

INFO FLASH 31/08

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(5/08) Commission steps up action for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education. Today, the Commission published a proposal for a Council Recommendation on blended learning to support high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education. 'Blended learning' in formal education and training is the term used to describe when a school, educator or student takes more than one approach to the learning process. It can be a blend of school site and other physical environments (companies, training centres, distance learning, outdoor, cultural sites, etc.), or blending different learning tools that can be digital and non-digital. The Commission proposes shorter-term measures to address the most pressing gaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a way forward for blending learning environments and tools in primary and secondary education and training, that can help build more resilient education and training systems. Full press release [here](#).

(29/07) Global Education Summit: Team Europe pledges leading contribution of €1.7 billion to the Global Partnership for Education. At today's Global Education Summit in London, the European Union and its Member States, as Team Europe, pledged €1.7 billion to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to help transform education systems for more than one billion girls and boys in up to 90 countries and territories. This represents the biggest contribution to the GPE. The EU had already announced its €700 million pledge for 2021-2027 in June. Full press release [here](#).

(23/07) Application of EU Law in 2020: Protecting our agreed rules and shared values during a pandemic. Today, the European Commission adopted the Annual Report on Monitoring the Application of EU Law, which sets out how the Commission monitored and enforced EU law in 2020, and how the Member States performed in various policy areas. The report takes into account the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and explains what action the Commission took to safeguard the rights, freedoms and livelihoods of people and businesses across the Union. Full press release [here](#).

(20/07) 2021 Rule of Law: EU report shows positive developments in Member States but also points to serious concerns. The European Commission has today published the second EU-wide Report on the Rule of Law with a Communication looking at the situation in the EU as a whole and dedicated country chapters on each Member State. The 2021 report looks at the new developments since last September, deepening the assessment of issues identified in the previous report and taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the report shows many positive developments in Member States, including where challenges identified in the 2020 report are being addressed. However, concerns remain and in certain Member States these have increased, for instance when it comes to the independence of the judiciary and the situation in the media. The report also underlines the strong resilience of national systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic also

illustrated the importance of the ability to maintain a system of checks and balances, upholding the rule of law. Full press release [here](#).

(15/07) Visa Code: The Commission proposes temporary visa measures for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia to improve cooperation on return and readmission.

Today, the Commission is proposing to the Council to adopt temporary restrictive measures on short-stay visas for visa applicants who are nationals of Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia. Under the [revised Visa Code](#) in force since February 2020, the EU's short-stay visa policy is linked to cooperation with partner countries on readmitting their nationals who do not have the right to stay in the EU. The proposals adopted today aim to improve the 3 countries' cooperation with the Member States on readmission. Effective return and readmission as well as sustainable reintegration are essential elements of comprehensive, balanced, tailor-made and mutually beneficial migration partnerships with countries outside the EU. Fostering co-operation is an important element of this policy and the EU needs to mobilise all available tools, including development co-operation, trade or visa. Improved and sustained cooperation could also potentially open the path to more favourable visa measures. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(16/08) Afghanistan crisis: Safety of Afghan women and girls has to be a fundamental EU priority.

Reacting to rapid developments on the ground in Afghanistan, Evelyn Regner, the Chair of the European Parliament's committee on women's rights and gender equality said: "Now the Taliban have seized control of Kabul, a new reign of terror for people living in Afghanistan has begun. For Afghan women and girls, this means systemic and brutal oppression in all aspects of life. In Taliban-controlled areas, women's universities have been closed, they are denying girls access to education, and women are sold as sex slaves. Full press release [here](#).

(19/07) Conference on the Future of Europe: greater say for regions and social partners.

Today, the Executive Board agreed to allocate more seats in the Conference Plenary to regional and local elected representatives, as well as to social partners. The sixth meeting of the Conference's Executive Board was the first one during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council. The Executive Board amended the Rules of Procedure by adding to the Conference Plenary six elected representatives from regional and six from local authorities. They also agreed to increase the number of representatives from the social partners by four, to a total of 12. Full press release [here](#).

(7/07) EU Parliament adopts two funds for asylum and border policies.

The 2021-2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (€9.88 billion) will strengthen the EU's common asylum policy, develop legal migration in line with member states' needs, support the integration of third-country nationals, and contribute to the fight against irregular migration. At Parliament's request, the money should also serve to push member states to share the responsibility of hosting refugees and asylum-seekers more fairly across the EU. With a €6.24 billion budget over seven years, the Integrated Border Management Fund is intended to help strengthen EU external border management while ensuring fundamental rights are respected. The fund will also contribute to a common, harmonised visa policy, and introduce protective measures for vulnerable people arriving in Europe, in particular unaccompanied children. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) Rule of Law: start applying budget conditionality immediately. The budget conditionality regulation does not require any additional clarification to be applied and rule of law breaches must be addressed without delay, say MEPs. In a resolution adopted by the Budget and Budgetary Control committees on Thursday with 53 votes 11 against and 2 abstentions, MEPs regret that the Commission has decided to abide by the non-binding December 2020 European Council conclusions and delay application of the budget conditionality regulation. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(17/08) Afghanistan: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union. European Union Ministers of Foreign Affairs gathered today for an extraordinary meeting to consider the latest momentous developments in Afghanistan. The country finds itself at a crossroads after decades of conflict. The wellbeing and security of its citizens, political and human rights achievements, as well as regional and international security are at stake. Full statement [here](#).

(23/07) Migration: EU helps channel humanitarian support to migrants in Lithuania. Following a request for assistance from Lithuania, the European Commission is helping European countries send support through the European Civil Protection Mechanism. Lithuania asked for help following increased arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers coming from the Middle East and Africa and entering Lithuania via the border with Belarus. Already twelve countries have offered support such as tents, beds and generators. The Commission coordinates the delivery and finances up to 75% of the costs for transporting the assistance. Full press release [here](#).

(12/07) The Council today adopted a decision setting up an EU military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique). The aim of the mission is to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in the Cabo Delgado province. The Council today adopted a decision setting up an EU military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique). The aim of the mission is to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in the Cabo Delgado province. Full press release [here](#).

(9/07) Providing protection through joint leadership: stepping up resettlement and complementary legal pathways. Representatives of the European Union, the United States of America, the Government of Canada and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees met on 9 July 2021 at the High-level Resettlement Forum convened by Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson. The participants confirm their determination to work together and coordinate efforts to provide the much-needed solutions for vulnerable refugees around the world, while ensuring their prospects for the future. Full press release [here](#).

(5/07) Eurobarometer Survey: Europeans consider climate change to be the most serious problem facing the world. A new Eurobarometer survey published today shows that European citizens believe climate change is the single most serious problem facing the world. More than nine out of ten people surveyed consider climate change to be a serious problem (93%), with almost eight out of ten (78%) considering it to be very serious. When asked to pick out the single most serious problem facing the world, over a quarter (29%)

chose either climate change (18%), deterioration of nature (7%) or health problems due to pollution (4%). Full press release [here](#).

(2/07) Eastern Partnership: a renewed agenda for recovery, resilience and reform underpinned by an Economic and Investment plan. Today the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy outlined a proposal on how to take forward priorities for cooperation with our Eastern partners in the years to come. This agenda is based on the five long-term objectives, with resilience at its core, as defined for the future of the Eastern Partnership in March 2020. It will be underpinned by a €2.3 billion Economic and Investment plan in grants, blending and guarantees, with a potential to mobilise up to €17 billion in public and private investments. This proposal will contribute to the discussions on the future Eastern Partnership policy including at the Eastern Partnership summit planned for December 2021. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(21/07) EASO - Many arrivals from the Maghreb but few asylum applications. Nationals of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria have lodged surprisingly few asylum applications over the past year, based on the number of illegal border-crossings that were detected for these nationalities. In contrast, applications by West Africans were again high in May. Full press release [here](#).

(14/07) EASO - EASO publishes a COI report: Syria – Security situation. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) report titled "[Syria: Security situation](#)". This report is part of a series of Syria COI reports produced in 2021. The reports provide information relevant for international protection status determination for Syrian applicants, and in particular for use in updating EASO's country guidance development on Syria. Full press release [here](#).

(9/07) FRA - Strengthening human rights protection at borders. A new joint EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and Council of Europe note outlines the human rights standards that apply at European borders. The [note](#) focuses on effective remedies for human rights violations at the European borders. It also provides detailed information on complaints mechanisms and the duty to carry out investigations into alleged violations at borders. Full press release [here](#).

(2/07) EASO - EASO publishes a COI report: Somalia Actors. Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) report titled - [Somalia: Actors \(2021\)](#). After peaking in 2015, with 21 600 applications for international protection, Somali requests for international protection have fluctuated in recent years. So far in 2021 (January-April), Somalis have lodged over 4 300 IP applications in the EU+, which makes Somalia the seventh top country of origin for applicants in the EU+. By comparison, in 2020 Somalia was the 10th top country of origin. So far in 2021, the EU+ recognition rate for EU-regulated types of protection (at first instance) for Somalis was 59 %, which is in line with that of the previous year. At the end of April 2021, some 10 500 Somali applications were pending at first instance. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) CoR - European Committee of the Regions supports European Democracy Action Plan as part of a "process of creating a new democratic infrastructure". The recommendations are an endorsement of the European Democracy Action Plan presented by

the European Commission in December 2020, which sets out a range of initiatives – often of a non-legislative nature – intended to protect and develop European democracy in a digital era. The CoR, however, faulted the plan for not emphasising enough the potential contribution of local and regional authorities to improving the health of European democracy. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) CoR - Mediterranean citizens and Mediterranean Sea need special attention from EU. The European Union should make improving the health of the Mediterranean Sea one of the priorities of its cooperation with countries in its southern neighbourhood, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has said in recommendations that also praise the EU for making support for youth entrepreneurship central to its new strategy for the region. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) CoR - Regions and cities call for more support to the care sector facing worker shortages. As Europe's population is ageing, the need for care services is expected to increase significantly in the coming decades. In an opinion drafted by Heinrich Dorner (AT/PES), Member of the State Government of Burgenland, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) calls on the European Commission to support cities and regions in addressing care worker shortages and highlights that family members – most often women – carrying out informal care work need adequate social rights and protection. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(26/07) Competition for schools: More than migrants. Within the communication campaign “More than migrants” in celebration of International Migrants Day, the Council of Europe and Intercultural Cities programme (ICC) invite schools to engage in a competition to break down the stereotypes that reduce migrants’ identities to labels. The school competition aims to trigger a collective reflection on the complexity of the identities that make each of us unique. The emphasis is on the contribution that each of us can make to society when we are given the opportunity to be ourselves, not just a label. Deadline: 19 November 2021. Full press release [here](#).

(23/07) Circular and Intercultural Cities. “People” and the “society” have been gaining a central role in the scope of sustainable development until the latter became the foundation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, while there is extensive guidance, scientific knowledge, legally binding instruments, and relatively big funding for a more sustainable development of our societies, there are still important gaps in dealing with the green transition in a way that is truly inclusive and offers solutions to social challenges – and vice versa. With this in mind, the Intercultural Cities programme started exploring a number of specific fields which local authorities could better exploit to bridge the ecological and the intercultural agenda. One of these is circular economy, an economic model where value is generated through continuous circulation of resources, with consideration for the planetary boundaries, and formulation of solutions from a systems and human-centric design perspective. However, although circular initiatives can have social benefits, these are not a given. Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) Publication of a new guide: Which alternative narratives work and why? Following the [‘10 criteria for the creation of effective alternative narratives on diversity’](#), the ICC has worked together with experts to develop research on alternative narratives specifically in relation to migration and integration. Alternative Narratives are positive,

pluralist, or progressive narratives that are based on intercultural principles and respect for human rights. In the policy brief [“Migration and integration - Which alternative narratives work and why”](#), narratives are examined from the perspective of the city with input of research from civil society. The brief identifies and examines alternative narratives under the frames of shared humanity, shared prosperity as well as shared health and security, based on research with illustrating practical examples from cities across the globe. The policy brief is part of a series of papers and training materials developed for the [Academy on Alternative Narratives and Intercultural Communication](#). Full press release [here](#).

(1/07) Publication of a new guide: A toolkit to fight rumours in your daily life. Imagine you are having a conversation with your neighbour when they drop a negative comment about migration. We all face similar situations from time to time – how have you handled them? Did you let it pass or did you speak up? Did you explain why the comment was discriminatory or hurtful? In the policy brief [“Claiming the power of dialogue - Toolkit for antirumours dialogue”](#), strategies for face to face dialogue are presented with the aim of providing the readers with a simple toolkit to engage in active antirumours dialogue. The policy brief complements the [Antirumours handbook](#) and other [antirumours materials](#), and is part of a series of papers and training materials developed for the [Academy on Alternative Narratives and Intercultural Communication](#). Full press release [here](#).

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(27/08) ICMC - ICMC Europe Joins NGOs’ Call for EU To Guarantee Protection of Afghan Refugees. The [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\) Europe](#) has joined a coalition of over 50 European NGOs working on asylum and migration and Afghan Diaspora organizations in Europe in signing the joint statement [“Current priorities for an EU response to the situation in Afghanistan”](#). The statement was released on 25 August, just as a large-scale humanitarian and protection crisis unfolds following the Taliban’s rapid takeover of Afghanistan. Full press release [here](#).

(29/07) PICUM - Covid-19 vaccines and undocumented migrants: international guidelines. International and regional public health and human rights bodies have, since the end of 2020, been vocal about the need for inclusive and equitable vaccination schemes, as a matter of public health, fairness and human rights; and have published guidelines about how to achieve this for people with irregular migration status, who have long faced major barriers in accessing health care. Full press release [here](#).

(28/07) Caritas Europa - Stop deportations to Afghanistan! Caritas Europa joins NGOs, refugee-led organisations and members of the Afghan diaspora in Europe in the call to immediately stop all deportation to Afghanistan, amidst the deteriorating security situation in the country. Full press release [here](#).

(19/07) Social Platform - Social Platform is building the Group of ‘Social Pillar Champions’ in the European Parliament. The Group of Social Pillar Champions will bring together Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are the most vocal and visible supporters of social rights – both for their own constituents and people across the whole European Union. It is an informal group, whose structure and activities will be adapted depending on the interests and needs of its members. As such, activities could, for example, range from internal meetings between MEPs and civil society organisations, to external

events on different Pillar principles, to livestreamed chats with members about their areas of expertise. Full press release [here](#).

(12/07) ENAR - ENAR joins the UN High Commissioner in calling for a specific UN mechanism to spur transformative change for racial justice and equality. On 12 July 2021 the UN High-Commissioner is presenting to the Human Rights Council (HRC) a report on systemic racism and police brutality around the world. The HRC will then decide how it follows up on this issue.

A resolution put forward by the group of African States proposes to create an international and independent mechanism to investigate and enhance accountability of past and current human rights violations against Black people in the USA, Latin America, Europe and around the world. The State members of the HRC will have to decide on this resolution. Full press release [here](#).

(9/07) PICUM - Undocumented children in Europe: between rights and barriers. Across Europe, undocumented children face legal and practical barriers to pursuing an education, getting the health care they need, and having a decent and stable home. However, as the representative from the Council of Europe pointed out, international bodies stress the importance of treating undocumented children as children only. Full press release [here](#).

(7/07) Caritas Europa - Time to get resettlement moving! Caritas Europa joins five major civil society organisations to urge the EU and its Member States to urgently revive resettlement efforts and make ambitious pledges for 2022 at the EU Resettlement Forum, on 9th July. Resettlement is one of the few safe, legal pathways available for vulnerable refugees to reach the EU, and is a crucial protection tool additional to the right to asylum. Resettlement is also a concrete means to demonstrate global solidarity and responsibility-sharing towards low and middle income countries that host 86 percent of the world's refugees. Full press release [here](#).

(5/07) Caritas Europa - EU should spend ODA effectively. For the next seven years, the new EU budget will allocate 10% of its external action instrument to migration activities. We are concerned about the best use of such resources and how they can contribute – as much as possible – to promoting sustainable development in partner countries, in alignment with partner countries' priorities and local populations' most pressing needs. Full press release [here](#).

(5/07) ICMC - ICMC Annual Report 2020: Serving Migrants and Refugees in an Unprecedented Year. In 2020, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) adapted with creativity and flexibility to continue assisting and protecting uprooted people and advocating on their behalf in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. Full press release [here](#).

(5/07) PICUM - The Covid-19 vaccines and undocumented migrants in Italy. As part of our efforts to monitor access to the COVID-19 vaccines for undocumented migrants in Europe, we're speaking with national-level advocates about the situation in their countries. This interview was conducted in June 2021 with Marco Paggi, lawyer at Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (ASGI) to discuss the situation in Italy. It is not meant to offer an exhaustive picture of the legal and practical context in Italy. Please get in touch at info@picum.org if you have information you'd like to share, and follow our Twitter page [@PICUM](#) [post](#) to get more recent updates. Full article [here](#).

(1/07) ICMC - NGOs Call for Urgent UN Response to Migrant “Pushback” Practices. The International Catholic Migration Commission and 50 other NGOs have voiced deep concern about the widespread government practice of forcing migrants back over international borders without the opportunity to seek protection. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

CESPI - [The refugee issue in Turkey’s relations with the EU](#)
ECRE - [Policy Note: Boosting Asylum in Spain – Making the Most out of AMIF Funding](#)
ECRE - [Reception, detention and restriction of movement at EU external borders](#)
EPRS - [The European Education Area and the 2030 strategic framework for education and training \[Policy Podcast\]](#)
EPRS - [Understanding EU action against human trafficking \[Policy Podcast\]](#)
EUI - [Implementing the United Nations Global Compact on Refugees?](#)
EUIdea - [EU Differentiation in Border, Asylum and Police Cooperation: Drivers, Effectiveness and Crisis](#)
IAI - [Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Africa–EU Partnership on Migration and Mobility: A Developmental Perspective from West Africa](#)
IZA - [Migration and Labor Market Integration in Europe](#)
MPI - [Deepening Labor Migration Governance at a Time of Immobility: Lessons from Ghana and Senegal](#)
MPI - [Future Scenarios for Global Mobility in the Shadow of Pandemic](#)
MPI - [Solidarity in Isolation? Social Cohesion at a Time of Physical Distance](#)
MPI - [Taking the Long View: Options for Inclusive Post-Pandemic Labor Markets](#)
OSCE - [Regularization of Migrants in an Irregular Situation in the OSCE Region](#)
Torfa et al - [Origin and transit migration of Afghans and Syrians to Germany: The influential actors and factors behind the destination choice](#)