



EU Policy Updates Note

04 / June – September 2024



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EU Policy Updates Note 4

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1. Introduction

This **Note** provides an overview of **relevant EU policy developments** in the four domains covered by the DignityFIRM project taking place between June and September 2024. In June, the European Parliament (EP) elections saw a consolidation of **right-wing forces with stronger anti-migration agendas**. EU priorities for the next political cycle, as outlined in the Council's [Strategic Agenda for 2024-2027](#) and [Von der Leyen's Political Guidelines](#) for the next Commission, place emphasis on **border control and returns**, as well as **sustainable agriculture** and **supporting farmers**. Additional developments covered in this Note include the [extension of the Temporary Protection Directive](#) (TPD) for Ukrainian refugees and [advancements in the negotiation](#) of the **Victims' Rights Directive**, while efforts to promote social sustainability and fair competition in the agri-food sector also continued. The next Notes will cover further legislative developments, including on the [EU Talent Pool](#) (see [Note n. 2](#)), and include in-depth looks into the mandates of the **new European Commissioners**. Von der Leyen's pick for Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration is [Magnus Brunner](#) from Austria (European People's Party, EPP), while [Christophe Hansen](#) from Luxembourg (EPP) is the designated Commissioner of Agriculture. The EP will need to give its greenlight to the new Commission after the hearings of the designated Commissioners by the relevant EP Committees, with the process expected to be completed by [December](#).

2. EU Developments

The European Parliament leans to the right after the 2024 elections

After the June 2024 elections, the power balance in the EP shifted to the [right](#), although [pro-EU groups](#) still hold the [majority](#). The centre-right **EPP** and the centre-left **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)** remain the [biggest and second biggest groups](#) respectively. Liberals from Renew Europe and the Greens saw their weight [decrease](#) instead. Meanwhile **Patriots for Europe**, a newly-formed [far-right group](#), now represents the [third largest group](#). The anti-immigration **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)** also increased its presence and is widely regarded as the [new kingmaker](#) in an ever [more fragmented EP](#). This could make it harder to form [large majorities](#), stall [legislative progress](#), and result in a [harder stance on migration](#). The [Parliament's Committees](#), whose Chairs were elected in July, will also play a role in setting agendas in this context. The [Agriculture and Rural Development \(AGRI\) Committee](#), chaired by an [MEP](#) from the ECR group, will likely be a battleground over protecting the **interests of farmers**. The [Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs \(LIBE\) Committee](#), now chaired by an [MEP](#) from EPP who previously worked on victims' rights, and the [Employment and Social Affairs \(EMPL\)](#) with a [Chair](#) from the Left group, will instead be responsible for files having implications for **migrant workers' rights**.

Priorities in the new cycle include reducing irregular migration and sustainable agriculture

At the [June European Council](#), Member States agreed to a new [Strategic Agenda](#) that should [guide their actions](#) in the new political cycle. Shortly after, in July, Ursula von der Leyen presented her [Political Guidelines in the](#)

context of her [re-election](#) as Commission President. [Migration](#) features as a priority in both, with a focus on [reducing irregular migration](#). Connected to this, von der Leyen tasked the Home Commissioner with developing a “[new common approach](#)” on returns including to speed up return procedures. At the same time, her [Mission Letter](#) to the new Commissioner refers to the need for stronger enforcement and possible review of rules to prevent the “**exploitation of workers in Europe with an irregular status.**” This follows widely-reported [abuse](#) and even [deaths](#) of migrant agricultural workers this past summer, and calls by [CSOs](#) to address the labour exploitation of migrants. Both the Commission and the Council priorities also point to the importance of a **resilient and competitive agricultural sector** and to strengthening **the position of farmers**. The new Commissioner for Agriculture has been asked to develop a **Vision for Agriculture and Food** based on the [conclusions](#) of the [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture](#) (see [Note n. 2](#)). While the conclusions also highlighted the need for **improved working conditions**, migrant workers received little attention. Yet, further initiatives on social sustainability could stem from this action (see below on the CMO Regulation).

Council adopts decision to renew the Temporary Protection Directive

On 25 June 2024, the [Council](#) agreed to extend the [Temporary Protection Directive](#) (TPD) for a fourth year, **until 4 March 2026** (see [Note n. 2](#)). The extension provides the TPD’s [4.3 million beneficiaries](#) with **continued access to rights** in the short-term, including residence, employment and education, although some **Member States introduced limitations** in the meanwhile, including on access to [housing](#). At the same time, the [prospects](#) for an EU-wide approach beyond 2026 remain uncertain. In this context, [Member States](#) like [Poland](#) and [Italy](#) now provide Ukrainians with [options to transition out of temporary protection](#) and acquire work-based residence rights. Yet, national permits raise questions for their limited scope, stricter eligibility requirements, and [lower protection standards](#)

compared to temporary protection. According to [commentators](#), this increases the **risk of precarious residence and employment status** as well as **poor working conditions**, including in the [agriculture and hospitality](#) sectors. At the same time, while the Russia’s aggression continues, discussions are ongoing about efforts to support **Ukrainians’ voluntary return**, with some [pilot projects](#) already underway.

Council agrees its position on the proposed update to the Victims’ Rights Directive

Following the 2023 [Commission proposal](#) (see [Note n. 1](#)), the EP adopted its [negotiating position](#) on the reform of the Victims’ Rights Directive in April 2024, followed in June by the Council’s own [position. Agreement on key provisions may prove challenging.](#) with the Council and the EP holding different views. The Parliament, for example, retained the Commission’s proposal to create a **safer environment for crime reporting** by prohibiting the transfer of irregular migrants’ personal data to migration authorities, which the Council rejected. Contrary to [calls from CSOs and human rights organisations](#), if adopted, the Council’s position may discourage reporting, **limiting the added-value of the Directive’s revision**. Interinstitutional negotiations are set to begin in the [upcoming months](#), although the exact timeline remains unclear.

New Regulation on Geographical Indications may incentivise better working conditions

Following a [Commission proposal](#) from March 2022, a [new Regulation](#) on [Geographical Indications](#) (GIs) for wine, spirit drinks, and agricultural products started applying in May 2024. GIs are [distinctive markers](#) only granted to products from specific regions, with the aim of safeguarding quality, reputation and authenticity. Under the [new rules](#), it will be possible to include **social sustainability objectives as part of product specifications** to obtain certain GIs. These may include [practices](#) such as the “**improvement of working and employment conditions**, as well as collective bargaining,

social protection and safety standards”. While such elements will not feature on the label, linking social objectives to GIs **may incentivise producers to improve working conditions**, also benefitting migrant workers. Although the added value of the regulation may be limited by the [voluntary nature](#) of the new rules, producers may develop **sustainability reports** to be published by the Commission to increase visibility of their [efforts](#).

CMO Regulation and competition discussions suggest limited consensus on social sustainability

In the context of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the [common market organisation](#) (CMO) Regulation provides a framework for managing production and trade in the agricultural sector. It bans [cooperation agreements](#) that restrict competition, but includes **exemptions** for agricultural actors to enter into **agreements among themselves and other actors in the supply chain**, for example, selling products at a higher price, **to achieve higher environmental sustainability standards**, beyond mandatory requirements. In this context, the [Netherlands](#) and [Germany](#) are leading efforts at national level to promote the use of competition law tools to also pursue social sustainability objectives. These are meant to incentivise farmers to provide **safer and more secure working conditions to workers**. In the same vein, the [EP](#) expressed support for competition rules encouraging coordination between producers **to improve social sustainability**. Yet, broader political agreement on further social sustainability objectives has so far proved difficult to achieve. Reflecting this, in December 2023, the Commission published (non-binding) [guidelines](#) excluding sustainability agreements with **social objectives** from the scope of the CMO Regulation. Shortly afterwards, however, in March 2024, the Commission published an informal [non-paper](#), hinting at the possibility of exceptions for social objectives. The [Conclusions of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture](#) also include a recommendation to consider reviewing the CMO guidelines to reward farmers for their investments

into sustainability, without explicit mention of social objectives. Further developments will depend on whether the recommendation features in the [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), as well as on any concrete follow-ups to the Commission’s non-paper proposals.

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ABOUT DignityFIRM

Towards becoming sustainable and resilient societies we must address the structural contradictions between our societies' exclusion of migrant workers and their substantive role in producing our food.

www.dignityfirm.eu



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