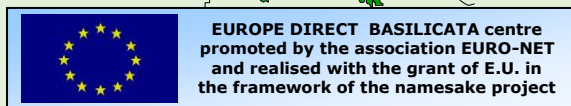




EURO-NET

The Youth European Network



**YEAR 19 - NUMBER 1
OF 20TH FEBRUARY 2024
ENGLISH NEWSLETTER**

Bimonthly newsletter:

- to spread European opportunities and initiatives,
- to disseminate the respect of human rights and the awareness about the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity,
- to fight discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance and racism,
- to help, with youth activities, the democratic stability and social inclusion in Europe,
- develop active European citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working within a European dimension;
- to promote European youth activities, such as exchanges, seminars, conferences, debates and training courses,
- to encourage exchange of ideas, proposals, experiences and good practises at international level.

**NEWSLETTER REALISED BY
THE ASSOCIATION EURO-NET
AS EUROPE DIRECT BASILICATA CENTRE**



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1. EU calls for end of violence against women

More than 3,000 women are killed each year in Europe by partners or family members, and countless more are harmed and harassed. Violence against women and girls is a threat to half of humanity, online and offline. It affects all women and takes many forms, including physical, sexual, or psychological violence, as well as economic abuse and exploitation. One in three women both in the EU and globally have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. At least two women a week are killed in the EU by an intimate partner or family member. 32% of perpetrators of sexual harassment in the EU come from the employment context.



This must stop. Every year on 25 November, the EU marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to renew its commitment to eradicate violence against women and girls in the EU and beyond, and call for action to stand in solidarity with victims and survivors. The EU protects women and children from gender-based and domestic violence through legislation, practical measures, and financial support. In 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for the first EU-wide law to combat violence against women and domestic

violence. The proposal aims to ensure that the most serious forms of violence against women are criminalised across the EU, such as rape, female genital mutilation and gender-based cyber violence, including cyber-stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention in 2023 is another key milestone to eradicating violence against women. It clearly shows our commitment to stepping up actions against gender-based violence across the 27 Member States. Violence against women is unacceptable. The European Commission remains committed to building a society where violence against women is prevented, condemned, and prosecuted when it occurs.

2. Commission welcomes political agreement on Artificial Intelligence Act

The Commission welcomes the political agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act), proposed by the Commission in April 2021. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, said: *"Artificial intelligence is already changing our everyday lives. And this is just the beginning. Used wisely and widely, AI promises huge benefits to our economy and society. Therefore, I very much welcome today's political agreement by the European Parliament and the Council on the Artificial Intelligence Act. The EU's AI Act is the first-ever comprehensive legal framework on Artificial Intelligence worldwide. So, this is a historic moment. The AI Act transposes European values to a new era. By focusing regulation on identifiable risks, today's agreement will foster responsible innovation in Europe. By guaranteeing the safety and fundamental rights of people and businesses, it will support the development, deployment and take-up of trustworthy AI in the EU. Our AI Act will make a substantial contribution to the development of global rules and principles for human-centric AI."* **The European approach to trustworthy AI:** The new rules will be applied directly in the same way across all Member States, based on a future-proof definition of AI. They follow a risk-based approach:

- **Minimal risk:** The vast majority of AI systems fall into the category of minimal risk. Minimal risk applications such as AI-enabled recommender systems or spam filters will benefit from a free-pass and absence of obligations, as these systems present only minimal or no risk for citizens' rights or safety. On a voluntary basis, companies may nevertheless commit to additional codes of conduct for these AI systems.
- **High-risk:** AI systems identified as high-risk will be required to comply with strict requirements, including risk-mitigation systems, high quality of data sets, logging of activity, detailed documentation, clear user information, human oversight, and a high level of robustness, accuracy and cybersecurity. Regulatory sandboxes will facilitate responsible innovation and the development of compliant AI systems.

Examples of such high-risk AI systems include certain critical infrastructures for instance in the fields of water, gas and electricity; medical devices; systems to determine access to educational institutions or for recruiting people; or certain systems used in the fields of law enforcement, border control, administration of justice and democratic processes. Moreover, biometric identification, categorisation and emotion recognition systems are also considered high-risk. Unacceptable risk: AI systems considered a clear threat to the fundamental rights of people will be banned. This includes AI systems or applications that manipulate human behaviour to circumvent

users' free will, such as toys using voice assistance encouraging dangerous behaviour of minors or systems that allow 'social scoring' by governments or companies, and certain applications of predictive policing. In addition, some uses of biometric systems will be prohibited, for example emotion recognition systems used at the workplace and some systems for categorising people or real time remote biometric identification for law enforcement purposes in publicly accessible spaces (with narrow exceptions). Specific transparency risk: When employing AI



systems such as chatbots, users should be aware that they are interacting with a machine. Deep fakes and other AI generated content will have to be labelled as such, and users need to be informed when biometric categorisation or emotion recognition systems are being used. In addition, providers will have to design systems in a way that synthetic audio, video, text and images content is marked in a machine-readable format, and detectable as artificially generated or manipulated. Companies not complying with the rules will be fined. Fines would range from €35 million or 7% of global annual turnover (whichever is higher) for violations of banned AI applications, €15 million or 3% for violations of other obligations and €7.5 million or 1.5% for supplying incorrect information. More proportionate caps are foreseen for administrative fines for SMEs and start-ups in case of infringements of the AI Act. The AI Act introduces dedicated rules for general purpose AI models that will ensure transparency along the value chain. For very powerful models that could pose systemic risks, there will be additional binding obligations related to managing risks and monitoring serious incidents, performing model evaluation and adversarial testing. These new obligations will be operationalised through codes of practices developed by industry, the scientific community, civil society and other stakeholders together with the Commission. In terms of governance, national competent market surveillance authorities will supervise the implementation of the new rules at national level, while the creation of a new European AI Office within the European Commission will ensure coordination at European level. The new AI Office will also supervise the implementation and enforcement of the new rules on general purpose AI models. Along with the national market surveillance authorities, the AI Office will be the first body globally that enforces binding rules on AI and is therefore expected to become an international reference point. For general purpose models, a scientific panel of independent experts will play a central role by issuing alerts on systemic risks and contributing to classifying and testing the models.

Next Steps

The political agreement is now subject to formal approval by the European Parliament and the Council and will entry into force 20 days after publication in the Official Journal. The AI Act would then become applicable two years after its entry into force, except for some specific provisions: Prohibitions will already apply after 6 months while the rules on General Purpose AI will apply after 12 months. To bridge the transitional period before the Regulation becomes generally applicable, the Commission will be launching an AI Pact. It will convene AI developers from Europe and around the world who commit on a voluntary basis to implement key obligations of the AI Act ahead of the legal deadlines. To promote rules on trustworthy AI at international level, the European Union will continue to work in fora such as the G7, the OECD, the Council of Europe, the G20 and the UN. Just recently, we supported the agreement by G7 leaders under the Hiroshima AI process on International Guiding Principles and a voluntary Code of Conduct for Advanced AI systems.

Background

For years, the Commission has been facilitating and enhancing cooperation on AI across the EU to boost its competitiveness and ensure trust based on EU values. Following the publication of the

European Strategy on AI in 2018 and after extensive stakeholder consultation, the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (HLEG) developed Guidelines for Trustworthy AI in 2019,



and an Assessment List for Trustworthy AI in 2020. In parallel, the first Coordinated Plan on AI was published in December 2018 as a joint commitment with Member States. The Commission's White Paper on AI, published in 2020, set out a clear vision for AI in Europe: an ecosystem of excellence and trust, setting the scene for today's political agreement. The public consultation on the White Paper on AI elicited widespread participation from across the world. The White Paper was accompanied by a 'Report on the safety and liability implications of Artificial

Intelligence, the Internet of Things and robotics' concluding that the current product safety legislation contains a number of gaps that needed to be addressed, notably in the Machinery Directive. Independent, evidence-based research produced by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) has been fundamental in shaping the EU's AI policies and ensuring their effective implementation. Through rigorous research and analysis, the JRC has supported the development of the AI Act, informing AI terminology, risk classification, technical requirements and contributing to the ongoing development of harmonised standards.

3. Giving a stronger voice to Europe's youth to build a better future

To build a better future, Europe must listen to its youth. Building on the achievements of the 2022 European Year of Youth, the Commission has announced several actions that give young people a greater say in the decisions that affect them. Moving forward, the Commission will now apply a 'youth check' when it is designing policies. In addition, Commissioners will speak more often to young people about current and planned policies. This way, the impact of EU policies on young people is systematically factored in, as is their perspective. In parallel, concrete actions have been put forward to address young people's concerns, especially in the areas: health and wellbeing, environment and climate change, education and training, international cooperation and European values, and employment and inclusion. Initiatives, among others, include preparing guidelines on wellbeing in schools and increasing volunteering opportunities for young people. From 12 to 19 April 2024, the Commission is also organizing the 2024 European Youth Week, two months ahead of the European elections. This event will focus on democratic participation and elections, promoting youth engagement through a series of activities all over Europe. All actions announced today are based on insights from the European Year of Youth, which featured 13,000 dedicated activities organized by more than 2,700 stakeholders across the EU. They are just the latest examples of the Commission's commitment to young people, following in the footsteps of long-standing EU programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

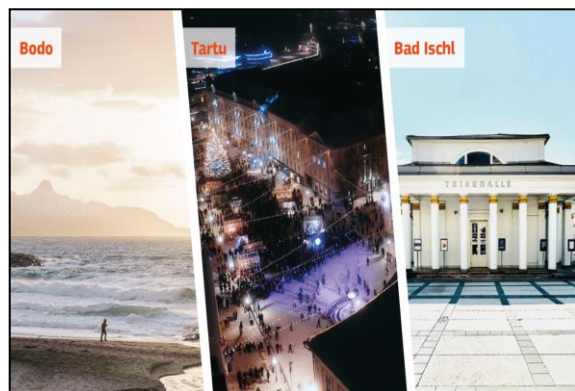


4. Three new Capitals of Culture in 2024

From January 1 2024, the cities of Bad Ischl in Austria, Bodø in Norway and Tartu in Estonia are European Capitals of Culture. **Bad Ischl - opening: 20 – 21 January:** Under the leadership of the title-holder Bad Ischl, 23 municipalities in the rural inner Alpine region of Salzkammergut are joining forces to implement a comprehensive and multi-layered programme for the European Capital of Culture year, under the banner "23 for 24". "Culture is the New Salt" is the title of the programme, as a reference to salt, which brought wealth to the entire region. It includes 178 main

projects and over 100 associated projects. It involves artistic interventions addressing remembrance culture, related among others to the House of Habsburg or National Socialism, as well as more contemporary art and new cultural formats dealing with modern challenges such as the development of a more sustainable model of cultural tourism for the region. Some highlights in the programme include: Salt Lake Cities: Young contemporary artists are invited to revitalize vacant train stations in the region. Tavern Lab: This project focuses on reanimating gastronomic development in local taverns. Silent Echoes: Dachstein, where the bells of Notre-Dame de Paris are introduced to the ice caves of Dachstein. [Find out more about the programme of Bad Ischl.](#)

[Link to the official website](#)



Bodø - Opening: 2 – 3 February: Bodø will host the

northernmost European Capital of Culture ever, placing the title in the Arctic for the first time. The entire region of Nordland is involved in the European Capitals of Culture project, under the title “Articulation”. The programme will host more than 1000 events throughout the year, making sure there is something to experience whenever visitors choose to come. The themes of the European Capitals of Culture year are closely connected to arctic nature, the north’s place in European heritage and future international development in the region. Highlights include: European Cabins of Culture:

This is a 21-day hike from cabin to cabin along the Swedish border, with arts and culture along the mountain path. Biegke Beahteme (“Who owns the wind?”): South Sámi Theatre’s trilogy about how the race for renewable energy threatens Sami culture. The opening ceremony will take place on a floating stage in the harbour in the middle of Arctic winter. Bodø 2024 is the largest cultural project in Norway in over 10 years and the largest ever in Northern Norway. [Find out more about the programme of Bodø 2024.](#)

[Link to the official website.](#)

Tartu - Opening: 27 – 28 January:

The theme for the Tartu European Capital of Culture year is “Arts of Survival”, and the programme is about creating a nature-friendly cultural city that also aims to restore trust in human closeness and show the power of Europe’s smaller cities. More than 1000 projects will address individuals of all ages planned throughout 2024. Highlights include: Kissing Tartu: This project will bring a series of artistic and educational activities about love, tolerance and sexuality, leading up to a mass kissing event on the Town Hall Square. Hidden Worlds Expanding: This brings international art to three cities in the region. Unfit Remains: This project will host two international exhibitions focusing on endangerment and extinction, using artistic interventions to bring a closer connection to nonhuman species and cultural mitigation of climate change. Tartu 2024 is the main event in Estonia and the largest regional cooperation project between Tartu and Southern Estonia. [Find out more about the programme of Tartu.](#) [Link to the official website.](#) The three European Capitals of Culture will also collaborate on a number of projects, highlighting the bonds that are created through the European Capitals of Culture action. About European Capitals of Culture: In 1985, the then Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, started the European Capital of Culture initiative. It has since become one of the most high-profile cultural initiatives in Europe. Cities are selected based on a cultural programme that must have a strong European dimension, including promoting participation and involvement by city inhabitants, communities and stakeholders contributing to the long-term development of the city and its surrounding region

5. President von der Leyen calls for global collaboration at the WEF

Countries and businesses need to closely collaborate in facing the challenges and tomorrow – that was Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen's** message during her speech at the [World Economic Forum \(WEF\)](#) in Davos this week. At this year's gathering, the WEF's “[Global Risks Report](#)” has been one of the major points of debate. The top concern singled out in this year's report was dis- and misinformation. “*These risks are serious because they limit our ability to tackle the big global challenges, we are facing*”, President von der Leyen warned in her speech. From climate change to geopolitical action, and the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) - “*None of these challenges respect borders*”, as the President pointed out. In highlighting the importance of solutions to these challenges, President von der Leyen emphasized the need for businesses and governments to work together. After all, they share a common interest in “*creating*

prosperity, wealth and security for people, creating a stable environment to unlock innovation and investment, and creating equal opportunity and freedom”, the President underlined.

2024 – a critical juncture: President von der Leyen drew attention to the critical juncture at which the world currently finds itself. In 2024, half of the global population will be able to vote in elections, including 450 million people in the European elections in June. Democracy and freedom do not come risk-free, President von der Leyen cautioned. Ukraine has lived this experience when Russia responded to the Ukrainian desire for freedom and democracy with its brutal war of aggression. And Ukraine is not only fighting their freedom, their democracy, their future, but also for Europe. *“The hearts of millions of Ukrainians were filled with joy and hope when we announced the opening of accession negotiations”,* the President reminded this week. Her speech highlighted how close cooperation between the European Union and businesses in the wake of the Russian aggression allowed us to counter Russia's attempts to weaponize energy supply and accelerate the clean energy transition. *“That is why the European Green Deal puts such strong emphasis not just on reducing emissions but also on a strong, competitive European presence in the new clean energy economy,”* the President underlined. Responding to the Global Risks Report's main concerns, the President also highlighted the Union's efforts in countering dis- and misinformation. The [Digital Services Act](#) defines the responsibilities of large internet platforms, recruiting them in the fight against misuse and abuse of their platforms. **Leading the world in Artificial Intelligence:** The President also elaborated on the challenges and the opportunities that the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents. Europe is ideally placed to become the leader in AI advancements. With nearly 200,000 software engineers with expertise on AI and large stores of data in various languages with which to train AI models, the EU can provide innovators with key resources. Simultaneously, it is the EU's ambition to innovate responsibly. The [EU's AI Act](#) will set the guardrails for what AI can and cannot do. By regulating high-risk uses like real-time facial recognition, it builds trust. In return, businesses receive the necessary space for innovation. This is the worldwide first time that rules for AI are set out. As such, the EU is leading the way on how to deal with this new and revolutionary technology. **Reinforcing bilateral ties in the world:** In Davos, President von der Leyen took the opportunity to meet several world leaders in order to advance the EU's partnerships in the world. She met the President of the Swiss Confederation, Viola Amherd, with whom she took stock of EU-Swiss negotiations on our future relation. She also met the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to discuss Ukraine's accession; and with the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, she discussed the conflict in Gaza and the need to improve humanitarian access on the ground. Amongst others, President von der Leyen also met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, to reinforce EU-US cooperation on current geopolitical matters from Ukraine to Gaza. And she met Chinese Premier Li Qiang, the President discussed trade and commercial matters, as well as the potential for cooperation on climate and people-to-people exchanges.



6 New measures will increase transparency to protect European democracy

In democratic and open societies, everyone can freely express themselves, fully participate, and enjoy their rights and freedoms. But in Europe, democracy also has its enemies. Some have made attempts to exploit societal division and spread disinformation to weaken the democratic voice of citizens or to distort election campaigns. For this reason, the Commission has put forward new measures to: **ensure transparency of foreign interest representation** seeking to influence the decision-making process in the Union, by setting up common accountability standards and a Transparency Register for entities carrying out interest representation activities on behalf of a third country; **strengthen electoral processes in the EU**, supporting high



voter turnouts, and protecting election-related infrastructure and cyber security; **ensure citizens and civil society organizations can participate in policymaking**, by encouraging EU countries to develop a more consistent and organized approach to civic participation. There is a growing concern in the EU that the openness of our societies can be exploited by foreign governments. 81% of respondents to a recent EU survey agree that foreign interference in our democratic systems is a serious problem. At the same time, we must continue to find ways to make our democracies more resilient by encouraging active participation in our democracies. This new package builds on the European Democracy Action Plan adopted in 2020, and is an important additional action to strengthen democracies across the EU ahead of the 2024 European elections.

7. Commission proposes to change international status of wolves

The Commission is tabling a proposal for a Council Decision to **adapt the protection status of the wolf** under the international [Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats](#), to which the EU and its Member States are parties. The wolf's protection status under the Convention was established based on the available scientific data at the time of negotiation of the Convention in 1979. On the basis of an [in-depth analysis on the status of the wolf in the EU](#), the Commission proposes to make the wolf **'protected' as opposed to 'strictly protected'**. It follows the [Commission's announcement in September 2023](#) that on the basis of the data collected, it would decide on a proposal to modify, where appropriate, the status of protection of the wolf and to update the legal framework, to introduce, where necessary, further flexibility.

Changing the wolf's protection status under the Bern Convention, subject to the agreement of the EU Member States and other Bern Convention parties, is a precondition for any similar change to its status at the EU level. The proposal corresponds largely to the position that the European Parliament expressed in its resolution of 24 November 2022. The Commission continues to **urge national and local authorities to take the necessary actions** in the current framework, with EU support, while giving them a clear perspective of further management flexibilities if existing possibilities prove insufficient. President Ursula von der Leyen said: *"The comeback of wolves is good news for biodiversity in Europe. But the concentration of wolf packs in some European regions has become a real danger especially for livestock. To manage critical wolf concentrations more actively, local authorities have been asking for more flexibility. The European level should facilitate this and the process the Commission started is an important step. I am deeply convinced that we can and will find targeted solutions to protect both, biodiversity and our rural livelihoods."*



Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius said: *"The proposal to change the protection status of wolves under the Bern Convention recognised the need to address the challenges posed by increasing wolf populations, while keeping the aim of conservation of biodiversity and the objective to reach and maintain a favourable conservation status of the species. The Commission will continue to support national and local authorities with funding and guidance to promote the coexistence with the wolf and large carnivores in general. Investment into prevention measures remains essential to reduce livestock predation."* Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski said: *"From speaking with farmers and rural communities, I understand how the return of wolves has presented significant challenges in a number of areas, especially for pastoralism, in an already difficult socio-economic context. This proposal reflects these challenges, based on an in-depth analysis of all available scientific and technical data. I also take this opportunity to encourage Member States to make full use of EU funding to support investments in prevention measures, which are essential to reduce threats to livestock."*

Supporting national and local authorities: The return of wolves to EU regions where they had been long absent and their growing populations in new territories has led to **challenges and conflicts**, such as attacks on livestock and conflicts with farmers and hunters, especially where damage prevention measures are not widely implemented. As detailed in a joint [letter sent by Commissioners Sinkevičius and Wojciechowski](#) to EU Ministers, **the Commission is supporting national and local authorities** in preventing or significantly reducing predation risks.

Different measures have proved effective when properly implemented and tailored to the local context. The in-depth analysis shows that the **populations of wolves have significantly increased** in the last two decades and they are **occupying ever larger territories**. There are more than 20,000 wolves with generally increasing populations and expanding ranges, and breeding packs in 23 EU Member States. This is a conservation success, made possible by protective legislation, more favourable public attitudes and habitat improvements. This expansion has however led to increasing conflicts with human activities, notably concerning livestock damages, with strong pressure on specific areas and regions. This changing reality on the ground now justifies an adaptation of the legal protection status, to **allow further management flexibility to all Bern Convention parties**, while **keeping the overall legal objective to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for the species**. EU funding is available to support adequate **investments in appropriate damage prevention measures**, which will remain essential to reduce livestock predation.

Next steps: It is now for the Member States to decide on this proposal. Once adopted, the proposal will be submitted by the EU to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. Depending on the outcome of these decisions in the Council and in the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, the Commission would then be able to propose to adapt the wolf's protection status within the EU. Meanwhile, the Commission [continues to urge local and national authorities](#) to take action, where necessary, as allowed by the derogation possibilities in the current legislation, and to use available EU funding opportunities to invest in prevention and compensation measures. The Commission published [detailed guidance](#) in 2021 with examples of good practice. The Commission will continue its close cooperation with Member States to **monitor the progress towards the achievement of the favourable conservation status of the wolf and its coexistence with socio-economic activities**. It will also continue **supporting investments** for the coexistence with large carnivores and the work of the related [European and regional stakeholders initiatives](#).

Background: The Bern Convention is a Council of Europe intergovernmental treaty concluded in 1979 to conserve European wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those whose conservation requires the co-operation of several states. As of April 2024, it will cover 50 Contracting Parties, including all EU Member States. The EU's Habitats Directive implements the requirements of the Bern Convention and provides for strict protection for most wolf populations in Europe, with derogation possibilities.

8. Improving the welfare of animals

The European Commission has proposed new rules to improve the welfare of dogs and cats in the EU, and the conditions for animals during transport. It has also responded to a citizens' initiative to ban fur farming in the EU. **Better welfare for dogs and cats:** With more than 72 million dogs and more than 83 million cats in the EU, the estimated value of dog and cat sales is €1.3 billion annually.



The illegal trade has soared in recent years and some establishments keep the animals in poor conditions. The new rules aim to **harmonize EU standards** on the welfare of dogs and cats, covering **housing, care, transport and treatment** in breeding establishments, pet shops and shelters. **Better rules for the transport of animals:** Each year, 1.6 billion animals are transported in and from the EU. The new rules aim to **limit travel times** and enable **rest breaks** outside the vehicle **during long journeys, increase minimum space** and **prohibit transport in extreme temperatures**. Better animal welfare not only benefits the animals themselves but

also consumers and farmers, as it contributes to sustainable food systems and helps address risks to public health. **Further work on fur farming:** The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) 'Fur Free Europe' called for an **EU ban on fur farming** and the **sale of fur products**. The Commission has tasked the European Food Safety Authority to produce a **scientific opinion** on the matter. Based on this opinion, the Commission will decide on the most appropriate action and will also consider other **measures to ensure the welfare** of farmed fur animals. The animal welfare package is an important pillar of the Farm to Fork strategy, the European Green Deal's agenda for more sustainable agriculture and food production.

9. Asylum and migration: deal for more solidarity and responsibility sharing

The political agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Pact on Migration and Asylum constitutes a major breakthrough towards a common system for managing migration in the EU. The agreement covers five key proposals of the Pact:

- **Screening Regulation:** creating uniform rules concerning the identification of non-EU nationals upon their arrival, thus increasing the security within the Schengen area.
- **Eurodac Regulation:** developing a common database gathering more accurate and complete data to detect unauthorised movements.
- **Asylum Procedures Regulation:** making asylum, return and border procedures quicker and more effective.
- **Asylum Migration Management Regulation:** establishing a new solidarity mechanism amongst Member States to balance the current system where a few countries are responsible for the vast majority of asylum applications, and clear rules on responsibility for asylum applications.
- **Crisis and Force majeure Regulation:** ensuring that the EU is prepared in the future to face situations of crisis, including instrumentalisation of migrants.

Once these proposals are formally adopted by the European Parliament and Council, the pillars of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum will be in place. The Commission presented the New Pact on Migration and Asylum in September 2020, with the aim of finding long-term and sustainable solutions to managing migration. The Pact will create a legal framework that balances solidarity and responsibility between Member States, in a comprehensive approach to managing migration effectively and fairly. President Ursula von der Leyen said: "Europe is a strong community and capable of finding great answers to great challenges. I welcome the timely political agreement reached by Parliament and Council on the key elements of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Our goal was to find a fair and pragmatic approach to managing migration together in the EU. It is a crucial step in making sure that Europe has the tools to manage migration." The agreement reflects the commitment to manage migration in a fair and orderly way, allowing the Union and its Member States to move from ad-hoc to long-term and sustainable solutions. Until these new rules are fully applicable, the Commission stands ready to continue working with the European Parliament and the Council. The scope is clear, to ensure adoption on all Pact files by the end of this legislative mandate.



10. EU will enforce stricter rules for waste shipments

The Commission **welcomes the political agreement** reached between the European Parliament and the Council on waste shipments, which will ensure that the **EU takes greater responsibility for its waste** and does not export its environmental challenges to third countries. The rules will also facilitate the use of waste as a resource. The agreement is a contribution to the goal of the [European Green Deal](#) of reducing pollution and advancing the circular economy. **Export of plastic waste from the EU to non-OECD countries will be prohibited.** Only if strict environmental conditions are met, individual countries may receive such waste five years after the entry into force of the new rules. In the light of the global problems of soaring amounts of plastic waste and the challenges to its sustainable management, with this measure the EU legislators aim to prevent environmental degradation and pollution in third countries caused by plastic waste generated in the EU. Other waste suitable for recycling will be exported from the EU to non-OECD countries only when they ensure that they can deal with it in a sustainable manner. At the same time, it will be **easier to ship waste for recycling within the EU** thanks to modern digitalized procedures. There will also be **stronger enforcement and cooperation in fighting waste trafficking.** The new law will complement the new [Environmental Crime Directive](#), for which a political agreement was also reached. **Ensuring exports of waste from the EU are managed sustainably:** The adopted measures on the export of waste will **set the standard** as regards **preventing environmental and public health problems** in third countries caused by unsustainable management of waste, which was generated elsewhere. This new regulation will

only allow the export of waste to non-OECD countries if these countries inform the Commission that they are willing to import the waste and have the ability to manage it in a sustainable manner. For **plastic waste, no export will be allowed to non-OECD countries 2.5 years** after the entry into force of the new law, unless the country can meet strict conditions – in this case, imports would be allowed, but only five years after the entry into force of the new rules. The Commission will also monitor waste exports to OECD countries and take action if such exports create environmental problems in the country of destination. In addition, all EU companies that export waste outside the EU will have to ensure that the facilities receiving their waste are subject to an **independent audit** showing that they are **managing this waste in an environmentally sound manner**.



Unlocking potential of EU waste market to boost circular economy: The circulation of waste for recycling and re-use between Member States is key for the EU's **transition to a circular economy and the security of supply of raw materials**. The EU will modernize the current procedures for shipping waste making them more digital. Fast track procedures for certain eligible facilities designated by the Member States will also be made easier and more efficient. This will make it easier for **waste to re-enter the circular economy throughout the EU**, without lowering the necessary level of control for such shipments. **Tackling waste trafficking: To step up the EU response against waste trafficking**, there will be stronger **cooperation between EU Member**

States and more deterrent sanctions taken against criminals involved in illicit waste trade. The Commission will be able to act on the ground to **support investigations by Member States** on transnational crime linked to waste trafficking, with the direct involvement of the EU Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) on these issues. **Waste trafficking is one of the most serious environmental crimes**, harming the environment but also legitimate businesses. Moreover, there is a clear link between waste trafficking and organised crime. Up to one third of all waste shipments is believed to be illegal, generating a substantial illicit profit annually.

Next steps: The European Parliament and the Council will now have to formally adopt the regulation in line with the political agreement reached. Once formally adopted, the regulation will enter into force on the 20th day following its publication in the Official Journal. The Commission is already preparing for swift implementation, for example by making digital procedures operational in due time and reaching out through multilateral and regional fora, as well as bilaterally, to provide support to partner countries that are making efforts to align with the new export requirements. This is also expected to promote better waste management practices and the uptake of more circular models in the economies of EU's partner countries.

Background: The new Regulation is a key commitment of the [European Green Deal](#), the [new Circular Economy Action Plan](#) and the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#) and the new [EU Strategy to tackle Organized Crime](#) 2021-2025. Waste can be a valuable resource but it has to be used with care. When waste shipped across borders is not properly controlled and sustainably managed in the destination countries, it can harm human health and the environment. On the other hand, such waste can have a positive economic value and also bring environmental benefits. This is the case when it is recycled and used as secondary materials, therefore replacing virgin materials and contributing to a more circular economy. International trade in waste is on the rise, and the EU plays a significant role in it. The [Waste Shipment Regulation](#) currently in force dates back to 2006. Since its adoption, exports of waste from the EU to third countries have considerably increased, notably to countries that are not members of the OECD. The lack of detailed provisions to ensure that waste is managed sustainably in the countries of destination has led to weak enforcement and environmental and public health challenges in those countries

11. Heinrich Böll foundation scholarships (to study in Germany)

Every year, the Heinrich Böll foundation offers scholarships to approximately 1,000 undergraduates, graduates and doctoral students of all disciplines, of all nationalities, who study at universities, universities of applied sciences ("Fachhochschulen") or universities of the arts

("Kunsthochschulen"). Scholarship recipients must have an excellent academic career, be politically and socially active and have a keen interest in the Foundation's core values: ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, self-determination and justice. To check exactly what the requirements are, go to the site indicated below. Good or excellent knowledge of the German language is required (at least B2 or DSH2 level). **Deadlines:** -March 1st; - September 1st. It is possible to apply approximately six weeks before the deadline.



12. BEST courses for students in the technological field

BEST - Board of European Students of Technology - is a non-profit organization. It is run by students who work for other students. BEST organizes numerous activities where students from member universities have the opportunity to increase their international experience, make contacts, improve their English and have fun. Each BEST course is attended by 20-30 engineering students. Local BEST groups organize short courses (1-2 weeks) throughout the year, where engineering and technical students have the opportunity to improve their knowledge in specific topics regarding their field of interest. BEST also organizes seminars on education topics, engineering contests and leisure related events. During learning events, participants attend lectures given by the university teaching staff or experts from different companies, they also visit external companies, industrial plants or research centers, and sometimes take part in analytical studies. Learning events concern fields of technology, economy, marketing and management. At the end of the course every student must attend an exam, in order to verify the course results and the success achieved. You can find a list of BEST courses at the following address: <https://www.best.eu.org/courses/list.jsp>. Local BEST group manage the accommodation and food during the entire event, transportation to seminars and every activities related to the event topics, costs for teaching material and social activities. Depending on the situation of the local BEST group, a participation fee may be required. The maximum amount is 4 euros per day (but no more than 45 euros in total) for students from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and Iceland. Students from Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain will pay two-thirds of the fee. Students from Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Russian Federation and Turkey will pay a third of the amount. Students from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova, Romania, the Republic of Montenegro, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina do not pay any fees. Eligibility: - Technology students from universities with a local BEST group. The local organizing BEST group receives the applications and makes a selection based on regional elements, the motivation letter and the candidate's CV. The organizer also aim to have an equal number of woman and man. For more



info, see [here](#) BEST symposiums on education: the BEST symposia on education are symposia that last 6-10 days. They bring together European technology students and professors with the aim of evaluating and finding new paths for higher education in Europe. BSE are events with the same format as BEST courses, involving 20-25 students to discuss topics on education, trying to identify problems and solutions to innovate and develop education in Europe. **Deadline: 10 March 2024, 11pm** (summer session – application open from 11 February). The list of BEST symposia on education is available [here](#).

13. Internship 2024 at the court of justice of EU in Luxembourg

Every year, the court of justice of the European Union offers a limited number of paid internships lasting up to 5 months. Internships in the Court's services mainly take place in translation directorate, the research and documentation directorate, the communications directorate, the protocol and visits directorate, the legal adviser for administrative matters, the court registry and

the directorate of the interpretation. Internships in interpreting, lasting from ten to twelve weeks, are aimed at young graduates in conference interpreting whose language combination shows a management interest. Recipients: candidates with a degree in law or political science (mainly legal). Internships in interpreting, lasting from ten to twelve weeks, are aimed at young graduates in conference interpreting whose combination of languages shows an interest for the interpreting management. Requirements: Degree in law or political science (mainly legal); conference interpreter diploma (for internships at the interpreting directorate); a good knowledge of French is desirable. Economic conditions: the amount of the scholarship is 1,493.00 euro net per month. A contribution of 150.00 euro for travel costs is paid to trainees whose residence is located at 200km or more from the court of justice seat. Application guide: to apply you must send the required [documentation](#). **Deadline: April 15th**



14. Internships at the international tribunal for the law of the sea

The international tribunal for the law of the sea organize three-month internships at its headquarters based in Hamburg from October to December 2024. This opportunity is for university students and recent graduates who wish to implement their skills through fieldwork experience and



**International Tribunal
for the Law of the Sea**

learn about the functions and the activities of Itlos. The areas of activity for the next internships session are: Legal office; library and archives; language services; press office. To participate you must meet the following requirements: be under 35; have completed

at least 3 years of university; be enrolled in a degree or post-graduate course or be a recent graduate in law; international law; law of the sea; archival and library science; interpreting and translation; international relations; political science; journalism; communications; media studies; have an excellent knowledge of English and/or French. To apply there is time until March 31, 2024

15. First TPM of the “Youth Eco-Activism in the EU” project in Toulouse

On the 27th and 28th January 2024 took place in Toulouse, the first meeting of the “Youth Eco-Activism in the EU” project (acronym “YEAEU”), approved in France by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency, as ref. n.2023-1-FR02-KA220-YOU-000159007 has entered the heart of the activities. YEAEU. The project, which formally started in September 2023, and will end at the end of August 2025, involves the following European organizations: Toulouse Youth Network (France – project coordinator), HANTA EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LIMITED (Ireland), Youth Europe Service (Italy) , Youth Vision (Romania), For Citizens – European Institute for Active Citizenship (Portugal) and Copenhagen Youth Network (Denmark). During the meeting held in France, the partners discussed the products and the activities to be developed and the training course to be held in Denmark in March 2024, as well as the dissemination activities and the reporting rules to be respected. YEAEU aims to improve the awareness of the new generations regarding the climate crisis and help young people to take the initiative and actively face environmental issues at local, national and European levels, allowing them to become active actors, rather than passive spectators. The initiative aims to underline common values among young people in partner countries and among groups active in their communities, as it will guarantee to the participants to become more politically engaged in their communities to foment and support a change of direction . Finally, YEAEU aims to guide young people to create their own “green” social enterprises, encouraging bottom-up action and promoting youth activism.



16. First meeting in the presence of the “Register BSS sector” project

On 5 and 6 February, the first transnational meeting of the “Register BSS sector” project will be held in Lublin, Poland, an initiative approved by the EACEA (European Education and Culture Executive Agency) as project n.101132877 within the ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-FORWARD-LOT3 call (i.e. within the Partnerships for Innovation – Forward Looking Projects) in the ERASMUS Lump Sum Grants Actions. The project partners – SYNTEA SPOLKA AKCYJNA (Poland – project coordinator), DEKAPLUS BUSINESS SERVICES LTD (Cyprus), EURO-NET (Italy), MALOPOLSKA AGENCJA ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO (Poland) and AGENZIA PER LO DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPOLESE VALDELSA (Italy) – who until now had only met virtually will finally have the opportunity to meet face to face and also define the various steps of the planned activities in person. The schedule for the first day includes, among the other things, the definition of contracts for partners who have not yet signed their relevant contracts and obviously



first of all the discussion on the activities to be implemented in the long term. On February 6th the partners will address the details on reporting and the promotion strategy, also defining the development of the next meeting that would be held in Potenza. The project aims to develop a database of training offers of guaranteed quality and adapted to the job market; identifying, developing, testing and disseminating innovative approaches using Virtual Reality, thus contributing to the improvement of education and training systems through the creation of a training register that meets the current demand of companies in the labor market. The

project will therefore develop training linked to innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotization of business processes, virtual reality or the area of transversal skills which are widely recognized as horizontal skills necessary for all branches of Industry 4.0. The register to be developed in the Erasmus+ initiative will make it easier for students to find modern services based on innovative digital tools, increasing the efficiency of learning processes and thus stimulating the sustainable development of regions taking into account digitalization and green transformation processes, in line with all the recommendations and primary objectives of the European Commission in recent years.

17. The second newsletter of the GreenELEMENT project is ready

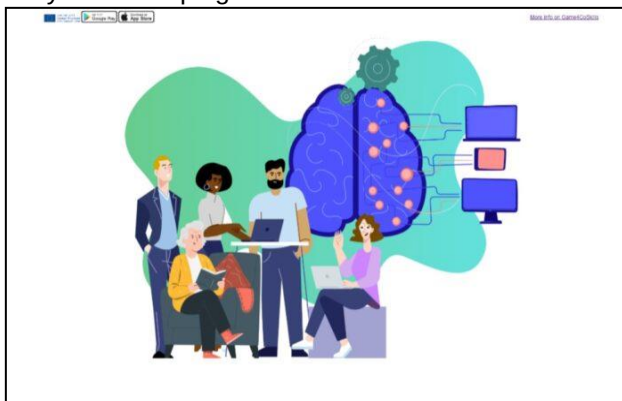
The second newsletter of the “Green Ecological LEad for sMall and MEdium-size eNterprizes” (acronym “GreenELEMENT”) has been distributed among the various partner countries of the project, an initiative approved as action n.2022-1-NL01- KA220-VET-000087087 from the Erasmus Plus Agency in the Netherlands as part of the KA220-VET – Cooperation partnerships in VET actions. The newsletter, translated in Italian by the Potenza partner GODESK, consist in 3 pages and describes the activities that the European partnership: Nefinia (Holland), Stando LTD (Cyprus), PNEVMA LLC (Bulgaria), Innovation Hive (Greece), DANITACOM – The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Denmark (Denmark) and Godesk srl (Italy), has developed in recent months. In particular, the newsletter focuses on the completion of the Report on the state of the art on Green Corporate Leadership (translated and available on the project website in 6 languages), describes what happened during the first project meeting in Rotterdam, Holland on November 23, 2023, and shows the importance of the training held in Cyprus on 12 and 13 December 2023. This latest event was a great



opportunity for participants to exchange knowledge on green policies at European level and to increase environmental awareness among SME leaders

18. Collection of case studies for Game4CoSkills

The partners of the project “Mobile game for cognitive skills development and concept teaching for adults with intellectual disabilities” (acronym “Game4CoSkills”) – an initiative approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in France as action n. 2021-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000026181 under the program of the same name KA220 Cooperative Partnership in Adult Education – have been busy in developing various activities. These included the collection of case studies for the trainer



Toolkit and others for the Policy Recommendations, the development of an online survey whose recipients were caregivers or training providers, the creation of voiceovers for some online games and the development of a pilot test of the egames developed (accessible at the link <https://game4co.eu/>) and addressed to people with intellectual disabilities. During the last month, before the end of the project, scheduled for the end of February, the partners of the transnational consortium, namely INTERACTIVE 4D (France), AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF INCLUSIVE

SOCIETY (Austria), SYNTHESIS CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION LIMITED (Cyprus), AVRASYA YENILIKÇI TOPLUM DERNEĞİ (Turkey), ELLINIKI ETAIRIA NOSOY ALZHEIMER KAI SYGGENON DIATARACHON SOMATEIO (Greece) and EURO-NET (Italy), will now also develop Multiplier Events in their respective countries to promote the final products developed to the general public.

19. Newsletter number 3 for the LearnSTEM project and meeting in Kavala

The third newsletter “Learn STEM” has been distributed in the various partner countries of the project. The “Innovative Model of learning STEM in secondary schools” project (acronym “Learn STEM”) is an initiative approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in Turkey as action no. 2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087583. The newsletter, which is sent to all the possible stakeholder in the various countries, gives information about the ongoing activities, like the eLearning platform which has been presented by the German partner Ingenious Knowledge GmbH at the partnership meeting that took place on February 1st in Kavala, Greece. During this meeting, where two delegates participated for EURO-NET, everything about the implementation of the various products and also the next deadlines has been discussed. The partnership is made up of the following organisations: Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi (Turkey), Ingenious Knowledge GmbH (Germany), Universität Paderborn (Germany), IEK Kavalas (Greece), Liceul Tehnologic “Haralamb Vasiliu” (Romania), Ahi Evran Anadolu Lisesi (Turkey), Yusuf Demir Bilim Ve Sanat Merkezi (Turkey) and EURO-NET (Italy). More information on the project is available on the website www.learnstem.eu or on the project's Facebook page available at the link: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551859486150>.



20. First steps of the “Register BSS sector” project

On the 5 and 6 February 2024 the first transnational meeting took place in Lublin, Poland, of the



ErasmusPlusLS project entitled “Register BSS sector”, an initiative approved by the EACEA (European Education and Culture Executive Agency) as project n.101132877 within the ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-FORWARD-LOT3 call. The project partners – SYNTEA SPOLKA AKCYJNA (Poland – project coordinator), DEKAPLUS BUSINESS SERVICES LTD (Cyprus), EURO-NET (Italy), MALOPOLSKA AGENCJA ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO (Poland) and AGENZIA PER LO DEVELOPMENT OF EMPOLESE VALDELSA (Italy) – they finally met

face to face and planned the first steps of the European project in a climate of great conviviality. The Polish coordinator, who hosted the meeting in his company structure explained the objectives of the initiative and shared with all the participants the need to create a register of training activities in the business sector which is particularly useful in the job market. The partners therefore defined the deadlines to be respected for the first phases of the project and also planned the next meeting that will be held in Potenza.

21. The multiplier event of the STARTKNOW project is coming soon

The project “Boosting the employability of Europeans young through the STARTKNOW Platform” (acronym “STARTKNOW”), an initiative financed in Spain under the Erasmus Plus program KA210-ADU as action n.2021-1-ES01-KA210-ADU -000033998 from the Spanish National Agency Erasmus Plus, is slowly approaching its completion and the partners – Associació Educativa i Cultural Blue Beehive (Spain – coordinator of the initiative), EURO-NET (Italy) and Centrum Edukacyjne EST (Poland) – are now developing the last activities in the countries belonging to the European consortium. In Italy, a final dissemination activity will soon be done by the end of February, to which the general public is invited and in which all the final results of the project will be presented. We also remind you that it is possible to participate in all the training courses (also in Italian) developed in the European partnership initiative on the project platform available at the link <https://elearning.startknow.eu/>.

