

INFO FLASH 25/08

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(24/07) Coronavirus: EIF and European Commission launch new Covid-19 measures supporting micro- and social enterprises under the EUR 400m EaSI Guarantee instrument. The EIF and the European Commission are launching new COVID-19 support measures under the EaSI Guarantee Instrument (EaSI) to enhance access to finance for micro-borrowers, micro- and social enterprises. The new measures will support micro- and social enterprises as well as individual micro-borrowers hit by the socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The objective of the new COVID-19 measures is to further incentivise financial intermediaries to lend money to small businesses, mitigating the sudden increase in perceived risk triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, and alleviating working capital and liquidity constraints of final beneficiaries targeted by the EaSI programme. Key features of these new measures include higher risk coverage, broadening of certain parameters, such as an increase of the maximum exposure for micro and social enterprises, and more flexible terms. Full press release [here](#).

(22/07) Integration of migrants: Commission launches a public consultation and call for an expert group on the views of migrants. Today the Commission is launching an EU-wide public consultation to gather views on new actions that could be taken at EU level to promote the integration and social inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background. The Commission is also launching a call for applications to set up an expert group composed of persons with a migrant background to participate in the development and implementation of migration, asylum and integration policies. Involving migrants, asylum applicants and refugees is essential to make the policies more effective and better tailored to needs on the ground. Full press release [here](#).

(9/07) EU Citizenship: New survey shows EU citizens are more aware of their rights. A new Eurobarometer survey on EU Citizenship and Democracy released today by the European Commission shows that a vast majority of Europeans (91%) are familiar with the term “citizen of the European Union”. This is the highest level of awareness yet since 2007 and a steady increase from 87% recorded in 2015. Most Europeans are well informed about their electoral rights – at national and European levels. Today, the European Commission is also launching a public consultation on EU Citizenship Rights. Full press release [here](#).

(9/07) 24 new European Universities reinforce the European Education Area. European Universities are transnational alliances of higher education institutions from across the EU that come together for the benefit of students, teachers and society. Today, the European Commission has unveiled the additional 24 European Universities that will join the first 17 alliances of higher education institutions selected already in 2019. With financial support from the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, they enhance the quality, inclusion, digitalisation and attractiveness of European higher education. Full press release [here](#).

(8/07) Migration: Relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece to Portugal and Finland. On 7 and 8 July, 49 unaccompanied children were relocated from Greece to Portugal

and Finland as part of a scheme organised by the Commission and the Greek Special Secretary for Unaccompanied Minors, in partnership with UN agencies and the European Asylum Support Office. Full press release here.

(8/07) European Commission and World Bank Group renew agreement to strengthen development cooperation. The European Commission and the World Bank Group have today signed a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, which guides the terms under which the Bank Group will use funding from the European Union to implement development projects across the world. Building on the partners' longstanding cooperation, the agreement will encourage economic growth and digital development, create jobs, reinforce skills, provide support to fragile and conflict affected states, fight climate change and address gender inequalities around the world. In addition, the agreement will help accelerate the partners' joint response to COVID-19, including support to small and medium businesses in emerging economies. Full press release here.

(2/07) EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: New assistance package to support vulnerable groups and address COVID-19 in North Africa. Today, as part of the EU's global response to the coronavirus outbreak, the EU - through its Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) - has adopted a new assistance package to protect migrants, stabilise local communities and respond to COVID-19 in North Africa. This package includes €80 million in new funds as well as €30 million reallocated from non-contracted actions under the EUTF. In line with the Joint Communication on the global EU response to COVID-19, this new funding will also strengthen the immediate response capacity, reinforce the health systems and services in the North African partner countries, mitigate the socio-economic impact of the crisis, as well as allow for the continuation of actions to protect refugees and migrants and stabilise local communities. Press release here.

(1/07) Commission presents European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. Today the Commission presents the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. It sets ambitious, quantitative objectives for upskilling (improving existing skills) and reskilling (training in new skills) to be achieved within the next 5 years. Its 12 actions focus on skills for jobs by partnering up with Member States, companies and social partners to work together for change, by empowering people to embark on lifelong learning, and by using the EU budget as a catalyst to unlock public and private investment in people's skills. Full press release here.

European Parliament

(23/07) EU long-term budget deal must be improved for Parliament to accept it. The recovery fund is a "historic move", but long-term EU priorities such as the Green Deal and the Digital Agenda are put at risk, MEPs say. In a resolution on the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020, adopted by 465 votes against 150, with 67 abstentions, MEPs pay tribute to the victims of the coronavirus and to all the workers who have been fighting the pandemic. They underline that "people in the EU have a collective duty of solidarity." Full press release here.

European Council / Council of the EU

(20/07) European Semester 2020: country-specific recommendations adopted. On 20 July 2020, the Council adopted its 2020 recommendations and opinions on the member states' economic, employment and fiscal policies, as well as the recommendation for the euro-area. This year's country-specific recommendations take into account the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the activation of the general escape clause under the Stability and Growth Pact on 20 March 2020. Full press release and country specific recommendations [here](#).

Others

(24/08) EASO - EASO publishes a COI report: Venezuela Country Focus. On 20 August 2020, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) report titled 'Venezuela Country Focus'. This COI report is a joint initiative of EASO and the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). The report addresses the main topics and questions raised by international protection authorities, decision-makers, and COI researchers. It covers recent developments in the economy, political and security situation, and the humanitarian situation. The report also discusses the most recurring targeted profiles by the government and its security forces. It describes activities of armed pro-government civilian groups (colectivos), including targeted profiles, modus operandi, relation with the government and security forces, and state response for victims of colectivos. Final chapters describe identity and courts documents, entry and exit procedures, and the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (LGBT) persons. Full press release [here](#).

(17/08) EASO - EASO publishes a COI report: Afghanistan, Key socio-economic indicators. Focus on Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat City. On 14 August 2020, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) report titled 'Afghanistan: Key socio-economic indicators. Focus on Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat City'. During 2016, EASO initiated a pilot project to facilitate Member States' cooperation on the development of country guidance notes on Afghanistan. In the context of this project, the need for updated information was identified on topics of relevance for the consideration of Internal Protection Alternative (IPA) in Afghanistan, with a focus on the cities of Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif. This choice of focus was also kept for the 2020 update of Country Guidance on Afghanistan. Full press release [here](#).

(12/08) EASO - As restrictions are eased, asylum applications in the EU+ increase significantly, but remain at half pre-COVID-19 levels. Following the gradual relaxation of emergency measures in EU+ countries,¹ in June about half as many applications for international protection were lodged compared to the months immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Europe. The impact of emergency measures on asylum trends continued to be visible in June. Although the 31 500 applications in June represented a threefold increase from May, this number was still at about half the level prior to the pandemic. In fact, almost all EU+ countries received fewer applications in June than in the first two months of the year. In the first half of 2020 the overall number of asylum applications dropped by 37 % compared to the same period in 2019. Full press release [here](#).

(15/07) FRA - Stronger together: EU Agencies join forces to respond to COVID-19. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, nine Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies (CEPOL, EASO, EIGE, EMCDDA, eu-LISA, Eurojust, Europol, FRA and Frontex) have been supporting the Member States and EU institutions in meeting the unprecedented challenges resulting from the outbreak of the virus – each agency in its respective area of work, in both the short term and the long term. Full press release [here](#).

(14/07) EASO - Asylum applications in EU remain limited in May. Despite the slow lifting of containment measures across most EU+ countries¹, asylum applications remained significantly reduced (-84%) in May compared to pre-COVID levels. At the same time, the number of cases awaiting a decision continue decreasing as national authorities redeploy staff to clear backlogs. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) EESC - Europe's demographic challenges require local solutions. In a debate with Dubravka Šuica, European Commission's Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Europe's local and regional leaders urged EU institutions to work closely together with local governments to counter the territorial and socioeconomic consequences of demographic change. As population is declining in more than 40% of EU regions, the European Committee of the Regions is calling to integrate the demographic dimension across all EU policies and in the debate on the Future of Europe. Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(20/08) Eurodiaconia - Impact Assessment of Humanitarian Corridors Program Primary Achievements. Forced displacement is a phenomenon that is affecting a rapidly growing amount of people. Despite the increasing numbers, host societies have not shown much willingness to increase integration measures. In this context, projects such as “Humanitarian Corridors” (HC) have proven an effective solution in fostering community and societal support for refugees. Full press release [here](#).

(17/07) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Wishful Waiting: Four Reasons to Curb Our Impatience for the Pact. The Commission’s priorities have been re-ordered due the COVID emergency, and rightly so. Although it is apparently ready to be published, we will be waiting longer for the long-awaited European Pact on Asylum and Migration. There is still a slim chance that it is released next week, should agreement be reached on the recovery plan, but it is more likely to be September with legislative proposals to follow even later. The delay is no cause for regret, though, for four reasons. Full press release [here](#).

(14/07) Eurodiaconia - Eurodiaconia Calls for Changes to the Proposed MFF. The negotiations regarding the EU long-term budget and the recovery initiative “Next Generation EU” are reaching a crucial point this week, as the 27 EU leaders will meet in Brussels on 17-18 July in an attempt to come to final conclusions. There is a strong commitment by many leaders to reach a final agreement this summer, but the negotiations are expected to be challenging. Full press release [here](#).

(10/07) Eurodiaconia - Weekly Editorial: Financing of A Social Europe at Risk. This week, among other things, the German Presidency delivered its priorities, demonstrating the commitment and the will to take the European Union out of the current economic and employment crisis. Full press release [here](#).

(8/07) Social Platform - Building Social Europe through the European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights (the Social Pillar) is an initiative proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission in 2017. The Social Pillar commits EU leaders to deliver new and improve existing social rights for people across Europe, and serves as the EU's compass to achieve better working and living conditions in Europe. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EPRS - [The EU Budget And Coronavirus](#)

EPRS - [Priority Dossiers Under The German EU Council Presidency](#)

Council of the EU General Secretariat – [Think Tank Review \(July\)](#)

MPI-Europe - [Measuring up? Using monitoring and evaluation to make good on the promise of refugee sponsorship](#)

Hertie School/Jacques Delors Centre - [Redeploying EU asylum policy: A way out of the governance quagmire](#)

ICMPD - [How will migration to Europe look in the Future? Trends, open questions, and four plausible scenarios](#)

ICMPD - [What policy communication works for migration? Using values to depolarise](#)

IOM - [Reintegration Counselling: A Psychosocial Approach](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – Why COVID-19 does not necessarily mean that attitudes towards immigration will become more negative](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – COVID-19 and human rights of migrants: More protection for the benefit of all](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – Quarantined! Xenophobia and migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – Temporary migration regimes and their sustainability in times of COVID-19](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – COVID-19 and rethinking the need for legal pathways to mobility: Taking human security seriously](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – “Disposable” and “essential”: Changes in the global hierarchies of migrant workers after COVID-19](#)

IOM - [Covid-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally – Shifting forms of mobility related to COVID-19](#)

IOM - [2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights](#)

Council of Europe - [Family reunification for refugee and migrant children - standards and promising practices](#)

PICUM/ECRE - [Policy Note: Ensuring an Inclusive Recovery for All: ECRE and PICUM Comments on the Next Generation EU Package and REACT-EU](#)