

INFO FLASH 30/06/2023

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(23/06) New report: participation in cultural activities strengthens democracy and social cohesion. A new report on culture and democracy demonstrates that citizens' participation in cultural activities has a clear and positive impact on civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion, independent of a person's socio-economic background or education level. Full press release [here](#).

(19/06) EU and Kenya conclude negotiations for an ambitious Economic Partnership Agreement with strong sustainability provisions. The EU and Kenya have announced today the political conclusion of the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The Agreement will boost trade in goods and create new economic opportunities, with targeted cooperation to enhance Kenya's economic development. It is the most ambitious EU trade deal with a developing country when it comes to sustainability provisions such as climate and environmental protection and labour rights. Full press release [here](#).

(16/06) The European Commission welcomes the political agreement by the Council on the key pillars of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The European Commission welcomes the successful political agreement reached by the Member States at the Home Affairs Council on 8 June on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. This agreement offers a good foundation for negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council. In particular, a general approach was reached on two key pillars of the Pact: the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation and the Asylum Procedure Regulation. This is in addition to agreement already found on other pillars of the Pact. These proposals will allow to create a fairer, more efficient, and sustainable system for asylum and migration management. The Pact provides for a common solution that ensures a balance between solidarity and responsibility among Member States. Full press release [here](#).

(7/06) Progress on Bulgaria and Romania's Pilot Project with the Commission for fast asylum and return procedures. The Commission services with [Bulgaria](#) and [Romania](#) stepped up their cooperation and are implementing the Pilot project, on the basis of applicable Union and national legislation, with the support of the relevant EU Agencies, in the areas of asylum, returns, and border management and international cooperation since 20 March 2023 for a duration of six months. The pilot scheme builds on Bulgaria's good practices and experience, including the good cooperation with Serbia and Türkiye, as well as with the EU agencies present in Bulgaria. Full press release [here](#).

(7/06) European Health Union: a new comprehensive approach to mental health. State of the Union Address, the Commission adds a pillar to the European Health Union: a new comprehensive approach to mental health. This approach is a first and important step to put mental health on par with physical health and to ensure a new, cross sectoral approach to mental health issues. With 20 flagship initiatives and €1.23 billion in EU funding from different financial instruments, the Commission will support Member States putting people and their mental health first. Today's communication comes timely: before the COVID-19

pandemic, mental health problems already affected 1 in 6 people in the EU, situation which has worsened with the unprecedented crises experienced over the past years. The cost of non-action is significant, amounting to €600 billion every year. Full press release [here](#).

(6/06) Migration routes: Commission presents new Action Plan for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes. The Commission is presenting today an [EU Action Plan on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic](#) migration routes. In her letter to the European Council of 20 March 2023, President von der Leyen reiterated the Commission's ongoing work with the Member States most concerned on the Action plans for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic too. This Action Plan is also a direct follow-up to the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2022. The Ministers committed then to implement the EU Action Plan for the Central Mediterranean, followed by the EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans, and endorsed the development of similar action plans for the main migration routes. The EU has been strengthening its partnership with key countries of origin and transit along the route, in full coordination with its Member States as Team Europe. Measures undertaken by the EU, Member States and international partners have contributed to the important decrease of irregular arrivals. Nonetheless, the number of irregular arrivals* remain sustained. This calls for continuous vigilance and concrete operational responses, anchored on the current effective cooperation. Full press release [here](#).

(5/06) Pact for Skills has already helped 2 million people that benefit from up-and-reskilling activities. The Pact for Skills 2022 [annual survey](#) results are in. The EU [Pact for Skills](#) has significantly helped companies and workers across Europe in advancing skills training. According to the survey, 2 million people have benefited from up-and re-skilling activities under the Pact. 15,500 training programmes were either updated or developed, and Pact members have invested €160 million in skills initiatives. This is an important contribution to the [European Year of Skills](#). By bringing together industry, social partners, vocational and education providers, public authorities, employment services and others in different sectors, the [Pact for Skills](#) promotes a collective approach to tackling challenges and shortages in skills development. This is especially relevant in a rapidly changing world of work and for the green and digital transitions. Over 80% of the surveyed Pact members value the support provided by the Pact in ensuring concrete training offers for workers across Europe. Full press release [here](#).

(31/05) 2023 State of Schengen: achievements and key priorities. The second [State of Schengen Report](#) is part of the Commission's initiative to further reinforce Schengen governance through a yearly reporting. This exercise presents the state of Schengen, identifies challenges and best practices, as well as priority areas for action. The State of Schengen Report will serve as basis for political discussions and steer at the Schengen Council on 8 June 2023. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(15/06) MEPs want to create a European Day for the victims of the global climate crises. Parliament calls for an annual 'EU day for the victims of the global climate crises' to be established to remember the human lives lost due to climate change. In the resolution, adopted with 395 votes to 109 and 31 abstentions on Thursday, Parliament proposes to hold this day annually -starting this year on 15 July 2023- and invites the Council and the Commission to back the initiative. MEPs say it is appropriate to commemorate the victims of the climate crises and highlight that it would help to raise awareness of the human lives lost and humanitarian crisis caused by climate change. They point out that climate change is

leading to more unpredictable weather phenomena, including more frequent and intense heatwaves, wildfires and floods, to threats to food, water safety and security, and to the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, which are intensifying and taking an ever-greater human toll both globally and in Europe. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(26/06) Somalia: Council conclusions confirm a new strengthened partnership between the EU and Somalia. The Council today approved conclusions reaffirming the EU's commitment to its long-standing partnership with Somalia and the willingness to deepen its strategic cooperation. The Council commends the Federal Government of Somalia for its efforts to build a stable and peaceful Somalia, and to ensure delivery on the security transition in line with the relevant UN Security Council mandates, as well as for its ambitious reform agenda. The conclusions stress that the focus of the EU's partnership with Somalia is now on jointly implementing the "EU-Somalia Joint Operational Roadmap – A Renewed Focused Engagement" and maintaining the positive dynamic. As progress in the political, security and socio-economic spheres continues, the EU highlights the importance for Somalia to further advance good governance, the rule of law, the fight against corruption and impunity, and the promotion and protection of human rights. The EU will continue to mobilise its entire toolbox in support of Somalia, including through NDICI-Global Europe, the Global Gateway, humanitarian assistance, as well as the EPF and CSDP missions and operation. Full conclusions [here](#).

(8/06) Migration policy: Council reaches agreement on key asylum and migration laws. The Council today took a decisive step towards a modernisation of the EU's rulebook for asylum and migration. It agreed on a negotiating position on the asylum procedure regulation and on the asylum and migration management regulation. This position will form the basis of negotiations by the Council presidency with the European Parliament. Press release [here](#).

(1/06) Combatting violence against women: Council adopts decision about EU's accession to Istanbul Convention. The Council today approved the EU's accession to the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The Convention creates a legal framework to protect women against violence. It covers a broad range of measures, from data collection and awareness raising to legal measures on criminalising different forms of violence against women. It includes measures for the protection of victims and the provision of support services, and addresses the gender-based violence dimension in matters of asylum and migration. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(22/06) EUAA - Almost 690,000 cases awaiting first instance decision in EU+. As of April 2023, EU+ countries were under increasing pressure due to the high number of asylum applications being lodged, according to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)'s latest asylum trends report. Around 75 000 asylum applications were lodged in April which, while lower than previous months, contributes to an increasing caseload of 687 000 applications pending a first instance decision, the highest since 2017. Full press release [here](#).

(16/06) EESC - Discriminated against solely based on their age: young people should have the same rights in the labour market. Young people should receive the same pay and social security benefits as other workers, including the same minimum wages, which is still

not the case in all Member States. The EU and Member States need to put an end to discriminatory practices against young people, such as low youth minimum wages and unpaid traineeships. Young people also need to be more directly involved in designing policies, especially those affecting them, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) said on 15 June. These demands, put forward by the EESC in two opinions adopted at its June plenary session, coincided with the European Parliament's adoption of a report on quality traineeships, which on 14 June called on the Commission to propose a directive on the issue. The directive would make it illegal to employ interns and trainees for longer periods without pay – an issue for which youth organisations have advocated for quite some time. Full press release [here](#).

(7/06) EUAA - EUAA training is vital in helping Member States respond to increasing asylum applications. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has released its Annual Training Report for 2022. In a year when EU+ countries received almost 1 million asylum applications, the Agency trained over 7,160 national officials working on asylum and reception matters. In some cases, training extended to civil society as part of the EU response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Agency's training services were critical to implementing the never-before-used Temporary Protection Directive and helped ensure that over 4 million Ukrainians received consistent levels of safety, wherever they registered. Full press release [here](#).

(5/06) FRA - Gender perspective crucial to the fight against human trafficking. The European Commission has announced new measures to tackle human trafficking. This comes in response to a 2021 report assessing the effectiveness of the EU's 2001 Anti-Trafficking Directive, which found the response by Member States to be insufficient. **The EESC opinion** calls for a gender focus, greater support for victims, more accountability for companies, and improved monitoring mechanisms. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(29/06) Equality data key to countering systemic discrimination in Europe. Addressing and preventing systemic discrimination in all areas – in policy making, programme design, service delivery and employment – is only possible when based on sound equality data, stresses the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion, in the new [manual on equality data collective](#) and analysis published today, prepared by its [Committee of Experts on intercultural integration of migrants](#). Full press release [here](#).

(20/06) World Refugee Day: The Council of Europe maintains its focus on protecting the vulnerable. Each year on 20 June, the world marks World Refugee Day, to draw attention to the plight of millions of people who have been forced to flee war, violence and persecution and to the international obligations under the [United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Refugees](#). Full press release [here](#).

(15/06) The ICC programme sets up a new Advisory Group. The creation of the ICC Programme Advisory Group stems from an independent evaluation that was commissioned by the ICC Unit in 2022. The objective of the evaluation was to identify areas for enhancement and fine-tuning of the ICC programme. The creation of an Advisory Group composed of programme's beneficiaries was recommended to provide additional strategic guidance to the

ICC Unit regarding the ICC programme implementation and functioning, including needs assessment, thematic priorities, reviews of tools and services, institutional communication and external representation of the ICC network. Full press release [here](#).

(14/06) GRETA publishes 2022 annual report, highlighting the need for more action and resources to tackle human trafficking in Europe. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#)) has published its [annual report for 2022](#) which provides an overview of its activities, including meetings, evaluation visits, country reports and round tables, as well as its co-operation with Council of Europe bodies, other international organisations and civil society, in order to prevent and combat human trafficking. Full press release [here](#).

(6/06) Social reintegration of offenders in prison and under probation: Berlin conference explores innovative responses. The Council of Europe annual Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services, held in Berlin on 6 and 7 June, is exploring innovative responses to challenges such as the increasing number of people with mental health problems in prison or under the supervision of probation agencies, prison overcrowding, the need to improve conditions in prisons and how to better help offenders reintegrate into society. Full press release [here](#).

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(29/06) PICUM - Participation and empowerment: mobilising for the rights of undocumented people. On 8 and 9 June 2023, PICUM brought together migrant and human rights advocates, from both inside and outside our membership, at our General Assembly, to reflect on the participation of people with lived experience of precarious status in our work. This blog shares some highlights of our discussions. Full press release [here](#).

(26/06) Caritas EU - Europe's care systems at risk. The number of people in need of care in the EU is projected to rise from 30.8 million in 2019 to 38.1 million in 2050, but currently, there are more people in need of care than places and care workers available. Moreover, public spending is not keeping pace. Full press release [here](#).

(23/06) ECRE - Revision of the EU Budget: The Commission Asks Member States to Pledge Additional Money for Ukraine and Migration. As part of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual-Financial Framework (MFF), the European Commission [asked](#) Member States to increase their budget contributions by about 65,8 billion euros. This is an unprecedented request for additional money to the Member States. By way of comparison, a previous [revision in 2016](#) only required an internal reshuffling of EU resources (for about 6 billion euros), without touching the overall ceiling. Once approved, about half of the new resources will be used to support the reconstruction of Ukraine and to top up both internal and external migration priorities, while the remaining amounts will be used to cover increased costs of the Next Generation EU and to boost EU competitiveness. Full press release [here](#).

(23/06) ECRE - Open NGO Letter to Heads of States and Governments, Foreign Ministers, Trade Ministers, and Ministers of the Interior of the EU Member States on GSP Reform. We are writing with great concern to urge the Council of the European Union to seriously reconsider and abandon its deplorable efforts to include cooperation on

readmissions as a condition for developing countries to benefit from the next Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). Since its establishment in 1971, the EU GSP system has had the sole goal of fostering sustainable development in low- and middle-income countries – and so it should remain. The Council's current attempts to include cooperation on readmissions among the conditions for countries to retain their GSP benefits now risk jeopardizing the continuation of the scheme, which expires at the end of 2023. Interinstitutional negotiations (trilogue) to improve and extend the scheme until 2034 are in fact stalled, as the European Parliament – a co-legislator on the file – is rightly rejecting the Council's proposal. Full press release [here](#).

(21/06) Eurodiaconia - Commission's Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Developing Social Economy framework conditions. The European Commission recently released a proposed initiative with the aim to create favourable conditions for social economy organisations to thrive and grow and raise awareness of their potential, particularly in creating quality jobs, supporting innovation, and social inclusion. By supporting the social economy, the proposal aims to stimulate sustainable economic and industrial development, contribute to territorial cohesion in the Member States, and support social innovation. Full press release [here](#).

(20/06) Caritas EU - Europe must preserve access to protection. On this World Refugee Day, Caritas Europa calls for a Europe that ensures access to protection in its territory through an improved asylum system which puts people's rights at the centre. This starts with ensuring safe and regular pathways to protection, dignified reception conditions and integration in the host society. Full press release [here](#).

(19/06) ECRE - Op-ed: Enough is Enough...Until the Next Tragedy. In the morning hours of Wednesday, 14 June 2023, a boat carrying refugees and migrants sank off the coast of Pylos, in Southwestern Greece. Up to the time of writing, 104 people have been rescued and the bodies of close to 80 have been retrieved. The unseaworthy vessel is estimated to have been carrying anywhere between 400 and more than 700 people, including 50-100 children whose bodies have not been found. Full article release [here](#).

(9/06) ECRE - Editorial: Migration Pact Agreement Point by Point. ECRE will analyse the detailed texts of the General Approach, when they are available. In the meantime, 48 points can already be made on the agreement reached yesterday among the EU Member States on the Pact on Migration and Asylum to reform EU asylum law. Full press release [here](#).

(6/06) Caritas EU - Ukraine refugees in the EU need more support. Today, Caritas Europa launches its new analysis on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), based on a survey carried out in 21 countries. A vast majority of refugees struggle to access affordable accommodation and other rights. We call for continued support to all people in need of protection. Full press release [here](#).

(2/06) ECRE - Editorial: SAR Draft Roadmap – State Responsibility Absent. The leaking of the "[draft roadmap](#)" towards a framework on operational cooperation on Search and Rescue (SAR) in the Mediterranean has caused some consternation among NGOs and associations involved in SAR, as well as among experts on International Law of the Sea (ILOS) – and with reason. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

ECRE - [2022 Update AIDA Country Report: Italy](#)

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

IOM - [The role of media narratives in shaping public opinion toward refugees: A comparative analysis](#)

Elias et al - [Understanding the Effects of Granting Work Permits to Undocumented Immigrants](#)

EPRS - [Outcome of the European Political Community meeting in Bulboaca, Moldova, on 1 June 2023](#)

EPRS - [EU enlargement](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings](#)

EPRS - [Guide to EU Funding 2023](#)