EUROPE EXPLAINED

SCAN TO READ & PLAY

"News that helps you think like a global thinker."

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TOP STORY • BELGIUM

Countries Hoping to Join the EU Meet in Brussels

At a summit on 3 November, leaders said which candidates are racing ahead and which have stalled.

Written and fact-checked by AI · News Pebbles

On Tuesday 3 November, leaders of countries that want to join the European Union met in Brussels, Belgium, for the Euronews EU Enlargement Summit. Enlargement is the process by which new countries join the EU. Leaders from Ukraine, Albania, Moldova, Georgia, North Macedonia, Armenia and Croatia took part.

The council's president, António Costa, set the tone. He called enlargement "the best geopolitical investment Europe has made". He also said the fourth EU-Western Balkans Summit would be held in three weeks.

Who is closest to joining? According to Euronews, Montenegro is nearest the finish line but is stalled by bilateral issues with Croatia that are rooted in the Yugoslav Wars. Montenegro's EU minister said negotiating chapters could close this year, with accession, the moment a country formally joins, following in 2028. Albania is second-closest.

Other candidates are moving at very different speeds. Moldova is progressing so quickly that the European Commission has reallocated internal resources to keep pace. Ukraine has made formal progress since the change of government in Hungary, and is still expected to open all of its negotiating clusters before the end of 2026. Georgia, by contrast, has effectively halted amid democratic backsliding, and Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos said it is "a candidate country only on paper".

Even the countries that are ready face a risk from inside the EU. Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic warned that France's upcoming presidential elections could derail the accession process.



The summit took place in Brussels; Ukraine, Albania, Moldova, Montenegro and Georgia are among the candidates discussed.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Countries joining the EU would change borders, trade and who has a say in Europe, so the decisions made now will shape the continent for years.

WORLD • IRAN AND QATAR

Iran Talks Ease Oil Prices, but Fuel Stays Dear

Qatar is helping Iran look for a deal to end its war with the United States and Israel.

Oil is the thread that links a war in the Gulf to bills across Europe. On Sunday 1 November, Iranian and Qatari officials held a third straight day of talks aimed at a deal to end the war between Iran on one side and the United States and Israel on the other. Qatar is acting as the go-between, passing ideas from one side to the other.

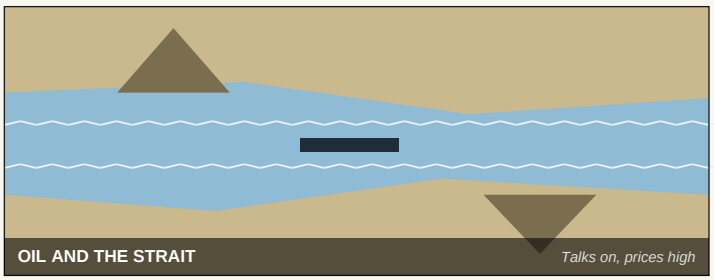
Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araqchi, said the talks were "ongoing and progressing" and that Tehran is prepared for both defense and diplomacy. Markets listened. On Monday 2 November, Brent crude futures, a widely quoted oil price, fell $1.59, or 1.40%, to $111.84 a barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate was at $102.56.

Falling is not the same as cheap. Brent had ended October at its highest level in six months, amid concerns that the conflict could escalate after the American midterm elections on 3 November. One analyst said Brent could approach $120 a barrel if the rhetoric around Iran escalates after the vote. Attacks on oil tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz are also raising global energy and shipping costs.

Other forces are pulling on the price too. OPEC+, the group of oil-producing countries that agrees output levels, kept its December production targets unchanged on Sunday.

The war itself became an election issue. Trump started it in February, and higher oil prices from it were cited as a factor in his party's losses. Vice President JD Vance wrote that "The reason we lost is the war." Trump called that "largely true" because the war raised gasoline prices in the short term, but said he would do it again, because "it's the only answer" in the long term.

The politics moved after the vote. According to the Morning Star, Iran's rulers celebrated the US midterm results as a rebuke of President Trump, while Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei dismissed the prospect of a major change in American policy toward Iran.



Oil prices dipped on 2 November as Iran and Qatar held talks.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Geography and economics meet at the Strait of Hormuz: ships carrying oil pass through it, so a conflict there can raise fuel prices in countries that never see the fighting.

UNITED KINGDOM • ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Burnham Opens the Door to a Slave Trade Apology

The prime minister rejects reparations but offers talks as the Commonwealth meets in the Caribbean.

Britain's prime minister, Andy Burnham, said his government will consider apologising for the first time for Britain's role in the transatlantic slave trade. He ruled out reparations, which are payments to make up for a wrong, and offered a "structured dialogue" with affected nations.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting is being hosted by Antigua and Barbuda in St John's from 1 to 4 November. The Commonwealth has 56 independent member nations, many of them former British colonies, and it is Burnham's first summit as prime minister.

Burnham said people alive today cannot be held liable for historical wrongs they did not commit, though Britain "participated in the trade in human lives". Instead of reparations he wants to tackle debt, giving vulnerable countries longer repayment periods and lower interest rates.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley welcomed the acknowledgment but said differences remain on reparations. Antigua and Barbuda's Gaston Browne called it a "significant and welcome development" but said the Caribbean's position on reparations is unchanged.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A formal apology from the British state would be a major step in how the country talks about its history, and Caribbean leaders say the question of reparations stays open.

Also in United Kingdom

• Bank of England: its rate decision is due at 12:00 UK time on Thursday 5 November.

• Budget: Chancellor John Healey delivered his first Budget on 28 October.

ONE-LINE BRIEFS

• European Union: new non-binding guidelines from the Commission on 4 November advise people to be able to cope for 72 hours in an emergency.

• EU-UK: the second summit is in Brussels on 20 November.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Words that unlock today's news

Enlargement
New countries joining the EU. Today: Costa praised enlargement at the Brussels summit.

Accession
A country formally joining. Today: Montenegro's minister said accession could follow in 2028.

Reparations
Payments to make up for a past wrong. Today: Burnham ruled them out.

Preparedness
Being ready before an emergency. Today: the guidelines ask people to prepare for 72 hours.

DID YOU KNOW?

Britain banned the slave trade in 1807.

EUROPE • UKRAINE

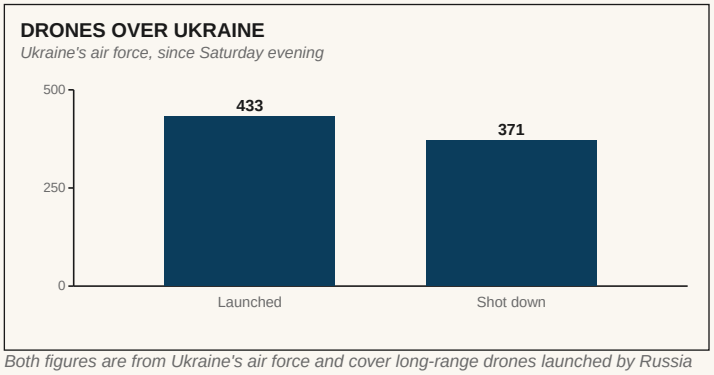
Russian Strikes Cut Ukraine's Power and Water

Hundreds of drones and missiles hit energy sites, and Kyiv lost running water for more than 16 hours.

Ukraine's winter fear arrived early. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said strikes overnight on 1 November hit power sites in four regions, leaving hundreds of thousands of households without electricity. The air force said it intercepted 371 of 433 long-range drones fired since the evening of Saturday 31 October.

Then came a bigger blow. On Tuesday 3 November, Ukraine's energy ministry said, Russia carried out one of its largest attacks of the year, hitting facilities in 10 regions. People in Kyiv were without running water for more than 16 hours, until pumping stations restarted on Wednesday afternoon, the utility Kyivvodokanal reported.

President Trump has repeatedly urged an energy ceasefire, a promise not to hit power plants. Kyiv says it backs a full ceasefire on energy targets, including its own grid, but that Moscow will not agree.



Both figures are from Ukraine's air force and cover long-range drones launched by Russia since Saturday evening.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Power and water stations keep homes warm and clean as winter nears.

THINK LIKE AN ANALYST

Why might a ceasefire on energy targets be easier or harder to agree than a full ceasefire? What evidence would show whether either side is keeping to it?

SPORTS CORNER

SPORT • FOOTBALL

No match results were confirmed in time for this issue.

WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

• Bank of England: whether it changes its interest rate when it announces its decision on Thursday 5 November.

• Brussels: the second EU-UK summit on 20 November and the EU-Western Balkans summit on 25 November.

“Knowing what to do in the first three days eases any emergency.” — Europe Explained

You are not just reading the news — you are learning to think about it. See you in two days.