

INFO FLASH 27/09

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(20/09) EU announces additional €119.5 million support to democracy and human rights for 2021. Following the 2021 International Democracy Week, the European Union has announced five actions worth €119.5 million to boost the strong European support to democracy and human rights around the world in 2021. Full press release [here](#).

(10/09) Eurobarometer: Optimism about the future of the EU at its highest since 2009. Attitudes towards the EU remain positive and broadly stable, according to the latest Standard Eurobarometer conducted in June-July 2021. Optimism about the future of the EU has reached its highest level since 2009 and trust in the EU remains at its highest since 2008. Support for the euro remains stable at its highest since 2004. The survey also indicates a significant improvement in the perception of the state of national economies. European citizens identify the economic situation as their top concern at EU level, followed by the environment and climate change and by immigration. Health is still the main issue at national level, slightly ahead of the economic situation of the country. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(16/09) Fair and equal social protection for riders, drivers and other platform workers. In a vote today, MEPs demand people working for digital labour platforms, such as food delivery services, should have the same rights as traditional employees. Platform workers are often misclassified as self-employed, depriving them of access to social protection and other labour rights. To address this lack of legal certainty, Parliament proposes a reversal of the burden of proof: in case of legal proceedings employers should prove there is no employment relationship, rather than vice versa. MEPs do however oppose the automatic classification of all platform workers; those who are genuinely self-employed should be allowed to remain in that position. Full press release [here](#).

(16/09) MEPs call for special visa programme for Afghan women seeking protection. Parliament deplores the violent takeover of Afghanistan, calls for more humanitarian aid and a coordinated response to protect those most vulnerable. MEPs are appalled by reports of violations, including executions, of child soldiers being recruited, peaceful protest and expressions of dissent being repressed, and human rights being restricted, especially targeting women and girls. In a resolution adopted by 536 votes in favour, 96 against and 50 abstentions on Thursday, they call on the EU and its member states to work together to facilitate the evacuation of EU citizens and Afghans at risk, in particular through the use of safe corridors. Full press release [here](#).

(15/09) New EU Blue Card rules for highly qualified immigrants wishing to work in Europe. MEPs adopted the reform of the EU Blue Card to facilitate the employment of highly qualified non-EU nationals and help alleviate labour shortages in key sectors. The Blue Card Directive, in place since late 2009, defines the conditions of entry and residence that third

country nationals (and their family members) must meet to take up highly qualified employment in the member states. However, the scheme has not attracted enough of these much-needed workers, with only 36 806 Blue Cards issued in the EU in 2019 (and Germany issuing most of them). Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(24/09) CoR - An integrated approach to migration is essential, CoR members say. Day-to-day realities of migration require cities and regions to integrate their services, CoR members say at Mediterranean conference, warning too of funding challenges and of a rise in anti-migrant disinformation. Cities and regions in the Mediterranean and the EU should try to develop a more integrated approach to the provision of basic public services for migrants, senior members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) have said. They also urged public authorities at all levels, including the EU, to make the personal day-to-day challenges faced by migrants, particularly women and the vulnerable, central to how they design policies. Full press release [here](#).

(21/09) Afghanistan: Council conclusions set out the EU's position and next steps. The Council today approved conclusions on Afghanistan emphasising the EU's commitment to peace and stability in the country and to supporting the Afghan people. The conclusions also set out the EU's line of action for the near future. The EU recognises that the situation in Afghanistan is a major challenge for the international community as a whole, and stresses the need for strong coordination in engaging with relevant international partners, notably the UN. The EU and its member states' operational engagement will be carefully calibrated to the policy and actions of the Taliban-appointed caretaker cabinet, will not bestow any legitimacy on it, and will be assessed against the five benchmarks agreed on by EU ministers of foreign affairs at their informal meeting in Slovenia on 3 September 2021. In this context, the rights of women and girls are of particular concern. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(22/09) FRA - Pandemic exacerbates challenges civil society faces. Civil society organisations across the EU provide services, engage in communities, raise awareness, advocate on behalf of others and hold authorities to account. But they face threats, attacks, funding cuts and disproportionate restrictions. These are just some of the challenges human rights civil society organisations face in some parts of the EU, and the Coronavirus pandemic has worsened their working conditions, highlights a new report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). FRA calls on policymakers to foster a more conducive working environment for civil society, helping to realise all human rights for all. Full press release [here](#).

(16/09) EASO - Asylum applications by Afghans approaching those by Syrians. While Syrians were still the largest group of asylum applicants in EU+ countries in July, the gap to Afghans continued shrinking. As these and other main nationalities lodged substantially more applications compared to previous months, total applications were at the highest level since the outbreak of COVID-19 and approached pre-pandemic levels. Full press release [here](#).

(15/09) CoR - State of the European Union: top-down approach will stop Europe delivering on its promises and not bring it closer to people. The European Committee of the Region will present its EU Annual Local and Regional Barometer on 12 October 2021,

offering a snapshot of the many effects of the pandemic on the EU's regions and cities and show the wide differences that exist within our Union and within each Member State. It will show the pandemic's 'scissors effect' on local and regional finances, how our regions and cities are progressing – or struggling – as they seek to master the green and digital transition, how the challenge of narrowing the economic and social differences between regions has become more complex, and how regions and cities are modernising local democracy. And, with the most wide-ranging survey ever conducted among the 1.15 million local and regional politicians in the EU, it will show the opinions of the politicians who build our Union every day in their local communities. Full press release [here](#).

(9/09) EASO - Afghanistan: EASO updates report on security situation. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has published an updated Country of Origin Information (COI)¹ [Report on the security situation Afghanistan](#). As with all EASO COI Reports, the publication offers an objective resource for use by EU Member State asylum officials when reviewing individual applications for international protection – in this case by Afghan nationals. It also offers the basis for the development of Country Guidance Notes aimed at harmonising asylum decision practices across the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(8/09) CoR - European Committee of the Regions critical of New Pact on Migration and Asylum at a European Parliament hearing. Antje Grotheer (DE/PES), rapporteur of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and Vice-President of Germany's Bremen City Parliament, presented [the opinion of EU's cities and regions on the asylum & migration reform package](#) at the hearing of European Parliament's LIBE Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, on 2nd September. She was highly critical of the importance of the first entry criterion in the analysis of asylum applications, a criterion on which Member States “*waste too much time*”, as well as of the failure to take account of the realities of the regions, particularly those on the front line of migration. She urged this effect for a greater consideration of regional specificities in every aspect of the process. Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(24/09) ECRE - Spain: Mass Expulsion to Morocco Alarms NGOs and Ombudsman – Bodies of People on the Move Wash up on Spanish Shores. [125 people](#) have been pushed back to Morocco from a Spanish enclave in North Africa, despite more than 90 the people having made written requests to seek asylum in Spain. Eight bodies have washed up on the shores in Southern Spain, believed to belong to people who set off on the dangerous Western Mediterranean crossing from Morocco or Algeria. Full press release [here](#).

(21/09) Caritas EU - Building just and peaceful societies in Africa. On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, Caritas Africa and Caritas Europa call attention to the multiple aspects of social exclusion that are persistent drivers of conflict in many African countries. We emphasize the importance of core civic freedoms that must apply to all residents and urge African and European leaders to take all necessary steps to protect these fundamental rights. Full press release [here](#).

(17/09) ECRE - EU Afghanistan Response: Donors Pledge One Billion USD in Aid, Commission Seeks to Block Afghan Arrivals, Parliament Calls for a Humane and

Comprehensive Approach. The international community has pledged significant funds aimed at addressing acute humanitarian need in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The European Commission is proposing measures to prevent Afghans seeking asylum in Europe while a resolution from the European Parliament lays out a principled and comprehensive approach to supporting Afghans. Full press release [here](#).

(10/09) Social Platform - Will the European Union be more social after Porto? (originally published on Secondo Welfare). Last May in Portugal, the leaders of the EU states pledged to reach some ambitious targets on employment, training and poverty by 2030. With a series of in-depth studies, we will try to understand if and to what extent the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Porto declaration that supports it can be important for the future of the Union. Full press release [here](#).

(3/09) ECRE - Editorial: The JHA Council on Afghanistan: all about the EU. During the week of the rentrée, the Justice and Home Affairs Council demonstrated that it is still possible to produce something shocking in the field of asylum and migration (also known as the common anti-asylum and selective migration policy). Having lived through the Austrian Presidency, the Danish attempts to return people to Syria, the Salvini Decrees, Orban's scapegoating and all the rest of it, it is easy to become hardened to hardline politics and adept at blocking out toxic discourse. The JHA Council's [statement on Afghanistan](#) broke through any protective shield, however, with its combination of European insularity, anti-refugee tropes and amateurish "security" talk. To see the events in Afghanistan through a purely European lens is kind of missing the point (although perhaps gives us another insight into what went so very wrong). The statement is so petty and provincial, it is hard to believe it is the work of ministers holding key portfolios in governments across a continent which aspires – perpetually, in one form or another, for good or for bad – to be a global player. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

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

ECRE - [ECRE Legal Note 11: Extraordinary Responses: Legislative Changes in Lithuania](#)

EPRS - [Long-term vision for rural areas: European Commission communication](#)

EPRS - [State of the Union address, European Parliament, 2021](#)

Europeum - [A "New" pact on Migration and Asylum? The European migration policy path-dependency](#)

IEMed - [Territorial impact of migration on frontline regions and cities on the EU shores of the Mediterranean](#)

EU Court of Auditors - [EU readmission cooperation with third countries: relevant actions yielded limited results](#)

MPI Europe - [Healing the Gap: Building Inclusive Public-Health and Migrant Integration Systems in Europe](#)

MPI Europe - [Migration Management and Border Security: Lessons Learned](#)

MPI Europe - [The International Community Must Develop a Well-Coordinated Protection Strategy for Afghan Refugees](#)