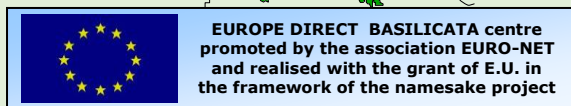




EURO-NET

The Youth European Network



**YEAR 19 - NUMBER 3
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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. European Semester Spring Package 2024

The Commission providing policy guidance to Member States under the 2024 European Semester Spring Package to build a robust and future-proof economy that secures competitiveness, resilience and long-term prosperity for all, while maintaining sound public finances, in the face of a challenging geopolitical environment.

The EU is determined to take further steps to enhance its long-term competitiveness, prosperity



and leadership on the global stage and to strengthen its open strategic autonomy. While the EU and its Member States have strong assets to build on, the EU will continue to address structural challenges that hamper its competitiveness, ensuring higher productivity growth and stronger investment and addressing labour and skills shortages. This requires an integrated approach across all policy areas: macroeconomic stability, promoting environmental sustainability, productivity and fairness. The European Semester provides this policy coordination, including the implementation of NextGenerationEU, with the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) at its core, and Cohesion Policy programmes. The European Semester cycle also provides updated reporting on

progress towards the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and identifies investment priorities for the upcoming mid-term review of Cohesion Policy.

Resilience in the face of challenges

The European Semester has played a crucial role in supporting strong and coordinated economic policy responses over the past five years, as the EU was confronted by a series of extraordinary challenges. The EU has demonstrated a high degree of economic and social resilience in the face of major shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the related energy price surges and inflation hikes. Looking ahead, the Spring 2024 Economic Forecast projects GDP growth in 2024 at 1.0% in the EU and 0.8% in the euro area, on the back of a strong labour market and dynamic private consumption. In 2025, growth is forecast to accelerate further to 1.6% in the EU and to 1.4% in the euro area. Meanwhile, inflation is expected to fall from 6.4% in 2023 to 2.2% in 2025.

Targeted recommendations to Member States

The 2024 country reports analyse economic, employment and social developments in each Member State and take stock of the implementation of recovery and resilience plans (RRPs) and Cohesion Policy programmes. The reports also identify key challenges, with a particular focus on competitiveness, and priority reforms and investments. Based on this analysis, the Commission proposes country-specific recommendations (CSRs) to provide guidance to Member States on how to tackle those key challenges that are only partially or not addressed in Member States' RRP. The country-specific recommendations are divided into: a recommendation on fiscal policy, including fiscal-structural reforms, where relevant; a recommendation to continue or accelerate implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans and Cohesion Policy programmes; and where relevant, further recommendations on outstanding and/or newly emerging structural challenges, with a focus on improving competitiveness.

Effective delivery of NextGenerationEU and Cohesion Policy: crucial drivers of a competitive EU economy

As illustrated in this year's country reports, NextGenerationEU and other EU funding programmes have supported the EU's recovery towards a greener, more digital, fairer and more resilient future through job creation, improved competitiveness, macroeconomic stability and territorial and social cohesion. To date, the Commission has disbursed over €240 billion to Member States in RRF grants and loans for the successful implementation of key reforms and investments. Also, over €252 billion has been disbursed under the Cohesion Policy funds since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most Member States continue to make good progress in the delivery of their RRP and Cohesion Policy programmes. However, some Member States need to urgently address emerging delays and structural challenges, to ensure the timely implementation of investments and reforms included in their RRP. This Semester cycle also provides guidance to Member States in view of the forthcoming mid-term review of Cohesion Policy programmes.

Policy guidance to enhance competitiveness

The Spring Package calls on Member States to take policy action to promote competitiveness and increase productivity. To this end, Member States are invited in the CSRs to: ensure a business environment supportive to competitiveness, taking full advantage of the opportunities generated

by the single market, especially for SMEs; improve educational outcomes and support skills development, with high-quality education and training based on modernised curricula, since addressing labour and skills shortages is essential to ensure the EU's prosperity; facilitate access to finance by improving savings allocation and capital financing and facilitating capital market and alternative forms of financing, especially for SMEs. Implement ambitious reforms to build integrated research and innovation ecosystems, focusing on science-business collaboration and knowledge transfers for example; and accelerate the green and digital transition, increasing the autonomy, resilience and competitiveness of the EU's net-zero industry, addressing labour and skills shortages, boosting public investment in digital infrastructure and skills, and tackling regulatory barriers to digitalisation.

Strengthening fiscal sustainability

The COVID-19 pandemic, the surge in energy prices, and the required policy response have contributed to a substantial increase in public debt in several Member States in recent years. Fiscal policies should put debt on a downward path or to keep it at prudent levels, while preserving investment. The new economic governance framework makes 2024 a year of transition for fiscal policy coordination in the EU. The fiscal policy guidance and decisions under the new framework contained in the Spring Package aim to strengthen Member States' debt sustainability and promote sustainable and inclusive growth in all Member States. Under the new rules, Member States will prepare medium-term plans setting out their expenditure paths and their priority reforms and investments. The recommendations included in the Spring Package provide a strong underpinning for the reform and investment commitments Member States must set out in these plans. The CSRs provide that Member States should pursue prudent fiscal policies by ensuring that the growth in net expenditure in 2025 and beyond is consistent with the fiscal adjustment requirements under the new governance framework. Concretely, this means that Member States with public debt above 60% of GDP or a deficit above 3% of GDP should ensure that the growth in net expenditure is limited to a rate that puts the government debt-to-GDP ratio on a plausible downward path over the medium term, while bringing the general government deficit to below 3% of GDP and maintaining it below this reference value over the medium term.



Fiscal surveillance

The Commission prepared a Report under Article 126(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) for 12 Member States to assess their compliance with the deficit criterion of the Treaty: Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland. In this assessment, the Commission takes into account relevant factors brought forward by Member States in case their public debt-to-GDP ratio is below 60% of GDP or their deficit is assessed as being "close" to the 3% reference value and "temporary". In light of the assessment contained in the report, the opening of a deficit-based excessive deficit procedure is warranted for seven Member States: Belgium, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Slovakia. The Report under Article 126(3) is only the first step into opening the excessive deficit procedures. In light of this assessment, and after considering the opinion of the Economic and Financial Committee, the Commission intends to propose to the Council to open deficit-based excessive deficit procedures for these Member States in July 2024. As part of the Autumn European Semester Package, to ensure consistency with the adjustment path set out in the medium-term plans, the Commission will propose to the Council recommendations to put an end to the excessive deficit situation. In 2020, the Council decided that an excessive deficit existed in Romania, based on 2019 data. According to the Commission's assessment, Romania has not taken effective action to correct this and put an end to its excessive deficit situation.

Assessing macroeconomic imbalances

The Commission has assessed the existence of macroeconomic imbalances for the 12 Member States selected for in-depth reviews in the 2024 Alert Mechanism Report. Overall, after the big terms-of-trade shock of 2022, macroeconomic imbalances tended to ease in most Member States.

- **France, Spain, and Portugal** are **no longer experiencing imbalances** as vulnerabilities have overall declined. Fiscal sustainability risks will be surveyed under the reformed fiscal rules.
- **Greece and Italy** are now found to be **experiencing imbalances** after experiencing excessive imbalances until last year as vulnerabilities have declined but remain a concern. Fiscal sustainability risks will be surveyed under the reformed fiscal rules.

- **Slovakia** is now found to be **experiencing imbalances**. The vulnerabilities related to cost competitiveness, external balance, housing market and household debt have lingered, and policy action has not been forthcoming.
- **Romania** is now found to be **experiencing excessive imbalances** after experiencing imbalances until last year as vulnerabilities related to external accounts, mainly linked to large and increasing government deficits, remain, while significant price and cost pressures have increased and policy action has been weak.
- **Germany, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Sweden** continue to **experience imbalances**.

Post-programme surveillance reports

Post-programme surveillance assesses the economic, fiscal and financial situation of Member States that have benefited from financial assistance programmes, focusing on their repayment capacity. The post-programme surveillance reports for Ireland, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal conclude that all five Member States retain the capacity to repay their debt.

Assessing social convergence challenges

In this Semester cycle, the Commission has carried out for the first time a two-stage analysis of employment, skills and social challenges in each Member State, based on the revised Social Scoreboard and the principles of a Social Convergence Framework. The first-stage analysis is included in the Joint Employment Report (JER) 2024, while a more detailed second-stage analysis was published by the Commission services in May 2024 for seven Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary and Romania).

Employment guidelines

The Commission is proposing guidelines for Member States' employment policies in 2024. These guidelines set common priorities for national employment and social policies to make them fairer and more inclusive. The 2023 guidelines are updated to cover actions to tackle skills and labour shortages and improve basic and digital skills. New technologies, artificial intelligence and algorithmic management and their impact on the world of work are also included. In addition, the guidelines refer to recent policy initiatives, in areas of particular relevance such as platform work, the social economy, and affordable housing. Finally, the Commission underlines the importance of monitoring progress towards the EU-wide 2030 headline targets, and the contributing national targets, in the areas of jobs, skills and poverty reduction. The Commission invites the Eurogroup and the Council to discuss the package and to endorse the guidance offered. It looks forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with the European Parliament on the contents of this package and each subsequent step in the European Semester cycle.

2. Commission decides to register two new European Citizens' Initiatives

The European Commission decided to register two European Citizens' Initiatives, entitled “Air-Quotas” and “Stop Destroying Videogames”.

The “**Air-Quotas**” initiative calls for the Commission to establish a citizens' carbon quota mechanism in each country that will encourage businesses to decarbonise through consumer demand. The organisers consider that this new mechanism should cover all purchases of goods and services, starting with air transport.



The organisers of the “**Stop Destroying Videogames**” initiative call for the Commission to introduce a requirement for publishers selling or licensing videogames in the EU to leave such games in a functional (playable) state, so to prevent publishers from remotely disabling videogames. Both European Citizens' Initiatives fulfil the formal conditions established in the relevant legislation. The Commission therefore

considers that they are legally admissible. The Commission has not analysed the substance of the proposals at this stage. The decision to register an initiative is based on a legal analysis of its admissibility under the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation. It does not prejudice the legal and political conclusions of the Commission on these initiatives and the action it would take, if any, in case any of these initiatives obtains the necessary support of at least one million EU citizens. The content of the initiative only expresses the views of the group of organisers, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Commission.

Next Steps

Following registration on 19 June, the organisers have six months to open the signature collection. If a European Citizens' Initiative receives one million statements of support within one year with minimum numbers reached in at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react. The Commission will have to decide whether or not it will take action in response to the request, and will be required to explain its reasoning.

Background

The European Citizens' Initiative was introduced with the Lisbon Treaty as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens. It was officially launched in April 2012. Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows one million citizens from at least seven EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose legal acts in areas where it has the power to act. The conditions for admissibility are: the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union. Since the beginning of the European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission has registered 114 initiatives.

3. EU Budget 2025 aims to reinforce funding for Europe's priorities

The Commission has proposed an annual EU budget of €199.7 billion for 2025. The budget will be complemented by an estimated €72 billion of disbursements under NextGenerationEU. This substantial financial envelope will support the EU in meeting its political priorities while integrating the changes agreed in the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in February 2024.

The draft budget 2025 directs funds to where they can make the greatest difference, in cooperation and in line with the needs of the EU Member States and our partners around the world to make Europe more resilient and fit for the future to the benefit of EU citizens and businesses. This will be done by fostering the green and digital transitions, by creating jobs while strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy and global role. It will enable support to key critical technologies through the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). The draft budget 2025 will also provide – in line with the MFF mid-term revision – continued support for Syrian refugees in Türkiye and the wider region, the Southern Neighbourhood including the external dimension of migration, as well as the Western Balkans. Crucially, it will provide stable and predictable support to Ukraine. The Commission proposes to allocate the following amounts to the various EU priorities (in commitments):



- €53.8 billion for the **Common Agricultural Policy** and €0.9 billion for the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, for Europe's farmers and fishers, but also to strengthen the resilience of the agri-food and fisheries sectors and to provide the necessary scope for crisis management.
- €49.2 billion for **regional development and cohesion** to support economic, social and territorial cohesion, as well as infrastructure supporting the green transition and Union priority projects.
- €16.3 billion **to support our partners and interests in the world**, of which, among others, €10.9 billion under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument — Global Europe (NDICI — Global Europe), €2.2 billion for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) and €0.5 billion for the Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, as well as €1.9 billion for Humanitarian Aid (HUMA).
- A further €4.3 billion will be available in grants under the **Ukraine Facility** complemented by €10.9 billion in loans.
- €13.5 billion for **research and innovation**, of which mainly €12.7 billion for Horizon Europe, the Union's flagship research programme. The Draft Budget also includes the financing of the European Chips Act under Horizon Europe and through redeployment from other programmes.
- €4.6 billion for **European strategic investments**, of which, for instance, €2.8 billion for the Connecting Europe Facility to improve cross-border infrastructure, €1.1 billion for the Digital Europe Programme to shape the Union's digital future, and €378 million for InvestEU for key priorities (research and innovation, twin green and digital transition, the health sector, and strategic technologies).

- €2.1 billion for **spending dedicated to space**, mainly for the European Space Programme, which will bring together the Union's action in this strategic field.
- €11.8 billion for **resilience and values**, of which, among others, €5.2 billion for the rising borrowing costs for NGEU, €4 billion Erasmus+ to create education and mobility opportunities for people, €352 million to support artists and creators around Europe, and €235 million to promote justice, rights, and values.
- €2.4 billion for **environment and climate action**, of which mainly €771 million for the LIFE programme to support climate change mitigation and adaptation, and €1.5 billion for the Just Transition Fund to make sure that the green transition works for all.
- €2.7 billion for **protecting our borders**, of which mainly €1.4 billion for the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), and €997 million (total EU contribution) for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).
- €2.1 billion for **migration-related spending within the EU**, of which mainly €1.9 billion to support migrants and asylum-seekers in line with our values and priorities.
- €1.8 billion to address **defence** challenges, of which mainly €1.4 billion to support capability development and research under the European Defence Fund (EDF) and €244.5 million to support Military Mobility.
- €977 million to ensure the **functioning of the Single Market**, including €613 million for the Single Market Programme, and €205 million for work on anti-fraud, taxation, and customs.
- €583 million for EU4Health to ensure a **comprehensive health response to people's needs**, as well as €203 million to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (rescEU) to be able deploy operational assistance quickly in case of a crisis.
- €784 million for **security**, of which, notably, €334 million for the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which will combat terrorism, radicalisation, organised crime, and cybercrime.
- €196 million for **secure satellite connections** under the new Union Secure Connectivity Programme.

The draft budget for 2025 is part of the Union's long-term budget as adopted at the end of 2020 and as amended in February 2024, including subsequent technical adjustments, and seeks to turn its priorities into concrete annual deliverables. -The annual budget for 2025 will have to be formally adopted by the Budgetary Authority before the end of the year.

Background

The draft EU budget for 2025 includes the expenditure covered by the appropriations under the long-term budget ceilings, financed from own resources. These are topped up by expenditure under NextGenerationEU, financed from borrowing on the capital markets. For the "core" budget, two amounts for each programme are proposed in the draft budget – commitments and payments. "Commitments" refer to the funding that can be agreed in contracts in a given year; and "payments" to the money actually paid out. All amounts are in current prices.

4. The Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum

After a historic agreement was reached on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, work has started to translate the large and complex set of legislative acts into an operational reality over the next two years.



This will be a common endeavour, with the Commission supporting Member States every step of the way. The Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted by the Commission on 12 June, sets out the key milestones for all Member States to put in place the legal and operational capabilities required to successfully start applying the new legislation by mid-2026. In addition, the EU Agencies will also provide both operational and targeted support to the Member States throughout this

process. The Common Implementation Plan provides a template for the National Implementation Plans to be adopted by Member States by the end of this year. It groups the legal, technical and operational work into 10 building blocks to focus and facilitate the practical implementation efforts. All building blocks are fundamentally interdependent and need to be implemented in parallel.

The 10 building blocks:

1. **A common migration and asylum information system (Eurodac):** will support Member States notably with the determination of responsibility and the monitoring of secondary movements. The new Eurodac is the large-scale IT system that will store and process data of asylum seekers. The timely development and entry into operation of the reformed Eurodac system is a critical precondition for the implementation of all the other elements of the Pact.
2. **A new system to manage migration at the EU external borders:** to manage the irregular arrivals of non-EU nationals and setting up fast, efficient and streamlined procedures for asylum and return, as well as strong safeguards. The Screening Regulation, the Asylum Procedure Regulation, and the Regulation on a Return Border Procedure, provide for a harmonised approach. All irregular migrants will be registered and subject to a screening of their identity, security risk, vulnerability, and health. In a second stage, a mandatory border procedure will apply for those who are likely not in need of international protection or present a security risk.
3. **Ensuring adequate reception standards of living** for applicants in relation to their needs. For example, for applicants for international protection there is earlier access to the labour market (6 months instead of 9 months), physical and mental healthcare and more protection for families, children, and vulnerable applicants. Moreover, the **Reception Conditions Directive** has also new tools improving the efficiency of the reception system and helping to prevent secondary movements. For example, Member States will have the possibility of allocating applicants to accommodations and geographical areas, making the provision of material reception conditions subject to actual residence in the accommodation where applicants have been allocated or in a specific area. Furthermore, Member States will have to provide only for basic needs when applicants are not in the Member State where they are supposed to be.
4. **Fair, efficient and convergent asylum procedures:** the Asylum Procedure Regulation and the Qualification Regulation streamline the assessment and decision-making process of individual asylum applications across Europe and reinforce the safeguards, rights and guarantees for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.
5. **Efficient and fair return procedures:** the EU's migration policy can only be sustainable if those who do not have the right to stay in the EU are effectively returned. The Return Coordinator will play a key role, building on the work already launched to improve joint planning of flights and identification missions including to optimise the use of Frontex support, exchange practices and experience on the joint issuance of negative asylum decisions and return decisions and cooperation on return of returnees posing a security threat.
6. **A fair and efficient system: making the new responsibility rules work:** by establishing effective and stable responsibility-sharing across the Union and reducing incentives for secondary movements. For instance, the procedures will be made more effective with the 'take back' notifications. Moreover, there will be new rules in place aimed to prevent abuse of the system (such as the obligation for applicants to apply in the Member State of first entry).
7. **Making solidarity work:** for the first time, the EU has a permanent, legally-binding, but flexible solidarity mechanism to ensure that no Member State is left alone when under pressure.
8. **Preparedness, contingency planning, and crisis response:** helping to build more resilience to the evolution of migratory situations, as well as reduce the risks of situations of crisis.
9. **New safeguards for asylum applicants and vulnerable persons:** increased monitoring of fundamental rights, by ensuring effective procedures while protecting human dignity and a genuine and effective right to asylum including for the most vulnerable, such as children.
10. **Resettlement, inclusion, and integration:** stepping up efforts in these areas of. Member States' efforts for the integration and inclusion of migrants remain indispensable for a successful migration and asylum policy.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum reflects a comprehensive and a whole-of-route approach to migration management. Therefore, the Commission is pursuing with the Member States a two-track approach, accompanying legislative work at EU level with operational activities. This notably includes work on the external dimension of migration, through the pursuit of comprehensive partnerships with partner countries. While actions in this area are not tied to legal obligations, it will be essential for the EU to continue and further intensify work with partner countries, notably in three key areas: the fight against migrant smuggling, effective returns, readmission and reintegration as well as legal pathways.

Next Steps



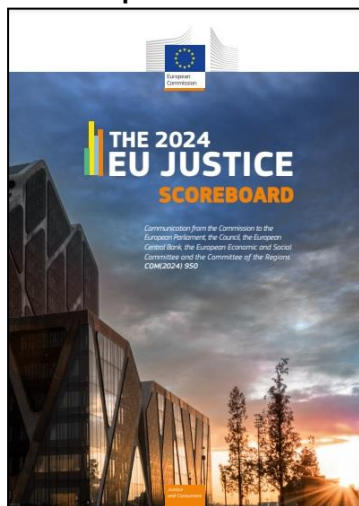
The Common Implementation Plan will be presented to Member States at the Home Affairs Council, after which it will be used as a basis for the preparation of Member States' National Implementation Plans which are due by December 2024. Based on the Common Implementation Plan, the next step is for Member States to establish their respective National Implementation Plans by 12 December 2024. Member States can count on the operational, technical and financial support of the Commission and EU Agencies throughout the whole process. Member States may also receive support from the Technical Support Instrument, which will be launching a dedicated call to support Member States in developing their National Implementation Plans. The Commission has set up dedicated support teams that will visit all Member State capitals between now and the autumn to assist Member States in the preparation of these National Implementation Plans. The Commission will closely monitor the progress made with the implementation of the Pact and report regularly to the European Parliament and the Council.

Background

The Commission presented the 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. After a political agreement on 20 December 2023, it was adopted by the European Parliament on 10 April 2024, and by the Council later on 14 May. The legal instruments of the Pact, including some which had been already proposed in 2016, entered into force on 11 June 2024 and will enter into application after two years, as of 12 June 2026; except the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation, which is already applicable.

5. EU Justice Scoreboard 2024

The European Commission has published the twelfth edition of the EU Justice Scoreboard,



an annual overview providing comparative data on the efficiency, quality, and independence of justice systems among the EU Member States. Compared to last year, the public's perception of judicial independence has improved, also in countries that had experienced systemic challenges.

This year's Scoreboard includes several new figures on accessibility of justice, such as on the accessibility to justice professions for persons with disabilities; on the accessibility to justice for consumers when exercising representative actions protecting their collective interests; on the salaries of judicial and prosecutorial expert staff; and on the notaries and their powers in the succession procedures. The 2024 edition also includes, for the first time, specific new figures on the independence of justice, for example on the appointment of court presidents, on national frameworks regarding asset declarations, and on the dismissal of Prosecutors General.

Key findings of the 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard:

- **Perception of judicial independence has improved, including among countries which experienced systemic challenges:** A Eurobarometer survey among the general public shows that, since 2016, the general public's perception of judicial independence has improved or remained stable in 19 Member States. Amongst **companies**, another Eurobarometer survey shows the perception of independence has improved or remained stable in 19 Member States compared to 2016. Perception of judicial independence improved, both among the general public and companies, also in countries that have experienced systemic challenges to judicial independence.
- **An insight into the appointment of prosecutors and the dismissal of the Prosecutor General:** In 14 Member States, either the independent prosecutorial councils or prosecution service itself appoints prosecutors. The power for the executive (either the Minister of Justice, the Government, or the Head of State) to appoint prosecutors is subject to a judicial review in nearly all the 12 Member States where prosecutors are appointed this way. It is also mandatory in nearly all these 12 Member States to state reasons for the rejection of a candidate for prosecutor. 20 Member States give the executive or parliament the power to dismiss the Prosecutor General (in five of them on a proposal by the Council for the Judiciary), and in six

Member States this power is given to the Council for the Judiciary. 16 Member States offer the possibility of a review of the decision.

- **Ongoing potential for enhancing the digitalisation of justice systems:** Only six Member States have procedural rules which allow the admissibility of evidence in digital format in civil, commercial, administrative, and criminal cases. In 26 Member States, this is a possibility in some cases or in some areas of law. Moreover, the findings of this year's edition reveal that there is still room for improvement when it comes to the possibility to initiate proceedings or file a claim online. Nine Member States either allow for this possibility in some situations only or do not allow it at all.
- **In most Member States there are specific arrangements for supporting the participation of persons with disabilities as professionals in the justice system:** In 20 Member States there are at least some specific arrangements supporting the participation of persons with disabilities.
- **Varying degrees of specific arrangements for child-friendly proceedings with children involved as victims or suspects or as accused persons:** In 26 Member States information is provided about the victim's or suspect's rights and the proceedings in a child-friendly way and in 18 Member States, criminal proceedings involving children are treated as a matter of urgency.

Next steps

The information contained in the EU Justice Scoreboard contributes to the monitoring carried out within the framework of the European Semester and the Annual Rule of Law Cycle — the findings will feed into the Commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report. The 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard has been further developed to address the need for additional comparative information (such as a new figure on the salaries of judicial and prosecutorial expert staff and on the procedure to dismiss Prosecutors General) identified during the preparation of the 2023 Rule of Law Report. The Scoreboard's data are also used for the monitoring of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

Background

Launched in 2013, the EU Justice Scoreboard is used by the Commission to monitor justice reforms in Member States and is one of the tools in the EU's Rule of Law toolbox. The Scoreboard focuses on the three main elements of an effective justice system:

- **Efficiency:** indicators on the length of proceedings, clearance rate and number of pending cases;
- **Quality:** indicators on accessibility (such as legal aid and court fees), training, budget and salaries of judges and prosecutors, human resources and digitalisation;
- **Independence:** indicators on perceived judicial independence among the general public and companies, and on safeguards relating to judges and the functioning of national prosecution services.

As in previous editions, the 2024 edition presents data from two Eurobarometer surveys on how the public and companies perceive judicial independence in each Member State. The findings of the 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard have been considered in the country-specific assessment carried out within the 2024 European Semester, as well as in the evaluation of the implementation of Member States' Recovery and Resilience Plans, and the annual Rule of Law report. In 2024, the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy — which sets out strategic guidance to mitigate the negative impacts of the energy shocks, foster sustainable growth, and increase the EU's resilience — reiterates the link between effective justice systems and an economy that works for people in Member States. Well-functioning and fully independent justice systems have a positive impact on investment decisions and on the willingness of all actors to launch investment projects. Under the 2021-2027 Justice programme, the EU is making over €305 million available for the further development of a European area of justice. It will also help improve the effectiveness of national justice systems and strengthen the rule of law, democracy, and the protection of fundamental rights, including by ensuring effective access to justice for citizens and businesses. The programme funds activities, which cover training for judges and other legal practitioners, mutual learning, judicial cooperation, and awareness-raising.



6. European Health Union: stronger and better prepared for the future

The Commission adopted a Communication on the European Health Union, which highlights the strides made in EU health policy over the last four years, for the benefit of citizens in the EU and worldwide.

The start of this mandate was marked by the biggest pandemic in a century, which caused human suffering on a worldwide scale and tested public health systems to the limit. However, the COVID-19 pandemic also showed what EU solidarity, collaboration and decisive action can achieve. Thanks to the EU Vaccines Strategy, all EU citizens had access to life-saving COVID vaccines at the same time under the same conditions. This helped to stem the spread of the virus and saved millions of lives. The EU Digital COVID Certificate allowed economies and societies to re-open safely, while SURE helped over 31 million workers to overcome the economic impact. As



pandemics know no borders, our cooperation and solidarity also extended across the world. Through our Team Europe approach, the EU became the largest donor of vaccines through COVAX and provided almost €54 billion in emergency support to partner countries. The European Health Union thus emerged in the midst of the pandemic as a necessity to preserve EU resilience and contribute to Europe's societal wellbeing, strategic autonomy and geopolitical stability. It was built on the experience of the COVID-19 crisis and responded to the clear calls of citizens for a stronger EU

presence in public health. Unveiled in November 2020, the vision for the Health Union is to ensure that Member States are better prepared to respond to future health crises together, while supporting modern and innovative health policies for all citizens across the EU. Backed by substantial funding from the EU4Health programme, the goals of the European Health Union quickly turned into tangible results. With more action in the pipeline, the European Health Union has delivered to date:

- **Stronger health security measures, to better respond to future crises.**
Today the EU is better equipped to anticipate, prepare for and respond to any major health threat. This is thanks to a stronger legal framework for health security cooperation, reinforced EU health agencies, and the creation of the Health Emergency and Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA).
- **Equal and timely access to affordable medicines for all citizens**
The proposed EU pharmaceutical reform will give an additional 70 million EU citizens access to new medicines, while maintaining a competitive pharmaceutical sector in Europe. The reform centres on the needs of EU citizens to ensure that everyone has access to the medicine that they need, when they need it, wherever they live and whatever their illness. This reform will also improve the availability of critical medicines by setting out a series of measures to address shortages.
- **A world-leading Cancer Plan**
Europe's Beating Cancer Plan launched a number of significant actions to tackle the disease at every stage – from prevention to diagnosis and treatment, to post-cancer care. Supported by €4 billion in EU funding, it is already making a difference to the lives of cancer patients across Europe.
- **Game-changing initiatives to digitalise healthcare**
Citizens will have access to better healthcare anywhere in the EU, thanks to the ground-breaking European Health Data Space (EHDS). In full respect of EU data protection rules, the EHDS harnesses the full potential of the digital transition and will also enable better use of data for the research and development of lifechanging medicines.
- **Comprehensive action for better mental health**
The EU Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health recognises that our mental health is as important as our physical health and affects individuals of all backgrounds. It consists of wide-ranging actions backed by over €1.2 billion to promote mental well-being, improve prevention and support services, and break down stigma in this important area.
- **Rules to boost patient safety and secure the supply of medicinal products**
Donors and recipients of substances of human origin, such as blood and cells, will benefit from stronger protection under revised EU rules. Measures to prevent any disruption of supply in

critical medicines and medical devices mean that citizens can continue to rely on safe and effective medical products, treatments and therapies.

- **A One Health approach to tackle major health risks**

By recognising the link between human, animal and environmental health, Europe is better positioned to develop stronger policies to tackle major health challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance and the impact of climate change on health.

7. Europe's bathing waters remain safe

The vast majority of bathing water sites in Europe met the European Union's most stringent “excellent” bathing quality standards in 2023, according to the latest annual Bathing Water. This represents 85.4% of the EU's popular bathing waters. As much as 96% of all officially identified bathing waters in the EU met the minimum quality standards, with only 1.5% rated as “poor”.

The assessment, put together by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in cooperation with the Commission, highlights where swimmers can find safe bathing sites in Europe this summer. It focuses specifically on safety for bathing, through monitoring of bacteria which can cause serious illness in people, rather than general water quality. The highest share of excellent bathing waters is found in Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Austria. In Belgium, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria and Romania, all officially identified bathing waters met at least the minimum quality standard in 2023. The bathing quality of coastal water is generally better compared to inland water. In 2023, 89% of coastal bathing sites classified are of excellent quality, compared to just under 79% of inland bathing waters. Since the adoption of the Bathing Water Directive in 2006, the share of bathing waters with poor water quality has dropped in the past decade and is now stable since 2015. However, health risks from swimming in bathing waters are an ongoing issue with 321 ‘poor’ sites in the EU reported in 2023.



Background

The assessment is based on the monitoring of 22,081 bathing sites across Europe that were reported to the EEA for the 2023 season. This includes sites in all EU Member States, Albania and Switzerland. It is based on data reported by Member States for the 2020-2023 bathing seasons.

Alongside this year's Bathing Water Report, the EEA has also released an updated interactive map showing the performance of each bathing site. Updated country reports are also available, as well as more information on the implementation of the directive in countries. Although most of



Europe's bathing waters are in excellent condition from a bacteriological perspective, pollution of surface and ground waters remains significant and may be exacerbated by the changing climate. Improving water resilience for people and for the environment in coming years will be key. The Bathing Water Directive, complementing the Water Framework Directive, is one of several pieces of EU law that protect water: the Environmental Quality Standards Directive, the Groundwater Directive, the Nitrates Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. In the context of the European Green

Deal and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Commission is assessing whether the Bathing Water Directive remains fit for purpose to protect public health and improve water quality, or if there is a need to improve the existing rules and propose relevant updates, including new parameters to allow better future assessments of bathing water quality. The report is published during the Commission's annual EU Green Week, including the conference “Towards a water resilient Europe” starting in Brussels on 29 May. At the EU Green Week, the Commission is launching the #WaterWiseEU campaign an awareness-raising campaign on the need to transform the way water is managed, used and valued. This will encourage people to “See Water Differently” and explore solutions to the various water challenges we are facing today.

8. Energy Markets Reforms Adoption

The Commission welcomes adoption of important electricity and gas market reforms and the new regulatory framework to boost the development of hydrogen and other decarbonised gases.

These reforms highlight Europe's determination to pursue the clean energy transition while enhancing security of supply and consumer protection and building on the lessons learnt from the energy crisis. Future-proof energy markets will stimulate investments in clean energy and facilitate lower and more stable prices which are key to make European industry more competitive on the global stage. With the adoption of the revised electricity market design and the decarbonised gas and hydrogen package, the EU has further tools to reach its energy and climate targets under the European Green Deal. The updated gas market framework gives Member States the possibility to stop or limit imports of both piped gas and LNG from Russia and Belarus, in line with the REPowerEU objectives.

Better protected and more competitive power consumers

The electricity market reform gives consumers a wider choice of contracts and clearer information before signing contracts. They will have the option to lock in secure, long-term prices as well as to have dynamic pricing contracts to take advantage of price variability to use electricity when it is cheaper. Member States will have to establish suppliers of last resort so that no consumer ends up without electricity. Vulnerable consumers and the energy poor will be protected from disconnection and Member States will be able to extend regulated retail prices to households and SMEs in case of a crisis. On top of consumer protection, energy sharing is also strengthened. As an example, tenants will be able to share surplus rooftop solar power with a neighbour. The reform will also help European businesses stay competitive by giving them access to more predictable energy costs. It creates the conditions for both suppliers and consumers to benefit from the expanded use of



longer-term market instruments such as Power Purchase Agreements, two-way Contracts for Difference and forward contracts. This will provide investment certainty to both power producers and industrial consumers. Overall, both households and companies will be able to benefit from the lower costs of renewables, whose integration and availability will also be boosted by the new provisions on grid congestion, trading deadlines, demand response and storage, as well as EU-level auctions. Finally, to ensure EU consumers will benefit from competitive markets with transparent price-setting, the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) and national regulators will have enhanced ability to monitor energy market integrity and transparency.

A cleaner and more secure European gas market

The new framework for the gas market will facilitate the uptake of renewable and low-carbon gases while ensuring security and affordability of energy for all European citizens. The reform of the gas market ensures that decarbonised gases and hydrogen can flow across Europe. In particular, the reforms will lead to the creation of a market for hydrogen, which will be key to curb emissions in hard-to-abate sectors such as heavy industries and transport. The Commission will also pilot a five-year project to bring together demand and supply of hydrogen to enhance market development and transparency under the European Hydrogen Bank. Consumers will be better protected against supply and price risks. They will be empowered to take an active role in the market and to select cleaner supplies and contracts. Practically speaking, they will be able to switch suppliers more easily, use effective price comparison tools, get accurate, fair and transparent billing information, and have better access to data and new smart technologies. Following adoption, the revised legislation will now be published in the Official Journal of the Union and its provisions will enter into force according to specific timelines.

Background

The Commission put forward the decarbonised gases and hydrogen package in December 2021 as part of the European Green Deal. It was provisionally agreed by the co-legislators in December 2023. The proposals followed the strategic visions set out in the EU Energy System Integration Strategy and EU Hydrogen Strategy in 2020. The revision of the electricity market design was proposed in March 2023 to respond to the call of EU Leaders to come forward with a reform to secure European energy sovereignty and achieve climate neutrality. It was presented as part of the Green Deal Industrial Plan and provisionally agreed by the co-legislators in December 2023.

9. Commission establishes AI Office

The Commission has unveiled the AI Office, established within the Commission. The AI Office aims at enabling the future development, deployment and use of AI in a way that fosters societal and economic benefits and innovation, while mitigating risks.

The Office will play a key role in the implementation of the AI Act, especially in relation to general-purpose AI models. It will also work to foster research and innovation in trustworthy AI and position the EU as a leader in international discussions. The AI office is composed of:

- Regulation and Compliance Unit that coordinates the regulatory approach to facilitate the uniform application and enforcement of the AI Act across the Union, working closely with Member States. The unit will contribute to investigations and possible infringements, administering sanctions;
- Unit on AI safety focusing on the identification of systemic risks of very capable general-purpose models, possible mitigation measures as well as evaluation and testing approaches;
- Excellence in AI and Robotics Unit that supports and funds research and development to foster an ecosystem of excellence. It coordinates the GenAI4EU initiative, stimulating the development of models and their integration into innovative applications;
- AI for Societal Good Unit to design and implement the international engagement of the AI Office in AI for good, such as weather modelling, cancer diagnoses and digital twins for reconstruction;
- AI Innovation and Policy Coordination Unit that oversees the execution of the EU AI strategy, monitoring trends and investment, stimulating the uptake of AI through a network of European Digital Innovation Hubs and the establishment of AI Factories, and fostering an innovative ecosystem by supporting regulatory sandboxes and real-world testing.

The AI Office will be led by the Head of the AI Office and will work under the guidance of a Lead Scientific Adviser to ensure scientific excellence in evaluation of models and innovative approaches, and an Adviser for international affairs to follow up on our commitment to work closely with international partners on trustworthy AI.

AI Office setup and tasks

The AI Office will employ more than 140 staff to carry out its tasks. The staff will include technology specialists, administrative assistants, lawyers, policy specialists, and economists. The office will ensure the coherent implementation of the AI Act. It will do this by supporting the governance bodies in Member States. The AI Office will also directly enforce the rules for general-purpose AI models. In cooperation with AI developers, the scientific community and other stakeholders, the AI Office will coordinate the drawing up of state-of-the-art codes of practice, conduct testing and evaluation of general-purpose AI models, request information as well as apply sanctions, when necessary. To ensure well-informed decision-making, the AI Office will collaborate with Member States and the wider expert community through dedicated fora and expert groups. At EU-level the AI Office will work closely with the European Artificial Intelligence Board composed of representatives of Member States. The Scientific Panel of independent experts will ensure a strong link with the scientific community and further expertise will be gathered in an Advisory Forum, representing a balanced selection of stakeholders, including industry, startups and SMEs, academia, think tanks and civil society. The AI Office will promote an innovative EU ecosystem for trustworthy AI. It will contribute to this by providing advice on best practices and enabling access to AI sandboxes, real-world testing and other European support structures for AI uptake, such as the Testing and Experimentation Facilities in AI, the European Digital Innovation Hubs, and the AI Factories. It will support research and innovation activities in the field of AI and robotics and implements initiatives, such as GenAI4EU, to ensure that AI general-purpose models made in Europe and trained through EU supercomputers are finetuned and integrated into novel applications across the economy, stimulating investment. Finally, the AI Office will ensure a strategic, coherent and effective European approach on AI at the international level, becoming a global reference point. The organisational changes outlined above took place effect on 16 June. The first meeting of the AI Board should take place by the end of June. The AI Office is preparing guidelines on the AI system definition and on the prohibitions, both due six months after the entry into force of the AI Act. The Office is also getting ready to coordinate the drawing up of codes of practice for the obligations for general-purpose AI models, due 9 months after entry into force.



Background

In April 2021, the Commission proposed the EU AI Act and a new Coordinated Plan with Member States, to guarantee the safety and fundamental rights of people and businesses, while strengthening investment and innovation across EU countries. The EU AI Act was provisionally agreed by co-legislators in December 2023 and is the world's first comprehensive law on Artificial Intelligence. The AI Act should enter into force by end July 2024. In January 2024 the Commission launched a package of measures to support European startups and SMEs in the development of trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI). As part of these measures, a Commission decision to establish the AI Office was adopted.

10. EU boosts readiness to combat 2024 wildfire season

As Europe is preparing for the approaching wildfire season, the EU is taking significant steps to bolster firefighting efforts and safeguard communities, by pre-positioning firefighters and assembling a fleet of firefighting aircraft.

First, 556 firefighters from 12 countries will be strategically prepositioned across key locations in Europe this summer, such as France, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, ready to help local fire brigades. This proactive measure enhances Europe's readiness to combat wildfires and mitigate their devastating impact on lives, homes, and the environment, and underscores the robustness of EU solidarity in addressing such crises. Second, the EU has also assembled a dedicated rescEU fleet of firefighting aircraft for this summer, consisting of 28 airplanes and 4 helicopters stationed in 10 Member States. More specifically the fleet will include: four medium amphibious airplanes, two light planes and one helicopter from Greece; two medium amphibious airplanes from Croatia; two



medium amphibious airplanes and two light planes from Italy; two medium amphibious airplanes from Spain; four medium amphibious airplanes and one helicopter from France; four light planes from Sweden; two light planes from Portugal; two helicopters from Czechia; two light planes from Cyprus; two light planes from Germany. The Commission has also allocated a total of €600 million to facilitate the acquisition of 12 new firefighting planes in the future, which will be distributed among six EU Member States. In addition, several helicopters will also be financed in the future by the EU to reinforce the EU aerial firefighting fleet.

The prepositioning of firefighters and the acquisition of additional firefighting aircraft underscore the EU's commitment to bolstering its capacity to respond effectively to wildfires, particularly during the upcoming summer months.

Background

The EU ensures a coordinated approach to preventing, preparing and responding to wildfires when those overwhelm national response capacities. When the scale of a wildfire overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, it can request assistance via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Once activated, the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre coordinates and finances assistance made available by EU Member States and the ten UCPM- Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Türkiye, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine) through spontaneous offers. In addition, the EU has created the European Civil Protection Pool to have a critical number of readily available civil protection capacities allowing for a stronger and coherent collective response. The ECPP aims to enable a faster, better-coordinated, and more effective European response to human-induced disasters and natural hazards. It brings together resources from 27 Member States and participating states, ready for deployment to a disaster zone at short notice. Should the emergency require additional, life-saving assistance, the rescEU firefighting reserve steps in to provide additional capacities to confront disasters in Europe. It includes a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes, and a stockpile of medical items and field hospitals that can respond to health emergencies. RescEU works by giving Member States grants to buy capacities, and the European Commission has the final call to deploy them. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre also monitors the evolution of wildfires with the support of early warning systems such as the European Forest Fire Information System, while the EU's Copernicus emergency satellite mapping service complements operations with detailed information from space.

11. Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism 2024

The Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism (the Prize) was launched on 16 October 2020 as a tribute to the Maltese anti-corruption investigative journalist and blogger who was assassinated in a car bomb attack in 2017. The Prize, with the support of the European Parliament, will be awarded annually to in-depth journalism pieces undertaken by EU-based professional journalists. The Prize aims to recognise outstanding in-depth journalism work on topics that are relevant for the European Union (EU) as a whole or some of its Member States, and contribute to the promotion of principles and values of the EU, as enshrined in the European Charter of Human Rights. The Prize is open to individual professional journalists or teams of professional journalists of any nationality. Applications may be submitted by authors themselves or by professional media organisations and associations on their behalf. Entries must have been published/broadcast in print, audio visual or online media outlets based in one of the 27 EU Member States between **1 September 2023 and 31 July 2024**. English is the official language of the Prize. Entries may be submitted in all EU official languages. A summary in English (500 words maximum) must be provided in the submission form. Entries may have one or several authors. Applications may be submitted by authors themselves or by professional media organisations and associations on their behalf. By submitting an application, the applicant(s) declares to be the author(s) and to be the copyright owner(s) or to have obtained the authorisation from the right holder. Should a journalist or team of journalists wish to participate with more than one entry, they are allowed to do so. However, they must submit a separate application per entry. Plagiarism, which includes the unauthorised use of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own, or any infringement of third parties' intellectual property rights will result in disqualification. Retrospective discovery of plagiarism or infringement of third parties' intellectual property rights will result in revocation of the awarded Prize. Evaluation will be based on the following criteria: relevance of the topic for European society and contribution to the promotion of EU values and principles; quality of content, which should be well documented, accurate, factual, and based on a variety of sources; quality in terms of language, style, and structure; original and in-depth approach to the topic. There will be one single winner, who will receive €20.000. The winner will be announced at the Award Ceremony to be held in the European Parliament. Applications must be submitted via our [online platform](#) by **31 July 2024**.



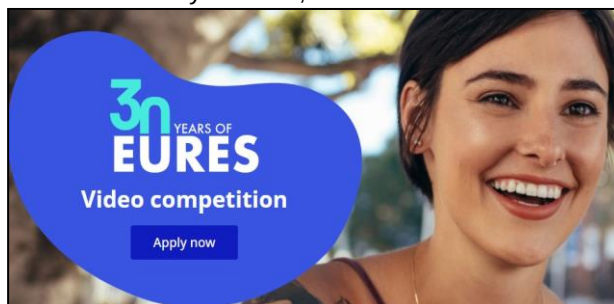
12. Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition

The Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition (CEC) is part of the Entrepreneurship Campus and was initiated to give entrepreneurs from around the world the opportunity to create innovative responses to global and/or community challenges and to engage in a more peaceful and sustainable world. Young people and adults from around the world are invited to submit their innovative ideas and projects with a social impact that enhance and implement one or more of the 17 Millennium Development Goals. To find out more about the 17 Goals, visit this [site](#). Anyone aged 13 and over with an innovative idea for a business that contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and anyone aged 13 and over who runs a business, non-profit organisation or informal programme capable of implementing these kinds of innovative ideas can apply. To apply, you need to make a short presentation of your idea or project. If you are accepted, you will have until 31 July to take the "Brains versus Capital" and "Sustainable Entrepreneurship" courses, complete the Entrepreneurial Design Canvas' (EDC) and receive feedback from the Entrepreneurship Campus community. The ECOC does not provide cash prizes, scholarships or other financial resources. You gain knowledge, contacts, a business plan in the form of an entrepreneurial project (provided you complete it conscientiously) and an official certificate from the Stiftung Entrepreneurship. **Deadline for submitting nominations: 31 July 2024.** Deadline for online submission of votes: 31 August 2024. More information can be found at the following [link](#).



13. EURES30 Youth Video Competition

EURES celebrates 30 years of high-quality job mobility services with the aim of making Europe an attractive career destination for young jobseekers and launches the #EURES30 youth video competition. To participate you must: be between 18 and 30 years old; be a citizen or resident of one of the 31 EURES member countries; register by answering the question: "How can EURES help you get your dream job in Europe?" The video must talk about you and your personality, inclinations and talents and be no longer than two minutes. It can be recorded in any language; subtitles are not mandatory, but an English transcript must be provided. Videos must be uploaded to a public YouTube channel, the link to which must be provided in the application. Between 16 July and 12 August, five finalists will be chosen through an open vote on a dedicated EURES platform. EURES and the European Employment Authority (ELA), in cooperation with the contest manager, will select the three winning videos from the five with the most votes based on various criteria (relevance, clarity, originality, creativity). The winners will have the opportunity to visit the ELA office in Bratislava, to meet the EURES team and to receive valuable career advice from EURES advisors. **Deadline: 5 July 2024.** More information can be found at the following [link](#).



14. Applications for the Lorenzo Natali Prize 2024

The journalists can apply for the 2024 Lorenzo Natali Prize, the EU's flagship journalism award, by submitting eligible stories. Journalists reporting on issues related to climate, environment and energy, digital and infrastructure, gender equality, human development, migration and forced displacement, peace and governance, sustainable growth and jobs, and youth can [apply online](#) until midnight CEST on **30 June**. Journalists can submit written, audio-visual or multimedia work in one of the following categories:



- **Best Emerging Journalist Award:** Reporting by journalists aged between 18 and 25 at the time of submission and published by a media outlet based in any of the eligible countries.
- **Investigative Journalism Award:** Reporting published by a media outlet based in one of the eligible countries whose objective is to uncover serious issues such as crimes, injustice, corruption, or corporate wrongdoing, and to expose these to the public.
- **Feature Journalism Award:** Reporting published by a media outlet based in one of the eligible countries focusing on entertaining, educating, engaging or informing the audience. This can take an in-depth look at a current event, situation, person or group, and can cover innovations and solutions to current challenges.
- **Special Award:** The 2024 edition will recognise photojournalism work published by a media outlet based in one of the eligible countries.

Applications are open to reporting in any language but should be accompanied by a translation in one of the competition languages: English, French, Spanish, German or Portuguese. Detailed information on the terms and conditions is available [here](#). A Grand Jury of internationally renowned journalists and representatives from key non-governmental organisations around the world will choose the winners in each category. Each winner will receive €10 000. The winner of the Best Emerging Journalist category will also be offered work experience/a traineeship with a media partner. The winners will be announced at the Lorenzo Natali Prize Award Ceremony in Brussels later in 2024. The Prize commemorates the former Vice-President of the European Commission, Lorenzo Natali, who contributed significantly to the promotion and furthering of European development policies. His spirit has been kept alive through the Prize for over three decades by celebrating journalists whose stories inspire change. The Prize was first launched by the European Commission in 1992. Previous winners are listed on the [website](#) of the Lorenzo Natali Prize.

15. Multiplier event in Italy of the “Equalley” project

On 29th April 2024 took place at the Comprehensive School “Domenico Savio” in Potenza (Italy) the multiplier event foreseen for Italy in the “Equalley” project (acronym “Tacklingstreet harassment & gender stereotypes in youngsters”), an initiative approved, as action n. 2021-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000032603, in Spain by the National Agency Erasmus Plus within the KA220-SCH programme addressed to Cooperative Partnerships in School Education. The meeting was held in the institute directed by Prof. Daniela Novelli, a school headmistress always very attentive to the

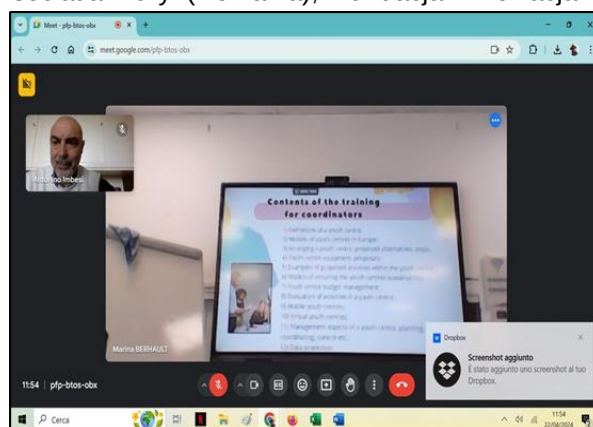


needs of the world of young people, who enthusiastically joined the initiative aimed at tackling the issues of harassment and sexual violence, combating stereotypes and gender discrimination. The conference was developed in hybrid form (i.e. both in-person and online), starting at 9:30 a.m. and included the live participation of the director of the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, Antonino Imbesi, as well as the project contact person Dr. Katia Lacerra, while Dr. Margherita Gilotti followed the event via web link, another staff member of the EURO-NET association who participated in the development of the project activities. During the seminar, all the results and activities developed in Equalley were presented by the various partners of the

project, which in addition to the association from Potenza is also made up of Escuela Profesional Otxarkoaga (Spain), Aidlearn Consultoria Em Recursos Humanos Lda (Portugal), Uniwersytet Lodzki (Poland) and Stichting Emancipator (Netherlands): Thus, the brochure containing the results of research carried out on the project topics in all partner countries, a course for 12-16 year olds and a final guide for educators and trainers as well as the ever-present and essential web platform were presented.

16. Meeting in Marseille of the “DIGI-YOUTH KIT” project

On 22nd April took place in Marseille the partners of the project “DIGI-YOUTH KIT” (acronym “DYO2) approved as action 2023-1-FR02-KA220-YOU-000159986 by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in France in the framework of the programme of the same name under the initiative KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth to discuss the project steps and start working concretely on the activities envisaged therein. The project involves a very broad partnership of no less than 11 partners from 6 different countries; Pole Metropolitain Pour L'entrepreneuriat, Le Carburateur (France, Coordinator of the Transnational Consortium), Cooperative D'initiative Jeunes (France), Burgaski Svoboden Universitet (Bulgaria), Regional Cluster North-East (Bulgaria), Aintek Symvouloi Epicheiriseon Efarmoges Ypsilis Technologias Ekpaidefsi Anonymi Etaireia (Greece), Eyropaiko Institutoyto Topikhs Anaptykshs (Greece), Asociatia Millenium Center Arad (Romania), S. C. Predict Csd Consulting S.R.L.(Romania), Asociatia Zury (Romania), Fundacja Innowacja I Wiedza (Poland) and Euro-Net (Italy). During the meeting, which unfortunately the EURO-NET association was only able to attend online, with its director Antonino Imbesi, due to the simultaneous regional elections that kept the entire staff of the organisation from Potenza (as they were eager to take part in the programming choices of their region), they discussed how to develop the first steps of the initiative aimed at increasing the quality of youth work and ensuring the digital transformation through the development of 2 online training courses for youth centre coordinators and animators, the construction of an informal network of at least 20 youth centres from Europe and the creation of an e-game on the theme of running a youth centre, thus strengthening the active participation of young people.



17. Ready course modules of the “Podcast para um Futuro sem Fronteiras”

The training modules of the course envisaged in the project “Podcast para um Futuro sem Fronteiras”, acronym “PFWB”, an initiative approved by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency in Portugal as action n. 2022-2-PT01-KA210-VET-000097749, are already ready in the various languages. Under the Erasmus Plus programme KA210-VET - Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training. The training course is now to be uploaded online on the e-learning platform, which is also in the home stretch, so that it can be used by students in the various organisations. The training is aimed at teaching how to create a podcast and covers the tasks and activities that normally take place in a newsroom, including the definition of a radio report, the correct setting up of an interview and other techniques that can make the trainee autonomous from the conception phase to the realisation and publication phases of a podcast. Within the training course, space is also given to the technical aspect, showing how to set up and



record the voice, how to use audio editing programmes, how to edit and post-produce a podcast, how to publish and stream. The three partners of the transnational partnership initiative, D. Sancho Ensino, Lda. Escola Profissional do Infante (project coordinator - Portugal), Innovation Footprint (Greece) and EURO-NET (Italy), aim to improve the employability of students (many of them with fewer opportunities) through non-formal education; using new technologies in a smart way and increasing the digital mind set (critical understanding and use of technological tools) of young people; fostering the acquisition of technical skills in radio/editorial and ‘public speaking’ so as to sharpen their soft skills and consequently improve their chances of finding a job in various sectors. Once the training has been uploaded, we will move on to the concrete training phase and the many students involved will also have to concretely develop the podcasts by creating a real library of online radio services. The trainees (30 students from each partner country) will have to produce podcasts both in their mother tongue and in English, publishing them on two different channels in order to reach a wider audience: this activity will

be the main focus of the project, designed precisely to encourage young people to participate in active life and in their own and their community's future through the production of a large number of podcasts.

18. “Supporting the economy and fighting inflation” new video

Supporting the Economy and Fighting Inflation' is our new video produced as part of the Europe Direct Basilicata 2024 project with the contribution of the European Union. The video was made to explain what Europe is doing to support the economies of member states and reduce inflation. In the EU there will be a faster decline in inflation and slower economic growth. The Commission's new forecast for the European economy shows lower growth rates than expected in 2023. Moreover, the current downward trend in inflation is expected to accelerate this year. In 2024 growth is expected to be 0.9% (compared to 1.3%) in the EU and 0.8% (compared to 1.2%) in the euro area. In the meantime, inflation in the EU is expected to fall from 6.3 % in 2023 to 3.0 % in 2024 and then to 2.5 % in 2025 <https://commission.europa.eu/news/inf...> The production direction of the video was, as always, supervised by Antonino Imbesi (head of our Europe Direct Basilicata centre). Antonia Bruno took care of the texts and dubbing, while the storyboard and animation of the images were done by Gianluca Lagrotta. The video is available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mk-p_-V8ZHo.



19. New video made by the staff of the Europe Direct Basilicata Centre

Here is our latest production, realised as Euro-net association, on behalf of the CDE-CNR of Potenza: it is the video entitled "Giovani al voto" (Young people voting) focusing on the European elections of 8 and 9 June 2024. The video was made as part of the project "European Elections 2024" of the Network of European Documentation Centres in Italy with the contribution of the



Representation in Italy of the European Commission. The purpose of the video is to inform and make people aware of the importance of voting for the supranational Parliament, which is crucial for collectively deciding on the future of the European Union. Indeed, the vote of the citizens who go to the polls will not only decide who will be Members of the European Parliament but will also influence the election of the next European Commission. These decisions will shape our

daily lives and those of many others. The production direction of the video was supervised by Assunta Arte of CDE-CNR in Potenza, as always by Antonino Imbesi (head of our Europe Direct Basilicata centre). Antonia Bruno took care of the texts and dubbing, while the storyboard and animation of the images were done by Gianluca Lagrotta. The video is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQCKskTlqWU>.

20. A pact for the future of the new generations signed in Potenza

On 25th May, during an event open to the entire citizenship, held in Potenza in the setting of the city's Theatre Stabile, which was used in extremis due to the adverse weather conditions, a cooperation pact was signed between the Provincial Councillor for Equality, the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, the Potenza City of Youth Committee the Municipality of Potenza and the representatives of the trade unions CIGL, CISL and UIL to support the growth of the regional capital cities and in general to support the growth of young Lucani, creating occasions and opportunities to be made available to them in order to improve their skills and abilities, thus enabling them to remain in Basilicata and invest in the same region of birth and/or adoption. The public signing of the "YES" manifesto (to emphasise that we can really do what is envisaged in it), which was also followed very closely by dozens of journalists and local and regional media operators, took place following an open debate in which all the signatories highlighted the importance of investing in the future of youth in the light of the phenomena of inclusion, migration, global gateway, innovation and multicultural changes that are characterising the modern world and Europe and that must be interpreted and addressed in the light of the founding values of the European Union that are and remain a pillar for common growth.



21. New online meeting for the "WARRIOR" project

On 5th June, took place online meeting the partners of the project 'Warrior's Values: Effective



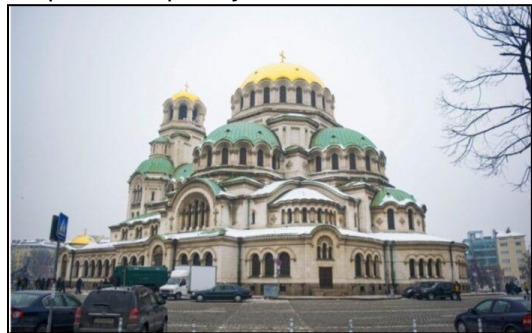
Defence against Fakes and Frauds" - EURO-NET (European project leader), Ukrainian Center of the Future (Ukraine), InnoVed (Greece); Foundation International Center of Dialogue, Innovations and Future (Poland) and Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (Germany) to define the next steps of the project activities concerning the graphic part of the "Trickeries Guide" and the planning of Work Package 3 which concerns the phase of training

young people on the techniques and methodologies to be used to defend themselves against false information and news circulating on the web. The "WARRIOR" project (an initiative approved in Italy by the National Agency for Youth within the framework of the P Erasmus+ programme - KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth as action n. 2023-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-

000153640) is, in fact, aimed at providing youth workers and young people with an educational manual specifically designed to strengthen the capacity to identify false information and manipulation and to train young people to recognise fake news as well as to improve youth workers' digital skills to promote the fight against false information and manipulation through social media.

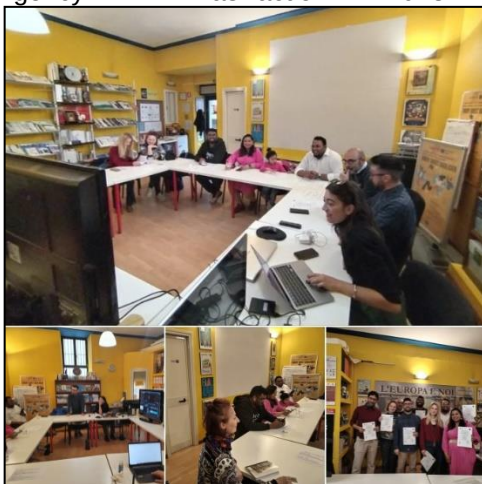
22. Training course in Bulgaria for the “Speak it up” project

In the period 17-21/06/2024 (travel days excluded), takes place in Sofia the transnational pilot training course envisaged in the project "Speak It Up: Youth Public Speaking Skills Development Towards a Democratic Society in Contemporary Europe" - acronym "Speak It Up", an initiative approved in Sweden as action n. 2022-1-SE02-KA220-YOU-000086337 within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth. The course, which will be attended by 3 representatives from each partner country, is aimed at the introduction of the Curriculum developed in work package 2 of the project and the introduction to the 7 training modules developed, as well as the testing of the game in realisation. The following organisations are part of the partnership developing the whole initiative (aimed at improving active civic participation in young people and strengthening their sense of initiative by supporting their commitment to participate in democratic processes as well as helping youth leaders and trainers to improve or develop their public speaking skills) Internationella Kvinnoföreningen (Sweden - project coordinator), Möllans Basement (Sweden), Asociacija Aktyvistai (Lithuania), Centrum Edukacyjne EST (Poland), Dracon Rules Design Studio (Greece), Stando LTD (Cyprus), Pnevma LLC (Bulgaria) and EURO-NET (Italy).



23. Training course in Italy of the “Ogres only exist in fairy tales” project

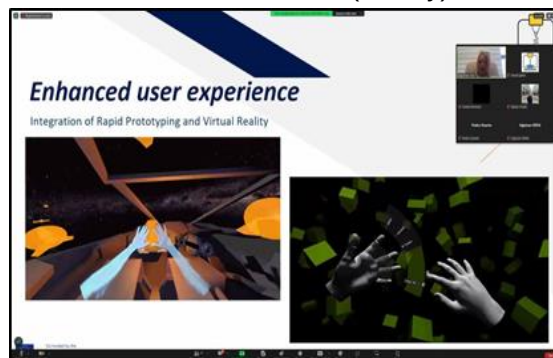
In the second week of May took place in Potenza, Italy, at the office of the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, the training foreseen within the project “Ogres exist only in fairy tales” - Small Scale initiative approved in the Erasmus Plus KA210 programme by the National Erasmus Plus Agency INDIRE as action n. 2023-1-IT02-KA210-ADU-000166636. The training course was



attended by staff representatives of the three partners of the European consortium composed of Associazione FARGO (Italy, project coordinator), Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (Germany) and Euro-Idea Fundacja Społeczno-Kulturalna (Poland). The activity carried out was geared towards the creation of a training course aimed at providing the users of each partner with the grammatical, linguistic and technical skills to be used to devise a narrative for images based on the specific theme of the project. Through the observation of reality and the analysis of some narrative works, the course included an activity structured over several days during which all the phases of the construction of a short film were tackled, from the conception of the screenplay to the shooting, from the direction of the actors to the dubbing. The training had a workshop setting, characterised by an extremely practical approach, in which through a series of individual and collective exercises the users were able to develop a specific imagery, capable of translating a story into images, with the transfer of skills and knowledge useful for the production of the final short films. During the project, in fact, 3 short films on violence against minors will be developed, which will directly involve groups of young adults from each country specially selected.

24. Online training of “VRP4Youth” project

In the period 13-16/05/2024 took place online the training of the project “Innovative Integration Between Virtual Reality and Rapid Prototyping for Youth” (acronym “VRP4Youth”), an initiative approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in Turkey as action n.2022-1-TR01-KA220-YOU-000089257 within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth. The training involved several dozen young people from all the organisations making up the composite transnational consortium: Gazi Universitesi (project coordinator - Turkey), Kungliga Tekniska Hogskolan (Sweden), Association of Academicians Union (Turkey), Instituto Politecnico Do Porto (Portugal) and Godesk Srl (Italy). The virtual lessons were delivered by expert trainers, including Godesk CEO Antonino Imbesi. The online training focused on the introduction and integration of Virtual Reality and Rapid Prototyping technologies. Each participant who successfully completed the course received a certificate of attendance. One of the main objectives of this first pilot training program was to accurately measure the performance of the training modules developed within the project and then to evaluate the impact of the training received by the participants. More information on the project and on the activities and products created and in progress are available on the initiative's website <https://vrp4youth.org/> and on the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/people/VRP4Youth/100090467855108/>.



25. Last meeting in Greece of the “Green Youth” project

Last month, the last meeting of the European project “Green Youth - Educational materials for environmental sustainability” was held in Larissa, Greece, an initiative approved, as action n. 2021-2-PT02-KA220-YOU-000047993, in Portugal by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency, within the framework of the actions envisaged in the Erasmus+ programme of the same name - KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth. During the meeting, the partners - Associacao Juvenil da Ilha Terceira (Portugal - coordinator of the entire project), Institute of Entrepreneur Ship Development (Greece), Youth Europe Service (Italy), Avrasya Yenilikçi Toplum Derneği (Turkey) and Vaev (Austria) - discussed the project management and the status of the implementation of the products/results foreseen in the project and defined the next steps before the completion of the entire programme. For the association from Potenza, two young project staff members participated in the meeting: Donato Viola and Imbesi Fortunato Luca, who presented the activities carried out in Italy to the partners. Among



the activities still to be implemented are the multiplier events, which will be dissemination events to promote the entire project and its products to the general public.

26. Training course in Spain of the “Games4Green” project

In the period 20-24/05/2024 took place in Ibi, a small town in the province of Alicante in Spain, the training course for staff planned in the project “Learning serious video games coding for green awareness” - acronym “Games4Green”. The project, approved as initiative n. 2022-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000085499 in Germany by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency, is financed under the programme of the same name within the KA220-VET actions, i.e. in the cooperative partnerships directed towards vocational training. The training, which was attended by all the project partners - Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (project coordinator - Germany), InnoVED (Greece), Associació Educativa i Cultural Blue Beehive (Spain)



and Rigas Tehniska Universitate (Latvia), Chamber of Commerce of Basilicata (Italy) and Youth Europe Service (Italy) - was a pilot course for the staff of the various partner organisations on how to make digital games in the environmental sector: Indeed, video games are very useful and impactful tools to be able to promote awareness-raising campaigns on climate change and environmental and nature protection. To this end and to make the course programme more interactive, the training activities were divided among the project partners and included both theoretical and practical teaching. For the Youth Europe Service association, Luigi Vitelli, Antonino Imbesi and Luca Ritrovato participated in the training course.

27. Training course in Italy on filmmaking in the " Fargo " project

Took place in Potenza (Italy), In the halls of Godesk, the most important and well-known innovation space and coworking centre in the entire Basilicata region, the second day (the first of the two took place on 25th of May) of the training provided within the project "Ogres only exist in fairy tales" - a Small Scale initiative approved in the Erasmus Plus KA210 programme by the National Erasmus Plus Agency INDIRE as action no. 2023-1-IT02-KA210-ADU-000166636. This training course,



which will take place in each country belonging to the European partnership composed of Associazione FARGO (Italy, project coordinator), Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (Germany) and Euro-Idea Fundacja Społeczno-Kulturalna (Poland), aims to provide the young participants with the grammatical, linguistic and technical skills to be used in devising a narrative in images based on the specific theme of the project. Through the observation of reality and the analysis of a number of narrative works, the course includes an activity structured over five days in which all the phases of the construction of a short film will be addressed, from the conception of the screenplay to the shooting, from the direction of the actors to the dubbing. The teaching method used assumes a workshop approach, characterised by an extremely practical course, in which, through a series of individual and collective exercises, users will be able to develop a specific imagery, capable of translating a story into images. The training is designed to transfer

skills and knowledge on methodologies and tools useful for the realisation of the final short film. The following modules are included in the training course: Film literacy on the theme of violence against minors; Creative writing and dramaturgy; Directing: recording techniques and methods; Acting, intonation and expressiveness; Dubbing and subtitling. At the end of the course the young participants will then have to make a short film on violence against minors in each country of the transnational consortium, which will be used to promote information campaigns to try to curb this phenomenon in the various participating States and to promote moments of debate and reflection in the local and national communities. On 4th June took place on the second day of the training course, again at Godesk, the activity involved a large group of young people who are learning how to develop a short film: in fact, the project envisages in the step the production of a "short movie" based on the language of fiction cinema, lasting 15 minutes and based on research and content analysis on the theme of violence against young people. The short film aims to narrate a very delicate issue through a visual code that is accessible to the youngest and highly innovative in terms of the visual aspect: the digital filming technique, the new technologies and the raw, rapid and modern style will allow the spectator to live an immersive and engaging experience. The short film will be supervised by a crew of professionals working in the film industry who will oversee each stage of its production up to the final editing. The project partners are therefore now working, each in their own country, intensively on the development of the training activities preparatory to the short film to prepare their respective groups for all the development phases of the film (conception, screenplay, shooting, direction, dubbing, editing) so that at the end of the training the young participants will be able to make a short film on the project theme in each country of the transnational partnership.



28. Meeting in Potenza of the “Food for Change” project

On 4th and 5th June took place in Potenza a new meeting of the "Green and Sustainable Food Educators" project, an initiative approved in the Erasmus Plus KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in VET programme by the competent National Agency as action no. 2022-1-FI01-KA220-VET-000085304. The project, of which the Italian partner is the “Potentina” Association Youth Europe Service, allowed all partners to verify the work carried out so far and to plan future



training and work activities. During the two days in “Lucania”, the partners also had the opportunity to make some very interesting visits to productive realities that are a flagship for the local community, such as Magazzini Sociali, where leftover food is recovered to make new food products or to redistribute it to those in need and in difficult situations. The foreign partners present at the meeting: University of Turku (Finland - project co-ordinator), Euro-Idea Fundacja Społeczno-Kulturalna (Poland), Horeca Academie BV (Netherlands), and Raisio Seudun Koulutuskuntayhtymä (Finland), greatly appreciated the visits made and also actively participated in the presentations made during these visits with questions and queries. At the meeting hosted in the offices of the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, unfortunately, the Cypriot partner, M.M.C Management Center Limited,

due to internal problems, was only able to participate online and therefore was unable to benefit from the added value of the visits excellently organised by the staff of the association in Potenza.

29. Maratea: VET activities in hosting in the Erasmus Plus project

In the period 01-29/06/2024, eleven young people from the Agrupamento de Escolas de Águas Santas in Portugal are hosted by the Youth Europe Service association in Maratea to carry out a short-term international internship experience in the framework of the Erasmus Plus project entitled "Engaging Youth in Tourism", approved as action n. 2023-1-PT01-KA122-VET-0001451179 by the competent Portuguese National Agency of the same European programme. The young foreign students (on internship in hotel facilities, travel agencies and organisations that for various reasons are involved in activities related to the promotion of the “Lucania” region) are hosted in various tourist facilities in the "pearl of the Mediterranean" where they will be able to gain important experience that will be particularly useful for their future careers: during the planned "internship" period, in fact, the young people will be supervised by qualified personnel who will teach them how to move in the world of work and will provide them with a life experience that will be very useful for their future careers. At the end of their internship, all participants will receive a certificate of participation and the Europass Mobility Document, certifying the qualifications and competences achieved during the work and training activities carried out in Italy.

