

INFO FLASH 30/10/2024

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(22/10) Commission analyses potential to boost European Research Area. The EU has made strides towards building a more integrated, efficient and attractive single market for research and innovation, but further work is needed to fully tap into its potential. These are the conclusions of the Communication on the implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) that the Commission adopted today, reaffirming its commitment to placing research and innovation at the core of Europe's future growth. As highlighted by the Draghi report and the Political Guidelines for the next Commission, research and innovation are critical drivers of economic resilience, competitiveness and wellbeing. Initiated in 2000 to address fragmentation in the European research landscape and given a new push in 2020, the ERA aims to create a dynamic and attractive environment for researchers and innovators across Europe, making it the place to be for them. The new Communication takes stock of the progress made under the four strategic objectives agreed with the member states and highlights where further work is needed. Full press release [here](#).

(21/10) EU invests over €380 million in 133 new LIFE projects to support the green transition all around Europe. The Commission has granted today more than €380 million to 133 new projects across Europe under the [LIFE Programme for environment and climate action](#). The allocated amount represents more than half of the €574 million total investment needs for these projects - the remainder coming from national, regional and local governments, public-private partnerships, businesses, and civil society organisations. LIFE projects contribute to reaching the European Green Deal's broad range of climate, energy and environmental goals, including the EU's aim to become climate-neutral by 2050 and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, while ensuring Europe's long-term prosperity. This investment will have a lasting impact on our environment, the economy and the well-being of all Europeans. Full press release [here](#). Project summaries [here](#).

(16/10) Independent experts call for increased investment to strengthen Europe's research and innovation leadership. More excellent research, impactful innovation and technology scale-ups are needed to make Europe more globally competitive, secure and sustainable. These are among the twelve expert recommendations presented today to the Commission to strengthen Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme, and its successor.

The recommendations have been drafted by an independent group of 15 leading experts chaired by Manuel Heitor, former secretary of state for science, technology and higher education of Portugal. Their report, entitled 'Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness', highlights the European added value of the EU framework programme for research and innovation (R&I), and puts forward twelve recommendations. Full press release [here](#).

(30/09) Europeans believe they need more information to prepare for emergencies, a recent Eurobarometer survey shows. Today, the European Commission published the [results](#) of an opinion survey showing that the majority of EU citizens believe need more

information to prepare for disasters and emergencies. Furthermore, the responses reveal citizens feel mostly exposed to risks linked to the impact of climate change but also security and social risks. The recent Special Eurobarometer survey asked people in the 27 Member States about their perceived exposure to disaster risks, their level of knowledge and the sources they use to learn about disaster risks. The survey also asked people how well they are prepared for disasters and how much they trust emergency services and authorities. Full press release [here](#).

(24/09) Eurobarometer survey shows Europeans are taking action to save energy and embrace clean energy, but want more support to make the transition and keep their bills under control. A wide-ranging survey published today shows that European citizens support the energy policy pursued by the EU in the last five years. Looking ahead, they express their strong backing for more EU-wide coordination, and even more efforts at EU and national level to make energy prices more affordable, as we pursue the clean energy transition and ensure our energy independence. A large majority of respondents (77%) say the European Union should have a stronger coordination role on energy matters, depending on different circumstances. 79% of people surveyed agree that our climate targets will spur new jobs and attract investments in the clean energy sector. 76% believe our policies will reduce dependence on energy imports, and 69% think they will ensure reduced energy bills for households and businesses. To ensure that these targets are met, 62% said that Europe should diversify its energy sources, including by investing in renewables, and 54% said that we should save energy wherever possible. Full press release [here](#).

(19/09) Commission report shows how social investments and reforms can support competitiveness, economic growth and inclusion. Social investments and reforms in key areas can boost employment, social inclusion, competitiveness and economic growth. This is the main finding of the Commission's [2024 Employment and Social Developments in Europe \(ESDE\) report](#). Reforms and financial support for early childhood education and care, skills development, lifelong learning, vocational training and certain job support schemes are particularly promising. The latest ESDE report shows that investments have had a positive effect on income, employment levels, social inclusion and the fight against poverty, helping to reduce social and economic gaps across the EU. Social investments and reforms also contributed, between 2010 and 2021, to increasing median wealth in the euro area while decreasing differences between Member States. EU countries with previously weaker economic and social performance have caught up with stronger ones, partly thanks to these investments. Full press release [here](#).

(8/10) Commission proposes an EU Digital Travel application for easier and safer travel. Today, the European Commission adopted two proposals to digitalise passports and identity cards, also called 'EU Digital Travel application', for individuals travelling to and from the Schengen area. Both EU citizens and non-EU citizens are subject to systematic checks when crossing the EU's external borders. Currently, these checks are made physically at the border crossing point. With almost 600 million crossings recorded in 2023 only, there is a need to speed up border controls and ensure smoother travel, while at the same time maintaining a high level of security, ensuring that each and every traveller is checked. The Commission is therefore proposing a common framework for the use of digital travel credentials and a new 'EU Digital Travel application', for travellers to create and store their digital travel credentials. The new rules will make traveling to and within the Schengen area easier and more secure. Full press release [here](#).

(7/10) 22nd European Week of Regions and Cities takes stock of achievements and looks ahead to the future of Cohesion Policy. Today, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa **Ferreira** and the President of the Committee of the Regions, Vasco Alves Cordeiro, launched the 22nd European Week of Regions and Cities during a press conference in Brussels. The four-day event will bring together a diverse mix of stakeholders, project promoters and practitioners, researchers, and journalists, and will provide an opportunity to look back on the many achievements of Cohesion Policy during the current Commission mandate. It's also an opportunity to discuss how the Policy can best continue to fulfil its EU Treaty mission of promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion across the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(2/10) Commission takes stock of International Partnerships' strategy to enhance resilience at home and abroad. Today, the European Commission has adopted a Communication on “building sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe,” taking stock of the progress achieved in the field of International Partnerships. Over the past five years, EU has revamped its model of cooperation in response to the evolving geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape and global challenges, notably the growing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU has moved away from donor-recipient dynamics towards mutually beneficial partnerships, which bring benefits to the local populations and strengthen resilience at home and abroad. This approach was embodied in the Global Gateway investment strategy launched in 2021. By investing in partnerships, the EU seeks to position itself in an increasingly contested international environment. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(23/10) EU budget for 2025 to focus on research, health, education, and climate action. Parliament demands an EU budget for 2025 that focuses on improving people's lives, boosting competitiveness, and addressing current challenges. MEPs set the overall level of commitment appropriations for the 2025 draft budget at almost €201 billion, €1.24 billion more than the Commission's proposal from last June. Parliament wants to boost programmes vital in addressing health challenges, supporting young people, agriculture and rural areas, helping people suffering from natural disasters, boosting climate action, managing migration and security needs, and strengthening EU support for neighbouring regions experiencing geopolitical and humanitarian crises. MEPs restored €1.52 billion in funding cuts proposed by the Council, and set payment appropriations at €153.5 billion. The EURI repayment costs, which are twice the amount initially forecast for 2025, should not result in reduced funding for essential programmes, like Erasmus+ or R&D, according to Parliament. MEPs want to reverse cuts made by member states to appropriations dedicated to these areas and to use the new “EURI cascade mechanism” introduced by the revision of the EU's long-term budget . This mechanism is designed to manage escalating Next Generation EU borrowing costs without affecting key initiatives, maintaining the budget's flexibility and response capacity. Full press release [here](#).

(23/10) Investigation into missing unaccompanied child migrants wins the 2024 Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism. The investigation, run by media from Germany, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and the UK revealed that at least 51 433 unaccompanied child migrants disappeared after arriving in European countries between 2021 and 2023. Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, Pina Picierno, Vice-President responsible for the Prize, and representatives of the independent European-wide Jury of the Prize participated in the award ceremony held in the European Parliament's Daphne Caruana Galizia Press Room in Strasbourg. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(23/10) Cohesion policy: Council agrees negotiating mandate for a regulation on facilitating cross-border solutions. Member states' EU ambassadors today reached agreement on the Council's negotiating mandate for a new regulation on facilitating cross-border solutions. The proposed regulation aims to facilitate cross-border interactions and promote the development of cross-border regions by making it easier to tackle cross-border challenges, such as the development of infrastructure and the operation of cross-border public services. Its key feature is the creation of cross-border coordination points within member states to handle cross-border files submitted to them, either by communicating with initiators on behalf of the competent authority or by assessing the file themselves. In its mandate, the Council supports the creation of a new legal framework for addressing cross-border obstacles to complement existing possibilities. However, it limits the scope of the framework to regions with land borders and makes it completely voluntary for member states to decide whether to set up cross-border coordination points. Full press release [here](#).

(15/10) Fostering Jewish life and combating antisemitism: Council approves declaration. The Council today approved a declaration on fostering Jewish life and combating antisemitism. The declaration highlights alarmingly high levels of antisemitism across the EU and emphasises that the EU stands unequivocally against all forms of antisemitism, racism, hatred, and discrimination. The Council calls in the strongest possible terms for further action to combat these phenomena. Among the specific areas, the declaration underscores the importance of combating all forms of antisemitic hate speech, including Holocaust denial and trivialisation. These growing trends, especially online, harm Jewish communities, undermine collective historical memory, and threaten the cohesion and security of European democratic societies. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(24/10) FRA - Muslims in Europe face ever more racism and discrimination. One in two Muslims in the EU face racism and discrimination in their daily life – a sharp rise since 2016. Muslim women, men and children are targeted not just because of their religion, but also because of their skin colour and ethnic or immigrant background. Young Muslims born in the EU and women wearing religious clothing are especially affected. These are some of the findings of the latest report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Full press release [here](#).

(14/10) EEUA - EUAA's first Fundamental Rights Strategy reinforces safeguards for applicants throughout its operations. The Management Board of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has adopted the Agency's first Fundamental Rights Strategy. The Strategy, proposed by the Agency's Fundamental Rights Officer, is a feature of the EUAA's new mandate, and the result of a broad consultation with members of the EUAA Consultative Forum, around 120 civil society organisations, and the UNHCR. Full press release [here](#).

(9/10) EIGE - Change making conversations: coming up at the Gender Equality Forum 2024. Gender equality, a basic human right, is still 60 years away. In other words, resources and opportunities are not equally accessible for all. Dreams and ambitions are deferred or downright dismissed. But together, we have the tools and talents to break down those barriers for good, and make change happen. This December in Brussels, our agency is

organising the [Gender Equality Forum 2024](#) – a follow up to the 2022 Gender Equality Forum – bringing together MEPs and youth activists, business leaders and campaigners to take stock of gender equality in Europe and plot a course for the future—one that is just, inclusive, and sustainable. And, we want to invite you to [participate online](#). Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

(22/10) Italy should set up an independent and effective equality body and do more to counter hate speech. In a new report the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) calls on Italy to set up a fully independent and effective equality body and reinforce the National Office Against Racial Discrimination as a fully-fledged official coordinating body. Italy should in particular adopt a National Action Plan Against Racism, organise an awareness raising campaign aimed at promoting equality, diversity and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and take further action to combat hate speech by public figures (see also the translation of the report in Italian). Full press release [here](#).

(17/10) New guide published to enhance minority rights via inclusive education. Inclusive educational environment recognising diversity, promoting a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect, addressing discrimination and segregation is crucial for enhancing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. What should be done in practice by European states, civil society and the academic community to foster such an environment is the focus of the Thematic Commentary, adopted by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and published on 17 October. Full press release [here](#).

(15/10) Stopping violence against women: New report stresses need for risk assessment to keep women safe from violence. The Group of Experts on combating violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO) has published its 5th general report on activities for 2023, which presents the major achievements of its work and includes a thematic section on “the role and importance of risk assessment and risk management in preventing and combating violence against women”. This report stresses the importance of increasing training for authorities to better address different forms of violence, including psychological and digital manifestations of violence. GREVIO monitoring throughout 2023 also determined that separation from a violent partner can increase risks to children, hence the importance of incorporating dynamic risk assessments into custody and access procedures. These procedures can be used to perpetuate abuse after separation, including through abusive litigation. A better understanding of post-separation violence is therefore essential to ensure the safety of victims. Full press release [here](#).

(7/10) Report highlights inadequate healthcare access for LGBTI people, recommends solutions. A new Council of Europe report “Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health and Access to Healthcare for LGBTI People in Europe” has revealed substantial disparities and systemic challenges. It proposes numerous recommendations to the Council of Europe member states to improve the healthcare landscape for LGBTI individuals and thus foster a more inclusive and just healthcare system across Europe. Full press release [here](#).

(25/09) Smart, inclusive, fair policies needed to counter instrumentalisation and politicisation of minority rights in Europe, says expert committee. Over the past two years, from mid-2022 to mid-2024, despite some positive developments and good practices,

very worrying trends against diversity and minority rights in Europe have been observed, says the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in its latest activity report. These trends include increasing instrumentalisation of minority policies for political ends, perceiving national minorities as a security threat, a danger of societal disintegration as a result of scapegoating and exclusion of individuals based on their ethnic affiliations, as well as challenges related to economic inequalities disproportionately affecting persons belonging to national minorities. Full press release [here](#).

(19/09) Council of Europe experts give guidance on applying the recovery and reflection period for victims of trafficking. A new Guidance Note published by GRETA, the Council of Europe anti trafficking body, highlights the purposes and principles of the recovery and reflection period and its legal basis and procedures. Provided for in Article 13 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the recovery and reflection period is an essential element of protecting and assisting all victims of trafficking. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(24/10) ECRE - Op-ed: Does the Rome court's refusal to validate the detention order of the first asylum seekers brought to Albania mark the end of the Italy-Albania deal? The [Italy-Albania deal](#), which was signed in November 2023 and ratified in February 2024, as part of Italy's broader efforts to hinder arrivals from the Central Mediterranean route, allows Italy to send migrants rescued in international waters to Albania for asylum processing under an accelerated border procedure and for return operations. The procedures happen under Italian jurisdiction and are regulated by Italian law transposing the relevant EU legislation. The administrative and judicial authorities competent to deal with the matter are those in Rome. Migrants are first screened at the port of Shëngjin, and vulnerable individuals, such as minors or victims of trafficking, who are exempted from the border procedure, are returned to Italy. The rest are transferred to a centre in Gjadër, where their asylum claims are processed, and potential return operations for rejected applicants are arranged. Those who instead qualify for protection are transferred to Italy. Full press release [here](#).

(11/10) EUROCIITIES - Cities and migrants' rights in the era of digitalization. On 10 April 2024, after nearly five years of negotiations and extensive public and political debate, the European Parliament approved the new Pact on Migration and Asylum. This latest reform represents a significant shift in how the EU approaches asylum, migration, and border management. But what do digital regulations have to do with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum? One of the most transformative aspects of the new pact is that technology plays a central role in implementing migration policies. Full press release [here](#).

(8/10) CARITAS EU - A new EU anti-poverty strategy. Caritas Europa and Caritas Germany hosted a high-level conference on the announced EU anti-poverty strategy, with a focus on minimum income. Decision-makers from the European Parliament and the European Commission renewed their commitment to work towards a holistic approach to lift people out of poverty. Full press release [here](#).

(1/10) EUROCIITIES - Cities drive the future of digital democracy. In the city of Barcelona, innovative plans are being developed that have the potential to transform urban democratic

processes across Europe for decades to come. Representatives from five European cities have gathered to take part in the [Nets4Dem](#) initiative's first-ever [Democracy Lab](#), where they are working together to find new digital solutions to the complex democratic challenges facing their local administrations. From 17-19 September, the cities of Cascais, Istanbul, Rotterdam, Sofia and Vilnius, along with representatives from other cities, have collaborated closely with an experienced team of democracy experts and fellow municipal civil servants. Their goal has been to identify how, and if, they can use digital tools to rebuild their citizens' trust in democratic processes, and ensure people's voices are heard, no matter where they live or what their background is. Full press release [here](#).

(27/09) EUROCIITIES - Culture as a connector in Europe's cities. This year's [Eurocities Culture Forum](#), taking place in Belfast, is all about exploring how culture can bring people together and solve urban challenges. Under the theme 'Culture as a connector', cities are showcasing projects that harness the power of art and heritage to improve social cohesion, boost local economies, and tackle environmental issues. Here's a look at some standout examples from the event, showing how culture is making a real difference in cities across Europe. Full press release [here](#) and [here](#).

(24/09) PICUM - What the new Commission means for undocumented migrants. Once again, migration is embedded in a portfolio that is essentially centred around security, namely the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration. Such a security approach is evident in goals around doubling Europol's staff and increasing its powers, tripling Frontex' border guards, and "securing" the EU's borders overall. This Commissioner would also report to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The mission letter tasks the new Commissioner with implementing the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which human rights organisations have long criticised for increasing detention, lowering essential safeguards for those who come to Europe seeking safety or livelihood and overall being unworkable and harmful. Full press release [here](#).

(6/09) ECRE - Op-ed: Marking Three Years Since the Taliban's Takeover of Afghanistan: A Grim Reflection. Tuesday 15 August was the third anniversary of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan – a day that shattered the hopes of millions and forced hundreds of thousands of Afghans (mostly highly educated) to flee their homeland. This date symbolises not just the Taliban's return to power but also the hasty withdrawal of the international community, including European countries, many of whom had had a presence in Afghanistan for over two decades. Over these three dark years, life has persisted, albeit under immense hardship and with a deep sense of despair. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Eurodiaconia - [Promoting Access to Essential Services: Good Practices and Recommendations for Policymakers](#)

ECRE - [The EU-Mauritania Partnership: Whose Priorities?](#)

ECRE - [Reception Conditions Directive \(Recast\)](#)

ECRE - [Asylum in Europe: The situation of applicants for international protection in 2023](#)

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

EPRS - [EU contribution to the fight against child poverty](#)