, explosions, and grid damage, while the climate crisis worsens drought and heat.

In Ukraine, 1.4 million hectares of forest – an area the size of Montenegro – have been scorched by Russia between, amounting to a war crime. In 2024 alone, 900,000 hectares, nearly the size of Cyprus, went up in flames until 16 November 2024, making Ukraine the most fire-affected European country in the past two years.

by Laura Navarro Soler and Mandy Spaltman

Burned hectares from wildfires by country and if that year was below or **above** the average.



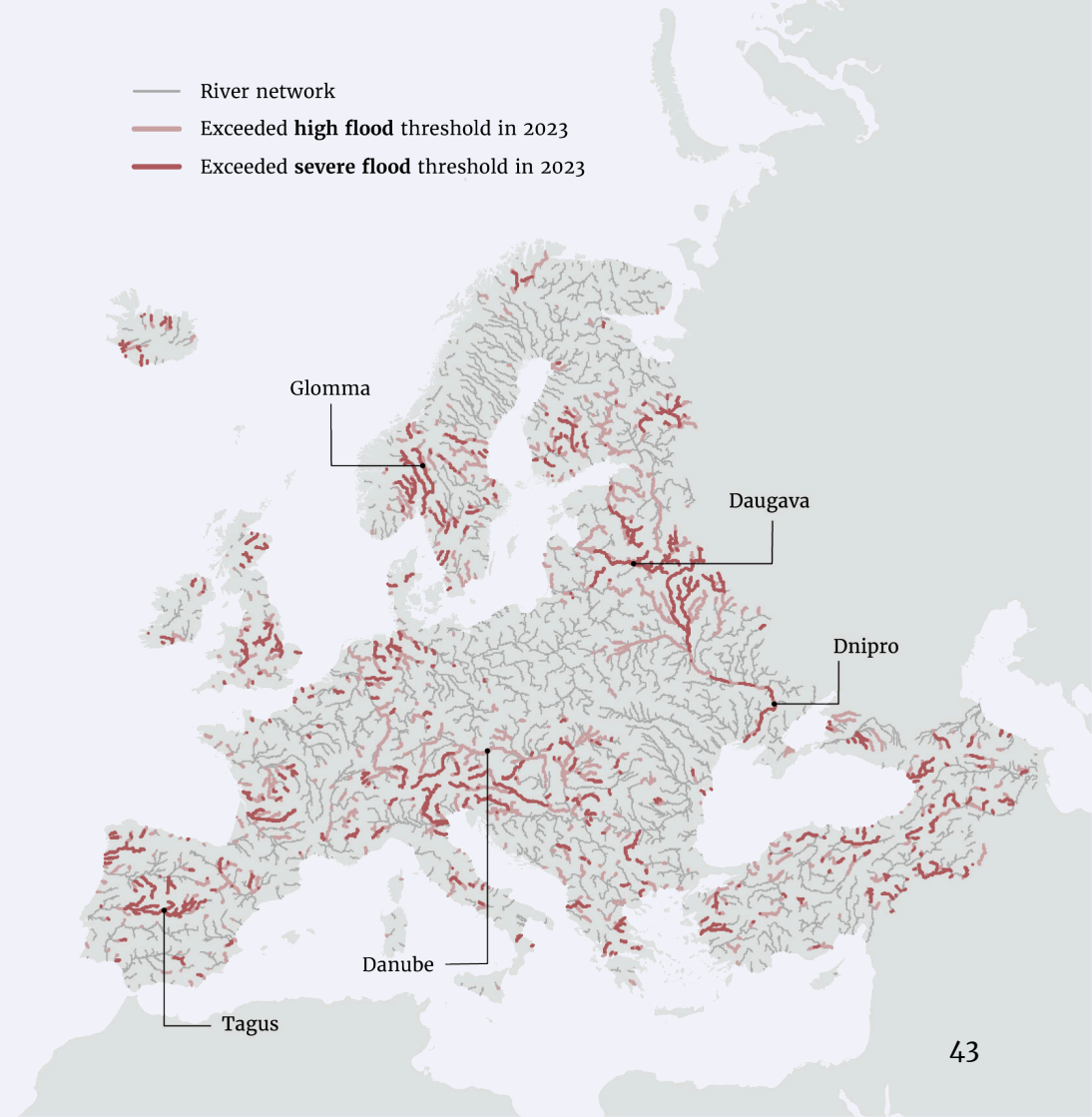
## Flooding

# Europe's rivers are overflowing

One in eight Europeans lives in a high-risk flood zone, where extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe. In 2024, floods devastated entire regions in Spain, Italy, Austria, Czechia, and others, often caused by fast overflowing rivers after torrential rainfall.

What can cities do to prevent such tragic floods? Early-warning systems help evacuate people fast, and restoring rivers to their natural bendy state usually slows down flood formation.

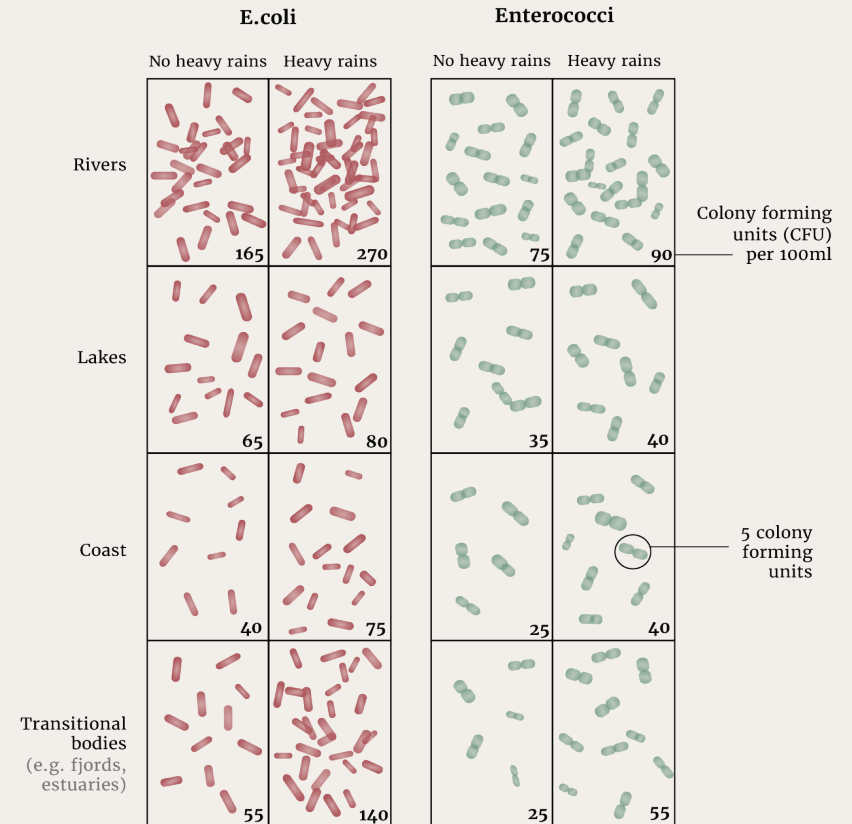
by Laura Navarro Soler and Sebastian Gräff



# Climate crisis as a public health threat

Floods aren't just a natural disaster but a public health emergency. Floodwaters form a toxic cocktail of oil, heavy metals, industrial chemicals, and raw sewage – a perfect storm for waterborne diseases. Bacteria like E.coli and enterococci can cause diarrhoea and infections.

by Hanna Huld



## Climate crisis

# European seas are rising – but not everywhere

Rising seas don't spell floods for everyone. While cities like Barcelona, Gdańsk, and Istanbul brace for sea levels expected to climb up to 0,7 meters by 2100, this won't happen in Northern Europe.

Take Luleå in Sweden. It's likely to see decreasing sea levels, in part thanks to post-glacial rebound – where the land is bouncing back after being squashed by ancient ice sheets.

by Sebastian Gräff



## Flood risks

# The Netherlands is drowning

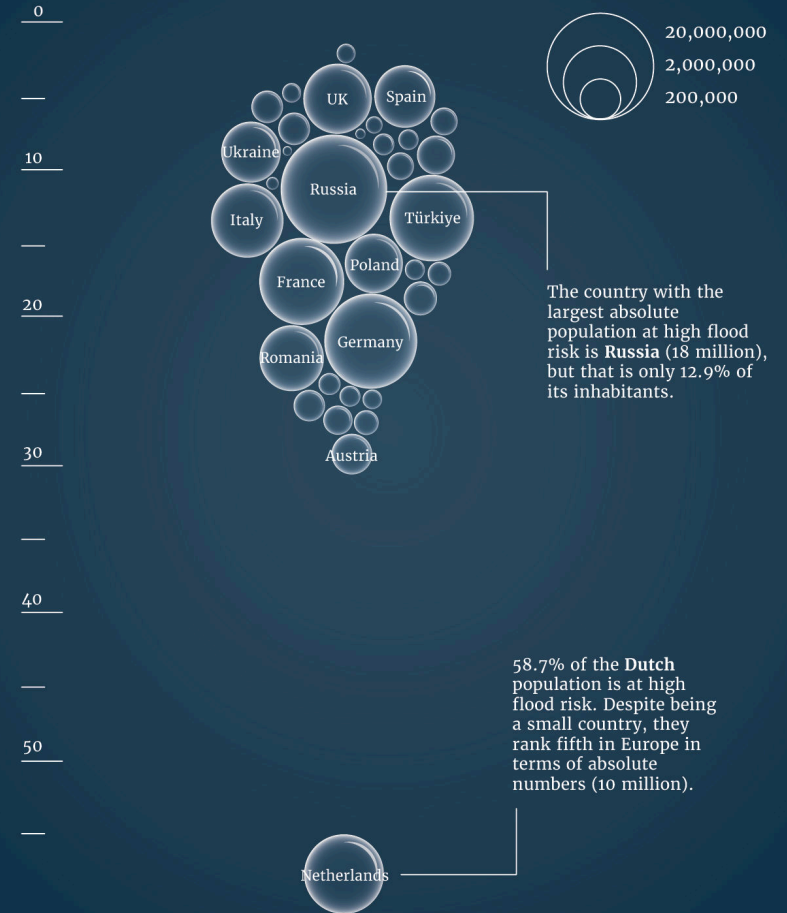
A quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level, putting the Dutch at the highest flood risk in Europe, ahead of even famously flood-prone countries like Bangladesh.

But floods are no news there. Since the catastrophic 1953 flood breached dykes in over 90 places and claimed 1,800 lives, the country has prioritised flood control and built the Delta Works, a jaw-dropping system of dams, sluices, locks, dykes, levees, and storm surge barriers.

by Mandy Spaltman

% population at high flood risk

Absolute population at high flood risk



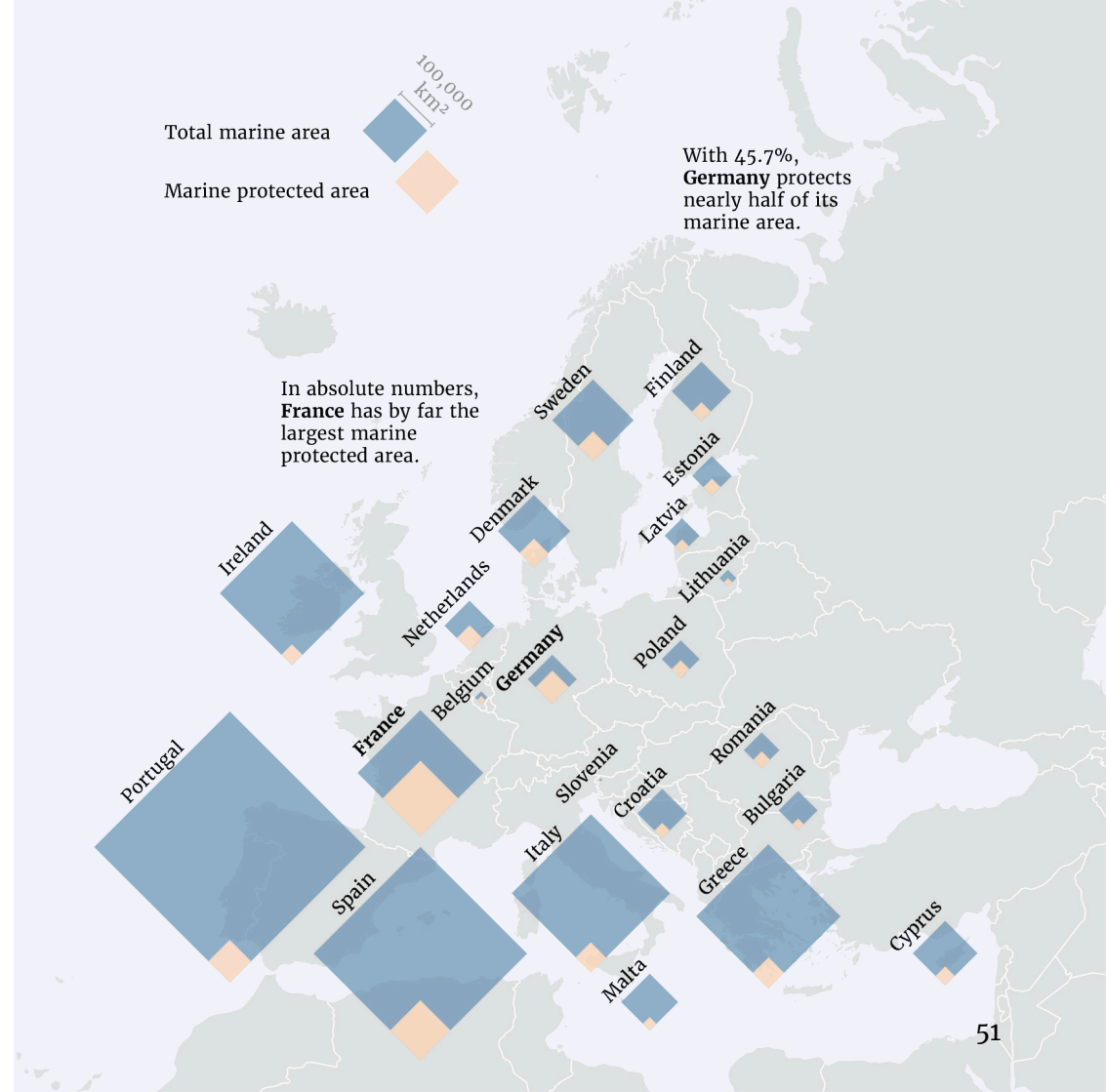


## Which seas are protected

Natura 2000 is a network of protected areas based on the Birds Directive of 1979 and the Habitats Directive from 1992 that aims to safeguard habitats and species in the European Union.

As part of its biodiversity strategy, the EU has set an ambitious target to protect 30% of all EU seas by 2030. Currently, 8% of marine areas are protected by Natura 2000, which, when combined with complementary national designations, adds up to 12%.

by Juliana Regoso





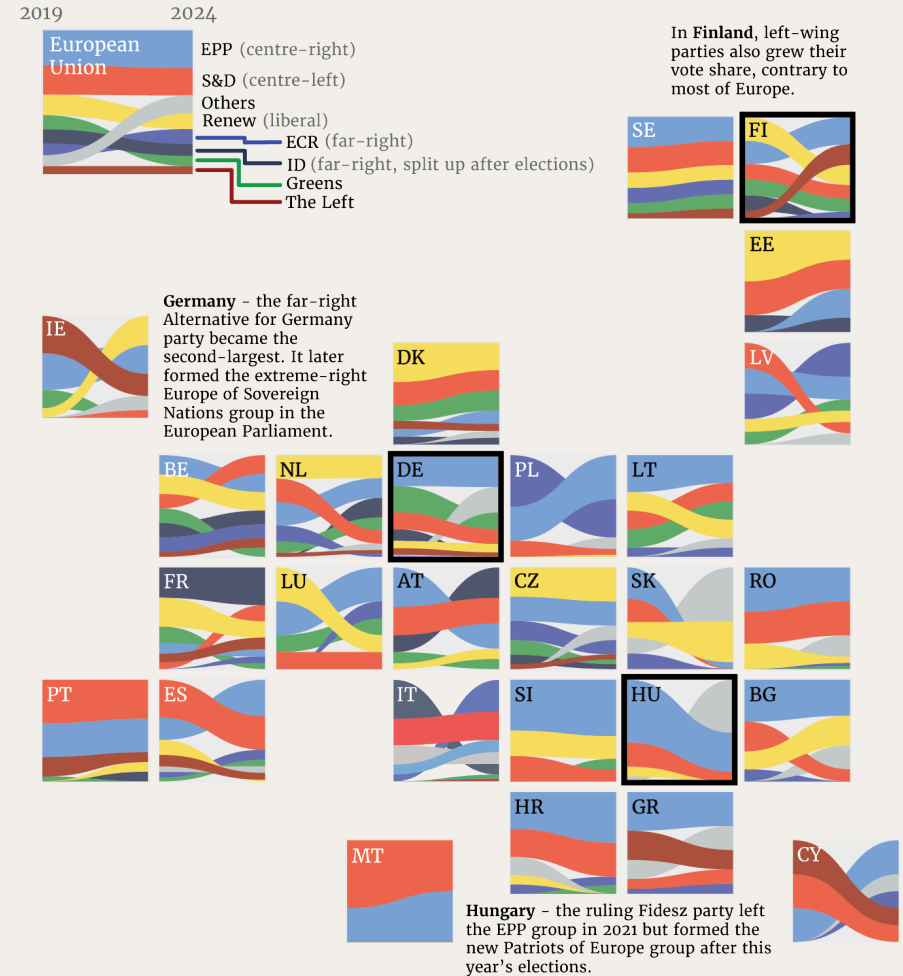


## EU elections reshuffled parties' share

Europe's biggest political event in 2024 was the European elections in June. They led to a victory for conservative to far-right parties and a right-wing dominance in the European Parliament. More than half of its members are from the centre-right European People's Party or far-right groups like the European Conservatives and Reformists, the Patriots of Europe, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations – the latter two formed out of the previous Identity and Democracy group.

However, bucking the broader rightward trend, countries like Finland and Lithuania saw notable gains for left-wing parties.

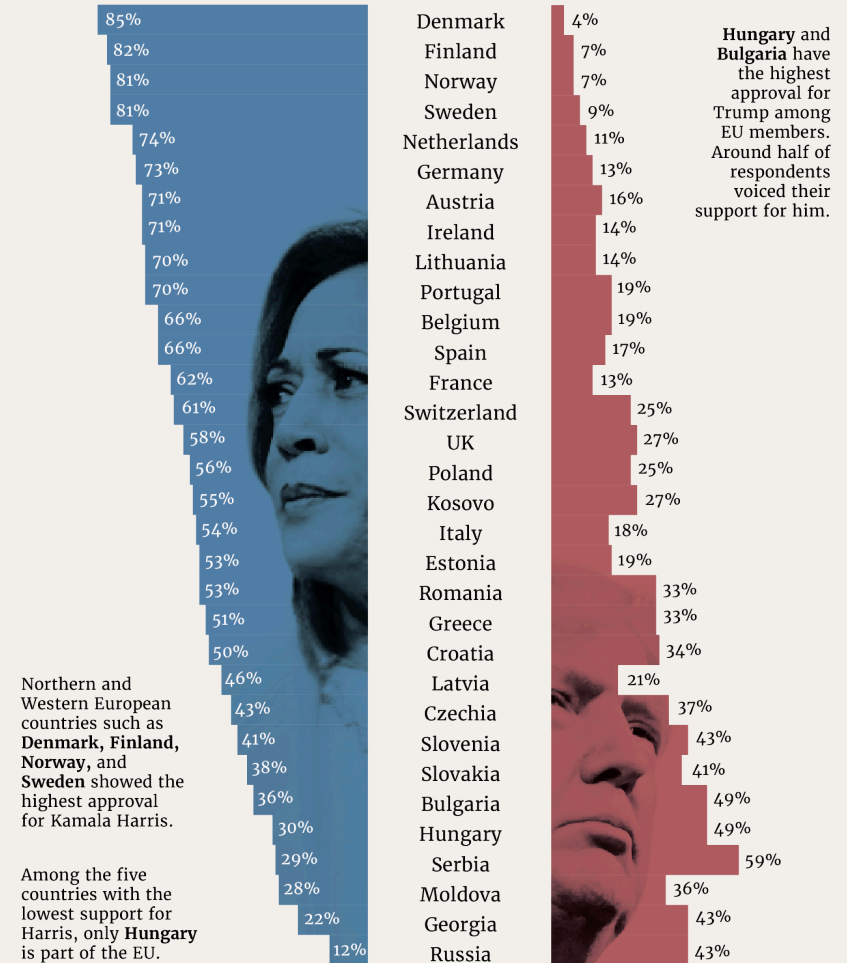
by Sebastian Gräff



## Europe wanted Kamala Harris

When US citizens vote, many outsiders wish they could have a say, given the global impact of the US elections. Polls suggest that most Europeans, if asked, would have preferred Kamala Harris over Donald Trump. Harris was the favoured candidate in 24 countries – though not in Serbia, for instance, where 60% of the voters supported Trump.

by Sebastian Gräff



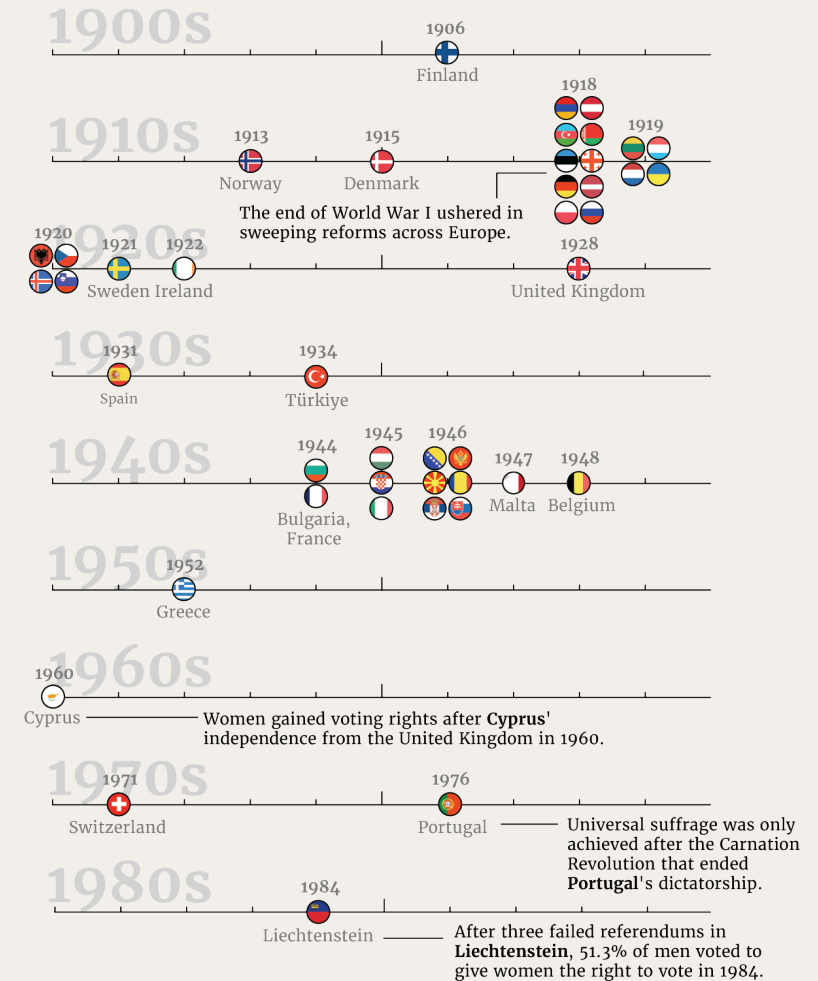
## Fundamental rights

# Women's right to vote

As we leave the big election year of 2024, it seems obvious that women have the right to vote. Yet this right is the achievement of a centuries-long fight. Finland paved the way in 1906, but progress across the continent was far from smooth. Many countries initially limited voting rights to property-owning or educated women, with universal suffrage coming much later.

This right came shamefully late in some countries – Switzerland in 1971 and Liechtenstein only in 1984, after a narrow vote by men.

by Yanika Borg



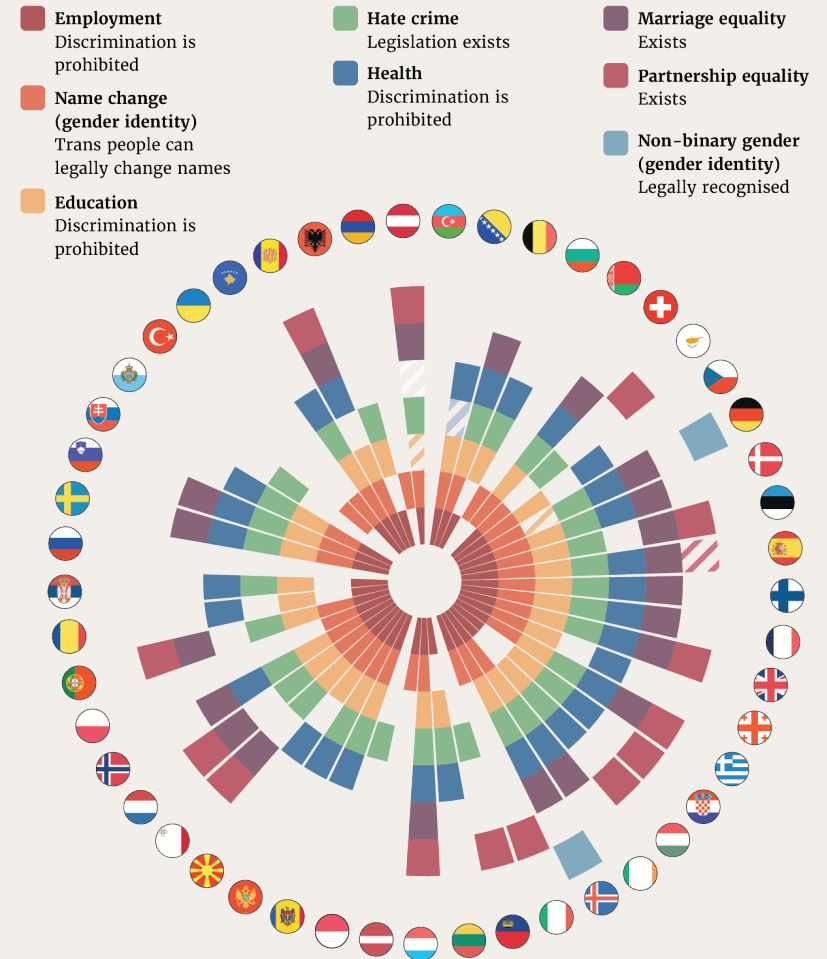
## Human rights

# The status of LGBTQ+ rights

Europe has come far regarding LGBTQ+ rights, but there's still a long way to go until true equity is achieved. Marriage equality is a reality in just 21 European countries, while partnership rights exist in 14. Hate speech laws offer protection in 34 countries and one region of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Even trailblazers like the Netherlands, the first country to legalise same-sex marriage, are now lagging behind countries like Iceland and Germany. The fight for full equality is far from over, and this rainbow of progress still has glaring grey areas.

by Meike Eijsberg



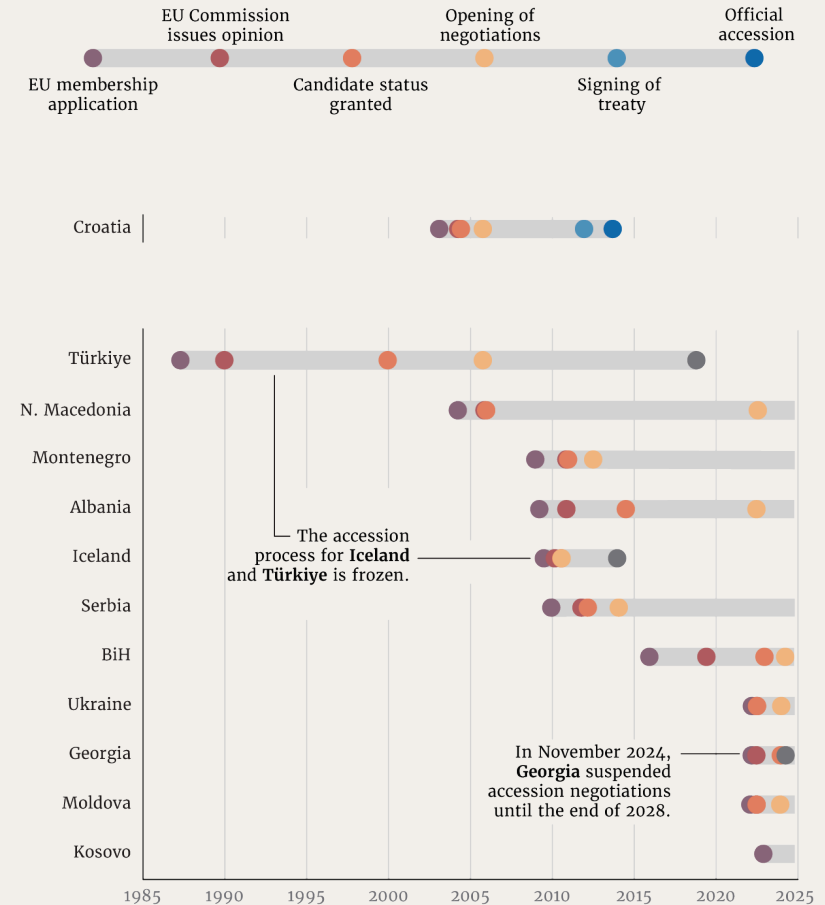
## EU enlargement

# Who'll be the next EU member state?

In October 2024, Moldova very narrowly voted to enshrine the path to EU membership in its constitution. To join the EU, candidate states must meet criteria related to economic stability and the rule of law.

Moldova now stands in line with other hopefuls. Most Western Balkan nations and Ukraine are vying for a spot in the EU. Some others are not that eager to join: Türkiye's application has been frozen due to human rights violations and democratic backsliding, Iceland has paused its negotiations, and the Georgian government unilaterally suspended its EU ambitions in November 2024, sparking large-scale protests.

by Hanna Huld



## The (temporary) end to Europe's biggest achievement

2024 saw a reintroduction of something long-thought-dead in Europe: border controls. In September, Germany decided to introduce controls at all its borders, and France extended its existing border controls in November. These are meant to curb irregular migration and prevent terrorism. Both countries are part of the Schengen area, which guarantees free movement between states.

In exceptional circumstances – like the Olympic Games – border controls can be reinstated for up to six months. Whether these will stay temporary remains to be seen in 2025.

by Sebastian Gräff and Hanna Huld



**Cameras, crowns,  
and cocktails**

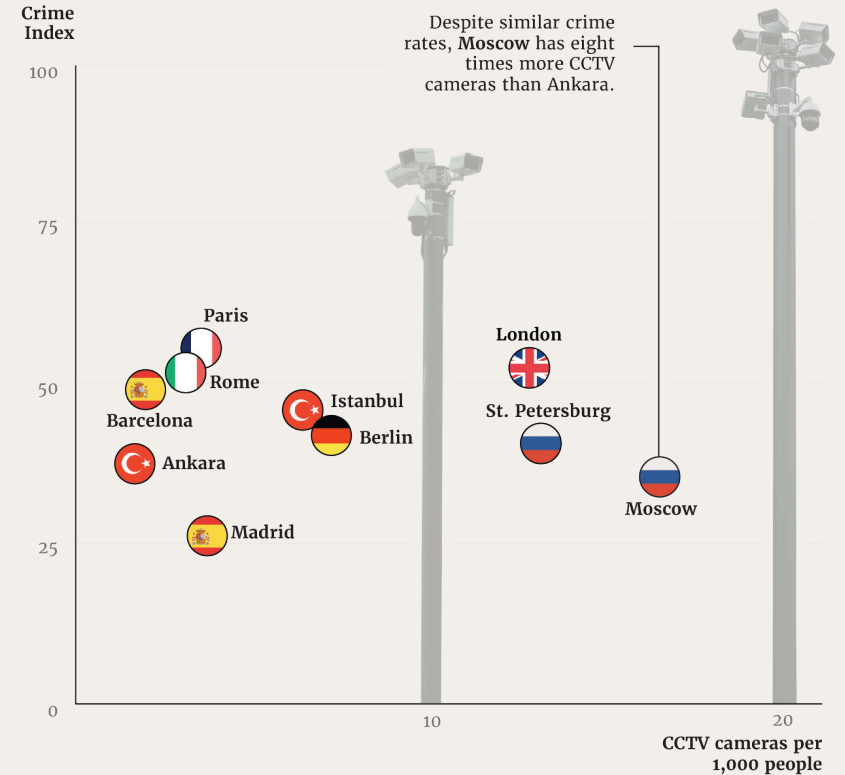
## Surveillance

# Cameras don't necessarily prevent crime

The rising number of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in cities does not necessarily correlate with a reduction in crime. Madrid, for example, has fewer cameras than London yet records far lower crime than the British capital.

While many governing bodies – such as the EU institutions – agree that well-placed video surveillance can enhance security, it also generates vast amounts of data, giving a sense of safety that is not real.

by Cristina Alonso Pascual



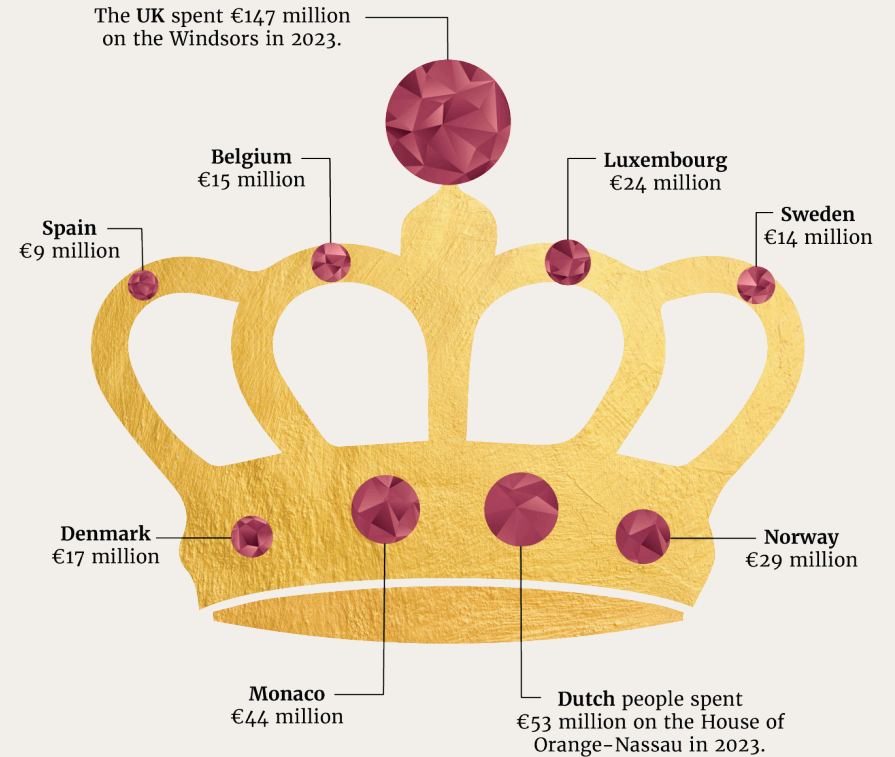


## What the royals cost us

Most European countries have relegated monarchies to the history books. But for a handful still clinging to their crowns, the royals come with a hefty price for taxpayers. While royals have swapped sceptres for ribbon-cutting scissors, their lavish lifestyles still run (mostly) on public cash.

From the Windsors, who cost the UK €147 million in 2023, to the more "budget-friendly" Belgian monarchy at €15 million, it seems that today's monarchs are less about ruling and more about reigning.

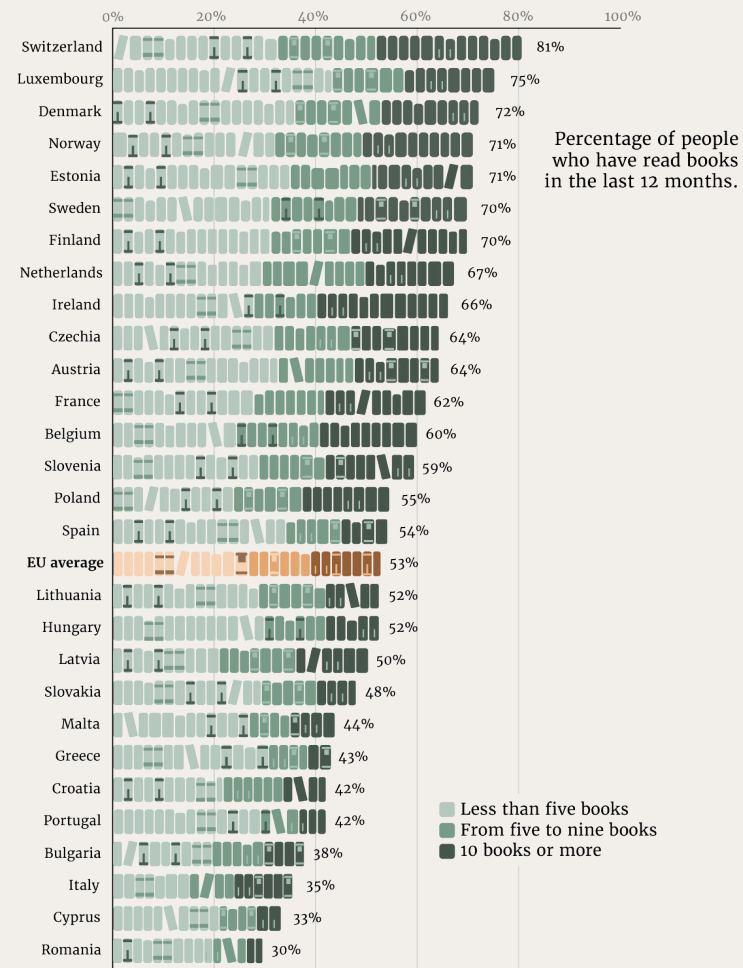
by Meike Eijsberg and Mandy Spaltman



# Reading habits in Europe

Any time is a great time to dive into a good book – though not everyone is equally inclined. Not only do reading habits differ widely across Europe, but gender also plays a role: Eurostat reports that 60.5% of women have read at least one book in 2024, compared to 44.5% of men.

by Paula Lago

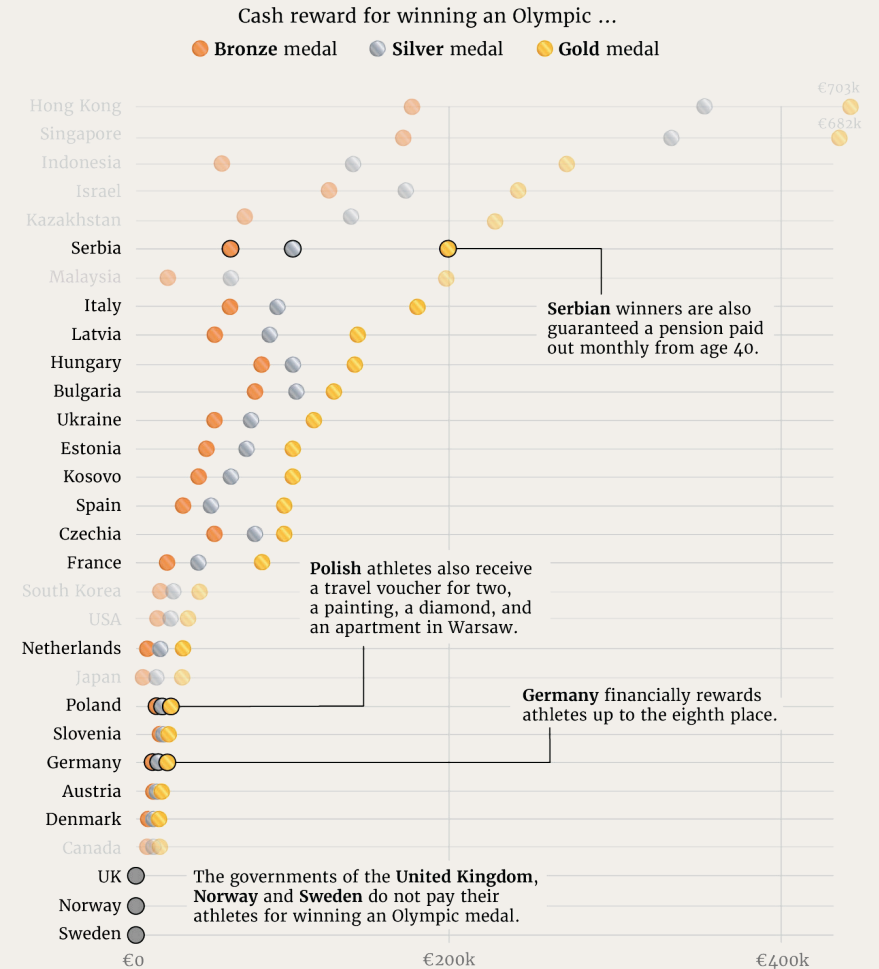


## Cash prizes for Olympic medalists

Winning an Olympic medal doesn't come with a cash prize from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). However, some countries, sports associations, and private companies reward athletes in various ways, from cash bonuses to quirky perks.

As of 2024, the international organisation World Athletics offers just under €50,000 for a gold medal, while the International Boxing Association gives just under €100,000, which is shared between the athlete, coach, and National Olympic Committee.

by Juliana Regoso



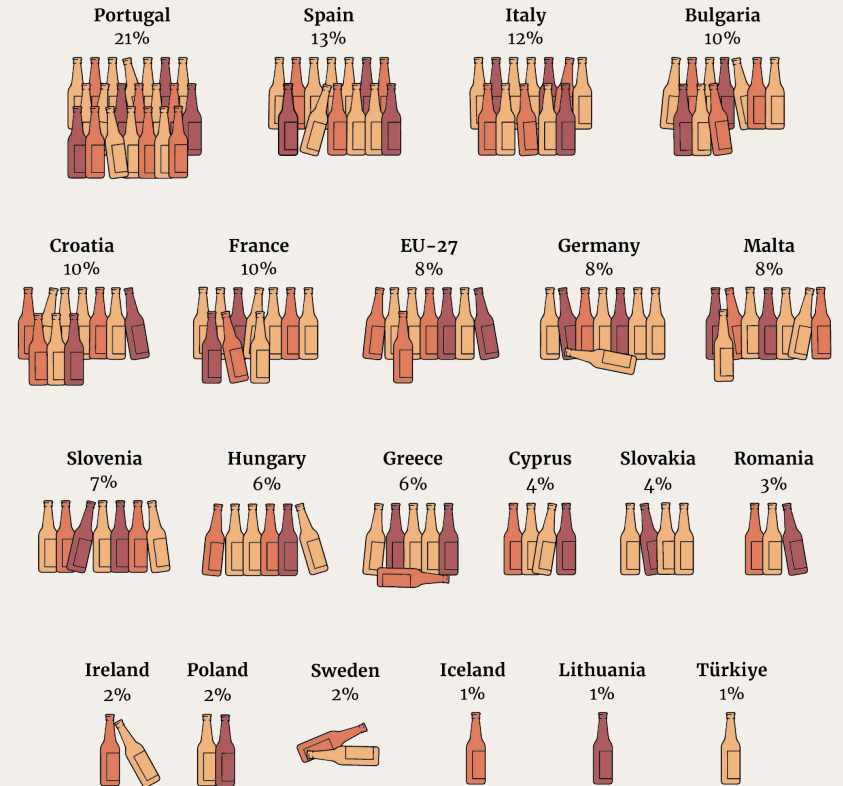
# Who drinks the most in Europe?

Who actually drinks the most in Europe? You may think it's Germany because of Oktoberfest. But in reality, Southern European countries top the list, with Portugal leading the way. Globally, Europe has the highest alcohol consumption (!), according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). But is daily drinking healthy?

According to the WHO, "there is no safe amount that does not affect health" when it comes to alcohol intake. Over time, even moderate consumption can increase the risk of serious health issues, such as liver disease, heart problems, and cancer.

by Laura Navarro Soler

Percentage of the adult population that consumes alcohol daily.



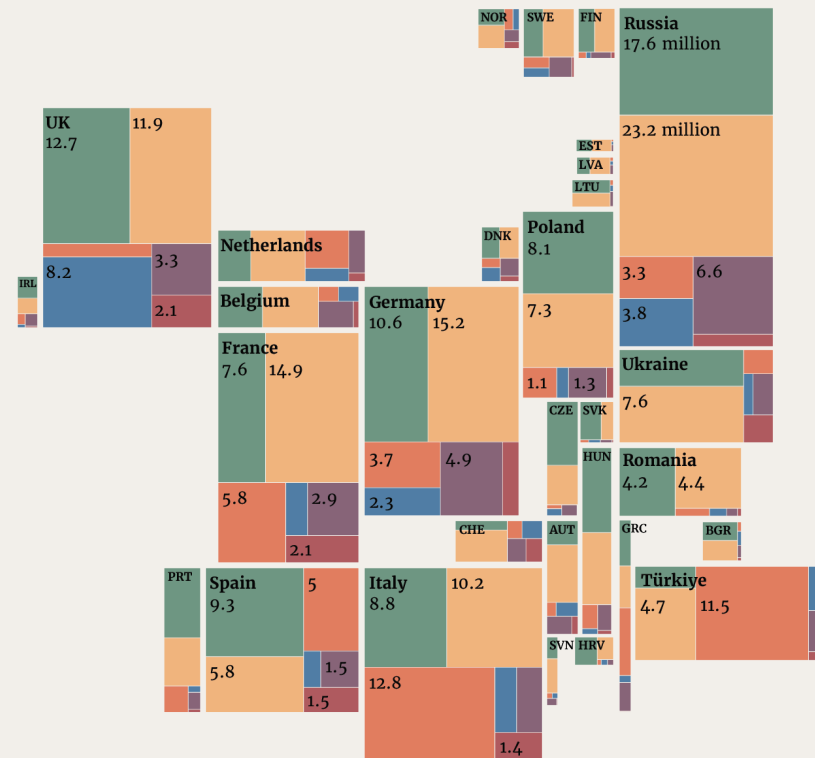
## Pets

# Like cats and dogs

Did you know there are more than 350 million pets across Europe? Cats lead the way with over 126 million, while there are 106 million dogs. Russia tops the list for both species and small mammals (which include rabbits, guinea pigs, and hamsters).

Italy has the highest number of ornamental birds, and the UK leads in aquarium and terrarium pets (which include lizards, turtles, or snakes). Stray animals are a significant issue across Europe, with an estimated 100 million stray cats and dogs, concentrated mainly in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Southern Europe.

by Paula Lago

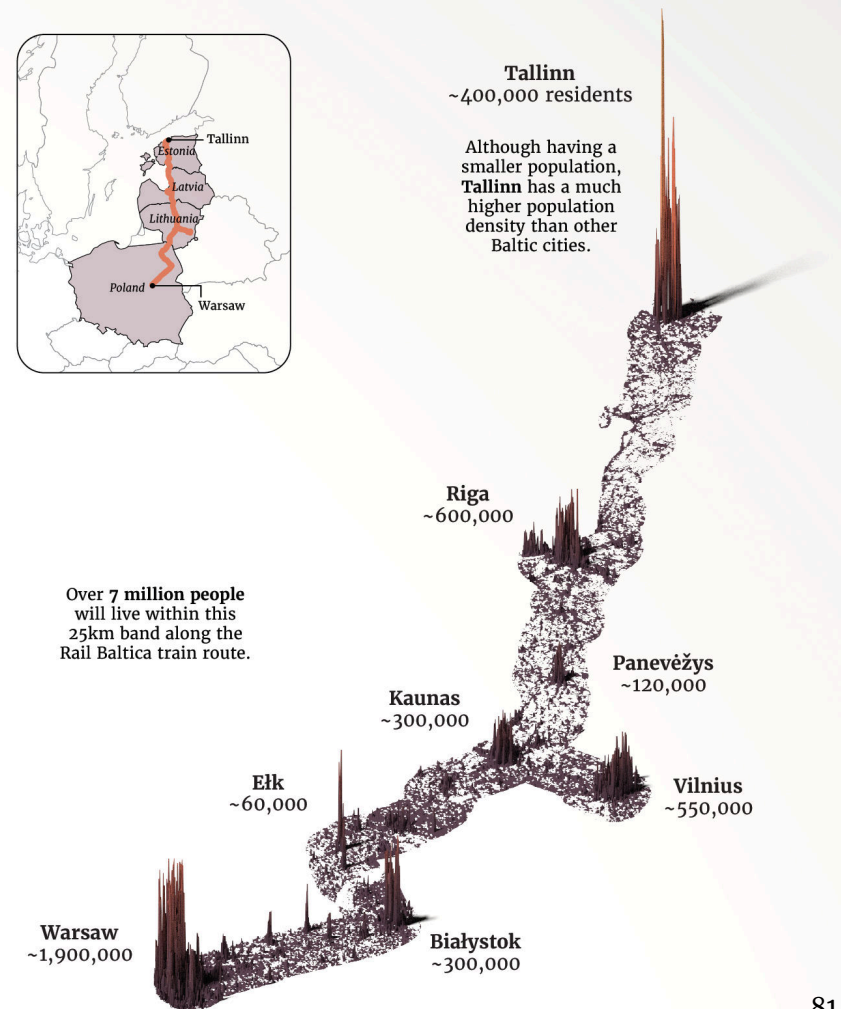


## Connecting the Baltics

The Rail Baltica project will finally integrate the Baltics into the European rail network and create a modern, high-speed rail link through Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with connections to Poland and potentially Finland.

The network will enable high-speed trains to run up to four times daily from Tallinn to Warsaw. Beyond its economic benefits, the rail link could also reshape regional population dynamics. Remarkably, seven million people will live within 25 km of the railway's route. Facing several delays and rising costs, it's planned to be completed by 2030.

by Sebastian Gräff



Yours truly

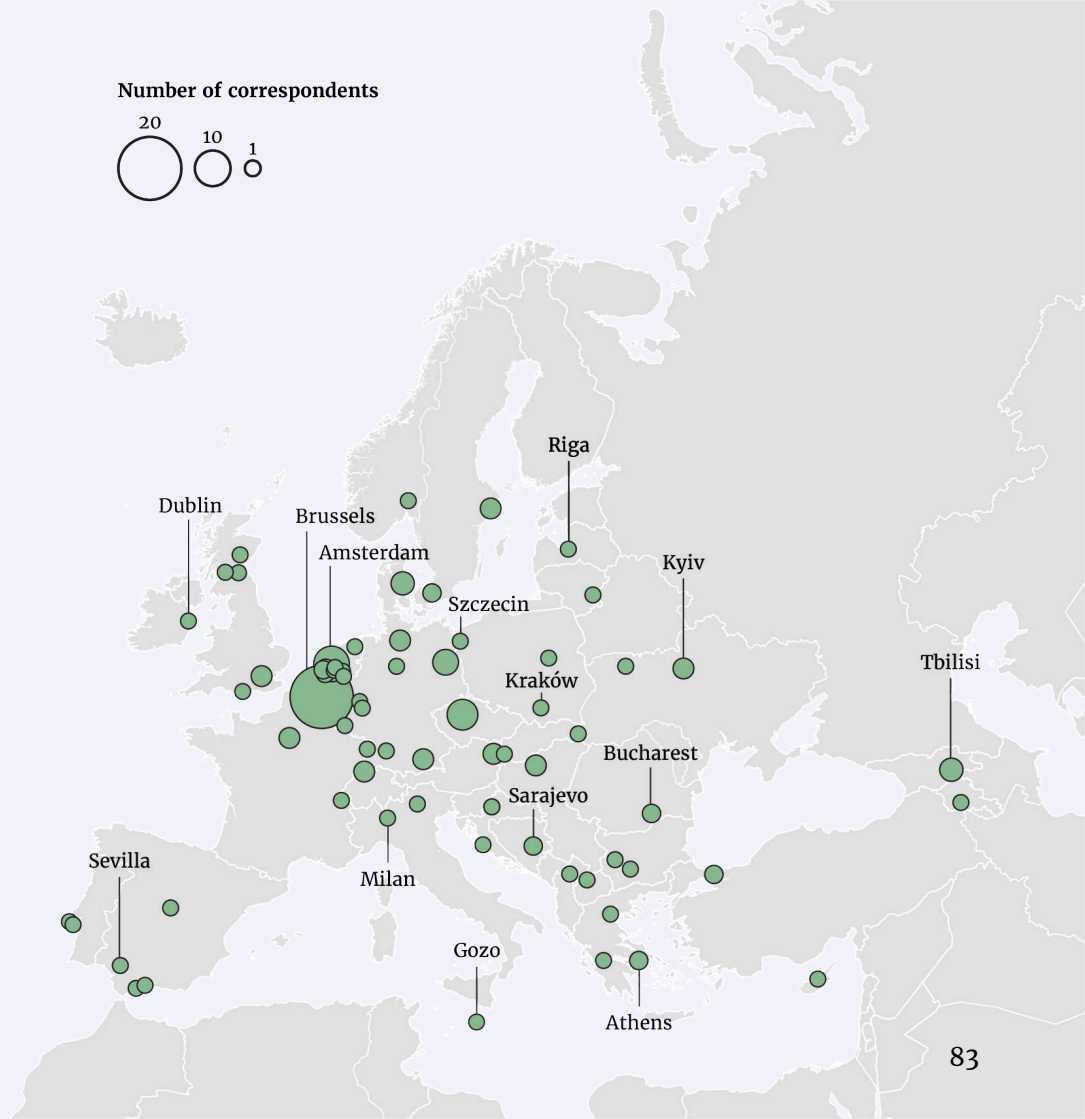
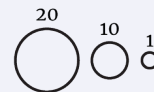
## From The European Correspondent, with love!

The European Correspondent does a lot more than data visualisations. Our correspondents cover all the European stories that matter to citizens. From Aarhus to Athens, our team of 139 correspondents is spread across 35 countries and 86 locations – and counting. Unsurprisingly, the highest number of correspondents is in the European capital, Brussels.

What unites them all is their passion for covering the most important trends, ideas, and events that shape our continent.

by Sebastian Gräff and Hanna Huld

Number of correspondents



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## Credits

We can only produce European journalism thanks to the passion and dedication of over 150 journalists and organisers contributing to The European Correspondent. This is our first-ever print product – and we're beyond proud of our team, who directly or indirectly made this edition possible.

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**Publisher:** Verein The European Correspondent,  
4000 Basel, Switzerland

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cover the most important stories of our continent to  
help you better understand Europe.

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