

INFO FLASH 26/11

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(23/11) EU proposes blacklisting of transport operators involved in facilitating the smuggling or trafficking of people. As part of the European Union's united response to state-sponsored instrumentalisation of people at the EU's external border with Belarus, the Commission and High Representative propose today measures to prevent and restrict the activities of transport operators that engage in or facilitate smuggling or trafficking of people into the EU. This will add a new instrument to the EU's toolbox for supporting Member States affected by such hybrid attacks. Other forms of support notably humanitarian assistance should accompany any measures taken under this instrument. Full press release [here](#).

(23/11) EU actions to counter state-sponsored instrumentalisation of migrants at the EU external border. Full factsheet [here](#).

(23/11) Emergency EU support available for migration and border management. Full factsheet [here](#).

(16/11) Launch of the Start-up Village Forum: delivering the vision for EU's rural areas. Today, the Commission launched the [Start-up Village Forum](#) to gather insights on challenges for and potential of rural start-up companies. As part of the EU's June 2021 [long-term vision for rural areas](#) and the Commission Action Plan for Rural areas, the annual Start-up Village Forum contributes to boosting research and innovation in rural communities and help build up a more innovative entrepreneurship that will attract more young and talented people. Full press release [here](#).

(6/10) High-Level Forum on providing protection to Afghans at risk. Tomorrow, High-Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson are convening a High-Level Forum focusing on providing protection to Afghans. The forum is a follow-up to discussions in G7 and in the extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council on Afghanistan. The aim is to ensure that action of the EU and of the Member States to protect Afghans is supportive of global coordination and cooperation efforts. The forum will bring together, in a virtual setting, Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Interior Ministers of EU Member States as well as from Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, representatives of the European Parliament, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration, António Vitorino. In the afternoon, discussions will continue at senior officials' level with representatives of Canada, the UK and the US. Full press release [here](#).

(29/09) New Pact on Migration and Asylum: reporting on developments and stepping up fight against migrant exploitation. One year on from the adoption of the proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Commission is today presenting a [Report on Migration and Asylum](#). The Commission is also adopting a renewed [EU action plan against](#)

migrant smuggling and a Communication on the application of the Employers Sanctions Directive. As part of the comprehensive approach to migration under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, these initiatives aim to prevent organised exploitation of migrants and reduce irregular migration, in coherence with the New Pact's aim to promote sustainable and orderly management of migration. The initiatives will address both persistent challenges in dismantling organised criminal groups, as well as the need to adapt to new challenges including state-sponsored migrant smuggling, in response to the situation at the EU's external borders with Belarus. Full press release [here](#).

(29/09) EU fight against migrant smuggling and exploitation. A strong European response is needed to prevent organised exploitation of migrants and reduce irregular migration, in coherence with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum's aim to promote sustainable and orderly migration management. Full factsheet [here](#).

European Parliament

(25/11) Parliament demands new EU rules to support legal labour migration. Proposals to ease legal labour migration to Europe are needed by the end of January 2022, to overcome the challenge of an ageing population and of skills shortages. Full press release [here](#) and [here](#).

(24/11) Minimum wage: green light to start negotiations with Council. MEPs on Thursday decided to start talks on a directive that will guarantee all workers in the EU a fair and adequate minimum wage. The draft directive on a minimum wage aims to lay down minimum requirements to ensure an income that allows for a decent standard of living for workers and their families. This can either be realised via a statutory minimum wage (the lowest wage level permitted by law) or by allowing workers to negotiate their wages with their employers via collective bargaining. Parliament also wants to strengthen and extend the coverage of collective bargaining by obliging member states with less than 80% of workers covered by these agreements to take active steps to promote this tool. Full press release [here](#).

(11/11) A strong EU Asylum Agency to support asylum systems in the member states. The new EU Asylum Agency will have enhanced operational and technical powers to facilitate cooperation among member states and contribute to converging asylum standards. The legislation endorsed on Thursday by the European Parliament upgrades the existing mandate of the EU Asylum Support Office (EASO), which has been operational since 2011 and is based in Valletta, Malta. The new agency will provide operational and technical assistance to member states at their request. This will include, for example, helping to identify and register third-country nationals or by assisting national authorities to manage the international protection procedure - including in crises and relocation and resettlement situations - and more generally with the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. It will also be tasked with developing operational standards, analysis and guidelines as well as training on asylum-related matters. Full press release [here](#).

(10/11) Poland-Belarus border: MEPs alarmed by humanitarian and political crisis. The EU must stand united in its response to the Belarusian regime's inhuman instrumentalisation of migrants, MEPs said in a debate on Wednesday. In a plenary debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Wednesday afternoon, MEPs expressed their deep worries over the dramatic crisis currently unfolding at the Polish-Belarusian border. They also repeated their strong condemnation of the current tactics of the Belarusian dictatorial regime of funnelling migrant flows to the EU's external borders, escalating the

situation with neighbouring countries, in particular Poland, as revenge for European Union sanctions. Full press release [here](#).

(14/10) MEPs want protection for media, NGOs and civil society from abusive lawsuits.

The EU needs rules against vexatious legal actions intended to silence critical voices, according to the Parliament's Civil Liberties and Legal Affairs committees. In a draft report endorsed on Thursday with 63 votes for, 9 against, and 10 abstentions, MEPs propose measures to counteract the threat that Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) pose to journalists, NGOs and civil society. MEPs regret that no member state has yet enacted targeted legislation against SLAPPs, and they worry about the effect of these lawsuits on EU values and the internal market. In the report, they highlight the frequent imbalance of power and resources between claimants and defendants, which undermines the right to a fair trial. MEPs are particularly concerned about SLAPPs being funded from state budgets, and their use in combination with other state measures against independent media outlets, journalism and civil society. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(7/10) Council adopts visa measures against The Gambia. The Council today decided to temporarily suspend the application of certain provisions in the visa code to nationals of The Gambia. This decision was taken due to the country's lack of cooperation on readmission of third-country nationals illegally staying in the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(7/10) Legal migration: Council adopts blue card directive to attract highly-qualified workers. The Council today adopted a 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](#).

(7/10) EU Code of Conduct against illegal hate speech online: results remain positive but progress slows down. Today the European Commission has released the results of its sixth evaluation of the [Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#). The results show a mixed picture as IT companies reviewed 81% of the notifications within 24 hours and removed an average of 62.5% of flagged content. These results are lower than the average recorded in 2019 and 2020. While some companies have improved, results for others have clearly worsened. As in previous monitoring rounds, a main weakness remains insufficient feedback to users' notifications. Finally, a novelty in this year's evaluation is the information provided by IT companies about measures they have taken to counter hate speech, including actions to automatically detect such content. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(28/10) EIGE - Gender Equality Index 2021: Fragile gains, big losses. The EU scores 68 points out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index, released today by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). This is a microscopic increase of just 0.6 points since last year's edition. Full press release [here](#).

(27/10) EASO - EASO publishes a COI report: Pakistan security situation. Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) Report titled "[Pakistan security situation report \(October 2021\)](#)". This report is an update to the previous EASO COI Report "Pakistan – Security Situation" published in October 2020. Full press release [here](#).

(19/10) EASO - EASO publishes updated Country Guidance: Nigeria. Nigeria remains one of the main countries of origin at EU+ level. According to EASO Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data, close to 16 000 applications were received in EU Member States and associated countries in the 12-month period until August 2021. EASO is pleased to announce the update of '[Country Guidance: Nigeria](#)'. This update, published on 19 October 2021, replaces the first edition of the guidance of February 2019. Full press release [here](#).

(13/10 CoR - Regions and cities urge for quick adoption of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Jari Andersson, chair of Sastamala City Council (FI/EPP), has drafted an opinion urging the EU Member States to accelerate implementation of the EU strategy on the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee. Mr Andersson's opinion was adopted at the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on Tuesday 12 October. The opinion underlines that regions and municipalities play an important role in combating child poverty and exploitation and preventing exclusion. Full press release [here](#).

(6/10) CoR - The JRC Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy as knowledge and coordination hub for regions and cities. Today, the European Commission Joint Research (JRC) Centre launched the Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (CC). It aims at providing tools, resources, research and methodologies to build capacity and best practice in participatory and deliberative democracy across different levels of governance in the EU. Mark Speich, Chair of the CoR commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs – CIVEX - stated that the cooperation between the CC and regions and cities could be mutual: On the one hand the CoR can be a full partner of the JRC in its work on the EC policy priority "A new push for European democracy" by contributing with regional and local best practices to the community of practitioners around the CC. On the other hand the CC could develop a mechanism to mainstream citizens' participation in the EU policy making and support the local and regional level to systematize the use of participatory tools on a permanent basis. Full press release [here](#).

(4/10) CoR - Cities and regions underline their role in eradicating homelessness and in building trust in Artificial Intelligence systems. Homelessness is probably the most severe manifestation of social exclusion in Europe. There were at least 700 000 people who slept rough or in shelter accommodation on any given night in 2019, which represents an increase of 70% in 10 years. An opinion adopted by the European Committee of the Regions' SEDEC Commission points out that the multiple causes and facets of this urgent societal problem need to be addressed at all levels of government. At the meeting held on 1 October, SEDEC members also adopted an opinion on the European Commission's Artificial Intelligence (AI) package, which seeks to regulate the deployment of AI and prohibit certain AI practices while largely ignoring the contribution of local and regional authorities. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(26/11) A comprehensive policy approach for intercultural integration at the national level. During its third plenary meeting last June, the CDADI adopted the Model Framework for an intercultural integration strategy at the national level, the first international guidance to serve as a basis for national intercultural integration strategies grounded on human rights standards. Developed by the Working Group on Intercultural Integration (GT-ADI-INT), the purpose of the Model Framework is to guide national policy practitioners in their efforts to design integration policies which help build inclusive and cohesive societies. Full press release [here](#).

(26/11) New checklists to discover if your project is intercultural. The Intercultural Cities programme is happy to present three easy-to-use checklists to help assess whether your projects and policies are truly intercultural. They can also be used for completed projects, as well as for grant applications by civil society organisations. The intercultural checklists are intended for local officials, working groups, civil society, and other actors. Full press release [here](#).

(3/11) Data protection: Committee of Ministers updates recommendation on profiling. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has adopted a Recommendation aiming to respond to the radical changes in profiling techniques in the last decade and to the consequent need for additional safeguards to protect personal data and private life of individuals. The text, which updates a previous recommendation on the same topic adopted in 2010, aims to align its provisions with the modernised data protection “Convention 108”, known as “Convention 108+”. The recommendation provides that respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, notably human dignity, privacy, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, social justice, cultural diversity and democracy should be guaranteed in both the public and private sectors during all profiling operations. Full press release [here](#).

(20/10) Council of Europe recommends measures to protect children against radicalization. As some children may be particularly vulnerable to messaging by terrorist associations and groups, including via social media, the Council of Europe has recommended a set of measures to help its 47 member states better protect children against radicalisation for the purpose of terrorism. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(26/11) ECRE - Joint Statement: Call on the EU: Restore Rights and Values at Europe's Borders. As European civil society and professional organisations working on asylum, migration, humanitarian assistance and human rights, we are shocked by the continuing humanitarian crisis at the borders between the EU and Belarus which causes immense suffering and has led to the deaths of at least ten people. While we fully condemn the actions of Belarus, we urge a response from the EU, the EU's Member States, and all relevant European and international organisations that is in line with EU and international legal obligations and with standards of common decency. Full joint statement [here](#).

(21/11) Social Platform - Quality work for a quality life. On 11 October, I attended the 'Quality Work for a Quality Life' conference. Given all the focus on how work is fundamentally changing due to COVID, the topic was a no-brainer for the Slovenian

Presidency, though they added a much welcome focus on ageing and the workplace. Representatives from the European Commission, labour ministries, trade unions, businesses, International Labour Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and academia looked at the good and the bad of the changes wrought by COVID. Full press release [here](#).

(19/11) ECRE - Hungary vs EU: CJEU Confirms Stop Soros Amendments Violate EU Law, Commission Seeks to Impose Non-Compliance Fines, Minister of Justice Challenges Supremacy of EU Law. On 16 November the Court of Justice of the European Union ([CJEU](#)) [confirmed](#) that the [so-called](#) Stop Soros law from 2018 infringes EU law. The European Commission has announced that it will [refer Hungary to the CJEU](#) to impose fines over non-compliance with a CJEU [ruling from December 2020](#) that found indefinite detention in transit zones and [indiscriminate pushbacks](#) to Serbia to be in breach of EU law. Hungary's constitutional court [is discussing](#) a challenge to the supremacy of EU law over the ruling. Full press release [here](#).

(16/11) International Federation of Social Workers - Statement on the refugee crisis at the Belarus-Polish border. Full statement [here](#).

(4/11) EUROCITIES - Working on socially equitable cities. Full conference summary [here](#).

(29/10) ECRE - Editorial: The Pact: First Drafts on APR and RAMM. This week, the Pact moved forward a step with the presentation of the first of the draft reports prepared by the European Parliament's rapporteurs. The shadow rapporteurs from the other political groups will now prepare their amendments to the reports and the final product will constitute the Parliament's position on the legislative proposal in question, otherwise read as the amended proposal to be taken to negotiations with the Council. Right now, that other co-legislator looks blocked, with disagreements remaining among the Member States: unsurprisingly, a pile of complex legislation has not served to resolve deep and bitter conflicts, some of which Member States have no intention of resolving because their governments thrive on the battles with each other and with the EU. So it is up to the EP to make some progress. Full article [here](#).

(28/10) EUROCITIES - All children have a right to their future. "They took me to the police station and took away my shoes... Then they locked me with other people in a cell. We were around 40 people. Children and adults. Some were sleeping on the floor. If you were asking for something, the police officers were beating you or kicking you with their boots." This is the testimony of an unaccompanied minor making their way to a new life in Europe. In 2020, three out of 10 migrants were children – and 10% of those children were travelling unaccompanied. These children are often very vulnerable and suffer from trauma experienced before, during and after their transition to their new countries. However, many national governments do not offer the comprehensive support necessary to help these children integrate and achieve their best. The cities of Amsterdam, Leeds, Malmo and Tilburg are among those that are filling the gaps to ensure that unaccompanied migrant children have everything they need to get a fair start in life. Full press release [here](#).

(27/10) EUROCITIES - A recipe for local inclusion. From a crusading basketball team to hosting art performances in a city-centre park turned urban farm, cities across Europe are innovating to include local people, businesses and vulnerable groups in revolutionising food

systems. In Berlin, the secret is understanding the time constraints facing local people that would like to be involved; in Bordeaux, it's overcoming the digital divide. At a meeting of five European food projects, 'City-led citizen engagement for food policies in Europe,' a side event of the Farm to Fork 2021 conference on 14 October 2021, cities shared insights on bringing people to the table to co-design food policy, and how local approaches could strengthen local and European policy. Full press release [here](#).

(25/10) Caritas EU - Cease pushbacks now! As people die in the freezing forests of north-eastern Europe, Caritas Europa cannot remain silent. In reaction to the European Council's October session, we call on EU leaders to uphold human dignity and to ensure humanitarian access to people in need at the EU's borders. Full press release [here](#).

(22/10) Caritas EU - Prioritise migration as a development force. Caritas Europa co-signed an open letter with ACT Alliance EU calling for migration to be prioritised as a force for development. Key milestones of the ongoing negotiations on the new EU-Africa partnership are fast approaching, with the AU-EU ministerial meeting scheduled for 26 October and the 6th AU-EU summit planned for February 2022. In line with [Caritas Africa and Caritas Europa's initial proposals](#) for the new EU-Africa Strategy, we expect these important events to lead to future AU-EU joint actions that are anchored in the respect of human rights and international law. The strategy should reflect the positive aspects of migration, and commit to significantly step-up cooperation on safe and legal pathways for migration and mobility. Full press release [here](#).

(21/10) Social Platform - European Commission 2022 Work Programme - enough ambition to ensure Europe's social recovery? Putting the Social Pillar into practice is mentioned in the chapter on "An Economy that works for people" but most of its initiatives focus significantly more on economic reforms than on people. A legislative proposal on protecting workers from asbestos, one on fair taxation and the foreseen Recommendation on minimum income (which remains below our [calls](#) for a directive on adequate minimum wages) are the only social initiatives included here. Full article [here](#).

(20/10) Social Platform - Social Europe is the only answer to the rise of right-wing extremism and racism in Italy. Italy has seen a surge of violent neo-fascist attacks in recent weeks. On 9 October, groups of violent neo-fascists infiltrated a protest against COVID-19 vaccine passes in Rome, attacking a hospital and a trade union building. The vaccine debate has proved to be fertile ground for an already growing movement to set down even stronger roots. Italy has always struggled with its relationship with fascism. Some parts of the so-called parliamentary far-right, such as Brothers of Italy and Lega, do not openly condemn fascism because of the fascist links and identity of many of their affiliates. Fortunately, this is not the only signal that is coming from my country: in response to these recent attacks many joined demonstrations last Saturday led by CGIL, Italy's largest trade union. The demonstrators stood together in solidarity to say there is no place for fascism and fascist ideas in our country. I joined the demo organised in Brussels (pictured above) and was heartened to see that more than 100,000 people rallied in Rome, with the support of the main representatives of Italy's centre-left forces. Full article [here](#).

(12/10) PICUM - Between asylum and return, space is closing for residence permits for undocumented migrants. Under international and EU law, there are several human rights reasons for which people who do not qualify for asylum cannot be deported. These include the principle of non-refoulement, the protection of family and private life, the best interests of

the child and the prohibition of arbitrary detention. In addition, several circumstances that are outside of an individual's control can make deportation or return impossible. For people who for whom return is impossible, or undesirable, many EU countries foresee residence permits that go outside the scope of international protection. Full press release [here](#).

(7/10) PICUM - the new EU Action plan against migrant smuggling is failing migrants. The [renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling \(2021-2025\)](#), presented by the European Commission at the end of September, risks exacerbating all the reasons why migrant smuggling happens in the first place. Full press release [here](#).

(4/10) EU Alliance for Investing in Children - Statement on the drafting of the Child Guarantee national action plans. On the 14th of June 2021, EU Member States took a historic decision by unanimously adopting the Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee. By calling on EU Member States to guarantee access to basic rights and services for children in need, this ambitious and innovative framework represents a landmark step forward in protecting the rights of children growing up in poverty and social exclusion in the EU. Moreover, the approval by unanimity demonstrates the commitment of all 27 Member States to tackle child poverty within the EU.

Even before the pandemic, over 18 million children in the EU were growing up in poverty or social exclusion. Although official Eurostat data for 2020 have not been released yet for all Member States, the negative consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on children in vulnerable situations and their families have already been evident in several countries. Hence, an ambitious and comprehensive framework to protect children in need and ensure equal access to key services is urgently needed. For this reason, after years of negotiations, evidence-based advocacy, and hard work, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children (Alliance) [positively welcomed the adoption of the Child Guarantee](#). In particular, [the EU Alliance was pleased to notice that most of its requests made over the last years were included in the final text of the Recommendation](#). Full statement [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

ECRE - [ECRE Policy Note: A Seamless Link?](#)

Eurodiaconia - [Promoting Shared Prosperity in the European Semester](#)

Eurodiaconia - [Access to Quality Employment for People in Vulnerable Situations](#)

Eurodiaconia - [Report on the Progress on the Social Dimensions of the Country-Specific Recommendations](#)

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

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

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

Etzold & Christ - [Humanitarian Admission Programmes: how networks enable mobility in contexts of protracted displacement](#)

Forced Migration Review - [Externalisation / Mobility and agency in protracted displacement](#)

Robert Bosch Stiftung - [Automating Decision-Making in Migration Policy: A Navigation Guide](#)

EPRS - [Understanding EU policies for persons with disabilities](#)