

INFO FLASH 31/03/2025

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(31/03) Commission supports 135 new projects to help Member States implement their reform agenda. Today, the Commission has approved a new round of 135 projects under the Technical Support Instrument ('TSI'), to support Member States to prepare, design and implement a total of 390 reforms in 2025. The selected projects will help the Member States address reforms in key priority areas to strengthen the Union's resilience and competitiveness and to improve citizens' lives across the EU. Two-third of the projects are linked 15 flagship projects aimed at addressing common reform needs in the EU, such as improving the quality of public administration, provide a better business environment for SMEs, or to make energy systems fit for the green and digital transition. Full press release [here](#).

(25/03) Commission expands youth participation with new Youth Report, Eurobarometer survey and online debate. The Commission is launching a new online debate on the Citizens' Engagement Platform, alongside the publication of the 2024 EU Youth Report and the latest Eurobarometer survey on young people's views. The debate builds on the Youth Policy Dialogues that took place during the Commission's first 100 days, bringing the most prominent themes raised by young people into an open, EU-wide discussion. This initiative comes as a new Eurobarometer survey shows that 61% of young Europeans are optimistic about the future of the EU. Six out of ten (60%) also believe that the EU has a positive impact on society. Young people see as the EU's main strengths the freedom to live, study and work in another EU country (32%), strong relationships and solidarity between Member States (28%), and the EU's commitment to democracy and fundamental values (25%). Full press release [here](#).

(21/03) Commission and national authorities take action to protect children from harmful practices in video games. Coordinated by the European Commission, the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (CPC) has launched an enforcement action against Star Stable Entertainment AB to ensure a safer, more transparent experience for players of the Star Stable Online game. In addition, the CPC Network is presenting today key principles to help the gaming industry comply with the EU consumer protection rules related to in-game virtual currencies. Full press release [here](#).

(27/02) Go-to-Market Services & Opportunities for EU-Funded Research & Innovation Results: Horizon Results Platform & Strategic Partners. Join us to learn about what the European Commission Horizon Results Platform (HRP) and its key Partners offer you to advance in your go-to-market journey. Full press release [here](#).

(19/02) Commission presents its roadmap for a thriving EU farming and agri-food sector. Today, the Commission is presenting its Vision for Agriculture and Food, an ambitious roadmap on the future of farming and food in Europe. This roadmap sets the stage for an attractive, competitive, resilient, future-oriented and fair agri-food system for current and future generations of farmers and agri-food operators. Simplifying further our policies and

increasing the uptake of innovation and digitalisation are pre-requisites to all actions outlined in the Vision. Later in 2025, the Commission will propose a comprehensive simplification package for the current agricultural legislative framework, along with an EU digital strategy for agriculture to support the transition to digital-ready farming. Full press release [here](#).

(13/02) The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation. The Code of Practice on Disinformation is a pioneering framework to address the spread of disinformation, agreed upon by a number of relevant stakeholders. Established in 2018, the Code of Practice was significantly [strengthened in 2022](#), with the aim of becoming recognised as a Code of Conduct under the Digital Services Act (DSA). On 13 February 2025, the Commission and the European Board for Digital Services endorsed the integration of the 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation as a [Code of Conduct on Disinformation](#) into the framework of the DSA. Full press release [here](#).

(13/02) Tackling gender-based violence in EU research institutions. Gender-based violence is widespread, affecting approximately 30 % of women in Europe, according to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. It is particularly prevalent in research institutions, where hierarchical structures can foster abuses of power. The EU-funded UniSAFE project was launched to tackle this violence in academia, which affects individuals of all genders – women, men and non-binary people. Despite previous studies hinting at the profound impact of gender-based violence (GBV) in research institutions, there has been a lack of comprehensive understanding of the issue. As Sofia Strid, scientific coordinator of UniSAFE, notes: “Academia is not just any other workplace – it’s a hotpot of power and authority and hierarchy, structured by age, gender and other inequalities. We’ve known for some time about the negative consequences of GBV in higher education, but we didn’t have specific numbers.” While there has been recent increased action at European policy level to recognise and address GBV in academia, it’s remained largely under-addressed. Without sufficient knowledge and infrastructure in place, it’s difficult to fully prevent, protect or prosecute such violence. Full press release [here](#).

(29/01) Podcast: the numbers behind rural Europe. In the latest episode of the Eurostat podcast [Stats in a Wrap](#), we look into what data can tell us about living in the EU’s countryside. Rural communities make up nearly 30% of the EU population and account for around 80% of its territory. Rural areas are remarkably diverse, from sprawling agricultural landscapes to smaller towns with their own unique economies and cultures. The EU’s rural areas are also often perceived in different ways. For some, they are romantic havens from the stress of city life. For others, they are tough places to get work, healthcare and education. But it is data that can help us change or confirm our perceptions about rural life in Europe. Full press release [here](#).

(24/01) European Universities initiative: report highlights success, outcomes and transformational potential. The report presents the strengths, achievements and progress of the alliances. It also identifies the remaining aspects to be addressed and provides policy orientations to sustain the success of the initiative in the long term. Students now benefit from significantly multiplied and enriched educational offerings, with access to hundreds of joint study offers, joint programmes, flexible learning pathways, increased mobility and internationalisation opportunities across all the partner universities in an alliance. Full press release [here](#).

(22/01) EU Green Week 2025: Circular solutions for a competitive Europe. Competitiveness is at the heart of the EU's agenda. In spring, a 'Competitiveness Compass' and the 'Clean Industrial Deal' will provide new direction and impetus for this. With its potential to drive sustainable competitiveness, reduce waste, increase strategic autonomy and promote innovation, a circular economy offers solutions to some of Europe's most pressing challenges. This year's Green Week will unpack the "three Cs" - Clean, Competitive & Circular – exploring how to put circularity at the centre of our economic transition. The conference will enable knowledge sharing, alliance building, and raising awareness about the potential of a circular economy. Full press release [here](#).

(15/01) Creative Europe announces the results of its 2024 calls. The Creative Europe programme has successfully supported the creative and cultural sectors with the following five actions in 2024. On this page you will find information about the main results of these five calls for proposals. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(19/03) Labour migration: an EU Talent Pool to facilitate international recruitment. Today, MEPs in the Civil Liberties Committee backed the creation of an [EU Talent Pool](#), designed to make it easier to recruit non-EU nationals to jobs in sectors where there are shortages, through a dedicated digital platform that matches EU vacancies with jobseekers living abroad. Application of the new legislation would be optional for EU countries and would not affect their right to decide how many third-country workers to admit to their territory. Full press release [here](#).

(12/03) MEPs call for a more competitive EU that respects social and labour standards. On Wednesday, MEPs adopted two resolutions outlining their priorities for the next cycle of economic and social coordination between member states. In a resolution on economic policy coordination, MEPs focus on the need to increase public and private investment to address the investment gap, improve competitiveness and entrepreneurship, and continue fiscal consolidation. They say the EU should pursue these objectives while ensuring social cohesion and a high standard of living. In the resolution on the employment and social priorities, MEPs emphasise the importance of reducing the administrative burden for companies, whilst safeguarding labour and social standards. They believe better support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can lead to more innovation and better-quality jobs, and that stronger social economy enterprises can promote quality employment opportunities and the circular economy. The report states that fiscal policies under the European Semester must ensure investments align with sustainable growth and the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR), in particular on affordable housing, healthcare, and education. Full press release [here](#).

(11/03) Parliament calls for a strong and standalone Fund to combat social exclusion. On Tuesday, Parliament called for more resources for the European Social Fund Plus post-2027 to better support the EU's social dimension. The report calls for a reinforcement of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to support people in vulnerable situations, invest in people and skills, help combat poverty, in addition to boosting social investment and entrepreneurship.

The text outlines Parliament's input for the upcoming discussion on the budget ESF+, stressing it should remain the key tool to help member states, regions and local communities to strengthen the EU's social dimension. The fund should tackle social challenges such as

digitalisation, the consequences of climate change, decent working conditions, and the rising cost of living, with sufficient funding for education, training, and skills development. Full press release [here](#).

(17/02) Cost of living and environment are the main concerns of young people in the EU. An EP survey of EU citizens aged 16-30 shows social media is their main information source, and that the majority are also aware of the risks of online disinformation. Rising prices and the cost of living are a concern for 40% of the 16-30 year-olds who took part in the latest [Eurobarometer Youth Survey](#) published on Monday. One third of respondents said they believed the EU should focus its attention on the environment and climate change over the next five years, while 31% believe the economic situation and job creation should be a priority. Almost three in ten (29%) want the EU to prioritise social protection, welfare and access to healthcare. More than one in five respondents highlighted education and training (27%), housing (23%) and the EU's defence and security (21%) as important priorities for the EU. European defence is of particular concern for young people in Czechia (36%), Poland (33%), and Estonia (32%). Full press release [here](#).

(31/01) Polish Presidency debriefs EP committees on priorities. Ministers are holding a series of meetings in parliamentary committees to present the priorities of the Polish Presidency of the Council. Poland holds the Presidency of the Council until the end of June 2025. This text will be updated regularly as the hearings take place. Full press release [here](#).

(16/01) MEPs choose Bruno Gencarelli as top candidate for EU data protection watchdog. The Civil Liberties Committee selected Bruno Gencarelli as their preferred candidate for the role of European Data Protection Supervisor in a vote on Thursday. MEPs in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs ranked the four candidates applying for the position of European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) in a secret ballot. Before the vote, MEPs held a hearing with the candidates to evaluate their suitability for the role, touching on the interplay between security and fundamental rights, including data retention and law enforcement questions; prioritisation and consistency after the EDPS's tasks have been expanded; and the impact of new technologies. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(28/03) EU's cohesion policy: Council sets out clear guidelines for the future. The Council today approved conclusions setting out its position on key aspects for cohesion and the future of EU's cohesion policy. The conclusions will serve as a basis for discussions in the coming months and for the Commission's work on the legislative framework for cohesion policy after 2027. Full press release [here](#).

(24/03) Labour market statistics on businesses: Council adopts new regulation. The Council has adopted a new law to improve collection of labour market statistics on businesses at EU level. In particular, the new rules will ensure that these statistics are more up-to-date and comparable across countries. They also provide for better coverage of the economy, and ensure that data is collected on the gender pay gap. EU lawmakers need access to timely, reliable, and comparable labour market statistics on businesses (LMB statistics) in order to effectively design, implement, evaluate and coordinate a wide range of EU policies, for example in areas such as coordination of economic and employment policies, social policy, and equal pay for men and women. LMB statistics are used to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals, the European employment strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the European Semester. Full press release [here](#).

(20/03) European Council conclusions on competitiveness, European defence and security and migration. The European Council took stock of progress in the implementation of its conclusions on migration, including in light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission. The European Council encourages further work in particular on: the external dimension, notably through comprehensive partnerships; the implementation of adopted EU legislation and the application of existing legislation; the prevention and countering of irregular migration, including through new ways in line with EU and international law; efforts to facilitate, increase and accelerate returns, using all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools; the concepts of safe third countries and safe countries of origin; the fight against instrumentalisation, human trafficking and smuggling; visa policy alignment by neighbouring countries; as well as safe and legal pathways in line with national competences. The European Council recalls the EU's determination to strengthen security at its external borders and ensure their effective control, in line with EU and international law.

The European Council calls on the co-legislators to make progress, as a matter of priority, on files with a migration dimension. In particular, it invites the co-legislators to swiftly examine the recent Commission proposal on returns. Full conclusions [here](#).

Others

(19/03) EIB - EIB Global helps cities develop climate-resilient urban projects in East Africa. The European Investment Bank (EIB Global) has made available over €1.2 million (over KSh 166 million) in technical assistance support to cities in East Africa for the preparation of climate-resilient urban development projects. The cities set to benefit from this technical assistance are Kericho, Nyamira, Kisumu, Embu, Eldoret and Malindi in Kenya as well as Zanzibar in Tanzania and Makindye in Uganda. Full press release [here](#).

(6/03) EIB - European Commission and EIB group lay foundations for a new pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group are partnering with Europe's national promotional banks (NPBs) and international financial institutions (IFIs) to develop new financing opportunities for affordable and sustainable housing across Europe. At the EIB Group Forum in Luxembourg today, EIB Group President Nadia Calviño and European Commissioner for Energy and Housing Dan Jørgensen underlined the importance of tackling one of the most pressing concerns of citizens and governments in the European Union. They advocated a pan-European push that brings together local and national, public and private actors to catalyse finance and urgent action under the Commission's upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan. Full press release [here](#).

(5/03) EIB - New EU programme launched with banking sector to support women entrepreneurs across Europe. The European Investment Bank and the European Commission have launched today a first of its kind advisory programme aimed at helping EU commercial banks improve access to finance for women-owned and women-led SMEs in Europe. Women make up a third of Europe's entrepreneurs and yet many of them face major financial barriers. The InvestEU Gender Finance Lab, developed by the EIB Group with funding from the InvestEU Advisory Hub, aims to support financial intermediaries, including commercial banks and fund managers.

A tailored masterclass programme is being launched to seize the opportunity of increasing investments in female entrepreneurs. It will help banks leverage the investment opportunities presented by women entrepreneurs, create more innovative and relevant financial products,

and share good practice among fellow financial institutions to better serve women entrepreneurs and bridge the gender finance gap. Full press release [here](#).

(3/03) EEUA - EU+ asylum applications decrease by 11% in 2024, and some changing trends established. The number of asylum applications received in the EU+ decreased by over one tenth (11 %) in 2024, with applications from Syrians, Afghans and Turks all decreasing significantly. While Germany continued to receive the most applications in the EU+, these were down by one third last year. Cyprus continued to receive the most applications per capita. In 2024, almost half of all received applications (48 %) were from citizenships for which the recognition rate is low (≤ 20 %). The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has just published [its annual analysis](#) of asylum trends in 2024. Some 1 014 000 asylum applications were received in the EU+1, an 11 % decrease year-over-year. Several of the main citizenships of asylum applicants in the EU+ each recorded a significant decrease in 2024. Applications from Syrians (151 000), Afghans (87 000), and Turks (56 000), each decreased by 17 %, 24 % and 45 %, respectively, compared to 2023. Full press release [here](#).

(27/02) Cedefop - Making learning progression a reality: policy scenarios towards 2040. As the learning landscape evolves—shaped by changes in the labour market, society, and the economy—so does our understanding of qualifications. In response, both European and national efforts have sought to enhance the flexibility of VET systems and promote lifelong learning. While significant progress has been made since 2000, challenges remain, particularly in bridging different types of learning and ensuring consistent implementation across countries. On 19th February 2025, the final conference of the ‘Ensuring transparency and transferability of learning outcomes’ project took stock of the progress made and the challenges faced by Member States in building learning systems that are flexible, responsive, inclusive, and a driving force for lifelong and life-wide learning. Full press release [here](#).

(25/02) EIGE - Introducing the latest Gender Equality Index thematic focus: a vital reminder to end violence against women. Violence against women in the European Union is not just a social issue—it is a human rights crisis. According to EIGE’s latest Gender Equality Index 2024 Thematic Focus, gender-based violence remains prevalent, severe and under-reported across the EU. While the EU has taken strong legal steps, the fight for real progress requires urgent action from policymakers, civil society, and the public. Full press release [here](#).

(25/02) European Ombudsman - Ombudsman suggests ways for Commission to ensure EU border management funds comply with fundamental rights obligations. The Ombudsman has made a series of [suggestions](#) to the European Commission to help it monitor EU funds granted to Member States for border management and ensure their use does not result in fundamental rights violations. In particular, she suggested the Commission create guidelines for assessing compliance by Member States with fundamental rights throughout the entire duration of funding programmes. These guidelines should include the need to take into account independent sources of information on potential rights violations and establish public criteria for withholding or suspending EU funding. The Ombudsman’s inquiry into this issue follows a complaint from several non-governmental organisations who had raised concerns that the Commission has failed to effectively monitor EU-funded border management activities in the face of persistent allegations of human rights violations by the Greek authorities. Full press release [here](#).

(21/02) FRA - First-of-its-kind conference on 'Fundamental Rights at the Heart of Policing'. On 20 and 21 February 2025, experts from law enforcement authorities, academia and non-governmental organisations gathered at Europol headquarters for the first 'Fundamental Rights at the Heart of Policing' conference, organised by Europol's Fundamental Rights Officer. Over 130 participants from 25 EU Member States and 11 non-EU countries joined the event, as well as representatives from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the EU Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) who contributed to the exchange. Participants discussed and shared experiences and perspectives on respecting fundamental rights in policing, and finding collaborative ways to ensure these are embedded in law enforcement standards and practices. Full press release [here](#).

(20/02) EUAA - European courts provide increased clarity on women seeking international protection, EUAA report finds. In 2024, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) handed down three landmark judgments providing national authorities with more clarity when assessing applications for international protection lodged by women faced with different forms of gender-based violence. A new EUAA report examines how these EU-level and national court decisions are guiding national practices to shift to a more gender-sensitive approach in international protection. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has [published a report](#) examining how courts interpreted the legal grounds to grant international protection to women fleeing violence and systematic discrimination. Over the last five years, there has been a significant legal shift in recognising and protecting this profile of applicants, with three landmark rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in 2024 providing clearer legal grounds to Member States' national authorities, as they consider asylum applications due to persecution or serious harm based on gender. Full press release [here](#).

(14/02) FRA - Need for a more fundamental rights-compliant European Green Deal. The European Green Deal is the EU's principal strategy to tackle climate change: a green transition that strives to leave no one behind. A new paper from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reveals a fragmented approach to addressing the impact of climate change on fundamental rights. The paper argues that a systematic application of fundamental rights standards and obligations in EU climate policy could more effectively advance a just and inclusive transition. Full press release [here](#).

(6/02) FRA - Planned return hubs cannot be rights-free zones. The EU's plans to set up centres in non-EU countries (so-called 'return hubs') must respect fundamental rights law, warns a new Position Paper from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The paper sets out the safeguards that need addressing under EU law before establishing such hubs. These include compliance with fundamental rights, securing legally binding agreements to protect people's rights, and setting up independent human rights monitoring systems. Full press release [here](#).

(5/02) EUAA - Harmonising the sanctioning of reception conditions when asylum seekers fail to meet their obligations. A recent EUAA report looks at how EU-level and national courts in Member States have shaped the implementation of provisions relating to reducing or withdrawing material reception conditions, such as housing, food, and clothing or financial assistance, when asylum applicants do not comply with their obligations or engage in violent behaviour. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) recently [published a comparative analysis](#) of EU and national court decisions, issued over the last 5 years, relating

to the sanctioning of asylum applicants when they do not adhere to their obligations. The report comes as national authorities have reported an increase in applicants engaging in disruptive behaviour over the past years, as reported in the [EUAA Asylum Report 2024](#). Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

(28/03) Council of Europe reference documents on migration and refugees now online. The Division on Migration and Refugees ([DMR](#)) has published a comprehensive list of key Council of Europe treaties, recommendations, and other reference documents addressing migration and refugees on its [website](#). Full press release [here](#).

(6/03) Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse: new online training course. The Council of Europe has launched a new [online training course on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#). It was unveiled during the 44th [plenary meeting](#) of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) that concluded on 6 March. Full press release [here](#).

(3/03) The Book of Europe: leaders share their vision for the continent's future. Would you like to know what the Foreign Minister of Iceland thinks about the future of Europe, the perspectives of the Prime Ministers of Portugal and Spain as well as the President of Switzerland? What are the thoughts of the UK and Germany, and why do they differ? What is the perspective of Hungary, Estonia, Albania, Greece, or Andorra? These intriguing questions, among many others, are explored in the [Book of Europe. First-Hand Visions of the Future of Europe](#) launched by Liechtenstein's government. Full press release [here](#).

(26/02) New recommendation to protect mental health of prisoners and probationers. The Council of Europe has addressed a [Recommendation](#) to its 46 member states aimed at promoting and protecting the mental health of prisoners and probationers and at ensuring the management of their possible mental disorders, in full respect of their human dignity. While highlighting the crucial role of prison and probation staff, the recommendation calls for specialised training to equip staff to understand mental health issues better and respond appropriately and humanely. Full press release [here](#).

(19/03) Council of Europe highlights social rights challenges amid cost-of-living crisis. The European Committee of Social Rights ([ECSR](#)) has published a [review](#) focused on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on social rights across Europe. The review provides a detailed overview of the challenges faced by states in safeguarding the rights enshrined in the European Social Charter. It sets out recommendations to governments on how to ensure that those rights are guaranteed in situations where the cost of essentials rises much faster than average household incomes. Full press release [here](#).

(2/02) Publication of ICC national networks annual reports 2024. The annual reports of the ICC National Networks of Italy (Città del Dialogo), Portugal (RPCI), Spain (RECI) and Ukraine (ICC-UA) are now online. The reports contain information about the progress of ICC national networks of cities, showcasing how they align local activities with ICC priorities for the benefit of the whole ICC Network. The Italian Network, Città del Dialogo, welcomed a new member in 2024 (Portomaggiore) and continued its work to involve citizens — particularly

young people — in intercultural initiatives aimed at fostering values of interculturalism and inclusion, as well as combating discrimination. Some member cities further engaged in capacity building activities, especially on alternative narratives and disinformation. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) Honouring Jewish heritage across Europe through cultural routes. Under the auspices of the [Luxembourg Presidency](#) of the Committee of Ministers, the European Association for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage ([AEPI](#)) celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The event aimed at underscoring the commitment to protect and promote the richness and diversity of Jewish heritage across Europe, recognised as [Cultural route](#) of the Council of Europe. Full press release [here](#).

(2/01) Unlocking the Democratic Power of Digital Citizenship: The European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025. As we move deeper into the digital age, how can we ensure that everyone has the necessary skills to participate responsibly, safely, and effectively in the digital world? The [European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025](#) is set to answer this question by promoting digital citizenship education across Europe. This initiative, endorsed by 46 European Ministers of Education, aims to equip citizens with the competences needed to thrive in a digitally connected society, fostering a sense of shared responsibility, democratic participation, and human rights online. Full press release [here](#).

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(29/03) EURO CITIES - Cities call for social priorities to be high on the EU agenda. Across Europe, cities are taking bold action to combat poverty, tackle inequality, invest in affordable housing, and build inclusive, resilient communities. As the level of government closest to their residents, they are committed to ensuring no one is left behind. In just six years, European cities have invested more than €15 billion to strengthen social rights, improving access to childcare, housing, healthcare, education and employment. These efforts have directly improved the lives of over 100 million people. However, with rising living costs, deepening housing and labour market challenges, and growing pressure on local budgets, city leaders are sounding the alarm. Without stronger, more direct EU support, their ability to deliver services for their residents, especially those who are vulnerable, is at risk. Full press release [here](#).

(13/03) ECRE - Proposal for an EU Return Regulation. The European Commission (EC) has published its [proposal](#) for a 'Regulation establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union', commonly referred to as the Return Regulation. If adopted, it will replace *inter alia* the 2008 [Return Directive](#) (Directive on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals). The main elements of the proposal, which was [adopted](#) by the College of Commissioners on 11 March and [presented](#) to the European Parliament (EP) by Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner later on the same day, are set out below. Full press release [here](#).

(11/03) PICUM - New Returns Regulation ushers in dystopian detention and deportation regime. On 11th March, the European Commission published a [new draft law](#) to step up and speed up deportations of undocumented people across Europe. This proposal has been rushed through under political pressure, with no meaningful consultation of civil society

or impact assessments. This approach is guided by the imperative of increasing deportation rates, mostly by derogating from fundamental rights guarantees. Full press release [here](#).

(6/03) PICUM - Migrant smuggling: European Parliament's study asks Commission to withdraw new proposal over human rights risks. On 27th February, the research service of the European Parliament published a new study about the European Commission's proposed rules to tackle migrant 'smuggling', which finds that they risk leading to increased criminalisation of migrants and those who help them. The study focuses on the draft "Facilitation Directive", which aims to criminalise the facilitation of irregular entry, stay or transit in the EU. It is remarkable to note that the European Parliament conducted this study as a response to the Commission's failure to assess human rights risks before proposing the new rules. At the time of this writing, the European Commission has failed to conduct a proper impact assessment of the proposed Facilitation Directive. The authors of the study recommend that the Commission withdraw the proposal until a proper impact assessment is carried out. Full press release [here](#).

(25/02) EUROCITIES - News Housing first in cities: A transformative approach to homelessness. Across Europe, homelessness remains a pressing issue, with nearly 1.3 million people experiencing housing instability. In response, cities are pioneering innovative strategies to provide lasting solutions. One such approach, Housing First, has gained traction for its effectiveness in securing permanent housing for homeless individuals while offering tailored support services. A new Eurocities report, '[Housing First in Action: insights from five European cities](#)', sheds light on the successes and challenges of implementing this model in Brno, Glasgow, Lisbon, Lyon Metropole, and Vantaa. Full press release [here](#).

(17/02) EUROCITIES - The right to access affordable and quality housing. The growing European housing crisis demands a people-centred response, that involves city leaders, to ensure housing policies that grant access to quality, affordable homes for all citizens. "Our cities are at the forefront of this challenge," says André Sobczak, Eurocities Secretary General. "Housing affordability has become a critical issue as costs surge, outpacing income growth and pushing millions of Europeans to the brink." As one of their [ten priorities for a better Europe](#), mayors are calling for a greater role to shape policies that prioritise housing as a fundamental right and a cornerstone of social cohesion. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) EUROCITIES - A new urban compass for the European Pillar of Social Rights. Cities are indispensable partners in advancing the European social model and turning the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) into reality. Over the past six years, through the [Eurocities' 'Inclusive Cities for All' political campaign](#), cities have made a tangible contribution to the Pillar, collecting around 100 city pledges engaging 61 cities across 23 countries. The campaign has improved social rights for over 102.4 million citizens by implementing the EPSR principles at the local level. To discuss the future of the European Pillar of Social Right, to prove the essential role of local governments in its implementation and to present the results of the campaign, cities are meeting MEPs at the European Parliament on 26 March. This will take place during the third Eurocities Cities' Social Summit, which will bring together city leaders, EU policymakers, and key stakeholders. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) EUROCITIES - Empowering local leadership: A vision for a future-proof EU budget. The Local Alliance – a coalition of Europe's eight leading city and regional networks – has today published a pivotal [new policy paper](#) calling on EU leaders to ensure the next EU

budget (2028–2034) becomes a strong, comprehensive tool for a just, climate-neutral and competitive Europe. The [policy paper](#) states that recognising local and regional governments as key partners in the implementation of the EU budget is essential to achieving a prosperous Europe, where people want to live, work and thrive. As Europe faces unprecedented challenges, including climate change and digital transformation, the Local Alliance makes it clear that closer collaboration across all levels of government is critical for success. In the paper, the Local Alliance envisions an EU budget that acts as a long-term investment tool, bringing together public and private financing to support local projects that improve people's lives. Central to this vision is the safeguarding of Cohesion Policy, the EU's most effective means of ensuring balanced territorial development and tackling inequalities. Full press release [here](#).

(20/01) EUROCIITIES - Building welcoming and inclusive cities. As Europe continues to face migration and social challenges, city leaders underscore the need for inclusive policies that uphold dignity, equality, and rights for all. Local governments are at the forefront of these efforts, implementing innovative initiatives to integrate migrants and refugees while addressing inequalities. Yet, despite their crucial role, cities are often excluded from migration policymaking and lack direct funding to address these challenges effectively. Mayors are urging the new European Commission, in its first 100 days, to recognise cities as integration stakeholders. One of the [Mayors' 10 priorities for European citizens and cities](#) is 'Welcoming and Inclusive cities'. It calls for local leaders to be included in migration and asylum policymaking, including in the upcoming implementation of the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), and providing direct funding to integrate refugees so as to combat rising inequalities. Full press release [here](#).

(16/01) EUROCIITIES - A sustainable and inclusive culture: European cities take the lead. If our current society were an orchestra, culture would be the inspiration for innumerable melodies that gradually dial down and eventually blend into the background noise. Our cities hold the baton to make culture sound vibrant and dynamic, and they conduct it in harmony with sustainability and inclusion to play much more enriching symphonies. As such, culture is a powerful driver of social and environmental transformation. It shapes identities, strengthens social ties, and stimulates local economies. Cities are where cultural initiatives take shape and directly impact people's lives, making them central to achieving Europe's sustainability and inclusion goals. Despite this, culture is still often viewed as secondary to other priorities. For this concert to work, clear and effective support and policies from European institutions are essential. The show must go on. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

ECRE - [Comments Paper: Screening Regulation](#)

ECRE - [Comments Paper: Schengen Borders Code](#)

ECRE - [Policy Note: Maintaining International Protection in Europe during Syria's Transition](#)

EPRS - [A common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the European Union](#) [EU Legislation in Progress]

EPRS - [Growing focus on digital skills](#)

EPRS - [Fact-checking and content moderation](#)

EPRS - [EU action against poverty](#)

EPRS - [Implementation of the EU pact on migration and asylum](#)

EPRS - [The gender dimension of asylum claims](#)

EPRS - [A coordinated EU approach to housing](#)

EPRS - [Taxation's impact on gender equality in the EU](#)

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