

# INFO FLASH 31/12/2022

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(12/12) EU adopts new programmes in support to refugees and border management in Türkiye worth over €1.2 billion.** The European Commission has adopted today a €220 million package to improve border control at Türkiye's Eastern border, bringing to €1.235 billion the total EU assistance adopted in 2022 to continue support to refugees in Türkiye - basic needs, assistance for the most vulnerable and socio-economic support- and for border management. These funds are part of the additional €3 billion, announced in June 2021, following the European Council, to continue EU assistance to refugees in Türkiye between 2021 and 2023. Full press release [here](#).

**(5/12) Commission action plan for migratory routes in Western Balkans.** Ahead of the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 6 December 2022 and the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 8 December, the Commission has presented an EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans. The action plan follows up on the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council (Home Affairs) of 25 November, where Ministers committed to implementing the EU Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean. The measures are focused on support to or actions by Western Balkan partners, and action in the EU. It aims to strengthen the cooperation on migration and border management with partners in the Western Balkans in light of their status towards EU accession and their continued efforts to align with EU rules. The action plan reinforces the EU's support to Member States facing increased migratory pressure along the Western Balkan routes. Irregular movements along the routes have significantly increased this year due to several factors, including economic pressures and insecurity resulting from ongoing conflicts. Full press release [here](#).

**(30/11) Stand with Ukraine: EC awards €5.5 million to ensure safe homes for those fleeing Ukraine.** In the margins of the High Level Forum on legal pathways to protection, Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson announced the decision to award €5.5 million to a project managed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The project provides a needs assessment for those in need of accommodation who are fleeing Russian aggression against Ukraine, matching them with private offers and providing guidance for potential hosts. The project reinforces the European Commission's Safe Homes initiative. The Safe Homes initiative was developed to assist Member States, regional and local authorities and civil society involved in organising private housing initiatives for those fleeing Ukraine who are seeking safety in the EU. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/11) Complementary fact-finding report on Bulgaria and Romania's readiness for Schengen enlargement.** In view of continuously supporting Member States to make a subsequent decision on the full application of the Schengen acquis in Bulgaria and Romania, and particularly in view of responding to the interest for additional information expressed by one Member State, the Commission coordinated a complementary fact-finding mission between 14 and 18 November 2022, including on-site visits in Sofia and in the consulate of Bulgaria in Istanbul (on 16 November) and in Bucharest and in the consulate of Romania in Istanbul (on 17 November). Both Bulgaria and Romania expressed their full openness for this

complementary mission to be organised. The aim of this complementary fact-finding mission was to provide recent and additional information on Romania's and Bulgaria's implementation of visa policy, data protection and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Experts from several Member States, the Council, the European Commission and Eurojust took part in the complementary mission. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/11) Commission proposes action plan for challenges in Central Mediterranean.** The Commission presented an EU Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean in advance of the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council of 25 November 2022. The Commission has proposed measures to address the immediate challenges along the Central Mediterranean migratory route, recalling that sustainable solutions are needed, as set out in the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Action Plan proposes 20 measures around three pillars for the EU and its Member States. They are designed to step-up cooperation with partner countries and international organisations, strengthen cooperation between all actors involved in search and rescue and to reinforce the implementation of the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism. Read the full Action Plan. Full press release [here](#).

**(17/11) Full participation for Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia in the Schengen area.** The Commission has called upon the Council to take the necessary decisions without any further delay to allow Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia to fully participate in the Schengen area. While these three countries are already bound in part by the Schengen rules, they do not enjoy the full benefits that come with being part of the Schengen area without internal border controls. In a Communication adopted on 16 November, the Commission took stock of the three Member States' strong record of achievements in the application of the Schengen rules. Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia had strongly proven that they have met all these conditions. They have all the necessary tools, structures, and procedures in place to contribute to a well-functioning Schengen area. The recent fact-finding mission to Bulgaria and Romania – coordinated by the Schengen Governance Unit of DG HOME and comprising 17 Member State experts and representatives of Frontex, Europol and the Fundamental Rights Agency – as well as the measures taken by Croatia to reinforce the protection of fundamental rights at the external border, reaffirm these countries readiness to join Schengen. Full press release [here](#).

## European Parliament

**(15/12) Asylum: deal on reception conditions for applicants to international protection.** The main aim of the revised Reception Conditions Directive is to ensure equivalent reception standards across EU member states when it comes to material conditions -including housing-, health care and an adequate standard of living for applicants. The new rules should prevent applicants from moving around the EU after their registration. To improve their chances of being able to live independently and be able to integrate locally, asylum applicants should be allowed to work not later than six months from the date of the registration of their application, instead of the current nine months. To help enhance applicants' integration prospects they will get access to language courses, civic education courses or vocational training courses. Full press release [here](#).

**(15/12) EU long-term budget needs urgent revision to cope with current crises.** In a vote on Thursday, Parliament adopted a resolution on “Upscaling the 2021-2027 MFF: a resilient EU budget fit for new challenges” with 366 votes in favour, 128 against and 55 abstentions. MEPs underline that the current multiannual financial framework (MFF) has already been “pushed to its limits” less than two years after it was adopted, a situation aggravated by the unforeseeable events of 2022, like the war in Ukraine. They point out that it

is “simply not equipped, in terms of size, structure or rules, to respond quickly and effectively to a multitude of crises” and are “very concerned that the current MFF leaves the Union ill-equipped to respond to any potential future crises and needs and to fulfil its strategic role in the international arena”. Full press release [here](#).

## European Council / Council of the EU

**(12/12) Niger: EU establishes a military partnership mission to support the country in its fight against terrorism.** The Council today adopted a decision establishing a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military partnership mission to support Niger in its fight against terrorist armed groups. It will enhance the ability of Niger Armed Forces to contain the threat, protect the population in the country and ensure a safe and secure environment in compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law. EUMPM Niger will help implement a Nigerien capacity building plan, by supporting the establishment of the Centre for the Training of the Technicians of the Armed Forces. It will provide advice and specialised training on request to the Niger Armed Forces’ specialists, and support the creation of a new communication and command support battalion. This will be done in conjunction with the European Peace Facility assistance measure adopted on 18 July 2022. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/12) The Gambia: Council increases the visa fee due to lack of cooperation on readmission.** The Council today adopted an implementing decision increasing the visa fee applied to nationals of The Gambia to €120, seeking to improve The Gambia’s cooperation on the return and readmission of its own nationals. The decision is a response to the lack of substantial and sustained improvement in cooperation on readmission with The Gambia. In particular, cooperation on identification and return remains challenging, the timeframe set by the EU-Gambia readmission arrangement has not been adhered to, and a unilateral moratorium on returns by charter flights remained in place until March 2022. Full press release [here](#).

**(18/11) Border management: Council authorises the opening of negotiations with four Western Balkans partners on Frontex cooperation.** The Council today decided to authorise the opening of negotiations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia to broaden agreements on Frontex cooperation. The EU had already concluded agreements with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia under the previous Frontex mandate, however they only allowed the agency to carry out joint operations and deploy teams in the regions of those countries bordering the EU. An agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been negotiated under similar terms but had not yet been signed. Agreements negotiated under the new Frontex mandate will allow the agency to assist these countries in their efforts to manage migratory flows, counter illegal immigration and tackle crossborder crime throughout their territory. New agreements will also allow Frontex staff to exercise executive powers, such as border checks and registration of persons. Full press release [here](#).

## Others

**(21/12) EUAA - Sustained pressure on EU+ national systems as monthly applications exceed 100 000.** In October, EU+ countries received more than 100 000 asylum applications. In combination with persons fleeing Ukraine and registering for temporary protection, the recent rises in asylum applications have put national systems in EU+ countries under considerable strain. Full press release [here](#).

**(14/12) EUAA - EUAA's first COI publication on Colombia focuses on complex peace and conflict dynamics.** The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published a Country Focus report – on Colombia – for the first time. The report covers the period between 2021 and the first months of President Gustavo Petro's newly elected administration which was inaugurated in August 2022. It provides updated information that supports decision-makers in assessing international protection claims made by Colombian nationals. The report focuses extensively on the impact the post-FARC security landscape on civilians and individual profiles relevant for international protection. Full press release [here](#).

**(7/12) EUAA - EUAA publishes a Practical Guide on Interviewing Applicants with Religion-based claims.** The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published a Practical Guide on Interviewing Applicants with religion-based asylum claims. The guide aims to help national authorities assess applications by those fleeing their homes due to religious persecution. As an inherently abstract concept, "Religion" is difficult for applicants to prove and national authorities to examine. This results in longer procedures, multiple interviews and can add to the backlog of applications in the EU+, which stood at almost 548 000 in September. Full press release [here](#).

**(15/11) EUAA - Civil Society and NGOs now have a stronger voice on asylum and reception in Europe.** On 10 November 2022, the newly strengthened EUAA Consultative Forum, which brings together Civil Society Organisations working in the field of asylum and migration, held its inaugural plenary meeting in Malta. Members of the Consultative Forum elected Dr Sarah Adeyinka, Founder of CoCreate, as Chair ad interim. Full press release [here](#).

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

**(16/12) International Migrants Day: Council of Europe publishes guidance on how to better protect children against sexual exploitation and abuse.** Children's lives are disrupted and seriously affected when forced to leave their homes, whilst on the move, internally displaced or once they have reached the host country. These circumstances make children particularly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and to the risk of going missing. Full press release [here](#).

**(16/12) New thematic factsheet on Hate Crime and Hate Speech.** The Execution Department has published a new thematic factsheet on Hate Crime and Hate Speech. Hate crime is a criminal act motivated by bias or prejudice towards a person or group of persons while hate speech concerns various forms of expression directed against a person or group of persons on the grounds of the personal characteristics or status of the person or group of persons. The Court has noted in its judgments that discriminatory treatment can in principle amount to degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 3 of the Convention where it

attains a level of severity such as to constitute an affront to human dignity. When investigating violent incidents, State authorities have the duty to take all reasonable steps to unmask possible discriminatory motives. Full press release [here](#).

**(14/12) Age assessment in the context of migration: new Committee of Ministers Recommendation.** The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers has adopted a new Recommendation to member States on human rights principles and guidelines on age assessment in the context of migration. Refugee and migrant children are among the most vulnerable and exposed persons on the move. Being unable to prove their age can increase this vulnerability and the risk of being subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and/or becoming victims of trafficking. The Recommendation is the first international legal instrument setting human rights standards on age assessment in the context of migration. Full press release [here](#).

**(6/12) Anti-discrimination and inclusion: practical tools for reaping the benefits of migrant integration.** Well-designed and well-managed intercultural integration strategies are essential to increase the resilience and cohesion of European societies, and to build a solid basis for the inclusion of everyone, including migrants arriving to Europe. The Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) has adopted two practical documents to help states ensure that policy makers, public officials and the general public perceive diversity not as a threat but as a collective advantage that generates dividends - not only for migrants, but for society as a whole. Full press release [here](#).

## [CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

**(16/12) ECRE - Editorial: Three Lessons and Some New Year's Resolutions: Asylum at the End of an Unpredictable Year.** In the field of asylum policy, years tend to end much as they started – more people displaced, more hostile policies, more border violations, more bad proposals. Not so 2022. If you had predicted at the start of the year that Europe would respond effectively to a major displacement crisis – without panic and with a focus on protection, despite numbers of historic proportions – you would have been laughed out of town. But so it was. Nobody denies the massive challenges that remain in relation to the displacement from Ukraine and the ongoing war that caused it. ECRE's members are working on a daily basis to respond, from Ukraine itself, to Russia and Moldova, to Poland and across the rest of the EU. ECRE's updated Information Sheet documents the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive and national equivalents, and all the difficulties for people covered. Nonetheless, the response fundamentally changes the debate on asylum, with certain positive lessons to be drawn from a year of unpredictable events. Each positive is highly qualified, of course. Full article [here](#).

**(15/12) Caritas EU - Europe must embrace human mobility.** On this International Migrants Day, Caritas Europa highlights the indispensable contribution that migrants make to Europe's society and economy. In a new briefing paper, we call on European policymakers to facilitate human mobility and labour migration, while respecting migrant workers' rights and dignity. Full press release [here](#).

**(12/12) HRW - EU: Frontex Complicit in Abuse in Libya.** The use by the EU's border agency, Frontex, of aerial surveillance to enable the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept migrant boats, knowing that migrants and asylum seekers will face systematic and widespread abuse

when forcibly returned to Libya, makes Frontex complicit in the abuse, Human Rights Watch and Border Forensics said in a multimedia research feature released today. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/12) Lighthouse reports – Europe’s black sites** How refugees are being arbitrarily detained and tortured at secret facilities along EU borders before being illegally forced back across borders. Despite government denials and technical arguments, the campaign of illegal pushbacks at Europe’s borders has been repeatedly shown by Lighthouse Reports and other investigative journalists to be real. And yet it continues regardless. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/12) ECRE - Joint Statement: EU admits Croatia to Schengen Without Regard to Abuses at the Border.** The Decision on December 8, 2022, by the Council of the European Union to admit Croatia into the Schengen area despite substantiated reports of frequent breaches of EU and international human rights law by Croatian authorities and its border guards shows disregard for the EU’s commitment to fundamental rights, 8 leading human rights and humanitarian organizations said today. Following past assessments by the Commission and the Council that Croatia had fulfilled the technical conditions to join Schengen, and the European Parliament’s positive recommendation in November, the Council’s decision does not come as a surprise, the groups said. Over the years, EU institutions have repeatedly turned a blind eye to overwhelming evidence of systemic human rights violations at EU external borders, including Croatia, and rewarded heavy-handed tactics that fortified borders and prevented people in search of protection from entering the EU at any cost. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/12) ECRE - ECRE Reaction: No Majority for Instrumentalisation Regulation.** We welcome the fact that no majority could be found in the Council on the Instrumentalisation Regulation today. This demonstrates that, while the right to asylum in Europe is under threat, a sizeable group of Member States is ready to step up to defend it. ECRE and many others urged states to reject the proposal. The Instrumentalisation Regulation is the worst of a series of bad legislative proposals on asylum issued by the European Commission. It creates a mechanism that would allow Member States to deviate from standards related to asylum procedures, reception and return in any situation they believe to be “instrumentalisation”. Full press release [here](#).

**(17/11) ICMC - Italian Bishop Sounds Alarm on ‘Selective Admission’ of Migrants.** On Tuesday, 8 November, Fondazione Migrantes, an agency of the Italian Bishops’ Conference dedicated to migrants and refugees, and ICMC’s national member organization from Italy, published its annual report “Italians in the World.” The report studies the decades-long phenomenon of Italian migration to all corners of the globe, for the most part in search of economic opportunity. In the days immediately prior to the report’s release, however, hundreds of migrants were denied permission to come ashore in Italy from boats that rescued them after they had been left stranded, floating on unseaworthy boats in the Mediterranean Sea. Full press release [here](#).

## PUBLICATIONS

- European Migration Network - [Transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood](#)
- EPRS - [EU migration and asylum funds for third countries](#)
- ECRE - [Follow the money IV \(The use of AMIF and ISF-BV funds outside the EU\)](#)
- ECRE - [ECRE Policy Note: Monitoring the Implementation of Returns: A Complex Puzzle with Missing Pieces](#)
- ECRE - [Working paper: Higher Education in Europe: A Pathway to Protection for Afghans?](#)
- EPRS - [Preventing radicalisation in the European Union: How EU policy has evolved](#)
- EPRS - [Latest on migration](#) (Think Tank Review)
- Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank Review](#) (November)
- Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank Review](#) (December)