

INF FLASH 13/11

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(9/11) European Vocational Skills Week 2018 helps millions to discover the benefits of vocational education and training. Today marks the end of the 2018 edition of the European Vocational Skills Week, organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the Austrian Presidency. Thanks to 1512 events that took place all over Europe, the campaign has so far reached over 2.2 million people, 1.2 million more than last year. And it does not stop here, as many more associated activities and events are being organised across Europe until December 2018. To close the week, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, has announced the winners of the Awards for VET Excellence 2018. At the closing event celebrated today at the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in Vienna, Commissioner Thyssen, said: "It is a pleasure to be here today and feel the support that there is for vocational education and training all across Europe. Each and every one of you has contributed to making this third European Vocational Skills Week a success. Our campaign has reached millions of Europeans to convince them that VET is a great first choice. With your help, we will continue our work to position VET for what it is: an option that leads to successful careers and a choice that benefits the whole of Europe." Full press release [here](#).

(8/11) Africa-Europe Alliance: boosting sustainable energy investments in Africa. A new high-level platform initiative brings together key players in the sustainable energy sector from the public and private sectors of both Europe and Africa. Today at the Africa Investment Forum in Johannesburg organised by the African Development Bank, the European Union and the African Union have launched the EU-Africa high-level platform on sustainable energy investments in Africa. During his [State of the Union speech](#) President Juncker has announced the new '[Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#)' to substantially boost investment in Africa, strengthen trade, create jobs, and invest in education and skills. The high-level platform that was set in motion today represents a concrete action under this alliance to boost strategic investments and strengthen the role of the private sector. Full press release [here](#).

(8/11) The European Union and Burkina Faso step up their cooperation. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, strengthened the cooperation and partnership between the European Union and Burkina Faso at a meeting in Brussels. Presidents Juncker and Kaboré discussed the cooperation between the European Union and Burkina Faso in the fields of the economy, security and culture. The two presidents also discussed the subject of the presidency of G5 Sahel, which Burkina Faso will hold next year, and the challenges faced by the country, particularly in the area of security. President Juncker said: "The partnership between the European Union and Burkina Faso is very strong, and our meeting has been an excellent opportunity to underline this. We discussed our joint commitment to democracy, security, development and governance. Our cooperation is already yielding successful results which are benefiting the people of Burkina Faso, and we are committed to strengthening it further,

in particular through our new Alliance with Africa to create investment and jobs, and our External Investment Plan.' Full press release [here](#).

(6/11) Humanitarian aid: EU steps up humanitarian assistance for crisis in Yemen with additional €90 million. The Commission has allocated an additional €90 million in humanitarian aid for civilians in Yemen, as the conflict-torn country plunges into the world's worst hunger crisis. The new funding brings total EU humanitarian assistance in Yemen in 2018 to €118 million and will be channelled exclusively through humanitarian organisations. Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management said: "We are in a race against time to avoid a famine in Yemen. That is why the EU is stepping up its life-saving humanitarian assistance to the Yemeni people. Some 8 million vulnerable people will benefit from our additional funding, that will be directed at covering - among others - nutritional, health, sanitation and protection needs. However, the only way to stop this ongoing humanitarian tragedy is through a political solution that puts an end to the violence." Full press release [here](#).

(29/10) Humanitarian aid: EU releases €58 million for the Sahel and the Central African Republic. The Commission has allocated additional €50 million to the Sahel region and €8 million to the Central African Republic to address the increasing food, nutrition and emergency needs in the countries. For 2018, the EU's total humanitarian response to the Sahel countries now stands at €270 million and €25.4 million for the Central African Republic. "As the humanitarian situation in the Sahel continues to worsen, we are stepping up our assistance to address the major food crisis in the region. Ongoing violence and conflict, as well as the effects of climate change, are causing massive displacement, acute malnutrition and food insecurity that is affecting millions, especially children. We remain committed to show solidarity to the most vulnerable and to save lives," said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides. The EU funding will help provide food and nutrition to the most vulnerable and emergency assistance such as shelter, medical care and water. Funding in the Central African Republic will enhance the EU's ongoing efforts to address the needs of the displaced populations. "In the face of ongoing violence and displacement in the country, we must continue to do our utmost to cover the needs of all those forced to leave their homes," added Commissioner Stylianides. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(8/11) European Accessibility Act: Parliament and Council negotiators strike a deal. Key products and services, like smartphones, ticketing machines and banking services, will have to be made more accessible to people with disabilities. The new directive, provisionally agreed by Parliament and Council negotiators on Thursday, aims to improve the daily lives of people with disabilities and to encourage businesses to innovate with more accessible products and services. Around 80 million people in the EU live with a disability to some degree. Due to the ageing of the population, this figure is expected to increase to 120 million by 2020. Full press release [here](#).

(5/11) MEPs demand Bulgaria's and Romania's swift accession to Schengen area. EU ministers should admit Bulgaria and Romania to the border check-free Schengen area as soon as possible, the Civil Liberties Committee urges. MEPs reiterated on Monday their call on EU Ministers to take a swift and affirmative decision on the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as fully-fledged members to the Schengen area. They emphasize that a two-step approach - first ending checks at internal sea and air borders, followed by stopping checks at internal land

borders - would pose a number of risks and could negatively impact the future enlargement of the Schengen area. The decision should therefore be taken in the form of a single legal act, say MEPs. MEPs also call on EU Ministers to decide on Croatia's Schengen accession as soon as Croatia has successfully met the required criteria. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(9/11) Free flow of data: EU adopts new rules. The Council today signed off on the reform that will bring down barriers to the free movement of non-personal data within the EU. The new rules are designed to boost the data economy and the development of emerging technologies such as cross-border autonomous systems and artificial intelligence. A provisional deal was concluded with the European Parliament on 19 June 2018. Full press release [here](#).

(9/11) Developing IT systems in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice: Council agrees a stronger role for eu-LISA. The EU Agency responsible for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the implementation of the EU's border management, migration and law enforcement cooperation policies (eu-LISA) is being strengthened. The Council today adopted a regulation which further develops the mandate of eu-LISA. The regulation gives the agency an important role in implementing new IT architecture in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). Full press release [here](#).

(7/11) EU to strengthen sharing of public sector data - Council agrees its position. The EU is making it easier to re-use data held by the public sector. Today, member states' ambassadors agreed on the Council's negotiating position on reforms which are part of wider EU efforts to increase the supply of data to support the economy and to make sure that more data is used for the benefit of everyone. The new rules will encourage the development and uptake of new data-based services and technologies, such as artificial intelligence. They are also a major step towards making open data more widely available in the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(6/11) Less hate speech and more European content on video streaming services: Council adopts new EU rules. As a result of updates by the EU to its rules for audiovisual media services, traditional television and new services such as on-demand broadcasting will compete on a level playing field. Video sharing platforms will also for the first time be subject to rules ensuring that viewers, and in particular minors, will be better protected from violent or harmful content or hate speech. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(13/11) EU Court of Auditors - The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: swift response in challenging circumstances, but improvements needed to deliver better value for money, say EU Auditors. The Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which supports refugees and their Turkish hosting communities, has provided a swift response to the crisis in challenging circumstances, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. The humanitarian projects have helped refugees to address their basic needs but have not always delivered the expected value for money, say the auditors. Full press release [here](#).

(11/11) Eurojust - SIRIUS conference 2018. The SIRIUS* conference 2018 took place on 6 and 7 November at Europol's headquarters in The Hague. This two-day event, organised in collaboration with Eurojust, gathered over 200 judicial and law enforcement authorities from 40 countries, as well as representatives from Airbnb, Apple, Facebook, Google and PayPal, to address issues and challenges encountered when conducting Internet-based investigations. Full press release [here](#).

(9/11) FRA - Towards a European media literacy toolkit for newsrooms. The Global Editors Network hosted their first of a series of unconferences on 6 November in Brussels. The Agency took part in the discussions presenting progress on its own [media toolkit](#). The focus was on how newsrooms interact with media consumers, how they can help stop the spread and creation of misinformation, and what tools or services would help them. Full press release [here](#).

(2/11) FRA - Minimum age and social rights: Balancing child protection and participation. A new set of findings on differences in legal minimum ages covering social rights, education, employment and finance, alternative care, LGBTI and mobility has been released by the Agency. Full press release [here](#).

(31/10) European Economic and Social Committee - Experts call for regulation and civil society involvement to achieve sustainable development goals and sustainable value chains. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a joint responsibility of civil society, EU and the member States' authorities, as well as the private sector. This was one of the main conclusions of the high level conference on SDGs and initiatives for Sustainable Global Value Chains co-hosted on 30 October 2018 by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Commission and the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands. Experts also agreed that a combination of regulatory measures and incentives to voluntary initiatives is crucial to enhance private companies' and citizens' involvement. Full press release [here](#).

(30/10) FRA - Forced Return Monitoring project holds closing conference. On 23 October, the EU-funded Forced Return Monitoring II project implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) held its closing conference in Nuremberg, Germany. Full press release [here](#).

(30/10) FRA - Confronting labour exploitation through labour inspections. On 19 October in Brussels, the Agency gave a presentation to the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work. It spoke about the findings of its work and its opinions about how to [improve labour inspections](#) in the Member States stemming from the research on severe labour exploitation and the perspectives of migrant workers. It focused on the major actions and challenges needed to effectively confront labour exploitation through boosting labour inspections. Full press release [here](#).

(30/10) FRA - The human rights cities movement steps up internationally. The Agency took part in the World Human Rights Cities Forum in Gwangju, South Korea from 18 to 20 October. This year's forum discussed the various models of human rights cities and how these models are linked to charters, policies, norms and networks. The forum also presented a range of practices on ways to implement human rights locally. Interesting practices from

Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, and Nepal among others were shared. The approaches of Vienna and Barcelona were also showcased. Full press release [here](#).

(30/10) EU Court of Auditors - Simpler, more flexible rules proposed for cohesion funds after 2020, but additional safeguards needed, warn EU Auditors. New plans for how EU cohesion funds are spent are simpler and more flexible, according to an Opinion published today by the European Court of Auditors. Nevertheless, the auditors make a number of suggestions on how to make sure that Member State spending has a real impact and complies with the rules. Full press [release](#).

(25/10) Eurostat - Residence permits for non-EU citizens - First residence permits issued in the EU Member States remain above 3 million in 2017 - Main beneficiaries from Ukraine and Syria. In 2017, about 3.1 million first residence permits were issued in the European Union (EU) to non-EU citizens. The number increased almost by 4% (or 112 000) compared with 2016. Employment reasons accounted for almost one-third (32%) of all first residence permits issued in the EU in 2017, family reasons for 26%, education reasons for 17%, and other reasons, including international protection, for 24%. Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

(6/11) Greece should safeguard social rights for all and improve the reception and integration of migrants. “Greece should take urgent steps and adopt long-term policies to improve the reception and integration of migrants and to reverse the adverse effects of austerity measures on access to health care and education”, says Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, publishing the report on her visit to Greece carried out in June. Full press release [here](#).

(5/11) Tackling hate speech in the media: Zagreb conference. The Council of Europe and the Croatian Agency for Electronic Media are organising a conference on 6 and 7 November in Zagreb (Croatia) to discuss the different ways European states have regulated hate speech, and specifically the measures to tackle it taken by national regulatory authorities, the judiciary and media self-regulatory bodies. Hate speech and offensive language targeting ethnic, religious, sexual minorities, immigrants and other groups have become a widespread phenomenon in Europe. Over the years the Council of Europe and its member States have developed a comprehensive range of standards and measures to curb hate speech, while guaranteeing the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information. Full press release [here](#).

(30/10) Brain drain or brain gain? Seminar in Zagreb. A two-day seminar with this title is taking place in Zagreb, Croatia, to look at the phenomena of “brain drain” (the emigration of educated young people) and “brain gain” (the influx of qualified people who are either immigrating or returning home). It will also examine the possible role of the European Youth Card, which is aimed at boosting mobility. The event brings together some 50 representatives of the Council of Europe member states, research institutions, international organisations, youth and civil society organisations. It is organised under the [Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers](#) of the Council of Europe by the [Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card](#) of the Council of Europe, the [European Youth Card Association](#) (EYCA) and its Croatian member organisation, as well as the [Ministry for](#)

[Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy](#) of the Republic of Croatia. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(9/11) ECRE - EU as human rights champion – point of no return or new beginning? The 101 strong ECRE alliance met in Belgrade for the ECRE Annual General Conference 2018, taking place alongside the Europe NGO Consultation of UNHCR, an ECRE strategic partner. With over 200 participants at the conference, civil society remains strong and determined to defend the human rights of all, especially at this time when the right to asylum is under attack and the rights of the displaced in Europe are disregarded in parts of the continent. ECRE calls on the European Union to defend European values. This includes the rule of law, both within the EU and as part of the EU Accession process. The support for democratic reform and protection of human rights in Serbia and the Western Balkans will only happen if the EU itself changes direction. Full press release [here](#).

(2/11) ECRE - Inaccurate Statistics Hold Back Uganda's Progressive Refugee Policy. Uganda has received wide praise for [opening](#) its borders and allowing a high level of freedom of movement and access to work for its large population of refugees. However, an investigation into allegedly fraudulent registrations and mismanaged funds demonstrate that transparency is crucial to ensure Uganda's refugee policy is appropriately translated into practise. Full press release [here](#).

(2/11) ECRE - The Ostrich Approach to Migration. It came as little surprise when Austria announced its decision not to sign the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). But rather than creating a scandal it all looks rather sad. International cooperation on migration and asylum will continue, regardless of the self-destructive approach of one or two little land-locked countries. Along with Hungary, Austria has its head in the sand, the Austrich, trying to deny that migration exists. The reasons given for not signing were a mishmash of conspiracy theories and red herrings: the suggestion that the plan is to create a human right to migration; that it mixes up migration and asylum; other arguments that barely merit consideration. Full press release [here](#).

(2/11) EU Alliance for Investing in Children - How can the EU's post-2020 budget fight child poverty and social exclusion? Progress on reducing child poverty across Europe remains extremely limited as demonstrated by the fact that the poverty reduction target of the Europe 2020 Strategy has seen the least progress compared to the other targets of the strategy. Poverty severely impact children's health and their ability to develop their talents and capabilities, to establish relationships, and to learn. Poverty is carried on from one generation to another and severely undermines social cohesion and participation in society. If Member States and EU institutions want to fulfil their "commitment to work towards a social Europe" as declared in the joint Proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, Member States need to start by firmly reducing poverty and investing in children and families in vulnerable situations. Full statement [here](#).

(2/11) ECRE - Mediterranean: Over 100,000 Arrivals Recorded so far in 2018, almost 2000 Dead or Missing. As of November 2018, 103,407 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe, according to the [UN Refugee Agency](#)(UNHCR). The UNHCR record that 97, 651 refugees and migrants have arrived to the Mediterranean by sea, and 5,756 by land. The highest number, 53, 187, arrived in Spain. UNHCR also estimate that 1,987 people have died

or have gone missing while trying to make the journey to reach the Mediterranean. These figures represent a decrease when compared to 2017 in terms of persons arriving by sea – in 2017 there were 172,301 arrivals, and 3,139 people were estimated number to have died or gone missing. Full press release [here](#).

(26/10) ECRE - Morocco Plans to Deport Migrants Arrested at the Spanish Border Amid Wider Restriction of Immigration Policy. Morocco has [said](#) it is to deport 141 migrants who were arrested on Sunday, following an attempt by up to 300 people to enter Spain by crossing the border fence at the Moroccan enclave of Melilla. The attempt resulted in the death of one man who suffered a heart attack, while at least twenty-two others were injured. Fifty-five migrants were [returned](#) by Spain back to Morocco the day after the attempt. Full press release [here](#).

(26/10) ECRE - Portugal/Greece: Bilateral Agreement for Relocation of Asylum Seekers. The Portuguese Ministry of Internal Administration has [announced](#) a bilateral agreement for a pilot relocation of 100 refugees from Greece to Portugal. Following its pilot phase, the bilateral relocation scheme would be extended to cover 1,000 refugees in the course of 2019. The announcement came following a [visit](#) of the Portuguese Minister of Internal Administration to Greece. The two countries intend to submit the draft bilateral agreement to the European Commission to receive funding. According to the statement, persons covered by the agreement will first apply for asylum in Greece, before being interviewed by the Portuguese authorities with a view to being relocated and to receiving refugee status. Full press release [here](#).

(26/10) ECRE - Turkey: Constitutional Court Pilot Judgment on Protection from Refoulement. On 12 June 2018, the Turkish Constitutional Court delivered a pilot judgment in [Y.T.](#) concerning the prohibition of *refoulement* in light of the amendments introduced to the [Law on Foreigners and International Protection](#) by way of emergency decree in 2016. An [exception](#) to the principle of *non-refoulement* in Turkish legislation was brought about by [Emergency Decree 676](#) of 29 October 2016, which provides that a deportation decision “may be taken at any time during the international protection proceedings” against a person for reasons of: (i) leadership, membership or support of a terrorist organisation or a benefit-oriented criminal group; (ii) threat to public order or public health; or (iii) relation to terrorist organisations defined by international institutions and organisations. Full press release [here](#).

(26/10) ECRE - Op-ed: To Change Policy, We Need to Change the Narrative that Feeds It. When three year old refugee [Alan Kurdi was washed up on a Turkish beach](#), images of his lifeless body were shared across the world. In a way that months of statistics being shared about the scale of the crisis in the Mediterranean never could, that one photo cut through to the public consciousness, touched hearts, and evoked concern and compassion. Full article [here](#).

(26/10) ECRE - EU Africa Relations: Tone Down the ‘Newness’ and Revisit History. A potentially positive outcome of the EU’s two recent Summits is the focus on Africa with increased political and financial commitment, primarily through investment. Sometimes branded as a “Marshall Plan” for Africa, the same ideas appeared in President Juncker’s final State of the Union address. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

ECRE/PICUM - [Position on the proposal for a regulation of the European Social Fund + 2021-2027](#)

MIGNEX - [Aligning Migration Management and the Migration-Development Nexus \(Project\)](#)

MPI - [In Search of a New Equilibrium: Immigration Policymaking in the Newest Era of Nativist Populism](#)

MPI - [ChildMove: A discussion on the project following unaccompanied young refugees across Europe](#) (Webinar)

Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank Review](#) (October)

European Migration Law/Res Publica - [Migrations en questions](#) (Project)

BCW/Euractiv - [European Commission Scorecard](#) (Survey)

IMISCOE - [Annual Report](#)

EPRS - [EU Support For Human Rights Defenders Around The World](#)

EPRS - [EU Policies – Delivering For Citizens: EU Support For Democracy And Peace In The World](#)