

# INFO FLASH 31/05

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(11/05) Sahel and Central Africa: €210 million in EU humanitarian aid.** The EU is reaffirming its solidarity with vulnerable people in countries in the Sahel and Central Africa through a humanitarian budget of €210 million in 2021. The funding will be allocated to humanitarian projects in the following eight countries: Burkina Faso (€24.3 million), Cameroon (€17.5 million), the Central African Republic (€21.5 million), Chad (€35.5 million) Mali (€31.9 million), Mauritania (€10 million), Niger (€32.3 million) and Nigeria (€37 million). Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, said: “Worsening instability and armed conflicts, together with the COVID-19 pandemic and natural hazards, are having a devastating impact in the Sahel and countries in Central Africa. The EU remains committed to help reduce suffering among people in need in the region. While humanitarian aid is there to bring emergency relief, longer-lasting improvements can only be brought about through the political will of national governments and good governance.” Full press release [here](#).

### European Parliament

**(20/05) Parliament calls for more legal options for migrant workers coming to the EU.** An EU framework for legal migration would encourage more orderly migration, attract much-needed workers, undermine smugglers and traffickers, and ease integration. In a report adopted with 495 to 163 and 32 abstentions, Parliament highlights that legal migration has barely been part of the EU’s migration policy since 2015 and underlines that the New Pact on Migration and Asylum does not include any specific proposals in this area. “EU and national policy on legal migration should focus on responding to labour market and skills shortages”, MEPs argue, pointing to the ageing population and shrinking workforce. They demand that the legislation in place be reviewed and the scope made wider, as it currently covers mostly highly skilled or highly paid workers and multinational corporations, with only the seasonal workers directive targeting lower-paid migration. The text stresses the important role of remittances and the benefits that safe, regular and orderly migration have for both sending and receiving countries. Acknowledging the risk of “brain drain”, MEPs suggest promoting circular migration, where the migrant returns after a certain amount of time to their country of origin and might leave again for work reasons. For this purpose, the Commission should analyse the approach taken by other countries, such as a points-based system. They also suggest allowing foreign workers to spend longer periods away from their host country, so they can travel more easily to their home countries. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/05) MEPs call for better protection of migrants from human rights violations.** Parliament criticises the European Commission and some EU countries for overusing informal agreements on the return and readmission of irregular migrants. On Wednesday, Parliament adopted a report by 358 votes in favour, 309 against, with 26 abstentions providing recommendations on human rights protection in the framework of the EU’s external asylum and migration policy. The text notes that, since 2016, the EU and some member states have made many informal bilateral agreements and arrangements with third countries on

strengthening their border control and management capacities, fighting human trafficking and on the return and readmission of irregular migrants. It also highlights several worrying trends and the practical human rights implications stemming from such informal arrangements, which are concluded without due democratic scrutiny and parliamentary oversight and are not subject to judicial scrutiny. Full press release [here](#).

**(7/05) EU survey highlights support for greater crisis management role at EU level.**

Two days ahead of the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe, Parliament today published the results of its Eurobarometer survey on the future of Europe. The survey was commissioned jointly with the European Commission. Following the first results published, on 9 March, the [full report](#) finds: Around eight in ten Europeans (81%) agree that one of the priorities for the Conference should be how the EU could better handle crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a third (38%) agree strongly with this. Two-thirds of Europeans (66%) believe that the EU project offers a future perspective for Europe's youth. A similar proportion (65%) sees the EU as a place of stability in a troubled world. More than two-thirds of those surveyed are in favour of electing the President of the European Commission through the choice of lead candidates in the European elections. Less than a quarter (22%) are not in favour of such a process. Twice as many EU citizens see a possibility of voting for transnational lists in European elections as a good thing (42%), compared to only one in five (19%) who reject this proposal.

Full press release [here](#).

## European Council / Council of the EU

**(20/05) EU's humanitarian action: Council adopts conclusions.** Today the Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the "EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles". In its conclusions the Council expresses serious concern at the unprecedented scale of humanitarian needs, the shrinking of humanitarian space and the growing funding gap. It therefore stresses the importance of putting respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law consistently at the heart of the EU's external action, as well as ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, supporting and promoting principled humanitarian action and safeguarding humanitarian space. Full press release [here](#).

**(17/05) Legal migration: Council presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement on scheme to attract highly qualified workers.** The Council presidency and European Parliament representatives reached a provisional agreement on a draft directive establishing the entry and residence conditions for highly qualified non-EU nationals coming to live and work in the EU (the blue card directive). This EU-wide admission system aims to attract and retain highly qualified workers, particularly in sectors facing skills shortages. Full press release [here](#).

(17/05) European Universities initiative: Council conclusions pave the way for new dimension in European higher education. initiative, launched by EU leaders in 2017, will be fully rolled out during the EU's 2021-2027 financing period. Within the European Universities alliances, students, staff and researchers should be able to move seamlessly between partner institutions to train, teach and do research. With their conclusions, ministers encourage member states and the Commission to make sure that the initiative remains central to building a European Education Area by 2025, inspiring the transformation of higher

education in the EU and helping to achieve the ambitious vision of an innovative, globally competitive and attractive European Education Area and European Research Area. To that end, the Council invites member states to take advantage of all available funding possibilities, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility (the EU's post-crisis budgetary instrument), to support the development of 'European Universities'. Full press release [here](#).

**(10/05) Horn of Africa: EU to deepen strategic relationship with the region.** The Council today approved conclusions affirming the EU's commitment to give new impetus to its partnership with the Horn of Africa, and establishing a new strategy for the region. A geo-strategic priority for the EU in Africa, the Horn of Africa region has undergone unprecedented developments over the last years and is now at a crossroads. With this new strategy, EU's intention is to further strengthen and deepen its strategic relationship and partnership with the Horn of Africa and its countries, notably with a view to reduce instability, promote democracy and sustainable growth. Full press release [here](#).

## Others

**(27/05) EASO - West Africans and Moroccans lodging more asylum applications.** Along with several of the top nationalities, West Africans and Moroccans contributed to a recent rise in first-time applications for asylum in the EU+. This comes after months of high levels of irregular migration on the Western African route to the Canary Islands. Analysis [released](#) by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on asylum trends in March 2021 shows that about 40 200 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in March 2021.<sup>1</sup> This roughly stable total results from a significant rise in the number of first-time applications (+ 17%), offset by a simultaneous fall (- 31%) of repeated applications (in the same country). Full press release [here](#).

**(11/05) CoR - European Democracy Action Plan: A "democratic vaccine" against disinformation and hate speech.** Populism, nationalism, disinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories are widespread in the European public and political sphere, which is leading to polarisation and intolerance. The deterioration of fundamental rights in one Member State has a negative impact across the EU. Therefore, in the 8th meeting of the CIVEX Commission, members welcomed the European Commission's initiative on the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP), and adopted an opinion that puts forward a set of proposals for tackling disinformation and hate speech, as well as for promoting media literacy and critical thinking, including the setting up of a European agency linked with the CoR. The members also pointed out that local and regional leaders can play an important role in strengthening citizenship, as they are the closest authorities to citizens and the ones that are most trusted, according to the EU annual regional and local barometer published in October 2020. Full press release [here](#).

**(10/05) CoR - After the Porto Social Summit, regions and cities urge for the recognition of their role in building a Social Europe.** First Vice-President Vasco Cordeiro and SEDEC Commission chair Anne Karjalainen represented the European Committee of the Regions at the EU Social Summit in Porto on 7-8 May. They welcomed the commitment of the EU Heads of State and Government to strengthen the pledge to work towards a Social Europe, to reinforce social cohesion and to reach the new EU headline targets on jobs, skills and poverty reduction. However, they regretted that the final [Summit Declaration](#) lacks reference to the role of regional and local governments. Full press release [here](#).

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

**(31/05) The cities of Novellara, Reggio Emilia and the union of municipalities “Rubicone e Mare” (Italy) awarded an inter-city ICC grant for a project on Diversity Management.** The Italian municipality of Novellara, together with the city of Reggio Emilia and the union of municipalities “Rubicone e Mare” have been awarded one of the grants opened by the Intercultural Cities programme for inter-cities projects. Their project “Diversity Management approaches in the public-private partnership industry” aims to promote greater inclusion of employees from different backgrounds. In many organisational contexts the diversity management practice is translated into simple declarations of intent, through standard communication and awareness initiatives, far from achieving an effective inclusion and enhancement of the identity and experiential background of the workers. Public organisations are also concerned by this issue, but with more limitations and restrictions as they are subject to precise rules, in particular with regards to recruitment and career development processes. At the same time, as political bodies they can promote the topic in the public debate and incentivise companies, they have contracts with, to adopt effective Diversity Management strategies. Full press release [here](#).

## CIVIL SOCIETY

**(27/05) PICUM – The EU Strategy on returns: between the devil and the deep blue sea.** On 27 April 2021, the EU Commission published its first [EU Strategy on voluntary return and reintegration](#). The strategy is envisaged by the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) as an integral policy for a common EU system for returns. It conceives actions in seven areas with the aim of increasing the number of voluntary returns. If, on paper, the text recognizes voluntary return as being more efficient, cost-effective and preferable to forced return, in practice this is contradicted by several ongoing legislative proposals which make access to voluntary return more difficult. The text highlights the role of “swift and efficient return border procedures” to encourage migrants to take up voluntary returns, including for people in administrative detention and those whose asylum application is still pending. The Strategy increases the role of Frontex in promoting voluntary returns, despite the growing [scrutiny](#) into the lack of accountability and the potential [involvement](#) of the agency in human rights violations. Full article [here](#).

**(25/05) PICUM - How do undocumented migrants fare in the new EU funds?** The EU budget provides opportunities for supporting migrants’ inclusion through different funding instruments, although each fund has a specific scope that allows for specific activities for a specific target group. Some of these funds allow EU member states to fund measures for newly arrived third country nationals, as well as to foster migrants’ access to social services and integration in employment. Undocumented migrants are generally cut off from such resources in EU funding schemes. Consequently, organisations supporting the integration of undocumented migrants are usually unable to access EU funding schemes to fund projects involving undocumented migrants. Full article [here](#).

**(21/05) ECRE - Editorial: Charting the Procedural Labyrinth: the EU’s Proposed Asylum Procedures.** This week ECRE publishes two charts showing the procedural labyrinth facing asylum applicants in Europe, should proposed reforms go ahead. [Scenario 1](#) shows the “regular” asylum procedures for people who were authorised to enter – the majority of

applicants. [Scenario 2](#) shows the asylum procedures for those who arrive at the borders, either seeking protection at a land border or disembarked following search and rescue. Certain of those who are found by the authorities in the country having entered irregularly will also be transferred to centres at the border to follow Scenario 2, which starts with the new screening process. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/05) ECRE - PRAB: New Report on Pushbacks Across Six European Countries.** In [the report](#) “Pushing Back Responsibility. Rights Violations as a “Welcome Treatment” at Europe’s borders”, Protecting Rights at Borders (PRAB) has collected testimonies of 2,162 cases of pushbacks, including chain pushbacks over multiple countries. The report covers rights violations at borders in Italy, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Hungary. Based on an extensive collection of testimonies from the Central Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, as well as at the EU’s internal borders, the report concludes that: “Pushbacks continue to be systematically used by EU Member States and neighboring countries...” and “can be considered a de-facto tool for border management by some countries”. Full press release [here](#).

**(3/05) Caritas Europa - EU Pact on migration and asylum falls short.** Caritas Europa joined efforts with eight Christian organisations to provide analysis and comments on several elements of the [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) that the European Commission launched on 23 September 2020. As Christian organisations, we are deeply committed to the inviolable dignity of the human person, as well as to the concepts of the common good, of global solidarity and of the promotion of a society that welcomes strangers. We also share the conviction that the core values of the European Union must be reflected in its policies, including in the area of freedom, security and justice. In our analysis, we regret that the Pact falls short from providing the ‘fresh start’ it had promised, and replicates, in many aspects, deficient policies from the past. Our comments hereby propose key recommendations to ensure that people’s rights and dignity are respected, and to create more humane migration and asylum policies, anchored in welcoming societies. Full press release [here](#).

## [PUBLICATIONS](#)

CEPS - [Paving the way for future labour migration](#)

DIIS - [New report on West African migrants' use of information along the routes to Europe](#)

EPRS - [Understanding EU Action On Roma Inclusion](#)

EPRS - [Matching Priorities And Resources In The EU Budget: Climate Action, Migration And Borders](#)

EPRS - [European Pillar Of Social Rights: Gothenburg, Porto And Beyond](#)

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

ECRE - [Holding Frontex to Account: ECRE’s Proposal for Enhancing Nonjudicial Scrutiny Mechanisms](#)