

INFO FLASH 31/01

The European Commission has published reports on the [European Border and Coast Guard](#) and [EU Citizenship](#) and recommended that the Council allows [Member States to maintain temporary controls for another three months](#).

A conference on the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) was held on 23/01. The European Parliament adopted a [resolution on the Social Pillar](#), soon after having elected a new President, [14 vice-presidents](#) and a number of MEPs chairing committees ([here](#) is an infographic on the outcome). Social Platform also [reacted](#) to the content of the conference.

On migration, the Council of Europe urged European countries to [invest in alternatives to migrant detention](#). The European Ombudsman asked the European Commission to carry out a more thorough assessment of the human rights impact of the EU-Turkey Agreement, which was echoed in an [editorial by ECRE](#).

Relevant publications include a series of papers on migration, security and social affairs by RAND Europe and CEPS, as well as some policy notes by ECRE.

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(25/01) Managing migration along the Central Mediterranean Route - Commission contributes to Malta discussion. Ahead of the meeting of Heads of State or Government in Malta on 3 February 2017, the Commission and the High Representative/Vice-President have set out their contribution to the discussion on how to better manage migration and save lives along the Central Mediterranean route. The Commission and the High Representative/Vice-President are presenting a number of additional measures to strengthen the EU's work along this route, in particular with and around Libya. These actions are focused on fighting human smuggling and trafficking networks, helping to manage migratory flows more effectively, continuing to save lives at sea and improving the living conditions of migrants and refugees in Libya and neighbouring countries. Full press release [here](#).

(25/01) European Agenda on Migration: Commission reports on progress in making the new European Border and Coast Guard fully operational. The European Commission [has taken stock of the progress achieved](#) and the work still needed in making the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency fully operational. Three months after the launch of the Agency, important steps have been completed, including the setting up of mandatory rapid reaction pools for border guards and equipment and the launch of new pools for return intervention teams. These can be deployed in support of Member States who have the primary role and competence in reinforcing the control at the external border. Currently, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency has more than 1,550 officers deployed to support Member States at their external borders, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. While this represents the biggest pooling of

Member States' resources so far undertaken, the running operations of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency continue to be confronted with deployment gaps, and Member States need to ensure these gaps are properly filled. The joint investment and engagement of Member States in ensuring that the European Border and Coast Guard is fully operational as quickly as possible is a practical expression of the commitment of Member States to share responsibility and demonstrate solidarity in the common interest. Member States are represented on its Management Board.

(25/01) Back to Schengen: Commission proposes that the Council allows Member States to maintain temporary controls for another three months. The European Commission has recommended the Council allows Member States to maintain the temporary controls currently in place at certain internal Schengen borders in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway for a further period of three months. Despite the progressive stabilisation of the situation and the implementation of a series of measures proposed by the Commission to better manage the external borders and protect the Schengen area, the Commission considers that the conditions of the "Back to Schengen" [Roadmap](#) allowing for a return to a normally functioning Schengen area have not yet been entirely fulfilled. Despite important progress, ongoing work and the situation on the ground point towards the persistence of these exceptional circumstances. The Commission therefore finds it justified on a precautionary basis to allow the Member States concerned, and only after having examined alternative measures, to prolong the current limited internal border controls as an exceptional measure for a further limited period of three months under strict conditions. In particular, any such controls must be targeted and limited in scope, frequency, location and time to what is strictly necessary. Full press release [here](#). Q&A [here](#).

(24/01) 2017 EU Citizenship Report: Commission promotes rights, values and democracy. The European Commission [has published its third EU Citizenship Report](#) taking stock of progress since 2014 and further presenting actions to ensure citizens can fully enjoy their rights when working, travelling, studying or participating in elections. Europeans are more than ever aware of their status as citizens of the Union and the proportion of Europeans wanting to know more about their rights continues to increase. Four out of five Europeans cherish, in particular, the right to free movement that allows them to live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU (December 2016 [Eurobarometer](#)). However, a lack of awareness means EU citizens do not fully exercise their right to vote in European and local elections and many are unaware of their right to consular protection from other Member States' embassies. The 2017 EU Citizenship Report sets out the Commission's priorities in further raising awareness of these rights and making them easier to use in practice. The report is based on input from citizens through surveys and a public consultation, and focuses on four areas: 1) promoting EU citizenship rights and EU common values; 2) increasing citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU; 3) simplifying EU citizens' daily lives; 4) strengthening security and promoting equality.

(23/01) Commission prepares next steps towards European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Commission has taken a further step towards establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights with a high level conference in Brussels. Detailed proposals will follow shortly. The European Commission also announced it would co-host an EU Social Summit with Sweden later this year. More than 600 participants from Member State authorities, EU institutions, social partners and civil society, including more than 20 national Ministers and several Members of the College of Commissioners, are discussing the results of the public consultation on this [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Since the initiative's announcement by

President Juncker in September 2015, there has been a wide debate with EU authorities, Member States, social partners, civil society and citizens on the content and role of the Pillar and how to ensure fairness and social justice in Europe. Today's discussions bring this process to an end and will help the Commission prepare its proposal on the Pillar to be expected in March. At this occasion, President Jean-Claude Juncker announced today that he will host a "[Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth](#)" together with Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017. Full article [here](#).

European Parliament

(25/01) MEPs set priorities for a new impetus in development. The EU's development policy needs new impetus to tackle new climate change, migration and security challenges, Development Committee [MEPs say in a resolution voted](#). MEPs also call for better coordination and better targeting of development policy and stress that aid money must be used to eradicate poverty, not to stop refugees. Co-rapporteur Bogdan Wenta (EPP, Poland) said before the vote "The revised EU external cooperation framework creates the momentum that we have to build on. Our resolution puts the Sustainable Development Goals and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development at the very heart of the Consensus. We call for further efforts by the EU and its member states towards joint programming and efficient implementation in order to improve aid effectiveness and promote country ownership". Co-rapporteur Norbert Neuser (S&D, DE) added: "With the tough challenges we face, effective European development cooperation is more important than ever. With this resolution we make sure that our essential values guide us in our fight against poverty, and for the dignity and wellbeing of people."

(24/01) Cut cohesion policy red tape, urge Regional Development Committee MEPs. The EU Commission should table a plan in 2017 to cut delays in EU-funded projects that aim to reduce disparities among EU regions by stimulating growth and job creation, [say Regional Development Committee MEPs in a resolution voted](#). This "cohesion acceleration plan" should simplify rules and procedures so as to end delays in European Structural and Investment (ESI) funded projects and make the "e-Cohesion" management tool fully operational, said MEPs. "European Structural and Investment Funds investments help to reduce economic, social and territorial disparities within and between the European regions, as well as to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and job creation. Further delays in implementing cohesion policy programmes would jeopardise its contribution to achieving these goals and would put at risk EU's current main investment instrument", said the rapporteur and Chair of Parliament's Regional Development Committee, Iskra Mihaylova (ALDE, BG).

(19/01) European Social Rights: workers' protection needs to be extended to new jobs. All workers should have their basic rights guaranteed, whatever their form of employment and contract, [said MEPs approving their recommendations for the forthcoming proposal on the "European Pillar of Social Rights"](#). Rapporteur Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, PT) said in the morning debate: "Today, many European citizens feel unprotected in the face of global competition, the digital revolution and austerity policies. With this European Pillar of Social Rights, we aim to reactivate the EU as a protective shield: preventing child poverty, strengthening the youth guarantee, guaranteeing basic social rights also to people working in new forms of employment, and eventually introducing an EU social security card to help them keep track of their contributions to social schemes wherever they work in the single market".

(18/01) Parliament's mid-term election: 14 Vice-Presidents and 5 Quaestors elected. Following the election of the President, MEPs elected 14 Vice-Presidents in two ballots. To be elected, candidates needed to win an absolute majority of valid votes cast. The new Vice-Presidents come from six different political groups. Members also elected five Quaestors, by acclamation. Full list of elected Vice-presidents [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

Others

(25/01) FRA - Tighten fingerprinting safeguards for migrant children, suggests FRA. The proposal to revise the rules governing the EU's large-scale biometrics database, Eurodac, may jeopardise or enhance the rights of migrant children, suggests the latest Opinion from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). It examines the impact on children and suggests greater emphasis on child protection. It reveals how this particularly vulnerable group needs stronger child protection safeguards to ensure they are not coerced to give fingerprints, they understand what is happening to them and their right to asylum is not affected. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) Eurofund - Integrated dataset for European Working Conditions Survey 1991-2015 now available. An updated integrated dataset for the European Working Conditions Survey 1991-2015 [is now available to access](#) via the UK Data Service. The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). The Integrated Data File on the [UK Data Service website](#) includes all the questions which were asked over the life course of the EWCS. Main topics covered include: employment status, sectors and occupations, company size; physical environment; work intensity; working time and commuting; social environment; work-related health risks and well-being; cognitive and psychosocial factors; harassment and discrimination; skills, training and discretion; job prospects, job security and sustainability; work satisfaction; earnings; unpaid work; work-life balance. The data is available free of charge to all those who intend to use it for non-commercial purposes.

(20/01) European Agency for Safety and Health at Work - EU-OSHA launches visualisation tool on safety and health of Europe's ageing workforce. The project 'Safer and healthier work at any age' explores demographic trends, challenges, and existing strategies and policies for safe and healthy ageing at work. The findings [are now available online](#) and can be easily accessed through a user-friendly, interactive visualisation tool.

(20/01) FRA - Icy conditions threaten migrants' health. The freezing temperatures across much of Europe have placed many asylum seekers and migrants in peril as they remain in ill-equipped facilities. This is one of the main concerns from the latest summary report of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on migration-related fundamental rights in selected EU Member States. Full press release [here](#).

(19/01) FRA - Promoting child rights and professional training. The Agency gave a presentation on the contribution of European standards to implementing the UN's Child Rights Convention during a conference on the promotion of children's rights and professional training, organised by Centro de Estudos para Intervenção Social (CESIS). The presentation drew on the [Handbook on European child rights law](#), which is now available in 21 EU languages, including Portuguese. The conference highlighted the limited knowledge of the

convention among European professionals dealing with children, and the difficulties professionals encounter in implementing the convention in their daily work; they often face other 'urgent priorities' filling their time, limited human resources and training capacities. The event on 10 January in Lisbon was organised within the framework of the [THEAM project\(link is external\)](#). Press release [here](#).

(19/01) UN - UN agencies, partners launch new plan to address plight of refugees and migrants in Europe. The United Nations refugee and migration agencies along with a host of partners [unveiled a new strategy](#) and appeal to help address the challenges confronting hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants in Europe. The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, launched today by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and 72 other partners, is expected to play a key role in ensuring more efficient operations and a better coordinated response throughout 2017. The Plan seeks to complement and strengthen Governments' efforts to provide safe access to asylum and protection of refugees and migrants and accords priority to enhanced partnership and coordination. It also stresses the need for orderly and dignified migration management, and long-term solutions for refugees and migrants, including a robust relocation scheme, support to voluntary returns and reinforced alternative legal pathways to dangerous journeys, including resettlement and family reunification.

(19/01) European Ombudsman - Ombudsman: EU must continue to assess human rights impact of EU-Turkey deal. Following complaints on the issue, the European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, [has asked](#) the European Commission to carry out a more thorough assessment of the human rights impact of the EU-Turkey Agreement. Under the Agreement, concluded in March 2016, asylum seekers and migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece whose applications are then declared inadmissible are to be returned to Turkey; and Turkey is to take measures to prevent the opening up of new sea or land migration routes. The Ombudsman called on the Commission to include in its future progress reports on the implementation of the Agreement – agreed by the European Council - a separate section focusing on human rights risks and on measures to reduce them. The complainants turned to the Ombudsman after the Commission failed to reply or inadequately replied to the concerns they had expressed about the impact of the Agreement on human rights of the asylum seekers and the migrants subject to return to Turkey from Greece. Specifically, Women's Link Worldwide urged the Commission to carry out a human rights impact assessment of the Agreement, by focusing in particular on the situation of migrant women and children.

(18/01) EEAS - High Level Forum on Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hatred. The European Union, together with Canada, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United States, co-organised at the United Nations headquarters a [High Level Forum on Combating Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hatred](#) on 17 January in New York. The Forum sought to voice concerns about the rising tide of discrimination and violence specifically targeting populations of Muslim origin in Europe and worldwide and look for joint responses. The event opened with messages from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson, and representatives from the EU, the USA, Canada and the OIC. The EU was represented by Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis. The European Commission Coordinator on Combating anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, and the Coordinator of the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, Alfiyah Vaiya, also addressed the Forum. Ambassadors, civil servants and non-governmental organisations all underlined that combating discrimination and hatred against Muslims was an essential part of efforts to uphold universal human rights. The Forum's main

message was to promote diversity as a richness instead of a threat, to fight against all forms of discrimination, and to build bridges between different communities – religious and otherwise. Organisers and participants agreed states, international institutions and non-governmental organisations must work together to offer holistic responses – across entire societies – to discrimination and hatred at the international, regional and national levels.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(31/01) High time for states to invest in alternatives to migrant detention. “The use of migrant detention across Europe, whether for the purpose of stopping asylum seekers and other migrants entering a country or for removing them, has long been a serious human rights concern.” says Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe [Commissioner for Human Rights](#), in his latest Human Rights Comment published today. “I have repeatedly spoken out against the pan-European trend of criminalisation of asylum seekers and migrants, of which detention is a key part. Detention is a far-reaching interference with migrants’ right to liberty. Experts have confirmed its very harmful effects on the mental health of migrants, especially children, who often experience detention as shocking, and even traumatising.” Full press release [here](#).

(30/01) Anti-trafficking experts urge Italy to better protect unaccompanied children. The Council of Europe Group of experts against human trafficking ([GRETA](#)) has published a [report](#) on the implementation of the [Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) by Italy. The report assesses the specific situation of forced returns of victims of trafficking from Italy and the identification of victims of trafficking among asylum seekers and migrants. GRETA acknowledges the extreme difficulties which Italy is experiencing due to the unprecedented increase in the arrival of migrants and refugees, and the significant efforts made by the country, with the assistance of international organisations and civil society, to cope with the challenges posed by it. The report, which was preceded by a visit to Italy in September 2016, reveals gaps in the detection of victims of trafficking among newly arriving migrants and unaccompanied children. Particular attention is paid to the situation of Nigerian women and girls, who have been arriving in Italy in increasing numbers and many of whom are likely to be trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in Europe. GRETA raises concerns about the failure to identify them as victims of trafficking at an early stage, the disappearance of unaccompanied children from reception centres, and the manner in which forced returns of victims of trafficking to their country of origin take place. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(27/01) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Wilful denial: ignoring consequences of outsourcing protection. It should not take an [intervention from the Ombudsman](#) to convince the European Commission that an assessment of the human rights implications of the [EU-Turkey deal](#) is needed. However, the approach from the Commission seems to be one of deliberate blindness. At the height of what has come to be known as the ‘EU migration crisis’ the reactions were political panic and ad hoc initiatives at EU and national level rather than a coherent strategy. Now the European Commission is trying to get back in the game with an emerging strategy based on externalizing: blocking access to Europe and paying other countries to take responsibility for persons in need of protection, despite their being ill-equipped to do so. New initiatives are designed to reduce access to protection in Europe for people in need rather than to ensure it. The EU-Turkey deal stands as a symbol of the European response to the increasing forced displacement caused to a large extent by the war

in Syria and other major conflicts. Other dirty deals have followed: [Afghanistan](#) (money in exchange for accepting returns from Europe, with the Afghan government able to name its price); deals under [new Partnership Framework](#) (development, diplomacy and trade at the service of migration control); and this week a [Commission Communication](#) for the Southern Mediterranean. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) Social Platform - Going forward together for a strong European Pillar of Social Rights. ‘Going forward together’ is the theme of the European Commission [conference](#) on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar is the Commission’s attempt to create the social ‘triple A’ rating that its president, Jean-Claude Juncker, set as a goal of his term in office. Its success is hinged on whether the EU puts social rights at the heart of its work. This is why it is important to recall the importance of three core principles that form the backbone of social models and from which the twenty domains identified by the Commission are actually derived: quality employment, adequate income support, and access to quality, affordable and accessible services. These standards are enshrined in European and international law, and ought to form the basis of any proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights. They should not be overshadowed by an overwhelming focus on the risks and opportunities linked to digitalisation and new forms of employment; even though these evolutions are important, they should not take precedence over these principles. If it ensures that everybody in the European Union is protected by adequate social standards, the Pillar could reverse the race to the bottom that people residing in the EU have witnessed in recent years. Full press release [here](#).

(23/01) Caritas Europa - Caritas’ integration practices spotted by EP. Caritas Europa’s promising integration practices [have drawn the attention](#) of European Parliament (EP) Members participating in the Intergroup Fighting against Poverty. The Chair of the Intergroup, Sylvie Goulard (ALDE), [hosted] a panel with Caritas Europa and Cittalia Foundation to discuss these successful practices. For today’s multicultural Europe, it is essential that migrants have the opportunity for successful integration within their receiving societies and for contributing to these societies’ social, cultural and economic score. The latest Caritas Europa publication [“Welcome – Migrants make Europe stronger”](#), which [was] presented at the EP panel discussion, provides a more thorough collection of examples and promising integration practices from across Europe. It discusses the cultural, structural and socio-economic barriers that hamper or that can even prevent migrants’ integration. To propose solutions for policy-makers, the publication presents ways of creating environments that foster inclusive participation and empower migrants and receiving societies to work together towards a more cohesive Europe.

(20/01) ECRE - Austria: Proposals to restrict humanitarian visas and family reunification. The draft Aliens Reform Act 2017 ([FrÄG 2017](#)) has been presented to the Austrian Parliament. The draft document will further restrict refugee protection. It foresees amendments to a number of Austrian laws, including the Asylum Act and the Aliens Police Act. One of the foreseen changes is the abolishment of the possibility for refugees to obtain a D-type Visa for humanitarian reasons. This visa type allows people to legally travel to Austria to seek protection. ECRE member Diakonie has [warned](#) against such a move, as it would leave no legal pathways for people to access protection on Austrian territory and could interfere with their [right to family life](#) safeguarded in the [European Convention on Human Rights](#). Another change brought forward with the reform is the introduction of more onerous financial hurdles for family reunification of refugees. Financial hurdles will be introduced by obliging refugees to cover the costs of evidence such as DNA tests to prove family links. Higher costs are liable

to render the right to family reunification [ineffective](#) in practice, according to Diakonie. Full press release [here](#).

(20/01) ECRE - Asylum statistics 2016: Sharper inequalities and persisting Asylum lottery. On January 17 the ECRE's [Asylum Information Database \(AIDA\)](#) published an overview of the [latest asylum trends](#) revealing sharper discrepancies in the distribution of refugees across Europe, as well as persisting disparities in the recognition of international protection. "We do not yet have data from all European countries but based on available information it is clear that there is an increasing lack of fair distribution of asylum seekers and significant differences in the recognition rates across Europe," says Minos Mouzourakis, AIDA Coordinator. Although statistics for [Germany](#) 2016 includes a backlog of cases from 2015 the number of applications is substantial compared to other European countries. Full press release [here](#).

(18/01) CECOP - The role played by cooperatives in building social justice whilst generating wealth and distributing it equitably should be fully recognized. The EU social model has been deteriorating gradually since the beginning of the crisis, with increasing levels of inequality, unemployment and a partial return to the informal economy. Young people, migrant workers and women have been among the most affected. This negative situation is partially the result of austerity policies and the lack of preventive and effective monitoring and harmonization measures at the EU level regarding social policies. Within this context, whilst CECOP, the European Confederation of cooperatives active in industry and services, considers the idea to establish a Pillar of Social Rights to be a positive initiative, it also believes that its relevance and efficiency will depend upon whether it is framed correctly. The President of CECOP, Giuseppe Guerini, believes that "Cooperatives and the wider social economy should constitute a third component of the Pillar proposal, as is already the case in some EU countries. The role of the social economy, and above all cooperatives, in building social justice, whilst also generating wealth and distributing it equitably, should be fully recognized." Full press release [here](#).

(17/01) POLITICO.eu - Europe readies its 'Marshall Plan' for Africa. If Europe wants to tackle the root causes of the migration crisis, the head of the European Investment Bank says it must do more business in Africa. "We are talking nowadays about Africa in terms of economic perspectives and strategies, while in the past we talked about Africa as a recipient of donations," Werner Hoyer, president of the EIB, said in an interview with POLITICO at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "What is needed is not global social policy but down-to-earth investment. [Africa] has fantastic potential, but we need to mobilize the private sector. The idea of doing everything with grants is over". Such an approach, seeing Africa as a trade partner and an investment opportunity, is part of a European policy shift designed to strike agreements with African countries that create economic opportunities there and so help stem the tide of migrants north. Full article [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

European Commission - [Projects and organisations funded by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#) (Report)

Cicero Group - [The European Parliament's new leadership – 2017-2019](#) (Infographic)

EPRS - [EFSI And ESI Funds: Complementarity Or Contradiction?](#)

European Court of Human Rights – [Annual Report \(2016\)](#)

RAND Europe - [Cross-Cutting Challenges and Implications for the Mediterranean region](#)

RAND Europe - [Regional foreign policy dynamics and the Mediterranean Region](#)

RAND Europe - [A snapshot of security challenges in the Mediterranean region](#)

RAND Europe - [An overview of the growing criminalization of the Mediterranean basin](#)

OECD - [Skills for a Digital World](#)

Human Rights Watch - [EU Cannot Copy Australia's Offshore Asylum Model](#)

CEPS - [A European Unemployment Benefits Scheme: Lessons from Canada](#)

CEPS - [Migration versus Mobility in EU External Action towards Asia](#)

CEPS - [The integration of immigrants and legal paths to mobility to the EU](#)

College of Europe - [Towards a European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

ECRE - [Agent of protection? Shaping the EU Asylum agency](#) (Policy note)

ECRE - [Chartering a way to protection: The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – An indispensable instrument in the field of Asylum](#) (Policy note)

SOS Children's Village – [Toward the right care for children](#)

Intercultural Cities (CoE) - [How can the organisation improve its diversity strategy?](#)

Brookings - [Cities and refugees: The German experience](#)

Jacques Delors Institute - [Is there such a thing as "Social Europe"?](#)

University of Oxford - [Child Mobility in the EU's Refugee Crisis: What Are The Data Gaps And Why Do They Matter?](#)

Euractiv - [Monti group advisor: EU money could be better targeted at external borders](#)
(Article)

Euractiv - [Hate crimes on the rise in Czech Republic despite refugee progress](#) (Article)