INFO FLASH 31/03/2022

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(18/03) Ukraine refugees: Operational guidelines to support Member States in applying the Temporary Protection Directive. Since the start of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, more than 3 million people have fled the country, with UN estimates suggesting that more than half of them are children. To respond to this unprecedented situation, the EU agreed in record time to activate the Temporary Protection Directive to help people fleeing war in Ukraine. The Directive became immediately applicable on 4 March and now offers immediate protection and a clear legal status to millions of people. Today, the Commission is presenting operational guidelines to support Member States in applying the Directive. The comprehensive guidelines will help those arriving to have a consistent and effective level of rights and the Member States to assume their new responsibilities. Full press release here.

(17/03) EU cohesion policy: More than 1.5 million EU-funded projects accessible in new public platform. Today, at the start of the 8th Cohesion Forum, the Commission has launched 'Kohesio', a public online platform gathering all the information on over 1.5 million projects in all 27 Member States financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF) since 2014. It is the first time that such a comprehensive platform of project data, that will be available in all EU languages, is created and made available to all. Setting it up required a close cooperation with managing authorities in the different Member States or regions, as cohesion projects are managed by national and regional authorities. Full press release here.

(23/02) Niger: EU announces €43 million in humanitarian aid as Commissioner Lenarčič visits the country. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, is visiting Niger today to assess humanitarian needs in the country as it faces a deteriorating security situation as well as an unprecedented food and nutrition crisis due to impacts of climate change. During his visit, he will announce an initial €43 million in EU humanitarian aid in Niger for 2022. This new EU humanitarian aid will be targeted at areas and regions affected by the conflict, epidemics, widespread food shortages and high rates of child undernutrition. The primary focus of EU humanitarian funding is on addressing basic needs, including food, shelter, health, nutrition, access to safe water, and education for children in the context of humanitarian crises. Full press release here.

(15/02) Humanitarian aid: EU allocates €18 million in Algeria, Egypt and Libya. The European Commission has announced its humanitarian funding for North Africa for 2022 amounting to €18 million. The funding will support some of the most vulnerable people in Algeria, Egypt and Libya. The funding is allocated as follows: €9 million in Algeria to help meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of vulnerable Sahrawi refugees. The funds will help them to access food, nutrition, improve access to safe water and basic healthcare as well as education; €5 million in Egypt will help the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers stranded in the poorest neighbourhoods of urban centres. The funding will enable safe and sustainable access to quality education, protection services and basic needs; €4 million in Libya will help address humanitarian needs in health, education and protection for those most in need in urban centres and hard-to-reach locations. Full press release here.

(14/02) Future of Europe: Panel recommendations on EU in the world and migration. The final meeting of the fourth European Citizens' Panel took place on 11-13 February 2022 in Maastricht, the Netherlands. On Sunday, the European Citizens' Panel on 'EU in the world / Migration' voted through its 40 recommendations for the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Panel worked around five work streams: self-reliance and stability; the EU as an international partner; a strong EU in a peaceful

world; migration from a human perspective; and responsibility and solidarity across the EU. The Panellists' recommendations stem from their previous work carried out during two sessions, held in Strasbourg on 15-17 October 2021 and online on 26-28 November. Full press release here.

European Parliament

(31/03) MEPs withhold discharge of EU border control agency Frontex' accounts. On Thursday, the Budgetary Control Committee recommended clearing most of the EU accounts for 2020, but postponed the decision on the European Border and Coast guard Agency. In a vote with 6 in favour to 23 against and 1 abstentions in the so-called discharge procedure, MEPs in the Budgetary Control Committee postponed the decision on the 2020 accounts of the EU's border control agency, Frontex. They cited, as reasons behind the decision, a failure to fulfil the conditions set out in Parliament's previous discharge report, as well as findings by the EU's Anti-Fraud watchdog regarding harassment, misconduct and migrant pushbacks involving the Agency, presented to the committee by the OLAF Director-General and judged by the Members to be serious enough to postpone the discharge. Reported violations in Greece were not addressed and the operations in Hungary were continued regardless of the ruling by the Court of Justice that refugee return operations in Hungary in 2020 were incompatible with EU law, they say. Full press release here.

(9/03) MEPs demand a ban on 'golden passports' and specific rules for 'golden visas'. Concerned that EU citizenship is for sale, Parliament proposes new common rules to address the many problems linked to 'citizenship/residence by investment' schemes. On Wednesday, MEPs adopted a legislative initiative report calling on the Commission to table a proposal by the end of its mandate. The commitment by the Commission, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Canada, and the US to limit wealthy Russians with ties to the government from accessing 'golden passports' was raised during Monday's debate in plenary. The text passed with 595 to 12 and 74 abstentions. Full press release here.

(8/03) Fight against racism: end segregation in schools and halt xenophobia in media. MEPs ask for public policies on culture, media, education and sports to be used to uproot structural racism and promote the EU values of tolerance and inclusion. In a resolution adopted on Tuesday by 495 votes to 109 and 92 abstentions, MEPs **call for** media to stop spreading stigmatising narratives that dehumanise members of particular ethnic or racial groups, for example by targeting migrants as the source of economic and social problems. They propose to stop EU and state funding for media outlets that are found by competent authorities to be promoting hate speech and xenophobia. They also propose that all national audiovisual regulators should be provided with the powers to penalise programmes that promote racist content. Full press release here.

(8/02) Culture, education, media and sport must fight structural racism, say MEPs. The Culture and Education Committee proposes measures to fight against offline and online racism and discrimination in culture, education, media and sport sectors. In a resolution adopted on Monday by 21 votes in favour, 3 against and 4 abstentions, MEPs call on EU countries to take measures to address the structural roots of racism and discrimination in the EU. They also call on the member states to agree on the "Anti-discrimination" directive that has been blocked in the Council since 2008. Full press release here.

(8/02) Eurobarometer: defending democracy is top priority for the European Parliament. Citizens' support for the EU and the EP in particular has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, says a new Eurobarometer survey published on Tuesday. A near third of respondents (32%) chose democracy as top European value to defend, followed by freedom of speech and thought (27%) and the protection of human rights in the EU and worldwide (25%), according to the new Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament. Rising extremism, spread of disinformation, and weakening of the rule of law cause concern for the European citizens. Full press release here.

European Council / Council of the EU

(21/03) Council approves conclusions on Cameroon. Today the Council approved conclusions on Cameroon stressing the importance that the EU attaches to its partnership with that country, and reaffirming the EU's readiness to intensify engagement with the government, local authorities and civil society on all areas of mutual interest. In its conclusions the Council encourages the government of Cameroon to ensure a peaceful and inclusive political environment and welcomes the commitments made to strengthen local governance following the Major National Dialogue of 2019. The Council remains, however, extremely concerned by the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions, and appeals for an immediate end to the violence, respect of human rights and humanitarian principles, unimpeded humanitarian access and a safe environment for humanitarian work. In the light of the situation, the Council underlines the EU's readiness to support any meaningful mediation initiative which might lead to a peaceful and long-term settlement. Full press release here.

(4/03) Council adopts conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism. The Council today adopted conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism. In these conclusions, the Council deplores the alarming rise in racist and antisemitic incidents in EU member states. It invites member states to develop action plans and strategies by the end of 2022, implementing the 2020 EU anti-racism action plan and the 2021 EU strategy on combating antisemitism. The Council highlights the importance of education and training, calling on member states to raise awareness among their population of the fight against racism and antisemitism and uphold their duty to remember the victims of racist and antisemitic violence. It also calls on member states to promote research and education on Jewish life, antisemitism and the Holocaust, and racism and slavery. The conclusions invite member states to urge media, social networks, and technology and communications sectors to apply codes of conduct agreed at European level and adopt solutions to rapidly detect, assess and remove illegal online hate speech. Member states should also strengthen their ability to prosecute illegal online hate crime and hate speech, including by establishing online monitoring centres and platforms where people can report hateful content. Full press release here.

(3/03) Schengen area: Council adopts general approach on an enhanced evaluation mechanism. The Council today adopted its general approach on a Council regulation reforming the Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism. The regulation is intended to help make the Schengen area more adaptable to current and future challenges. The evaluation and monitoring mechanism provides for objective and impartial evaluations to quickly identify deficiencies in the application of Schengen rules and ensure they are swiftly addressed. It also provides the basis for a dialogue on the functioning of the Schengen area as a whole. Full press release here.

(18/02) Sixth European Union - African Union Summit: A Joint Vision for 2030. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) met on 17–18 February 2022. Full statement here.

(8/02) Burundi: EU lifts existing restrictions under Article 96 of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement. The Council decided today to repeal its decision taken in 2016, which imposed the suspension of direct financial assistance to the Burundian administration or institutions. With the repeal, the EU will therefore be able to resume this kind of cooperation with the Burundian administration. Today's decision to lift restrictions is a result of the peaceful political process that started with the general elections of May 2020 and which has opened a new window of hope for the population of Burundi. Full press release here.

(2/02) West Africa: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Mali. The European Union has been informed that the Malian transition authorities have requested that the French Ambassador to Mali, Mr Joël Meyer, leave the country within 72 hours. The European Union, which is fully committed to peace and stability in the Sahel, at the request of the States and in support of the people of the region, expresses its support and solidarity with France and deeply regrets the decision by the Malian transition authorities. The European Union calls on the

Malian authorities to exercise restraint rather than repeat unacceptable behaviour towards its European partners, such as Denmark, whose contingent has just been sent home for unfounded reasons. This isolation is detrimental to the common objective of fighting terrorism and to the humanitarian situation and, ultimately, to sustainable development and stability. The European Union calls upon the Malian transition authorities to take specific action and resume dialogue to move towards de-escalation. Full press release here.

Others

(30/03) CoR - Ukraine: EU turns to regions and cities to support refugees. The European Union has turned to its regions and cities to help support the millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing war. Following the adoption of a 10-point strategy that aims to protect refugees, the EU is putting in place practical, logistical and advocacy support. To help the humanitarian efforts, the European Committee of the Regions launched an Info-Support Hub to support regions and cities welcoming displaced people. Full press release here.

(11/02) CoR - Cohesion Report: digital cohesion, demography and brain drain are key to reduce territorial disparities. Local and regional leaders debated the findings of the new report, which shows cohesion policy's strengths but also increasing risks linked to stagnating regional economies. Promoting digital cohesion among regions, boosting investments in innovations, coping with demographic challenges, converting brain drain at territorial level into brain gain and keeping cohesion as a fundamental value of all EU policies. These are the main concerns and requests highlighted by members of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER) of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) during a debate on the new 8th Cohesion Report. Full press release here.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
(1/03) The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issues a new General Policy Recommendation to Council of Europe member states. The Council of Europe's expert body on racism and intolerance (ECRI) has published today a revised General Policy Recommendation on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination to help prevent and counter increasing public manifestations of anti-Muslim racism and discrimination across Europe. In its new Recommendation, ECRI underlined that Muslims are part and parcel of Europe's diversity, to which they have contributed for centuries, and recalled that collective action was needed to build inclusive societies that bring communities and individuals closer together and ensure equal dignity and mutual respect through shared democratic values. Full press release here.

CIVIL SOCIETY

(31/03) PICUM - in the EU, solidarity with migrants is under threat. Acting in solidarity with migrants in the EU has been difficult for decades. Nearly twenty years ago, three volumes of PICUM's Book of Solidarity highlighted "*the alarming tendency to criminalise assistance to undocumented migrants*". Between 2015 and 2019, research shows that at least 171 individuals were criminalised in 13 EU Member States. Far from slowing down, the criminalisation of solidarity with migrants in the EU is soaring. Full press release here.

(30/03) ENAR - European Network Against Racism: Racist double standards persist at EU/Ukraine borders and beyond. Over the past weeks, there have been overwhelming accounts documenting students of African and Arab descent, and their family members, being prevented from crossing the Ukrainian border. Reports also reveal that racial profiling, violence, and restrictions including of visas are still being used to prevent racialised people from reaching safety from the conflict. Full press release here.

(25/03) ECRE - ECRE Editorial: EU Displacement Response Turned Upside Down in Ukraine and So It Should Remain. The EU's response to the large-scale arrival of refugees from Ukraine has so far been exemplary and just as well: the displacement dimension of the crisis is intrinsically linked to the security outcomes as ECRE has highlighted from the start. The challenge now will be to maintain the positive response in the long-term, essential for both humanitarian and – again – for security reasons. Last year, before the Ukraine invasion reminded Europe of what a crisis really is, the focus of asylum and migration policy was Belarus and the "weaponisation" of people to further geopolitical ends. The concept was only slightly sanitised with the European Commission's rendering of it as "instrumentalisation", which is at the heart of the mini-package of Council Decision, Instrumentalisation Regulation and (some of) the amendments to the Schengen Borders Code (SBC). Full article here.

(23/03) ENAR - European Network Against Racism: Joint statement at 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council. We call the Council's attention to the human rights situation of Africans and other racialised groups following reports of discrimination and violence at EU borders. As expressed jointly by Special Procedures including the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and other Special Rapporteurs with a mandate on racial discrimination and the human rights of migrants, we are deeply concerned that Black people and other racialised groups are subjected to discriminatory treatment as they flee Ukraine and face subsequent discriminatory treatment within the EU. Bombs, cluster munitions and heavy artillery do not discriminate on the grounds of race or nationality. All human beings crossing European borders from Ukraine are fleeing the same dangers to their personal life and bodily integrity requiring them to seek refuge in another land than the one in which they reside. Full statement here.

(11/03) ICMC - Ensuring Protection for People Displaced by Climate Change. International coordination and a focus on protection are needed to address climate change-related displacement, concludes a virtual event on human mobility driven by climate change. Full press release here.

(1/03) PICUM - barriers to return: protection in international, EU and national frameworks. In recent years, EU migration policies have consistently focused on increasing the rate of returns. Yet such an approach rests on the mistaken belief that for undocumented people, the only option is to return – either by force or "voluntarily". In reality, people continue to reside irregularly for a wide range of reasons, and may indeed have other grounds for residence than an asylum application. According to official estimates, every year 300,000 people cannot return from the EU for different reasons, including human rights and factual considerations. Full press release here.

(22/02) CECOP - CECOP: New publication "Lasting Impact. Measuring the social impact of worker and social cooperatives in Europe – Focus on Italy and Spain". The social impact assessment topic started gaining greater attention in Europe a decade ago, following the European Commission Social Business Initiative aimed at providing better access to financing for actors in the social economy, the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the recent adoption of the Social Economy Action Plan. Cooperatives are playing a key role in the pursuit of the objectives set out in the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights with regards to quality employment, provision of quality services to the community and combatting poverty. Full press release here.

(21/02) PICUM - mental health and undocumented migrants: addressing challenges, fostering resilience. For undocumented people or for people with insecure residence status, precarious living and working situations, limited economic opportunities, exclusion from key services and the constant threat of being uprooted through deportation all contribute to chronic stress, uncertainty, and inequality, which erode their mental health and wellbeing. Full press release here.

(18/02) ECRE - Op-ed: The EU Must Stop Trapping Migrants in Libya or Risk Complicity in Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes. European and African leaders met in Brussels on 17 and 18 February for the sixth European Union (EU) – African Union (AU) summit. EU and AU leaders last

convened four years ago, days after CNN published a <u>video</u> of migrants and refugees being sold at an alleged slave auction in Libya: migration was inevitably a focus of that meeting. However, little progress has since been made to remedy the situation. In fact, EU migration policies have seriously worsened the plight of people on the move trapped in Libya. Long overdue, today's summit is a vital opportunity for leaders to address the desperate situation. Continued inaction to correct damaging policies will confirm the EU's complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes. Full article <u>here</u>.

(15/02) PICUM - the new draft Schengen borders code risks leading to more racial and ethnic profiling. In December 2021, the European Commission proposed new rules on internal borders, codified as a reform of the Schengen Borders Code, that aim to further increase surveillance and controls over non-EU citizens crossing internal and external borders. These proposals would increase the use of technology and would practically legitimise ethnic and racial profiling. More broadly, the proposals reinforce the narrative that irregular migration is a threat to the EU and that it needs to be fought with more policing. Full press release <u>here</u>.

PUBLICATIONS

ECRE - [Policy Note: A Step Too Far: Introducing "Instrumentalisation" In EU Law](#)

ECRE - [Policy Note: Schengen Borders Code Amendments: More Hostile Borders – Less Space For Human Rights](#)

ECRE - [ECRE Comments on the Commission Proposal to Amend the Schengen Borders Code](#)

EPRS - [Child migrants: Irregular entry and asylum](#)

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

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