

INFO FLASH 30/04/2024

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(30/04) Commission launches first-stage consultation of social partners on fair telework and the right to disconnect. Today, the Commission launched the first-stage consultation of European social partners to gather their views on the possible direction of EU action on ensuring fair telework and the right to disconnect. Telework has become widespread, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU Labor Force Survey shows that the overall proportion of people working from home in the EU has almost doubled in the last few years, from 11.1% in 2019 to 20% in 2022. Significant differences exist in this respect across industries, sectors and work profiles, also depending on a job's 'teleworkability', i.e. to what extent it is feasible to be carried out remotely. Evidence shows those workers who can and do telework clearly appreciate its benefits, notably its flexibility, with **over 60%** of respondents to a 2022 Eurofound survey confirming they want to work from home at least part of their working time. Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) EU Diversity Month kicks off with the winners of the 2024 European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards. Yesterday, the European Commission announced the winners of the third edition of the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards. The Awards celebrate the towns, cities, and regions across the EU that lead by example in inclusive policies. This year's winners are cities and municipalities in Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. They have been recognised for their work to build fairer societies by promoting diversity and inclusion on the grounds of sex, racial and ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation. Full press release [here](#).

(23/04) Commission issues recommendations to better protect children from violence. The Commission has today adopted the Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child, as a commitment in the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The Recommendation will support Member States in strengthening their child protection systems. Authorities at all levels of governance and civil society across all sectors need to work together to protect children from all forms of violence in a coherent and systemic way. The EU is home to 80 million children. Violence against children remains a significant challenge both inside and outside the EU, at many levels 13% to 29% of 15-year old students report being frequently bullied. Up to 13.7% of adult women reported to have experienced sexual violence in childhood, and this share might even be higher. The actions, and inaction, of governments have a greater impact on children than on any other group in society. Protecting children is both a moral and a legal imperative. It is also a strategic long-term investment in our societies. Full press release [here](#).

(17/04) Commission mobilises research and innovation funding for the green and digital transitions. The Commission has adopted an amendment to the 2023-24 Work Programme of Horizon Europe, the EU's research and innovation programme. The amendment mobilises previously unallocated Horizon Europe funding to increase the 2024 budget by nearly €1.4 billion to a total of €7.3 billion. This amendment includes an investment of nearly €650 million in the EU Missions aiming to contribute to solving some of

the challenges facing Europe, for example, making more than 100 cities climate neutral, a New European Bauhaus facility, as well as experimental actions opening EU research and innovation opportunities to more newcomers, among other novelties. Full press release [here](#). (18/04) New EU funding for innovative ideas to reduce long-term unemployment and help people find jobs. Today, the Commission launched a [call for proposals](#) worth €23 million to help EU Member States develop new ways of tackling long-term unemployment and support people to find their way back into the labour market. This was announced in the recent [action plan to tackle labour and skills shortages in the EU](#). Through this call for proposals, funded under the “Social Innovation +” initiative of the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#), the Commission aims to build on previous promising initiatives and to strengthen the role of social economy organisations. These organisations prioritise social and environmental purposes and reinvest most of their gains back into their initiatives. They have a proven capacity to support people who have suffered from isolation and poverty as a consequence of long-term unemployment. Full press release [here](#).

(12/04) The New European Bauhaus Prizes 2024 showcase sustainable, inclusive and beautiful projects all around Europe. Today, the Commission announced 20 laureates of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) Prizes 2024, for the fourth year in a row, organised with funding from the Cohesion Policy. These prizes reward outstanding projects and initiatives that combine sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics, demonstrating how the European Green Deal transition can practically enrich the lives of people and communities. The prizes are awarded in four categories and two strands: one for established projects (the “New European Bauhaus Champions”) and one for promising initiatives from younger applicants (the “New European Bauhaus Rising Stars”). The 2024 edition includes a special award for reconstruction projects from Ukraine, as well as a strong focus on EU regions facing socio-economic constraints or green transition challenges. Full press release [here](#).

(16/04) Commission publishes Schengen report setting new priorities for the year ahead. Today, the Commission reports on the State of Schengen over the past year and sets the priorities for the year ahead. The Schengen area has evolved into the world’s largest free travel area. Guaranteeing smooth and secure travel to a population of almost 450 million people, the Schengen area is essential for the European Union’s competitiveness. In 2023, Schengen has remained strong and remains the most visited destination in the world. Over 10 million Schengen visas were issued, and more than half a billion passengers visited the Schengen area, reaching 92% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels. This has significantly contributed to the EU economy, as tourism contributes close to 10% of the EU’s GDP and provides jobs to about 22.6 million people. Full press release [here](#).

(4/04) European Citizens' Panel to discuss Tackling Hatred in Society. Tomorrow marks the start of the European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society. 150 citizens, selected at random from all 27 Member States, will come together to look at the root causes of hatred and ways to address them. The aim of the Citizens' Panel is to produce recommendations on how to build bridges across fractured groups and communities. The Citizens' Panel will identify possible policy actions, as well as all relevant players that should be involved at the various levels such as decision-makers, civil society, the private sector, and citizens. The Panel will ultimately result in a list of recommendations that will support the European Commission's future work on tackling both hate speech and hate crime. The recommendations will also aim to serve as a guide to help the European Union and its Member States to move from hatred and division to the shared enjoyment of European values, as enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union. This European Citizens' Panel is a follow-up

to the 2023 Communication “No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred” adopted in December 2023 by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. The Communication calls for the creation of a pan-European space of dialogue, bringing together citizens from across the European Union. Full press release here.

(30/03) Bulgaria and Romania join the Schengen area. On 31 March, Bulgaria and Romania become Schengen members: the Schengen rules will apply in both Member States including on issuing Schengen visas and controls at the internal air and sea borders will be lifted. The Commission strongly welcomes this achievement, which follows the historic Council decision of December 2023. The Schengen accession of these two Member States will make the common area more attractive by significantly expanding the world's largest common area without internal border controls. Full press release here.

(27/03) Report highlights good progress made on long-term vision for EU rural areas. The European Commission has today published a report outlining the good progress made so far under the EU's long-term rural vision, highlighting positive outcomes delivered since 2021 and presenting ideas for future work. The report outlines progress made under the “Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas” to support stronger, more connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities. It presents 30 actions across a range of policy areas - of which nine are already completed. Full press release here.

(27/03) 9th Cohesion Report shows that Cohesion Policy continues to narrow the gaps in EU regions and Member States. Today, the Commission published its 9th Cohesion Report, showing that Cohesion Policy is fulfilling its mission to narrow economic, social, and territorial disparities across the EU. Great strides have been made to reduce the gaps that exist between the Member States and regions, strengthening the EU Single Market and making sure that the EU continues to invest in human capital and sustainable development. Exploiting the full potential of every region strengthens the competitiveness and resilience of the Union as a whole. Full press release here.

(25/03) Eurobarometer survey shows positive perceptions about the economy and the quality of life in the EU regions. The Commission published today a Flash Eurobarometer conducted at the regional level, showing that EU citizens look positively at the economic situation and the quality of life in their region. Over eight out of ten Europeans (82%) say that the quality of life in their region is good. At the same time, 65% of Europeans say that the current situation of the economy of their region is good. Europeans tend to think that the most important issues facing their region at the moment are the cost of living (31%), the economic situation and unemployment (26%), and health (26%). These are followed by housing (20%), the environment and climate change (19%), and the educational system (18%). At the same time, they identify economy, social justice and jobs (29%) as one of the most important dimensions for the future of Europe, followed by climate change and the environment (24%), education, culture, youth and sport (24%), democracy, values and rights and rule of law (21%), health (21%), EU security and defence (20%) and migration (19%). Full press release here.

(25/03) Republic of Korea to join Horizon Europe programme. Korea will join the growing group of countries associated to Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme. Today, Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, and Lee Jong Ho, Korean Minister for Science and Information and

Communication Technology concluded negotiations on Korea's association, marking a significant milestone in our commitment to foster mutual collaboration in research and innovation. The signing of the Association Agreement is expected to take place in the second half of 2024, pending the completion of all necessary ratification procedures on both sides. This will enable Korea's participation in Horizon Europe as of 2025. Once signed, researchers and organisations in Korea will be able to receive funding under Pillar II of the Horizon from 2025 onwards. Pillar II is the largest collaborative part of the programme, which is primarily focused on shared global challenges: climate, energy, digital economy, and health, with a budget of €53.5 billion. Full press release [here](#).

(21/03) New survey shows Pact for Skills helped train 3.5 million workers. More than 3.5 million workers received training from 2,500 organisations under the Pact for Skills in 2022 and 2023, according to key results of the annual survey on the Pact, published today on the occasion of the Pact for Skills Forum. These results highlight the importance of skills development, in line with the [European Year of Skills](#). They come in the same week when the Commission presented an [Action Plan](#) to tackle skills and labour shortages to boost the EU's competitiveness, social and economic resilience. The Pact for Skills is a flagship initiative of the [European Skills Agenda](#). It mobilises all relevant partners – including industry, social partners, training and education providers, public authorities, employment services – to work together to identify where the skills gaps are, and take concrete action to upskill and reskill workers in the EU. Overall, the survey shows how the 20 large-scale skills partnerships created under the Pact so far have helped improve the skills of workers in strategic sectors, such as micro-electronics, renewable energy, maritime technology, textiles, agri-food and digital ecosystems. Together, all large-scale skills partnerships under the Pact have pledged to upskill and reskill over 25 million people by 2030. At least one large-scale skills partnership has been set up for each industrial ecosystem of the EU Industrial Strategy. Full press release [here](#).

(21/03) 23 cities awarded with the EU Mission Label for their efforts towards climate-neutrality. Today, the EU Mission Label was awarded to 23 cities part of the [EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities](#), one of the EU Missions under Horizon Europe. The Label recognises the cities' plans to achieve climate-neutrality already by 2030 and aims to facilitate access to public and private funding towards that objective. The [first ten cities](#) had received the Label in October 2023. The EU Mission Label was awarded by Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth during a ceremony with mayors and city representatives at the EU Research & Innovation Days, the biggest forum in Europe to discuss the future of science and innovation and to co-create solutions with citizens and stakeholders. The 23 cities that received the label are: Ioannina, Kalamata, Kozani, Thessaloniki (Greece), Heidelberg (Germany), Leuven (Belgium), Espoo, Lahti, Lappeenranta, Tampere, Turku (Finland), Barcelona, Seville (Spain), Pecs (Hungary), Malmö (Sweden), Guimaraes, Lisbon (Portugal), Florence, Parma (Italy), Marseille, Lyon (France), Limassol (Cyprus) and Izmir (Türkiye). Full press release [here](#).

(20/03) Team Europe and African partners launch four initiatives to strengthen health systems and social protection in Africa. Three health Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) were launched today during the high-level event on the European Union (EU) – African Union (AU) partnership on Global Health for equitable access, in Brussels. The TEIs will strengthen health security, support Public Health Institutes in Africa, and boost digital health. On this occasion a Team Europe Initiative on Social Protection was also launched. The Team Europe Initiative on Sustainable Health Security will strengthen prevention, preparedness and response to

infectious threats and anti-microbial resistance in African countries. It brings together the European Commission, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Spain, ECDC and the Africa CDC. Full press release [here](#).

(17/03) Joint Declaration on the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between The Arab Republic Of Egypt and the European Union. The Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union have mutually agreed to elevate their relationship to the level of a strategic and comprehensive partnership, based on the values of equity and on mutual respect and trust. The two parties, cognizant of the historical relationship that has bound them for millennia, have reiterated their commitments to build on their long-standing relationship that was forged by close geographic, cultural, political, economic and people to people ties, with the aim of deepening their shared stability, peace and prosperity. Full declaration [here](#).

(12/03) Commission takes stock of key achievements on migration and asylum. Ahead of the March European Council, the Commission adopted today a Communication taking stock of the achievements in the area of migration and asylum over the last four years. From the beginning of the mandate, the von der Leyen Commission committed to a fresh start on migration and to work towards a sustainable EU framework to manage migration in an effective and humane way. The Commission has made progress on a two-track approach: putting in place sustainable reforms with the Pact on Migration and Asylum, while also working on targeted operational actions to support Member States. Full press release [here](#).

(7/03) The European Commission launches new migration partnership with Mauritania. Today, the European Union is strengthening the cooperation between EU and Mauritania by launching a migration partnership and dialogue. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson together with the Mauritanian Minister of Interior and Decentralisation, Mohamed Ahmed Ould Mohamed Lemine, have signed a Joint Declaration launching an EU-Mauritania migration partnership. The Commissioner will travel to Nouakchott, in a Team Europe approach, together with the Spanish Minister of Interior of Spain, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, and from the Belgian Presidency of the Council, State Secretary for Asylum and Migration of Belgium, Nicole de Moor. On this occasion, the Commissioner will meet Mauritanian President, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani. Full press release [here](#).

(4/03) The European Union continues to implement the Memorandum of Understanding with Tunisia with the disbursement of EUR 150 million in financial support. The European Union maintains its commitment to Tunisia through the disbursement of financial aid in the form of budgetary support worth EUR 150 million under the support programme for macroeconomic reforms by Tunisia (programme d'appui aux réformes macro-économiques de la Tunisie (PARME)) approved by the EU and Tunisia in December 2023. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: 'The EU maintains its commitment to Tunisia and disburses EUR 150 million to support economic reforms and financial stability. This is an important step in our common understanding reached last year and a major achievement for our partnership.' This disbursement is intended to assist Tunisia in stabilising its macroeconomic situation and in its efforts to improve the management of its public finances and business climate. The support strengthens the capacity of the Tunisian State to ensure stable and inclusive growth, and confirms the EU's commitment to supporting the country on its path to economic reform within the current socio-economic context. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(24/04) Parliament adopts Platform Work Directive. On Wednesday, MEPs approved new rules aiming to improve the working conditions of platform workers. The new rules, agreed on by the Parliament and the Council in February and adopted with 554 votes in favour, 56 votes against and 24 abstentions, aim to ensure that platform workers have their employment status classified correctly and to correct bogus self-employment. They also regulate, for the first time ever in the EU, the use of algorithms in the workplace. The new law introduces a presumption of an employment relationship (as opposed to self-employment) that is triggered when facts indicating control and direction are present, according to national law and collective agreements, and taking into account EU case law. Full press release [here](#).

(24/04) Due diligence: MEPs adopt rules for firms on human rights and environment. On Wednesday, Parliament gave a final green light to new rules obliging firms to mitigate their negative impact on human rights and the environment. The European Parliament approved with 374 votes against 235 and 19 abstentions the new “due diligence” directive, agreed on with the Council, requiring firms and their upstream and downstream partners, including supply, production and distribution to prevent, end or mitigate their adverse impact on human rights and the environment. Such impact will include slavery, child labour, labour exploitation, biodiversity loss, pollution or destruction of natural heritage. Full press release [here](#).

(24/04) Parliament adopts EU-wide Disability and Parking Cards. MEPs gave their final green light to the EU Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities. The new rules, adopted with 613 votes in favour, 7 against and 11 abstentions and already agreed on by the Parliament and the Council, will establish an EU-wide disability card to make sure that persons with disabilities have equal access to preferential conditions, such as reduced or zero entry fees, priority access and access to reserved parking. Both cards will grant card holders, as well as those accompanying them and assistance animals, access to most of the same conditions as national card holders. The new rules will only apply for short stays, with an exception for disability card holders that move to another member state for a mobility programme, such as Erasmus+. Full press release [here](#).

(24/04) Parliament approves first ever EU rules on combating violence against women. The new rules aim to prevent gender-based violence and protect its victims, especially women and victims of domestic violence. Parliament adopted on Wednesday, with 522 in favour, 27 against, and 72 abstentions, the first ever EU rules on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The directive calls for stronger laws against cyberviolence, better assistance for victims, and steps to prevent rape. The new rules prohibit female genital mutilation and forced marriage and outline particular guidelines for offenses committed online, such as the disclosure of private information and cyberflashing. The new legislation will include a longer list of aggravating circumstances for offenses that carry more severe penalties, such as crimes against public figures, journalists, or human rights defenders. The list also includes the intention to punish victims based on their gender, sexual orientation, skin colour, religion, social origin, or political beliefs, and the desire to maintain or restore “honour.” Full press release [here](#).

(23/04) Trafficking in human beings: MEPs adopt more extensive law to protect victims. The European Parliament has given its final green light to revised rules on preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting its victims. On Tuesday, MEPs adopted with 563 in favour, 7 against, and 17 abstentions a law expanding the scope of

current measures to combat and prevent human trafficking and better support its victims. To broaden the EU's actions against human trafficking beyond labour and sexual exploitation, the new law also criminalises forced marriage, illegal adoption and exploitation of surrogacy at the EU level. Full press release [here](#).

(10/04) MEPs approve the new Migration and Asylum Pact. The European Parliament today adopted ten legislative texts to reform European migration and asylum policy as agreed with EU member states. In order to assist EU countries subject to migratory pressure, other member states will contribute by relocating asylum applicants or beneficiaries of international protection to their territory, making financial contributions, or providing operational and technical support. The criteria according to which a member state is responsible for examining international protection applications (the so called Dublin rules) will also be updated. The regulation on asylum and migration management, by rapporteur Tomas TOBÉ (SE, EPP), was backed by 322 votes in favour 266 against and 31 abstentions. [Read more about it](#). Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(29/04) Ethiopia: Council restricts visa provision. Today, the Council decided to temporarily suspend certain elements of the EU law that regulates the issuing of visas to Ethiopian nationals. In particular, it will no longer be possible for member states: to waive requirements with regard to the evidence to be submitted by Ethiopian visa applicants; to issue multiple entry visas; to waive the visa fee for holders of diplomatic and service passports. Furthermore, the standard visa-processing period now becomes 45 calendar days instead of 15. This decision follows an assessment by the Commission, which concludes that cooperation by Ethiopia in the field of readmission of its nationals illegally staying in the EU is insufficient. There is a lack of response from the Ethiopian authorities with regard to readmission requests and difficulties persist with the issuance of emergency travel documents and with the organisation of both voluntary and non-voluntary return operations. The suspension decision is temporary but does not come with a specific end date. The Commission will continue to assess any progress made on readmission cooperation. Full press release [here](#).

(12/04) The Gambia: visa fees down to normal level. Today the Council decided that the visa fee for nationals of The Gambia who wish to travel to the Schengen area will be reduced from €120 to the standard visa application fee of €80. Because of a lack of cooperation of The Gambia as regards readmission of its nationals illegally staying in the EU, the Council had decided in December 2022 to increase the standard application fee for nationals of The Gambia to €120. Since then, The Gambia has substantially and sustainably improved its cooperation on readmission as regards the organisation of return flights and operations. Full press release [here](#).

(12/04) Legal migration: Council gives green light to single work and stay permit for non-EU nationals. Today, the Council adopted a revision of the Single Permit Directive. The law, which updates the 2011 directive currently in place, aims to attract the skills and talent the EU needs and to address shortcomings as regards legal migration to the EU. The directive sets out the administrative procedure for a single permit for both the right to work and the right to stay in the EU and determines a common set of rights for third-country workers. The revision provides for a shortened application procedure and aims to strengthen the rights of third-country workers by allowing a change of employer and a limited period of unemployment. Full press release [here](#).

(25/03) Combatting violence and harassment in the workplace: Council invites EU countries to ratify ILO convention. The Council has adopted a decision inviting member states to ratify the International Labour Organization's convention on violence and harassment (ILO convention 190). Violence and harassment in the workplace is a widespread and persistent phenomenon around the world: more than one in five people have experienced violence and harassment at work, whether physical, psychological or sexual, with women being particularly at risk. The violence and harassment convention is the first international instrument setting out minimum standards on tackling work-related harassment and violence. This convention will help promote decent work for all, health and safety at work and gender equality, and will also help to combat discrimination. Full press release [here](#).

(18/03) Green diplomacy: Council conclusions reaffirm the EU's commitment to work closely with partners to accelerate a global just and inclusive green transition. Today, the Council approved conclusions on green diplomacy, unequivocally affirming the EU's commitment to promote a just and inclusive green transition, and to support the implementation of global commitments in this regard, in close cooperation with partner countries worldwide through enhanced multilateralism and global action. In its conclusions, the Council reiterates the gravity of the accelerating triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which poses a global and existential threat and aggravates existing security concerns. The Council also expresses grave concern about the harm to the climate and the environment, in addition to the immense human suffering, caused by ongoing armed conflicts worldwide. Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine has inflicted massive environmental damage, nuclear safety risks, and precipitated energy and food insecurity globally, and Russia must be held accountable for it. Full press release [here](#).

(13/03) Council takes first step towards new EU rules on suspending visa-free travel for third countries. EU member states' ambassadors (Coreper) have agreed their position on a draft regulation which updates a mechanism that allows the EU to suspend visa-free travel for third countries whose nationals are exempt from the visa obligation when travelling to the Schengen area. This new law, when adopted, will boost the EU's toolbox to counter situations when visa-free travel is being abused or works against the interests of the EU. Full press release [here](#).

Others

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(29/04) Anti-trafficking group GRETA issues 2023 report. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has published its latest general report of activities, highlighting the key achievements in 2023. These include the publication of 11 new country evaluation reports (in respect of Azerbaijan, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden) and the launch of the fourth evaluation round of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, with a thematic focus on vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Full press release [here](#).

(23/04) Serious human rights concerns about United Kingdom's Rwanda Bill.

"The adoption of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill by the UK Parliament raises major issues about the human rights of asylum seekers and the rule of law more generally", said Michael O'Flaherty, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. "The United Kingdom government should refrain from removing people under the Rwanda policy and reverse the Bill's effective infringement of judicial independence", he underlined. Full press release [here](#).

(5/04) New Recommendation on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls.

Ahead of International Roma Day, the Committee of Ministers has adopted a Recommendation to the 46 Council of Europe member states to ensure equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls and address the specific vulnerabilities they face. Full press release [here](#).

(2/04) New Toolkit to debunk fake news in history classes.

The Council of Europe and the European Union have developed a new tool to prepare young people to evaluate content online and in the media, to identify historical distortions, and to think critically about the content they encounter. The "Toolkit for History Classes: Debunking Fake News and Fostering Critical Thinking" comprises 11 online activities helping students analyse different topics, events, figures and processes through historical sources and a multiperspective approach. The tool is accompanied by a free online Training Course for Secondary School Teachers on its practical use in classrooms. It will become available to the wider public in Autumn 2024. Full press release [here](#).

(22/03) Survey finds "widespread and concerning pattern" of NGO stigmatization.

A survey prepared by the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe indicates serious stigmatisation of NGOs across Europe, based on 55 responses to a questionnaire by NGOs operating in 31 Council of Europe member states plus Russia, as well as from two international NGOs. The survey determined that NGOs working in the areas of human and minority rights, as watchdogs (anti-corruption and investigative journalism) and for the environment proved to be particularly subject to stigmatisation. Full press release [here](#).

(19/03) Making justice for and with children in Europe: the goal of a new EU-Council of Europe joint project.

The new European Union-Council of Europe joint project on Child-friendly Justice has been launched in Strasbourg. Co-funded by the EU and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Division in close co-operation with Belgium, Poland and Slovenia as focus countries, and Greece, Hungary and Portugal as partner countries, the project will run until the end of March 2026. Full press release [here](#).

(12/03) A new manual on equality data collection to tackle systemic discrimination.

Systemic discrimination is not immediately visible and is rarely the result of specific intent. Yet, it drives entrenched disadvantage and inequality for many groups in society. As this is a complex phenomenon to identify, the collection and analysis of equality data are indispensable. Full press release [here](#).

(6/03) Council of Europe adopts Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has adopted a new Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029. In line with the Reykjavik commitments of the Heads of State and Government, this Strategy will guide the organisation's work towards gender equality over the next six years. Secretary

General Marija Pejčinović Burić said that “adopting this new Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029 on the eve of International Women’s Day sends a very strong signal of our commitment”. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(16/04) EUROCIITIES - Dortmund joins European cities with a commitment to migrant integration. The city of Dortmund recently signed the [Integrating Cities Charter](#), reaffirming its commitment to the integration of migrants and the promotion of well-managed migration. The Charter harnesses the duties and responsibilities of European cities as policy-makers, service providers, employers, and buyers of goods and services to embrace diversity. Dortmund, a city with a long immigration history, recognises the vital role migrants play in shaping its identity and contributing to its prosperity. The city aims to strengthen existing migrant networks and organisations to foster a sense of togetherness and inclusivity among all residents. In a world marked by increasing globalisation and population mobility, integrating migrants into local communities has emerged as a pressing concern for cities worldwide. Full press release [here](#).

(16/04) EUROCIITIES - Aiming for an updated European Pillar of Social Rights. Today, Ricardo Rio, Mayor of Braga, is representing Eurocities at the high-level conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights hosted by the Belgian Presidency in La Hulpe (Belgium). The presence of Rio underscores the crucial importance of the Pillar and our continued commitment to fostering inclusive urban communities across Europe. “It’s remarkable how cities often step up to fulfill roles that fall under the purview of national governments,” said Rio at the conference. “Braga, for example, took pioneering steps by becoming the first city in Portugal to undertake the dental care costs for vulnerable children, an aspect previously overlooked by the national health system.” Braga’s efforts extend beyond dental care. The city also complements the national health system by shouldering the financial burden of providing vaccines for babies. Cities have been at the forefront of making the Pillar a living framework for social rights and inclusion in urban areas. It is now time to update the Pillar with concrete initiatives that mirror the social challenges European cities are facing. In the [Eurocities Social Manifesto](#), we advocate for a stronger way of monitoring the implementation of the Pillar, as well as a legislative boost and dedicated funding. Full press release [here](#).

(19/04) EUROCIITIES - Integrating for a better Europe. In a world marked by increasing globalisation and population mobility, integrating migrants into local communities has emerged as a pressing concern for cities worldwide. Across Europe, cities play an important role in providing sustainable integration pathways and creating welcoming societies for all. City leaders and their local administrations recognise that welcoming, integrating and co-living approaches should be supported and implemented by collaboration across all levels of government. However, cities often highlight their difficulties in securing EU funding through national programmes, due to challenges such as political obstacles, when national and local governments belong to different political parties. Full press release [here](#).

(19/04) ECRE - Italy: New Reports Highlight Violations of Basic Refugee Rights Including Detention of Minors – Prime Minister Signs Three Agreements with Tunisia to Curb Migration as EU Ombudsman Launches Inquiry Into EU-Tunisia Deal – New Plans for Migrant Workers Launched to Fill Labour Shortages – Interior Minister Vows to Increase Number of Repatriation Centres – All Charges Against Iuventa Crew

Dropped. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has published a report on the “serious violations of basic rights” faced by people seeking asylum in major Italian cities. According to the report, which has been published exactly one year after the launch of a digital system aimed at easing access to the asylum procedure, the new system “could have helped to alleviate the barriers, delays, precarious conditions, and violence facing people trying to start the protection process there”. However, “the new digitalized system, while offering some a means to request appointments at the police headquarters, has largely shifted, not solved, the barriers and delays many protection seekers continue to face, and made them far less visible to the public”. Some of the barriers described in the report include lack of access to the technology and literacy needed to use the online platform, failure to provide translations, and system errors. IRC Italy has highlighted the severe consequences of these barriers, including denial of the right to reception and exploitation by third parties. The organisation has called on the Italian authorities to find immediate solutions to tackle long delays, resolve obstacles to the submission of applications for international protection and provide accessible and up-to-date information to applicants in languages they speak. Another report on immigration detention in Italy has been published by ECRE member organisation the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). In its report, JRS Europe has highlighted the issue of the detention of minors in Italy where local authorities employ a strategy of accusing the captains of migrant boats – who are often unaccompanied minors – of “facilitating irregular entry”. “This offense carries a penalty of imprisonment, with sentences reaching up to 16 years, alongside hefty fines. If any deaths occur on the boat, minors can even face charges of murder,” it wrote, highlighting the policy’s failure to address the root cause of human trafficking, namely the lack of safe and legal pathways into the EU. Full press release here.

(19/04) EUROCIITIES - European cities place people at the heart of digitalization. European cities place people at the heart of digitalization. Full press release here.

(12/04) ECRE - Adoption of EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum was adopted by the European Parliament (EP) on 10 April during its penultimate plenary session before the end of the current mandate. The ten legislative files that collectively make up the Pact were all approved with varying levels of support from members (MEPs). Full press release here.

(12/04) PICUM - Migrant workers: EU Council greenlights measures to reduce dependency on employers. In a final vote on 12 April 2024, the Council of the EU approved work permit rules for migrant workers that would improve application processes, labour market mobility and possibilities to escape exploitation (the revised Single Permit Directive). Most notably, the revised Directive seeks to ease procedures for non-EU workers to change employer. Work permits are often issued linked to a specific job, tying the migrant worker to their employer. Changing employer often entails lengthy and costly procedures, keeps workers in great uncertainty and ultimately prevents many from changing employer even when they endure abuse and exploitation. While governments will still be able to require certain conditions to be met, workers will now have a right to change employer and the process should be simpler, faster and more predictable. Full article here.

(11/04) PICUM - European Parliament final vote on Migration Pact foreshadows human rights violations. In a final plenary vote on April 10, the European Parliament sealed a Migration Pact that will likely lead to widespread human rights violations across Europe and at its borders. Full article here.

(09/04) PICUM - At least 117 people criminalised for helping migrants in Europe in 2023. Between January and December 2023, at least 117 people faced judicial proceedings in the EU for acting in solidarity with migrants. The majority were charged with facilitation of entry, stay or transit or migrant smuggling (depending on how the crime is defined in the national legislation). The figures stem from media monitoring of different national news outlets conducted by the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) throughout 2023. Full article [here](#).

(2/04) Social Platform - Start of the 2024 European Semester cycle - our recommendations for a more social Europe. For millions of people across the EU, staying above the poverty line is a daily struggle. It is both unsurprising and unacceptable that in the run-up to the EU elections, [Eurobarometer](#) found that on the cost of living 65% surveyed were not satisfied with the measures taken by their national government, and 57% were dissatisfied with the measures taken by the EU. The European Commission's [2024 Autumn Package](#), published end of last year, offers guidance on how Member States should try to tackle current challenges, like the cost of living, in the coming year. With so much on the line for people fighting against poverty and social exclusion, there is no doubt that stronger measures are needed to build a more 'social' Europe. In response to what the European Commission has presented in its 2024 Autumn Package, Social Platform, together with some of our members, highlighted specific concerns and made recommendations to the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the Employment Committee (EMCO). We call to further unlock the social potential of the European Semester process and implement much-needed social change. Read our reaction below. Article available [here](#).

(18/03) PICUM - European Parliament improves crime reporting for migrant victims - but fails to fully protect them from immigration enforcement. MEPs in the European Parliament's LIBE and FEMM committees voted today on their joint report revising the EU's rules on victims' rights (the EU Victims' Rights Directive). The committees' vote improves the European Commission's original proposal in several ways. Full article [here](#).

(14/03) EUROCIITIES - "Social and digital transformation must go hand in hand". "Digital inclusion is not a yes or no situation," said Joab de Lang, Expert Strategist Digital Inclusion and Cybersecurity in the City of Rotterdam, at the Eurocities' Digital Divide session within the conference 'Building inclusive pathways for better digital services'. "For example, young people are comfortable using social media, but then struggle accessing some governmental services offered through a website." Almost half of Europeans lack basic digital skills - and this is not evenly distributed across member states. For example, in Romania, the population with basic skills is around 40%, while in Finland or the Netherlands it is over 80%. "But this does not mean that there is no more work to be done," acknowledged de Lang. On the contrary, it is very difficult to include the remaining fifteen to twenty percent. Full press release [here](#).

(6/03) EUROCIITIES - Joining forces for a fairer housing market. Housing Ministers met yesterday under the Belgian presidency of the EU Council to issue the '[Liege Declaration](#)' on housing, advocating for "Affordable, decent and sustainable housing for all". The declaration recommends the European Commission establish an EU platform inspired by the [European Platform on Combatting Homelessness](#). "We welcome the idea of setting up this platform 'to urgently support national, regional and local partnership to end housing exclusion'," says Anna Iafisco, Policy Officer at Eurocities. Full press release [here](#).

(1/03) ECRE - Op-ed: Two years since the triggering of the Temporary Protection Directive: The dilemma of unity over fragmentation for the transitioning phase. Two years after the first-ever triggering of the [Temporary Protection Directive \(TPD\)](#) – a collective and unanimous move to provide safety and immediate access to rights to those displaced by the war in Ukraine – the EU and its member states (MS) are entering the third and (possibly) final year of its validity, with questions still unanswered about the future of the six million people who are benefiting from the temporary protection status that it and similar national protection schemes across the EU and associated countries (EU+) provide. Since the first weeks of the displacement, ECRE has closely followed the implementation of the TPD and its activation on 4 March 2022, compiling, analysing and regularly updating information on the [measures](#) put in place in response to the arrival of persons displaced from Ukraine, covering a range of aspects from rules on registration and re-entry, to access to rights and social support. Full press release [here](#).

(29/02) EUROCITIES - What priorities should be on the EU agenda? – a local perspective. Ahead of the European elections in June 2024, Eurocities is putting mayors and deputy mayors in the spotlight to discuss the importance of local governments and what should be included in the next EU mandate's priorities. Cities across Europe agree on the need to strive for a Europe where the future is sustainable and inclusive for all. To fulfil this future, cities work alongside the European Union to implement crucial policies such as the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the digital transition on the ground. Constant exchange and cooperation with EU institutions and national governments is essential to implement their strategies at the local level. "At a time when populism, nationalism and the extreme right are on the rise in Europe, cities are the ramparts and the beating hearts of European democracy," said Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of Strasbourg. As the closest governments to citizens and as crucial actors in policy implementation, cities deserve an active role by being at the heart of European and national decision making. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

ECRE - [Seeking Protection: Afghan Asylum Applicants in the EU](#)

ECRE - [The Rights of Refugees and Asylum Applicants with Disabilities](#)

ECRE - [Pathways to Protection: Mapping visa schemes and other practices enabling people in need of international protection to reach Europe safely](#)

Eurodiaconia - [Labour Market Integration of Third Country National Women](#)

EPRS - ['Sahelexit' in West Africa: Implications for ECOWAS and the EU](#)

EPRS - [The six policy priorities of the von der Leyen Commission: An end-of-term assessment](#)

EPRS - [Protecting children in virtual worlds \(the metaverse\)](#)

EPRS - [Preventing and countering the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the EU](#)

EPRS - [Children's participation in the democratic life of the EU](#)

EPRS - [EU migration and borders: Key facts and figures](#)

EPRS - [Examples of Parliament's impact: 2019 to 2024 – Illustrating the powers of the European Parliament](#)

EPRS - [Legal fiction of non-entry in EU asylum policy: Implications of the new Screening Regulation](#)

EPRS - [EU-UK cooperation on migration and asylum](#)

EPRS - [EU and US strategies towards sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank review](#) (March)

Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank review](#) (April)