EURO-NET

The Youth European Network

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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

EUROPE DIRECT
Basilicata

Contents

1. Recovery and Resilience Facility Annual Report 2024

The implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), at the heart of the EU's recovery instrument NextGenerationEU, is speeding up, fostering continuous reform and investment progress in Member States.

As shown in the Commission's third Annual Report on the RRF adopted on 10 October, the

Commission is supporting Member States in the full and timely delivery of their plans through more streamlined processes, and has further improved both transparency and mechanisms to protect the EU financial interests. The RRF, with €650 billion in grants and loans, is a critical driver of ambitious investments and reforms across Member States, in initiatives that advance the green and digital transition, and strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of the EU. Since its inception, the RRF has driven over €82 billion in investments directly supporting businesses. Over 900 reforms are being delivered to cut red tape and speed up business processes to obtain permits and licenses for example, helping EU industry become more competitive. With RRF support, 34 million megawatts hours in energy consumption have been saved, over 11.8 million people have participated in education and training, and 9.8 million people benefitted from protection measures against climate-related disasters. The Commission, Member States, and all relevant stakeholders, along with the European Parliament and Council, have worked closely together to achieve these results.

Over €300 billion in RRF funds expected to be disbursed by the end of 2024

Implementation and disbursements under the RRF have accelerated after some delays in 2023 largely linked to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, high inflation, supply constraints and the need to adopt REPowerEU chapters. To date, the Council has endorsed 26 such chapters, which provide additional funds to roll out reforms and investments that diversify the EU's energy supplies, accelerate the green transition, and support vulnerable households. To date, the Commission received 69 payment requests from 25 Member States and disbursed over €267 billion, i.e. more than 40% of the available RRF funding. By the end of the year, over €300 billion in RRF funds are expected to be disbursed. The report details numerous examples of how progress with reforms and investments across the six RRF policy pillars is having a tangible and positive impact on citizens and businesses alike. The Union has also continued to successfully raise funds on the capital markets to finance the Facility, with more than €60.2 billion issued in NextGenerationEU Green Bonds to date.

Implementation by Member States made simpler

In view of the time-bound nature of the RRF, all efforts should remain focused on the full and timely implementation of the plans by 2026. Member States must continue to swiftly implement their RRPs in full, and the Commission is actively supporting them in these efforts. In this context, the Commission took further steps in 2024 to support Member States in the implementation of the RRF. In July this year, the Commission introduced simpler processes in updated guidance to Member States, with a focus on how to revise plans, which will remain relevant to address implementation bottlenecks. Reporting requirements for Member States have also been streamlined. In addition, further clarity has been provided on ways to combine RRF with other EU funds to enhance synergies.

Reinforced transparency

The Commission is striving for high clarity and transparency in the implementation of the RRF, even beyond legal requirements. For example, this report includes an in-depth analysis of Member States' data on the 100 largest final recipients of funding under the RRF. The Commission is also providing further guidance on key concepts in the RRF Regulation, for transparency and clarity, which are laid out in the annexes to the report: clarifying how the Commission determines when a reform or investment has started to ensure eligibility under the RRF; clarifying what the Commission considers as a recurring expenditure, which is prohibited as a general rule, and the criteria used to determine when an exemption is duly justified; the concept of double funding in the RRF context, and the notion of final recipients of RRF funds.

Robust protection of the financial interests of the Union

The protection of the EU's financial interests is a top priority for the Commission. Therefore, it continuously strengthens its audit and control framework, also taking into account the recommendations of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Court of Auditors.

The Commission carried out 17 risk-based ex-post audits over the September 2023–August 2024 period on the satisfactory fulfilment of milestones and targets. Four system audits of national control systems were also carried out. By the end of 2023, the Commission had audited all Member States at least once.

Background

This report is the third of a series of annual reports by the Commission, which cover the implementation of the RRF during its entire lifespan, as required by the RRF Regulation. It will feed into the ongoing dialogue on the RRF implementation both among the Union institutions and with stakeholders. The information provided in the report is based on the content of the adopted recovery and resilience plans, as assessed by the Commission, on the data reported by Member States until April 2024 as part of their bi-annual reporting obligations, and on developments in the implementation of the RRF until 31 August 2024. Progress in the implementation of recovery and resilience plans can be followed on the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard, an online portal the Commission set up in December 2021. You can find more information on the RRF on this page, which features an interactive map of projects financed by the RRF.

2. Commission proposes an EU Digital Travel application

The European Commission adopted two proposals to digitalise passports and identity cards, also called "EU Digital Travel application", for individuals travelling to and from the Schengen area.

Both EU citizens and non-EU citizens are subject to systematic checks when crossing the EU's external borders. Currently, these checks are made physically at the border crossing point. With almost 600 million crossings recorded in 2023 only, there is a need to speed up border controls and ensure smoother travel, while at the same time maintaining a high level of security, ensuring that each and every traveller is checked. The Commission is therefore proposing a common framework for the use of digital travel credentials and a new 'EU Digital Travel application, for travellers to create and store their digital travel credentials. The new rules will make traveling to and within the Schengen area easier and more secure.

New rules introducing digital passports and ID cards

Digital travel credentials are a digital version of the data stored on passports and identity cards. The data includes information contained in the chip of the passport or ID card, including the facial image of the holder, but not fingerprint. A digital travel document can be stored on a mobile phone. It will be completely voluntary for travellers to ask for or use this digital version of their documents, free of charge. This will: allow smoother and faster border crossings for travellers: Both EU and non-EU citizens will be able to submit their digital passports or ID cards ahead of the journey, for an advance border check, when travelling to or from the EU; facilitate freedom of movement and reduce administrative burdens for EU citizens: Member States may allow EU citizens to use digital identity cards for registration and identification. For example, they could be used for registration with national authorities when taking up residence in another Member State, or to facilitate access to electronic identification schemes; improve the efficiency of border controls: Border management authorities will be able to focus their time and resources on detecting cross-border criminals and migrant smuggling thanks to advance checks made possible by digital travel credentials; improve the security of the Schengen area: Digital travel credentials will make it easier for authorities verify the authenticity and integrity of travel documents, making it harder for fraudsters to use fake documents or pass through borders undetected.

The EU Digital Travel application

The EU Digital Travel application will be developed by the Commission, with the support of eu-LISA, and deployed at EU level. The application will be available for all EU and non-EU citizens with a biometric passport or EU identity card travelling to or from the Schengen Area. Thanks to the EU Digital Travel application, travellers will be able to: create digital travel credentials, using their passports or, in the case of EU citizens, their identity cards; submit travel plans and documents to the border authorities in advance, reducing waiting times at border crossings since most checks will be completed beforehand; ensure their data is protected: The application requires user consent before processing personal data. Additionally, Member States will be required to provide border authorities with comprehensive training on data security and data protection rules before authorising them to access the data. The EU digital travel application will become available as of 2030. This will provide the possibility to store the digital travel credentials in the European Digital identity wallet.

Next steps

It is now for the Council and the European Parliament to agree on the proposals. Once adopted, in accordance with the relevant procedures, the EU Digital Travel application and the necessary technical standards will be developed.

Background

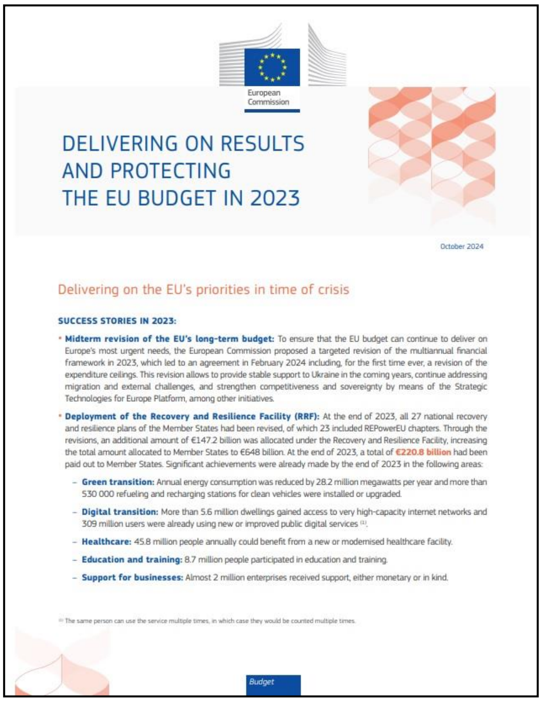
The proposals deliver on the Schengen strategy adopted in 2021, which committed to further digitalise procedures at the external borders. The proposals are also linked to the establishment of European Digital Identity Wallets where digital passports and ID cards can be stored alongside digital driving licences, medical prescriptions, and other documents. The initiative supports the Commission's 'Digital Europe' strategy and 'Digital Compass' in the framework of the Europe's Digital Decade' targets, aiming to digitalise public services and provide all Union citizens with digital identification by 2030.

3. Main achievements of the EU budget in 2023

The Commission welcomes the European Court of Auditor (ECA)'s extensive work on its Annual Report on the 2023 EU budget published on 10 October and takes note of the ECA's valuable insights as regards the regularity of the EU budget implementation.

Main achievements of the EU budget in 2023

In 2023, the EU budget continued delivering on our priorities. Under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the centrepiece of NextGenerationEU (NGEU), in 2023 Member States received payments for more than 700 fulfilled milestones and targets, including in relation to 22 growth-enhancing reforms in line with country-specific recommendations under the European Semester. Along with its NGEU the 2023 EU budget invested €159 billion (38% of its total spending) in climate-related actions for the benefit of EU citizens. This prevented, for example, around 87 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from polluting our environment annually. Moreover, the introduction of NGEU Green Bonds, which raised €49 billion by the end of 2023, has further boosted climate financing and expanded the EU sustainable finance market. Furthermore, in the current 2021-2027 budget period, by 2023, almost €15 billion were dedicated to developing high-capacity broadband and 5G networks to enhance the digital connectivity, offering citizens and businesses better access to the digital single market. Moreover, the EU budget played a vital role in supporting Ukraine in its efforts against Russia's war of aggression and contributed to its path towards the accession to the EU. By the end of 2023, the EU and its Member States had provided Ukraine and its people with nearly €85 billion in assistance. This included the disbursement of €18 billion in highly concessional loans as part of an unprecedented support package through the Macro-Financial Assistance Plus instrument. Under the European Solidarity Fund (EUSF), a tangible expression of EU solidarity with populations affected by natural disasters, over €755 million was paid out in 2023 to four Member States to support recovery and reconstruction. Finally, in 2023, the Commission dedicated €2.4 billion in humanitarian aid, including quadrupling its humanitarian aid for Palestinians effected by the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, with over €100 million.



European Commission

DELIVERING ON RESULTS AND PROTECTING THE EU BUDGET IN 2023

October 2024

Delivering on the EU's priorities in time of crisis

SUCCESS STORIES IN 2023:

- **Midterm revision of the EU's long-term budget:** To ensure that the EU budget can continue to deliver on Europe's most urgent needs, the European Commission proposed a targeted revision of the multiannual financial framework in 2023, which led to an agreement in February 2024 including, for the first time ever, a revision of the expenditure ceilings. This revision allows to provide stable support to Ukraine in the coming years, continue addressing migration and external challenges, and strengthen competitiveness and sovereignty by means of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform, among other initiatives.
- **Deployment of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF):** At the end of 2023, all 27 national recovery and resilience plans of the Member States had been revised, of which 23 included REPowerEU chapters. Through the revisions, an additional amount of €147.2 billion was allocated under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, increasing the total amount allocated to Member States to €648 billion. At the end of 2023, a total of **€220.8 billion** had been paid out to Member States. Significant achievements were already made by the end of 2023 in the following areas:
  - **Green transition:** Annual energy consumption was reduced by 28.2 million megawatts per year and more than 530 000 refueling and recharging stations for clean vehicles were installed or upgraded.
  - **Digital transition:** More than 5.6 million dwellings gained access to very high-capacity internet networks and 309 million users were already using new or improved public digital services [1].
  - **Healthcare:** 45.8 million people annually could benefit from a new or modernised healthcare facility.
  - **Education and training:** 8.7 million people participated in education and training.
  - **Support for businesses:** Almost 2 million enterprises received support, either monetary or in kind.

[1] The same person can use the service multiple times, in which case they would be counted multiple times.

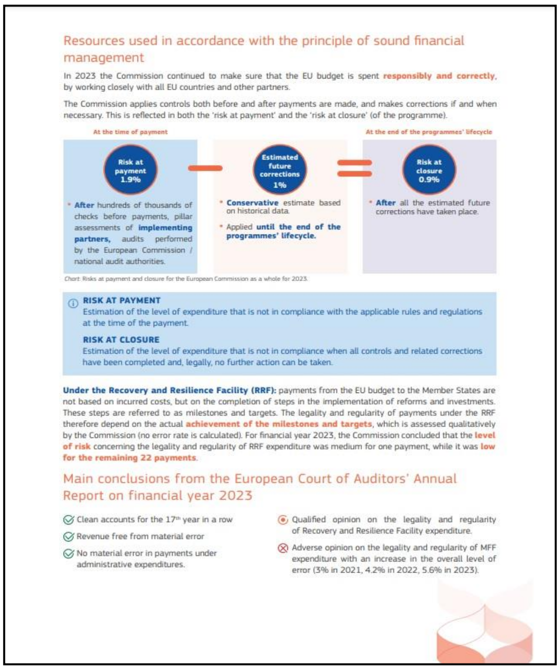
Budget

Commission's views on ECA report on the 2023 EU budget

The Commission welcomes the decision of the ECA to give the EU annual accounts a clean bill of health, for the 17th year in a row. Like in previous years, the ECA found that the collection of the EU revenues was free from significant error. The Commission has, however, noted the ECA's negative opinion on the regularity of spending under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its qualified opinion on the RRF. The Commission recalls that the estimated level of error reported by the ECA is not a measure of fraud, inefficiency, or waste – but are rather administrative irregularities which do not impact the end-result of a project and are usually recovered or corrected. At the same time, the Commission agrees that improvements are needed, and it is acting accordingly. Furthermore, given their different respective roles as external auditor and manager of the EU budget, the two institutions may have differences in their methodologies to assess whether an error has taken place, and to estimate the financial impact of that error. In some cases, this can lead to different results. The Commission continues to stand ready to work closely with the ECA to further align audit methodologies and interpretation of rules, in full respect of both institutions' independence and prerogatives. For instance, the Commission agrees that improvements are needed when it comes to complex spending rules, and it is actively working on them. Both the ECA and the Commission also agree on which types of spending are most prone to spending errors, and where actions need to be taken to better protect the EU budget.

Commission actively working to better protect the budget from irregularities

Thanks to the hundreds of thousands of checks performed before and after payments are made by national authorities, other partners, and the Commission itself, the Commission is well-informed about the risks to the EU budget and can take precise actions to address them. The Commission aims to keep the final level of error below 2% once programmes are closed and all checks and corrections are completed. For 2023, this goal was met, with the estimated risk at programme closure projected to be just 0.9%, fully in line with previous year's levels. The Commission is continually enhancing its management of the EU budget. Upon a Commission's proposal, the co-legislators agreed on revised rules for the financial management of the EU budget which entered into force in September 2024. This will ensure that EU funding is more transparent, more digital and clearly reflects the Union's values. As errors often result from the complexity of the rules, the Commission is constantly striving for simplification and harmonization of spending requirements. In the area of Cohesion Policy funding, for example, the legal framework applicable for the 2021-2027 spending period offers a comprehensive set of simplification measures. Furthermore, the Commission also maintains close collaboration with those implementing the EU budget, especially national authorities, and actively raises awareness among funding recipients through outreach efforts. Lastly, the Commission will also continue to use its preventive and corrective tools, such as interrupting and suspending payments and applying financial corrections. In 2023, the Commission and Member States implemented preventive and corrective measures for an amount of €3.8 billion.



Background

The publication of the Annual Report of the ECA, and the presentation of the Integrated Financial Accountability Reporting (IFAR) package to the European Parliament, kicks off the annual 'discharge procedure', taking stock of the financial management and achievements of the EU budget in 2023. The IFAR package includes five reports from the Commission that offer a comprehensive look at how the EU budget was used. These reports are crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability about the use of taxpayers' money. Under the discharge procedure, the European Parliament takes into consideration the IFAR package, the ECA Annual Report and any relevant ECA Special Reports, to decide whether to approve, delay, or deny the discharge on the budget. The European Commission collaborates closely with Member States and other partners to make sure the EU budget is spent efficiently, free from fraud and irregularities, and in line with the EU's policy goals to benefit citizens and achieve tangible results.

4. New rules to boost cybersecurity of EU's critical entities and networks

The Commission has adopted on 17 October the first implementing rules on cybersecurity of critical entities and networks under the Directive on measures for high common level of cybersecurity across the Union (NIS2 Directive).

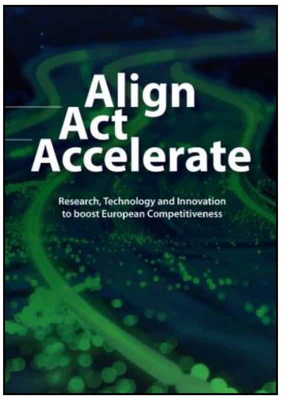
This implementing act details cybersecurity risk management measures as well as the cases in which an incident should be considered significant and companies providing digital infrastructures and services should report it to national authorities. This is another major step in boosting the cyber resilience of Europe's critical digital infrastructure. The implementing regulation adopted on 17 October will apply to specific categories of companies providing digital services, such as cloud computing service providers, data centre service providers, online marketplaces, online search engines and social networking platforms, to name a few.

For each category of service providers, the implementing act specifies when an incident is considered significant, to whom it needs to be reported and in which timeframe. This adoption of the implementing regulation coincides with the deadline for Member States to transpose the NIS2 Directive into national law. As of 18 October 2024 all Member States must apply the measures necessary to comply with the NIS2 cybersecurity rules, including supervisory and enforcement measures. The implementing regulation will be published in the Official Journal in due course and enter into force 20 days thereafter.

Background

The first EU-wide law on cybersecurity, the NIS Directive, came into force in 2016 and helped to achieve a common level of security of network and information systems across the EU. As part of its key policy objective to make Europe fit for the digital age, the Commission proposed the revision of the NIS Directive in December 2020. After entering in force in January 2023, Member States had to transpose the NIS2 Directive into national law by 17 October 2024. The NIS2 Directive aims to ensure a high level of cybersecurity across the Union. It covers entities operating in sectors that are critical for the economy and society, including providers of public electronic communications services, ICT service management, digital services, wastewater and waste management, space, health, energy, transport, manufacturing of critical products, postal and courier services and public administration. The Directive strengthens security requirements imposed on the companies and addresses the security of supply chains and supplier relationships. It streamlines reporting obligations, introduces more stringent supervisory measures for national authorities, as well as stricter enforcement requirements, and aims at harmonising sanctions regimes across Member States. It will help increase information sharing and cooperation on cyber crisis management at a national and EU level.

5. Independent experts call for increased investment



More excellent research, impactful innovation and technology scale-ups are needed to make Europe more globally competitive, secure and sustainable.

These are among the twelve expert recommendations presented on 16 October to the Commission to strengthen Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme, and its successor. The recommendations have been drafted by an independent group of 15 leading experts chaired by Manuel Heitor, former secretary of state for science, technology and higher education of Portugal. Their report, entitled “Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness”, highlights the European added value of the EU framework programme for research and innovation (R&I), and puts forward twelve recommendations:

1. Adopt a whole-of-government approach to align research and innovation with the EU strategy for competitiveness and a clean, digital economy.
2. Boost Europe's global competitiveness by fostering impactful research, innovation and scale-ups through a stronger framework programme.

3. Deliver European added value via a portfolio of actions focused on competitive excellence, industrial competitiveness, societal challenges and a strong research and innovation ecosystem.
4. Establish an experimental unit to launch disruptive innovation programmes with fast funding options, such as “ARPA-style” initiatives.
5. Strengthen competitive excellence by expanding funding for European Research Council, European Innovation Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions to attract top talent.
6. Create an Industrial Competitiveness and Technology Council to enhance industrial research and innovation investment and ensure relevance to strategic autonomy.
7. Form a Societal Challenges Council to address key societal issues, align with EU strategic priorities and engage with philanthropy and civil society.
8. Build an inclusive and attractive EU R&I ecosystem by securing long-term investments, fostering university alliances and encouraging Member States' co-investment.
9. Simplify the programme by reducing administrative burdens, embracing agile funding and streamlining application processes.
10. Develop an innovation procurement programme to stimulate industrial scaling through demand-driven solutions.
11. Approach international cooperation with a nuanced strategy, tailoring partnerships to specific domains and global geopolitical considerations.
12. Optimise dual-use technology innovation by managing civilian and military R&I programmes separately, leveraging benefits for national security and civilian needs.

Building on these recommendations, the independent experts are calling for an increased, more focused and protected budget. According to their analysis, this investment would position Europe as a leader in international R&I collaboration and governance.

Background

The high-level group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe brought together 15 experts from across Europe with a wide range of backgrounds. The group was tasked in December 2023 to provide concrete recommendations to the Commission on how to enhance the EU R&I programme in the short and longer term. The recommendations build on extensive stakeholder consultations and a wide body of evidence and analysis, including external studies.

6. Annual foreign direct investments report

EU Member States and the Commission are strengthening their cooperation on identifying and addressing investments from third countries that threaten EU security or public order, according to a Commission report published on 17 October.

The 4th Annual Report on the screening of foreign direct investments (FDI) into the Union observes that the number of notifications to the EU cooperation mechanism increased by 18% since the EU framework was put in place in 2020. The Report highlights the increased levels of attention being paid to the risks that certain investments from third countries may present to the security or public order in the EU and/or to EU projects and programmes of common interest. In addition, it showcases the growth in the number of Member States now screening foreign investment. The European Commission's recourse to detailed assessment has remained targeted and limited to exceptional cases: of the 488 cases notified in 2023, the vast majority (92%) were closed by the Commission within 15 days, while just 8% required a so-called second phase involving a more detailed security assessment. The EU continues to be an open global investment environment. This is further confirmed by a positive cumulative trend of foreign investment into the EU over the past decade, the Report shows. Screening has been particularly relevant in 2023 in the face of heightened geopolitical tensions and growing awareness of issues linked to economic security, which culminated in a Joint Communication setting out the EU's first Economic Security Strategy.

National screening mechanisms, collective security

Over the past four years, the European Commission has successfully encouraged Member States to adopt and implement effective national screening mechanisms to protect the collective security of the EU, its Member States, and EU projects and programmes of common interest. After six more Member States enacted relevant legislation in 2023, 24 EU Member States currently have screening mechanisms in place, with the remaining three (Croatia, Cyprus and Greece) having taken concrete steps to this effect. As a result, more than 1,500 transactions have been notified by Member States to the EU cooperation mechanism since the EU Regulation's entry into force in 2020. At the same time, the Report notes that not all Member States are notifying transactions at the same rate – in 2023, 85% of notifications came from seven Member States. Over the first years of operation and undertaken comprehensive evaluation, it has been possible to identify shortcomings of the current system. These are addressed by the Commission in its legislative proposal presented in January 2024 for the revision of the Regulation. The proposal, currently in the hands of the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, would make it mandatory for all EU Member States to have a FDI screening mechanism in place and would introduce a minimum level of harmonization of national screening laws across the EU, as well as ensure procedural improvements to the cooperation mechanism.

Background

The FDI Screening Regulation, which entered into force in October 2020, allows EU Member States to review foreign investments in their territory on grounds of security and public order, and also to take measures to address specific risks. The Regulation has also created a cooperation mechanism between the European Commission and Member State screening authorities, allowing for the exchange of information on individual FDI transactions in one Member State to identify possibly security or public order risks for other Member States or for EU-level programmes.

7. Commission shows online consumer protection laws benefits

The Commission published the findings of the Digital Fairness Fitness Check, which evaluates whether the current EU consumer protection laws are fit for purpose to ensure a high level of protection in the digital environment.

The Fitness Check covered three core Directives: the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, the Consumer Rights Directive, and the Unfair Contract Terms Directive. The results show that these rules remain both relevant and necessary to ensure a high level of consumer protection and effective functioning of the Digital Single Market. However, it also shows that consumers behave differently online than offline. Moreover, technological developments and increased tracking of online behaviour enable businesses to more effectively persuade consumers online. This highlights the need for rules that are better adapted to the specific harmful practices and challenges that consumers face online.

Key findings

- The three Directives have provided a degree of regulatory certainty and consumer trust to support the development of a diverse digital market, but consumers do not always feel fully in control of their online experience due to practices such as: dark patterns in online interfaces that can unfairly influence their decisions, for example, by putting unnecessary pressure on consumers through false urgency claims; addictive design of digital services that pushes consumers to keep using the service or spending more money, such as, gambling-like features in video games; personalised targeting that takes advantage of consumers' vulnerabilities, such as showing targeted advertising that exploits personal problems, financial challenges or negative mental states; difficulties with managing digital subscriptions, for example, when companies make it excessively hard to unsubscribe; problematic commercial practices of social media influencers. Some of these practices may already go against existing EU consumer law and other EU law, for example, the Digital Services Act and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.
- **Consumers are losing time and money** – the various harmful commercial practices online cost EU consumers at least €7.9 billion per year. At the same time, the cost for businesses to comply with EU consumer law is much lower, not exceeding €737 million per year.
- **Fragmented national laws:** The effectiveness of EU consumer protection is undermined by insufficient enforcement, legal uncertainty, the increasing risk of regulatory

fragmentation across Member States' national approaches, and the lack of incentives for businesses to aim for the highest standard of protection.

The Fitness Check shows that we need to take further action to make the digital environment fair for consumers. This includes tackling the most harmful practices such as dark patterns. Increased legal certainty could prevent regulatory fragmentation and promote fair growth. There is scope for simplifying existing rules, without compromising the level of protection. It is also fundamental to ensure the coherent application and effective enforcement of EU consumer law and the EU digital rulebook, including the Digital Services Act, which prohibits several unfair practices on online platforms. All of this will be on the Commission's agenda in the upcoming mandate.

Next steps

The Fitness Check provides a state of play and points to areas for improvement, which can be further analysed and built upon in the future. It does not establish recommendations on the exact format and content of future Commission action. The Commission consulted the public through several consultation activities, including a Call for Evidence and a public consultation. In the mission letter addressed to Commissioner-designate for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law, President von der Leyen refers to the need to develop “a Digital Fairness Act to tackle unethical techniques and commercial practices related to dark patterns, marketing by social media influencers, the addictive design of digital products and online profiling especially when consumer vulnerabilities are exploited for commercial purposes”.

Background

EU consumers are among the most protected in the world, online and offline. EU consumer protection laws aim at empowering consumers to play an active role and fully benefit from the Digital Single Market. In response to the emerging concerns about the lack of digital fairness for consumers, the Commission announced in the New Consumer Agenda that it will analyse whether additional legislation or other action is needed in the medium-term in order to ensure equal fairness online and offline. In 2022, the Commission launched a Fitness Check of EU consumer law on digital fairness in order to evaluate the situation.

8. EU Deforestation Regulation implementation

The Commission publishing additional guidance documents and a stronger international cooperation framework to support global stakeholders, Member States and third countries in their preparations for the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation.

Given feedback received from international partners about their state of preparations, the Commission also proposes to give concerned parties additional time to prepare. If approved by the European Parliament and the Council, it would make the law applicable on 30 December 2025 for large companies and 30 June 2026 for micro- and small enterprises. Since all the implementation tools are technically ready, the extra 12 months can serve as a phasing-in period to ensure proper and effective implementation. The guidance presented will provide additional clarity to companies and enforcing authorities to facilitate the application of the rules, coming on top of the Commission's continuous support for stakeholders since the law's adoption. At the same time, the Commission recognises that three months ahead of the intended implementation date, several global partners have repeatedly expressed concerns about their state of preparedness, most recently during the United Nations General Assembly week in New York. Moreover, the state of preparations amongst stakeholders in Europe is also uneven. While many expect to be ready in time, thanks to intensive preparations, others have expressed concerns. Given the EUDR's novel character, the swift calendar, and the variety of international stakeholders involved, the Commission considers that a 12-month additional time to phase in the system is a balanced solution to support operators around the world in securing a smooth implementation from the start. With this step, the Commission aims to provide certainty about the way forward and to ensure the success of the EUDR, which is paramount to address the EU's contribution to the pressing global issue of deforestation. The extension proposal in no way puts into question the objectives or the substance of the law, as agreed by the EU co-legislators.

Additional guidance for effective and pragmatic implementation

The guidance documents presented make good on the Commission's commitment to provide a reference of the recent collaborative efforts, involving stakeholders and competent authorities, to help ensure uniform interpretation of the law. Key areas covered include details on the functionalities of the Information System, updates on penalties, and clarifications on critical definitions such as 'forest degradation', 'operator' in the scope of the law, and 'placing on the market'. There is also further guidance on traceability obligations. The guidance is divided into 11 chapters covering a diverse range of issues such as legality requirements, timeframe of application, agricultural use, and clarifications on the product scope. All of these are supported by tangible scenarios. In addition, the latest FAQ, features over 40 new additional answers to address questions raised by a diverse range of stakeholders from around the world. Micro- and small companies benefit from a lighter regime, which is also detailed on a new dedicated webpage. Information for the general public on the Commission website has also been updated and reorganised for easier understanding by all.

Transparent country benchmarking and stepped up cooperation with international partners

The Commission publishing the principles of the methodology it will apply to the EUDR benchmarking exercise, serving to classify countries as low, standard, or high risk, aiming to facilitate operators' due diligence processes and enable competent authorities to effectively monitor and enforce compliance. Following the methodology applied, a large majority of countries worldwide will be classified as "low risk". This will give the opportunity to focus collective efforts where deforestation challenges are more acute. To help ensure smooth implementation worldwide, the Commission and the European External Action Service are presenting a strategic framework for international cooperation engagement on the EU Deforestation Regulation. It identifies five priority areas of action such as support to smallholders, eight key principles such as a human rights-centred approach, and several implementation tools including dialogue and financing. This comprehensive framework will aim to promote a just and inclusive transition to deforestation-free agricultural supply chains leaving no one behind. While the EU will step up dialogue and support even further, the partnership's success will also rest on EU partners' commitment to deliver on global targets to halt deforestation.

Completion of the dedicated IT system

The Information System where businesses will register their due diligence statements is ready to start accepting registrations in early November and for full operation in December. Operators and traders will be able to register and submit due diligence statements even before the law's entry into application. Since the system's pilot testing with 100 companies conducted in January, the Commission put in place several additional measures, including: creating a single point of contact for IT support for stakeholders; development of an interface that allows machine-to-machine connections to the system, without the need for manual data input; more than 250 private stakeholders are developing this feature on their side; support to test the geolocation files of stakeholders and providing feedback; videos and detailed multilingual user instructions about the system; training for interested stakeholders: the first session took place in Brussels on 25 September, and online training will take place from second half of October.

Next steps

With this actions, the Commission considers that the necessary conditions for smooth implementation will be fulfilled: this additional guidance documents will complete the wealth of support available to producers, trading organisations and partner countries in their preparations to implement the regulation, while the Commission remains committed to continue dialogue and engagement as necessary; companies and other stakeholders are invited to complete their connections, testing and training for the use of the IT System; the Commission is intensifying dialogues with most concerned countries, which will feed into the speedy finalisation of the country benchmarking system through a proposed Implementing Act by 30 June 2025; the Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to adopt the proposal for an extended implementation period by the end of the year.

Background

The EU Deforestation Regulation aims to ensure that a set of key goods placed on the EU market will no longer contribute to deforestation and forest degradation in the EU and elsewhere in the world. Deforestation and forest degradation are important drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss — the two key environmental challenges of our time. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that 420 million hectares of forest — an area larger than the European Union — were lost to deforestation between 1990 and 2020. Based on 2015–2020 deforestation rates, every hour the world is losing over nine times the forest surface of Brussels' Bois de la Cambre, or every minute three times the surface of the Parc Léopold bordering the European Parliament in Brussels. The co-legislators adopted the law in 2023, with overwhelming majorities both in the Parliament and in the Council. As part of the preparation of its 2021 proposal, the Commission conducted a public consultation which attracted the second largest number of responses (almost 1.2 million), with the vast majority of stakeholders supporting an ambitious approach including mandatory due diligence.

9. Sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe

The European Commission has adopted a Communication on "building sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe," taking stock of the progress achieved in the field of International Partnerships.

Over the past five years, EU has revamped its model of cooperation in response to the evolving geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape and global challenges, notably the growing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU has moved away from donor-recipient dynamics towards mutually beneficial partnerships, which bring benefits to the local populations and strengthen resilience at home and abroad. This approach was embodied in the Global Gateway investment strategy launched in 2021. By investing in partnerships, the EU seeks to position itself in an increasingly contested international environment. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union institutions, EU Member States, and European development financial institutions first pushed for joint responses in a Team Europe spirit, which has since become an integral part of the EU's external action toolbox allowing the EU to increase the scale, impact, and visibility of its actions. Bringing on board also the private sector, Team Europe approach has been the main delivery mechanism of the EU's Global Gateway investment strategy. Global Gateway is expected to mobilise up to €300 billion is sustainable public and private investments by the year 2027. Between 2021-2023, €179 billion in investments have been mobilised in in our partner countries across the world, advancing 225 flagship projects. Out of these, €50 billion were supported by the European Commission and €129 billion were mobilised by EU Member States, the EIB and the EBRD. The Global Gateway strategy focuses on five priority areas, each backed by concrete projects across various regions. Some examples include: climate and Energy: Global Gateway supports investments in renewable energy and infrastructure, such as the green hydrogen facilities in Namibia to harness wind and solar power, as well as rare earth resources. This partnership aims to make Namibia a leader in green energy, contributing to global climate goals. The EU is supporting Costa Rica's National Decarbonisation Plan, focusing on electrifying public transport and turning the harmful Sargassum alga into an economic resource through research and collaborations in sectors like cosmetics and biomass production in the Caribbean basin; digital Transition: The EU has launched five Digital Economy Packages to foster human-centric digital growth. A key example is the Copernicus Earth Observation Programme in the Philippines, which uses satellite data for disaster risk management and improves connectivity infrastructure. The EU has also launched the EU Latin America and Caribbean Digital Alliance to boost comprehensive cooperation on digital transition, including policy dialogue on cybersecurity; transport Connectivity: To improve infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, the EU has undertaken to support large-scale projects like the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor and€ the Lobito Corridor to enhance trade routes between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Lobito Corridor will improve the connection between Angola's Lobito Port to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, whilst the Trans-Caspian project will strengthen Central Asia's role as a connectivity hub; health: The EU's Global Health Strategy, focuses on strengthening health systems and pharmaceutical supply chains, deliver better health and prevent health threats. For instance,

the Team Europe Initiative on vaccines and medicines improves access to vaccines and healthcare in Africa, including the creation of local manufacturing capacities, which is vital for boosting resilience in the face of global health challenges; education and Research: The EU has increased its investment in education from 7% to 13%, with a strong emphasis on gender equality and teacher training. The Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa addresses the teacher's gap of over 15 million additional teachers by 2030 to achieve universal primary and secondary education by then. The Communication also recounts the EU's engagement in fragile contexts and countries, where the primary objective is to address root causes of fragility and support the basic needs and livelihoods of populations, along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. The EU has scaled up work to provide a comprehensive response to address root causes of migration. The external dimension is an essential component of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, and in line with the Pact, the EU has increased engagement with countries of origin and transit. To further support SDGs, the EU has significantly strengthened its multilateral engagement with global institutions like the United Nations, the G7/G20, and International Financial Institutions to shape global policies. As part of its priorities, the EU has made substantial financial contributions to international initiatives that promote global health, education, and equality, including €700 million for the Global Partnership for Education (2021-2027), €427 million committed to the Pandemic Fund, and €300 million to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to expand access to vaccines in poorer nations. Another key achievement is the Samoa Agreement, signed in November 2023, with African, Caribbean, and Pacific States to strengthen the EU's cooperation with these regions. This agreement helps the EU to maintain its role as a champion for youth, equality, gender, and human rights.

10. Updated Recommendation on smoke-free environments

The Commission has recommended to better protect people from the effects of second-hand smoke and aerosols through the revision of the Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments.

The new initiative recommends that Member States extend smoke-free environment policies to key outdoor areas, to better protect people in the EU, particularly children and young people. These areas include outdoor recreational areas where children are likely to congregate such as public playgrounds, amusement parks and swimming pools; outdoor areas connected to healthcare and education premises; public buildings; service establishments; and transport stops and stations. The Recommendation also recommends that Member States extend smoke-free environment policies to emerging products such as heated tobacco products (HTPs) and electronic cigarettes, which increasingly reach very young users. This comes after the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlighted the negative effects of exposure to second-hand emissions from these emerging products, including significant respiratory and cardiovascular problems. The Commission is also encouraging Member States to exchange best practices and strengthen international cooperation to maximise the impact of the measures taken across the EU. The Commission will provide support through a direct grant worth €16 million from the EU4Health programme, while €80 million from the Horizon Programme has already been dedicated to reinforce tobacco and nicotine control as well as addiction prevention. The Commission will also develop a prevention toolkit to support the protection of children and young people's health. This recommendations to better protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosols are addressed to the Member States. Given that health policy is a Member State competence, they are invited to implement these recommendations through their own policies, as they see fit, i.e. taking into account their national circumstances and needs.

Background

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan set the goal of creating a "Tobacco-Free Generation" by 2040, where less than 5% of the population uses tobacco. This proposal represents another step forward in efforts to improve preventive health. It also supports the de-normalisation of the use of tobacco and emerging products. Tobacco is the leading risk factor for cancer, with more than a quarter of cancer deaths attributed to smoking in the EU, Iceland, and Norway. Deaths and other health indicators (such as heart attacks in the general population and improvements to respiratory health) have improved thanks to smoke-free environments. In particular, this Recommendation covers emerging products such as heated tobacco products (HTPs) and electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes). These products have heavily increased their market share. They are often branded with misleading claims related to their supposed safety or usefulness as smoking cessation tools. However, their potential harmful effects are serious, and their users can become addicted to nicotine as well as often ending up using both traditional tobacco and emerging products. The Recommendation also extends the coverage of smoke-free environment policies to key outdoor areas. These include public playgrounds, amusement parks, swimming pools, transport stops and stations, outdoor areas connected to healthcare and education premises, and public buildings.

11. Blue Europe 2024-2025 "Denis de Rougemont" contest

Blue Europe, a think tank focused on fostering connections between Western, Central and Eastern Europe, is pleased to announce the 2024-2025 "Denis de Rougemont" contest. This year's competition honours Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985), a Swiss writer, cultural theorist, and thinker who was a pivotal advocate for European unity and integration, promoting a vision of Europe grounded in cultural diversity, shared values, and federal cooperation. His work *Le Paysan du Danube*, through the fictional journey of a peasant from the Danube region who travels across Europe, explores the continent's rich diversity of languages, traditions, and identities while highlighting the common values that bind Europeans together. *Le Paysan du Danube* serves as an important reminder that true European unity can only be achieved by valuing both shared heritage and cultural diversity, promoting dialogue and cooperation between the West and East. In the spirit of de Rougemont's legacy, the contest aims to encourage scholarly exchanges and deepen understanding between Western and Central-Eastern Europe (CEE). This contest is open to all EU/EEA Bachelor, Master and Doctoral students, as well as recent graduates who obtained their degree in 2024. We invite scholars from Western Europe to submit articles that explore the dynamic relationships between European regions – particularly with CEE – focusing on industrial, technological, political, or cultural exchanges. Scholars from Central and Eastern Europe are encouraged to write about any aspect of CEE itself, reflecting on its unique identity, challenges, and contributions to the broader European project. Selected works will be featured on Blue Europe's website, contributing to our mission of enhancing public awareness of European issues and fostering dialogue and cooperation across the continent. We believe it is a great opportunity for scholars and young researchers to showcase their knowledge and increase their visibility. This contest is open to all EU/EEA Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral students, as well as recent graduates who obtained their degree in 2024. Proof of academic enrolment is required. While not compulsory, scholars from Western Europe are still invited to write about European relations focusing on CEE, while scholars from Central and Eastern Europe are encouraged to engage specific topics related to CEE. Individuals may submit more than one paper to the competition, but only one will be eligible to be promoted to the final round. Submissions must be original, unpublished works that have not been submitted to other competitions or journals. Authors must ensure their submissions do not infringe on the intellectual property rights of any third party. Contributions must have a minimum of 3,000 words and a maximum of 30,000 words. To be admitted to the contest and be eligible for the award, the submission must be presented in either English, French or Polish. Nevertheless, to have the paper published on the website, an English version is required. All contributions must also adhere to a formal academic style, with proper citations and references according to the Chicago Manual of Style (both Author-Date and Note-Bibliography stiles are accepted). Original articles may be submitted on any subject among the following areas: Economy and Trade, Industry and Business, Literature and Cultural Studies, Political Science and Governance, International Relations, Sociology, Law and Human Rights, Environmental Studies and Climate Policy, Innovation and Technology, Energy and Sustainability, Education and Research Collaboration, Migration and Demographic Studies, Public Policy and Administration, Regional Development and Urban Planning, Security Studies and Geopolitics. Nevertheless, contributions must deal with – at least partially – Central and Eastern Europe. For more information, make sure to check the full rules [here](). **Deadline for abstract submission: 31 January 2025**.

12. Traineeships at the Court of Auditors

The Court of Auditors is one of the institutions of the European Union, whose main task is to audit

anybody or individual managing or receiving EU funds. In particular, EU institutions and bodies, national, regional and local administrations and the final beneficiaries of EU aid. The Court of Auditors organises three internship sessions per year of practical training in its areas of competence. The traineeship may last between three and six months. The three sessions each year start on: 1 April - 30 September (of the same calendar year); 1 October of one calendar year - 31 March of the following year. An allowance of EUR 1,600 per month is provided for standard traineeships. Applicants may be admitted to a standard traineeship if they: must be nationals of an EU Member State; must have completed at least four semesters of university studies in a field related to our work; must have a very good knowledge of one official EU language and a satisfactory knowledge of a second.

Traineeships in the field of artificial intelligence

For up-to-date information on this type of traineeship, please consult the reference **site**.

Positive Action Programme for trainees with disabilities

The ECA attaches great importance to inclusion by offering opportunities for people with disabilities to do traineeships at the ECA. In addition to the standard traineeship programme, the Positive Action Programme for trainees with disabilities offers an additional pathway for those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disabilities. The ECA offers two traineeships per year to EU citizens with a recognised disability.

Applications

You can apply for standard traineeships or the Positive Action Programme for trainees with disabilities by clicking on the ‘apply’ button on the relevant **website** and filling in the appropriate form. For the Positive Action Programme for trainees with disabilities, please send your documentation as proof to ECA-DI-STAGE@eca.europa.eu by 30 November 2024, specifying “Positive Action Programme for trainees with disabilities” in the subject line. For traineeships in the field of artificial intelligence, more information will be published shortly. **Deadline: 30 November 2024**. More information can be found at the following **link**.

13. Traineeships at the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

ECHA looks for newly-qualified graduates who are willing to make a contribution to the everyday work of the Agency. There are up to 20 graduate traineeship opportunities per year in scientific fields such as chemistry, toxicology, biology, environmental science and technologies, and administrative duties such as law, communications, finance, human resources and ICT. To apply for a graduate traineeship you must: be a national of a Member State of the EU or a national of the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein). Nationals of candidate countries benefiting from a pre-accession strategy can also be accepted according to the availability of budgetary resources and the ECHAs capacity to host them. A limited number of nationals of non-Member States may also be accepted; be able to communicate in English as this is the working language of ECHA; have obtained a university degree or equivalent or engaged in graduate-level work in fields relevant ECHA. You will be invited for a telephone and/or face-to-face interview if you are selected. Trainees do not benefit from sickness insurance. Before the start of your traineeship you must prove you are covered by a sickness and accident insurance valid in Finland. Traineeships are not offered to applicants who have already been a trainee in a European institution or body, employed by a European institution or body, or worked for ECHA as an interim staff member, researcher or in house expert for more than eight weeks. Traineeships may last from three to six months and may not be extended beyond six months. The graduate trainee scheme offers a grant of approximately 1,632 euro. Trainees who continue to receive remuneration from their employer, or any other grant or allowance will only be entitled to a grant from ECHA if the amount they receive is less than the one indicated above. In this case, trainees will receive an amount equal to the difference between their income and the level of ECHA's grant. Trainees in employment must provide a declaration of remuneration, expenses and allowances signed by their employer. **Deadlines: 31st October 2024**. More information can be found at the following **link**.

14. Internship Programme at the OECD

The OECD Internship Programme is designed to bring highly qualified and motivated students with diverse backgrounds into the Organisation to work on projects linked to the Strategic Orientations of the Secretary-General and to support the corporate functions of the Organisation. Its main goal is to give successful candidates the opportunity to improve their analytical and technical skills in an international environment. Internships take place in Paris. Some internships may take place in regional offices: Berlin, Germany; Mexico City, Mexico; Tokyo, Japan; Washington DC, USA. Internships are open for students who: are enrolled in a full-time degree programme (Online courses and programmes that do not require physical attendance or other forms of academic programmes that do not award students with a degree will not be recognised as accredited programmes) for the duration of the internship in a field or discipline related to the work of the OECD; are available for a minimum internship duration of one month; have an excellent command of one of the two official languages of the OECD (English and French) and a working knowledge of, or willingness to learn, the other. Knowledge of other languages could be an advantage; have good quantitative and IT skills; have good drafting and communication skills; thrive in a multicultural and international team environment. The duration of the internship is for a period between one and six months (renewable up to a total of twelve months), on a full-time basis (40 hours per week). In exceptional circumstances, part-time internships (minimum 20 hours per week) can be organised. The OECD encourages potential interns to pursue an internship of at least four months to make the best of their internship experience at the OECD. Internship start dates will be set based on interns' availability and the OECD hiring teams' needs. Therefore, do not forget to specify your availability in your application. The OECD grants a contribution to living expenses of €1 000 per full month worked to interns located in Paris. Interns are entitled to annual leave that amounts to two and a half working days for each full month worked. Applications are always open. More information can be found at the following **link**.

15. Euro-net officially takes over as partner in "Sailing Into Opportunities"

Last month, the association EURO-NET, Europe Direct Basilicata centre, was called to replace a previous Italian partner in the project "Sailing Into Opportunities" (acronym "Sailtunities"), an initiative approved by the Lithuanian Erasmus + National Agency within the actions KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education. The association from Potenza was selected after an in-depth and specific assessment of the skills and professionalism it could guarantee in the implementation of a programme of activities in the field of robotics that, due to the ongoing defection of the previous Italian partner, a Sicilian school in Milazzo in the province of Messina, had experienced a brief period of difficulty, which was immediately resolved thanks to the activism of the Lithuanian coordinator, VsI Robotikos Mokykla, a small company from Vilnius operating in the sector and with which the organisation from Potenza is already successfully implementing another project. The initiative, aimed at high school students, intends to develop an innovative methodology to implement research conducted by robotic craft, while

providing specific skills to teachers in order to ensure the future sustainability of the adopted methodology. The project involves students aged between 13 and 19 in learning activities that stimulate creativity, develop technological, personal and social skills and increase interest in science subjects in general. At the end of the project, which consists of the development in each school involved of a prototype of a small radio-controlled PVC boat, the initiative should have involved at least 300 students from the target group (who will acquire multidisciplinary knowledge and important personal, interpersonal and communication skills by taking part in pilot courses) and at least 150 teachers from the partner organisations and those involved in other schools (who will acquire new knowledge about the methodology produced and the application of innovative pedagogies in the field of science). The other project partners, in addition to the already mentioned EURO-NET and VsI Robotikos Mokykla are the following high schools: Vilnius Joachim Lelevel Engineering Gymnasium (Lithuania), Colegiul Tehnic Gheorghe Asachi Botosani (Romania) and Kuressaare Nooruse Kool (Estonia). On 16th – 21st September 2024 (travel days included) a delegation of teachers and trainers from Lucania took place the international training in Kuressaare, Estonia. On behalf of Italy, Antonino Imbesi, head of the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, and teachers Enrico Patarino and Leonardo Martinelli, from IPIAS “G. Giorgi” in Potenza, which is cooperating with the initiative (whose Italian partner is the Potentina association EURO-NET) as the school where the activities with the students will be carried out, took part in the interesting training. Delegations from the remaining project partners also participated in Estonia. The training was dedicated to explaining in detail how to run the pilot courses for high school students envisaged in the project and aimed at developing an innovative research methodology conducted by radio-controlled robotic boats to be built by the students themselves. During the training, the three participants had the opportunity to learn all the techniques to create a small remote-controlled boat for water surveys, to actually build it and to test its use in a river. The activity conducted during the week in Estonia was very proactive and interesting, and the result was truly surprising and exciting, as can be seen in the attached photo.

16. Fourth newsletter of the “Food For Change” project

AGOSTO 2024 | NEWSLETTER N. 4

FOOD FOR CHANGE!

INCONTRO TRANSNAZIONALE IN ALMADA

La nostra partnership si è recata ad Almada, in Portogallo, per l'ultimo incontro di progetto!

A luglio, i partner si sono riuniti per l'incontro finale ad Almada (Portogallo) per discutere la promozione dei risultati del progetto e le strategie per coinvolgere i partecipanti durante gli eventi moltiplicatori. I partecipanti si sono concentrati sulla diffusione efficace dei risultati a un pubblico più ampio e sulla garanzia che il progetto raggiungesse gli indicatori stabiliti nella domanda.

Le discussioni chiave si sono concentrate sull'ottimizzazione dei canali di comunicazione, sullo sfruttamento delle partnership e sulla pianificazione di attività che avrebbero evidenziato l'impatto del progetto e favorito il coinvolgimento della comunità. L'incontro si è concluso con un consenso su misure attuabili per migliorare la visibilità e sostenere l'eredità del progetto.

Co-funded by the European Union

The fourth project newsletter was published in all partnership languages of the project “Food for Change” (acronym “FFC”), approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in Denmark within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth as action number 2022-1-DK01-KA220-YOU-000089325. The newsletter is one of the last products of the initiative in question, which will come to a definitive end at the end of this month of August, having achieved and far exceeded all the goals initially set. The newsletter describes the very last activities (TPM in Almada and Multiplier Events) carried out during the summer period by the partners of the European consortium, consisting of Crossing Borders (Denmark, project coordinator), Kainotomia & Sia Ee (Greece), Associação Asociacija ‘Aktyvus jaunimas’ (Lithuania), Associação Novo Mundo Azul (Portugal) Comparative Research Network Ev (Germany), and EURO-NET (Italy). All information on the activities carried out and the products realised in the project are available in the various languages of the partnership and in English on the official website of the initiative at the link: https://foodforchange.eu/.

17. New meeting in Romania of the “Learn STEM” project

On 5th September 2024 took place in Iasi, Romania, a new meeting in the presence of the project “Innovative Model of learning STEM in secondary schools” - acronym “Learn STEM” - an initiative approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in Turkey as action no. 2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087583. The transnational meeting in September was aimed at taking stock of the state of development of the project and its products and their progress following the European meeting held last June in Potenza, Italy, at which all the partner organisations, namely Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi (Turkey), Ingenious Knowledge GmbH (Germany) Universität Paderborn (Germany), IEK Kavalas (Greece), Liceul Tehnologiic “Haralamb Vasiliu” (Romania), Ahi Evran Anadolu Lisesi (Turkey), Yusuf Demir Bilim Ve Sanat Merkezi (Turkey) and EURO-NET (Italy), had set new training goals for school students to be achieved by the end of the summer. The project, moreover, aims to strengthen the capacity of secondary schools to promote competences in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) through innovative and interactive pedagogical methods and approaches, in particular, through the use of IoT (Internet of Things): the European partnership is working to develop a pedagogical model, a teacher training programme and an online eLearning platform. More information on the project is available at www.learnstem.eu or on the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551859486150.

18. New meeting in Spain of the “CURIKIDS” project

On 2nd – 3rd September 2024 took place hosted by the Spanish partner AIJU, in Ibi, a small village in the province of Alicante, a new meeting of the project “Integrated STEM Education with an Interactive Digital Library for Curious Kids” (acronym “CURIKIDS”), an initiative approved by the Erasmus Plus National Agency in Turkey as ref. no. 2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000086836 within the framework of the Erasmus Plus KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education programme. For the EURO-NET association (Europe Direct Basilicata centre), Dr Alessia Di Tolla (in attendance) and Dr Andrea D'Andrea (online) attended the event. The meeting focused on the verification of the storytelling of the many games envisaged in the project that the partners Akdeniz University (Turkey), UNIBA - University of Bari Aldo Moro (Italy), Antalya Il Milli Egitim Mudurlugu (Turkey), and COFAC (Portugal) prepared. These stories will now be verified by the entire partnership and will be finalised so that the technical members of the partnership (especially EURO-NET and AIJU) can develop all the planned games. More information on the project and its many activities can be found at: https://curikids.eu/.

19. Last meeting in Wadowice of the “Speak It Up” project

Took place at the in Poland, in Wadowice (known to most as the birthplace of Pope John Paul II), on 9th and 10th September, the last transnational meeting planned 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 no. 2022-1-SE02-KA220-YOU-000086337 under the Erasmus Plus programme KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth). The meeting in Poland was dedicated to reviewing the work done so far and planning the last project activities, which formally should end at the end of October 2024. All partners of the European consortium, i.e. Internationella Kvinnoföreningen (Sweden - coordinator of the initiative), 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) presented a report on the activities implemented in the project and aimed at improving, through a process of non-formal education, the ability of young people to speak in public in democratic processes and all other related activities. More information about the entire Erasmus Plus project can be found at the following link: https://speakitupproject.eu/.

20. Intermediate report for the "WARRIOR" project

These days, partners of the project "Warrior`s Values: Effective Defence against Fakes and Frauds", of which the Potentina association EURO-NET is the lead partner, are busy drafting the interim report of activities. The Italian association requested all of its project partners - Ukrainian Center of the Future (Ukraine), InnoVed (Greece); Foundation International Center of Dialogue, Innovations and Future (Poland), Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (Germany) - to produce the necessary reporting documentation to be developed and submitted to the Italian Erasmus + National Agency for Youth. The "WARRIOR" project, this is the acronym of the initiative developed, was in fact approved and financed in Italy by the ANG within the Erasmus+ KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth programme as ref. no. 2023-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000153640. The project, more details and information on which can be found on the official website https://warriorproject.eu/it/home-it/, is aimed at providing youth workers and young people with an educational manual specifically designed to strengthen the ability to detect false information and manipulation and to train young people to recognise fake news as well as to improve the digital skills of youth workers to promote the fight against fake news and manipulation through social media.

21. National Meeting of the Europe Direct network in Catania

On 13th – 16th October 2024 took place in Catania, the National Meeting of the Italian Europe Direct network. The meeting, hosted by the European Commission's Representation in Italy, was attended by about 100 delegates from the E.C.'s official information centres (Europe Direct centres and European Documentation Centres) distributed throughout Italy. The meeting, developed in presence, was also attended by the Director of the Europe Direct Basilicata centre, Antonino Imbesi. During the event, all the most important actions that the Commission is developing in the last period and the communication priorities for the coming year 2025 and those planned for the next five years were discussed. The national meeting was addressed by Elena Grech (Acting Head of the European Commission Representation in Italy, after Antonio Parenti moved to head DG SANTE in Brussels) and Alessandro Giordani (Deputy Director Networks in the Member States DG COMM). During the proceedings, which were attended by senior officials

from the European Commission and officials and parliamentarians from the European Parliament, there were also in-depth discussions on countering disinformation, cybersecurity, and climate and energy issues.

22. Summer activities in the "Youth Eco-Activism in the EU" project

During the summer period, the Youth Europe Service organised several youth workshops as part of "Youth Eco-Activism in the EU" (acronym "YEAEU"), an initiative approved in France by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency as project no. 2023-1-FR02-KA220-YOU-000159007. During these workshop meetings, a focus was developed on what people can do to improve the

devastating impact of human actions on the environment and climate change, and they were asked to organise a media campaign on the topic. In addition, the topics of the European elections were dealt with by trying to get the group of young people to focus on what they would like to see the European Parliament achieve in the next five years, and by power mapping the positions that the major political parties have taken on these issues during the election campaign, ending with the realisation of "lobbying letters" addressed to the various EP candidates. The next steps will now be to organise the second youth training, which will take place at the end of November in Portugal and in which four young people from each of the project partners will participate: Toulouse Youth Network (France - project coordinator), Hanta Educational Services Limited (Ireland), Youth Vision (Romania) and For Citizens - European Institute for Active Citizenship (Portugal). The second European training course will be aimed at raising awareness among participants of youth activism, highlighting the importance of creating new organisations and making useful use of European funds to develop shared actions.

23. Meeting in Koge of the "Green Urban Paths" project

On 26th - 27th August 2024 took place a new transnational meeting of the "Green Urban Paths" project (acronym "G&PS") was held in Koge, Denmark, which was approved within the framework of the "Erasmus Plus KA220-ADU Cooperation partnerships in adult education" programme (as

action no. 2021-1-DK01-KA220-ADU-000033665) by the competent Danish National Agency. During the meeting hosted by the Danish project coordinator (KØGE Business College), the entire partnership discussed the activities already carried out and planned future initiatives. For the Italian partner Youth Europe Service, the meeting was attended by Dr. Alessia Di Tolla and Roberta Luongo, whose work received great appreciation from all the partners, which we would like to remind you are in addition to the Danish lead partner the following organisations: TQC SRL (Italy), Comparative Research Network EV (Germany) and Associació Educativa I Cultural Blue Beehive (Spain). The "Green Urban Paths" project (whose conclusion has been officially extended to 27/12/2024) is addressed to operators, educators and mediators who wish to know, understand and support the dynamics for the development of innovative, dynamic and attractive sustainable tourism paths, capable of making the territory highly green and intends to implement the creation of paths to improve tourism skills, improving their accessibility in adult education, using new generation digital products (Apps and platforms) combined with theatrical storytelling to develop products capable of promoting environmentally friendly solutions in the partner cities. More information on the project can be found at the following link: https://www.greenurbanpaths.com/.

24. New meeting in Riga of the "Games4Green" project

On 17th September 2024 took place the new transnational meeting of the partners of the project "Learning serious video game coding for green awareness" (acronym "Games4Green") of which both the Basilicata Chamber of Commerce and the Youth Europe Service association are Italian partners. The project meeting took place in Riga, Latvia, and was hosted by Rigas Tehniska Universitate. The initiative was financed by the German National Agency Erasmus Plus within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme within the KA220-VET actions, i.e. in cooperative partnerships directed towards vocational training as ref. no. 2022-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000085499. The European meeting enabled the various members of the consortium to review the progress made since the last meeting in Spain and to plan the planned seminars. The partnership developing this interesting initiative, in addition to the two Lucanian organisations mentioned above and the Latvian university, also includes Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH (project coordinator - Germany), InnoVED (Greece) and Associació Educativa i Cultural Blue Beehive (Spain).

25. Multiplier event and last meeting of the "Ogres only exist in fairy tales"

On 14th September 2024 took place in Salandra (Italy) during the Festival "Storie Parallele" the multiplier event of 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. During the event, which was attended by a large and enthusiastic audience, the staff of the FARGO Association presented the project, activities and work carried out with young people that led to the production of a short film entitled "Vis Amour", entirely developed by the group of young people participating in the European initiative. "*It was hard work* - said Nicola Ragone, President of the Lucania association, coordinator of the entire project - *but we are all very satisfied, because the end result was appreciated by everyone. Moreover, working with young people and alongside top professionals such as Antonino Imbesi and Luigi Vitelli, allowed the young people involved to gain fundamental experience for their future and careers.*" The screening was also attended by a delegation from the project's Polish partner, Euro-Idea Fundacja Spoleczno-Kulturalna, who also presented the results of their work to the large audience gathered. Soon the third short film, the one by the German partner, Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH, will also be ready and all three shorts made in this beautiful youth project will be uploaded on the initiative's website and also publicised on social channels in order to promote an open and as participative as possible debate on the issue of violence against young people. In October took place in Bonn, Germany, the last transnational meeting of the project it served the partners and the coordinator to take stock of the many activities developed and the last actions still to be completed, before the final report is drawn up (the project ends at the end of October). The meeting in Germany, which was hosted by the Erasmus partner ME Academy gGmbH, was attended by both a delegation from the Italian lead association and the Polish Euro-Idea Fundacja Spoleczno-Kulturalna. During the meeting, the European initiative's website was also officially presented, which contains the various short films developed by specially trained groups of young people in the three consortium member countries.

26. Final meeting in Linz, Austria for the "RESCUE" project

On 2nd - 4th October 2024 took place in Linz, Austria, the last meeting of the project "Raise your voice against Plastic", acronym "RESCUE", an initiative approved in Austria by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency, as action no. 2022-1-AT01-KA220-YOU-000086418, within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth. The project partners are Sudwind Verein Fur Entwicklungsp Olitik Und Globale Gerechtigkeit (Austria - coordinator of the entire project), Jugend-& Kulturprojekt EV (Germany), Kainotomia & Sia EE (Greece), Stowarzyszeni E Centrum Wspierania Edukacji I Przedsiebiorcz Osci (Poland), Youth Europe Service (Italy) and Cuiablue OÜ (Estonia), discussed the activities carried out and the last initiatives to be developed before the end of the partnership. In addition to the project delegates, the meeting was attended by young people from Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland and Greece, who carried out a joint environmental campaign, engaging both in the creation of the materials and then going out among the people to promote the important message. The meeting, which was attended by delegations of one leader and two young people from each partner, was well hosted and organised by the Austrian organisation Sudwind Verein Fur Entwicklungsp Olitik Und Globale Gerechtigkeit, the coordinator of the entire project. For the Youth Europe Service association of Potenza, two young people from the Youth Forum of the regional capital city, Pierangelo Rossano and Francesco Iacovino, participated as activists. Accompanied by Antonino Imbesi, they took part in all the activities of the Austrian event, working hard to successfully promote the campaign against the excessive use of plastic. Both were very happy with their experience in Austria and committed to developing new initiatives in Basilicata as well, as they are both convinced that it is extremely necessary for young people to get more involved in environmental protection actions. More information on the RESCUE project can be found at https://rescue.erasmus.site/e-learning/green-portal/.

27. Training in Bonn of the "EQUAL SciTech" project

On 6th - 10th October 2024 took place in Bonn, Germany, the transnational training (aimed at staff of partner organisations and teachers of interested schools) of the project "EQUAL SciTech: promoting gender equality in Science and Techonology", acronym "EQUAL SciTech", an initiative approved, by the competent Erasmus Plus National Agency in Portugal, as action no. 2022-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000088149, within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education. The course, hosted by the German partner Erasmus ME Academy gGmbH, was attended by delegations from all the partners, namely Agrupamento de Escolas de àguas Santas (project coordinator - Portugal), Geoclube - Associação Juvenil de Ciência, Natureza e Aventura (Portugal), I.I.S. "G. Fortnato" di Rionero in Vulture (Italy), Youth Europe Service (Italy) and Sredno opstinsko uciliste Pero Nakov (North Macedonia). For the Youth Europe Service association, the training course was attended by Dr. Luigi Vitelli and professors Simona Laguardia and Maria Stella Carlomagno, specially authorised by the far-sighted prof. ssa Daniela Novelli, Headmaster of the Istituto Comprensivo Statale "Domenico Savio" in Potenza, who will benefit from the products developed by the project and will be able to take advantage of the skills acquired by their trainee teachers during the initiative, which is aimed at improving the interest, commitment and results of young female students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, combating the stereotypes still present in society and encouraging girls to choose a future in STEM during their school career. More information on the project and its activities can be found on the official project website at https://equalscitech.eu/.