

INFO FLASH 6/03

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(1/03) A Europe that protects: Commission reinforces EU response to illegal content online. In its Communication of September 2017 on tackling illegal content online, the European Commission promised to monitor progress in tackling illegal content online and assess whether additional measures are needed to ensure the swift and proactive detection and removal of illegal content online, including possible legislative measures to complement the existing regulatory framework. As a follow-up, the Commission is today recommending a set of operational measures – accompanied by the necessary safeguards – to be taken by companies and Member States to further step up this work before it determines whether it will be necessary to propose legislation. These recommendations apply to all forms of illegal content ranging from terrorist content, incitement to hatred and violence, child sexual abuse material, counterfeit products and copyright infringement. The Recommendation builds on the on-going work with the industry through various voluntary initiatives to ensure that the internet is free of illegal content and reinforces actions taken under different initiatives. Full press release [here](#). Factsheet [here](#).

(27/02) The European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reaffirm strong commitment to serving Palestine refugees. The European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are holding a Strategic Dialogue on the way forward for their partnership. The discussion takes place in light of the current financial crisis facing UNRWA and the need to broaden its donor base and continue reforming the Agency. The EU and UNRWA remain committed to protecting the rights of Palestine refugees and continue the delivery of essential services to more than 5 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, has said that "the European Union stands by its commitment to Palestine refugees and UNRWA. We have accelerated our contribution to UNRWA's Programme Budget in 2018 and are committing to maintaining the present level of support to 2020. I recognise the importance of providing predictability to UNRWA in these difficult times. The Agency is a crucial stabilising factor in the Middle East. We stress the need, in parallel, for UNRWA to pursue deep reforms and to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable refugees." Full press release [here](#).

(26/02) Delivering on commitments: new programmes to protect migrants and support return and reintegration in Africa worth €150 million adopted. The European Union is adopting today three new programmes worth over €150 million under the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, directly following up on the commitments made by the Joint African Union – European Union – United Nations Task Force to address the migrant situation in Libya. The new programmes complement ongoing efforts of the European Union to protect migrants and provide them with sustainable reintegration options in Libya, along the Central Mediterranean Route and in Ethiopia. Full press release [here](#).

(23/02) EU mobilises the international community for Africa's Sahel region. Significant political, security and development support were mobilised today for Africa's Sahel region. The International High Level Conference on the Sahel, co-chaired today by the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and the G5 Sahel group of countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger), has mobilised political support for the Sahel region, €414 million to support the Joint security Force of the G5 Sahel whilst reinforcing the coordination of sustainable development efforts in the region. On the occasion, President Jean-Claude Juncker said: "Instability has many factors so our response must be linked and ambitious. Security and development must go hand in hand. To do so, we must continue to mobilise all the instruments we have at our disposal. The EU has doubled its support to €100 million to reinforce the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and I am proud that all our friends and partners of the Sahel joined us in these efforts." Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(6/03) Migrants in Libya: MEPs to discuss how to ease returns and fight smuggling. The mistreatment of migrants and refugees in Libya, and arrangements for their resettlement or return, will be debated with UNHCR in the EP at 15.00 on Monday. How to end the mistreatment of migrants and refugees stranded in Libya, the point of departure of up to 90% of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, will be discussed by Civil Liberties Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs, members of the Delegation for relations with Maghreb countries and UNHCR, Commission and External Action Service representatives. Following several media reports that migrants have fallen victim to the slave trade in Libya, the [EU and the African Union, together with the UN, agreed in November 2017](#) to set up a joint Task Force to save and protect lives along the African migration routes and in particular inside Libya, accelerating assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin, and the resettlement of those in need of international protection. Full press release [here](#).

(1/03) Joint statement on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive. Negotiators reached a common understanding on the contours of a possible agreement on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive. Joint statement by European Parliament Co-Rapporteurs Elisabeth Morin-Chartier and Agnes Jongerius, Bulgarian Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Policy Zornitsa Roussinova and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive: "After intensive negotiations this evening we, the negotiators on behalf of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, are satisfied to have covered all issues during the 7th trilogue meeting. We reached a common understanding on the contours of a possible agreement on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive. We believe that the proposed package agreement on the table is balanced. The possible agreement establishes the principle of equal pay for equal work on the same place, whilst providing more legal certainty for both workers and employers. We will now present the results of our negotiations within our respective institutions and will do our utmost to secure the mandates necessary for the final conclusion". Full press release [here](#).

(22/02) Post-2020 EU budget reform must match EU's future ambitions. Budget MEPs set out their position for negotiating the next long-term EU budget, which should finance new priorities as well as make up for any shortfall following the UK's departure. The Committee on Budgets on Thursday adopted two reports on the expenditure and revenue sides of the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF), to apply from 2021. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(28/02) Court of Justice of the European Union: appointment of nine judges. On 28 February 2018, the representatives of the governments of the member states appointed nine judges and three advocates-general to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Their term of office is six years, starting from 7 October 2018. The appointments were made as part of the partial renewal of the composition of the Court of Justice, which takes place every three years. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(6/03) FRA - International organisations commit to building broader support for human rights. With the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70 years ago, governments around the globe committed to making peace, democracy and justice a reality for all. We, national, regional and international institutions have worked towards that objective, striving to improve the life of hundreds of millions of people around the world. However, that work remains incomplete as poverty, armed conflicts, oppression, inequality and discrimination are still a reality for so many people. Full press release [here](#).

(1/03) FRA - FRA outlines its 2018 priorities with MEPs. The Agency's Director, Michael O'Flaherty, presented FRA's work priorities for this year to the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) in Brussels on 20 February, as it does each year. He informed Members about its recent [report on 'Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU](#). He also flagged its analysis of the impact of the use of [EU large-scale IT systems on fundamental rights](#) that relates to at least nine EU legislative files on the LIBE agenda that is due out on 28 March. This included the Agency's work on [interoperability](#) of these systems. Full press release [here](#).

(1/03) EASO - Number of asylum decisions surpasses number of applications in EU+ countries. Despite the issuing of a high number of asylum decisions by national asylum systems in the EU+ and a resulting decrease in backlog, nearly half a million cases remain pending. In January 2018, some 54,000 applications for international protection were lodged in the 28 European Union Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+). Despite issuing close to 60,000 decisions in the first instance, approximately 450,000 cases were still awaiting a decision. Even though these numbers are lower than for most of 2017, the figures indicate that the asylum situation in Europe is still not completely clear from the effects of the spike in applications in 2015-2016. Together, EU+ countries are issuing more first-instance decisions on asylum cases than the number of new applications that are being submitted, which reflects the success of the investment that Member States are making into backlog management and the continued focus on decision-making capacity in some countries. Consequently, there was a decrease in the number of pending cases, down from approximately a million in late 2016 to less than half a million at the end of January 2018. A third of all applications for international protection in the EU+ were submitted by citizens of just five countries: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. The number of Syrian applicants reached the lowest monthly number since February 2014, while some other nationalities increased. Full press release [here](#).

(26/02) FRA - Migrant border crossings remain challenging in some Member States. Stricter border management policies remain in effect in a number of Member States, according to Agency's latest report on migration-related fundamental rights issues. Pushbacks

and refused entry for asylum seekers are just some of the challenges facing migrants when trying to enter or travel through the EU. Harsh winter conditions are also making conditions difficult for migrants. Full press release [here](#). Read the [February 2018 highlights](#).

(22/02) EU Committee of the Regions - Culture and education, tools to strengthen European identity and social cohesion. The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. At the meeting of the CoR's SEDEC commission on 21 February, members discussed two opinions focusing on the role of education and culture for strengthening European identity and social cohesion. Full press release [here](#).

(22/02) EIB - EU member states boost EU Bank initiative to tackle migration challenge. Pledges from EU member states for the Economic Resilience Initiative now total more than 128 million euros. Commitments helping to create jobs and tackle the migration challenge in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans – with a special focus on young people and women. The Economic Resilience Initiative is on track with 21 projects and 1.5 billion euros of financing already approved. Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

(5/03) Children in migration need information on reality, not just on rights, says a new report. Children in migration at all the stages of their journey to Europe should receive child-friendly and understandable information, which nevertheless must reflect the realities and difficulties they may face in the new environment, says the Council of Europe in a [new report](#) published today. The most effective way of providing the information is through personal verbal communication with professionally trained people the child trusts; leaflets and print material in clear language should be used as a complementary means; accurate peer-to-peer information should also be promoted. The report prepared by the Children Rights Division of the Council of Europe, as well as the accompanying [video](#) based on feedback from children in migration in Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece and Hungary, reflect the views of the children themselves, NGOs and child-protection authorities, and provide recommendations for further action. Full press release [here](#).

(26/02) Special Representative on Migration and Refugees Tomáš Boček publishes first activity report. In order to successfully tackle the challenges linked to migration, there needs to be “a clear, principled and holistic approach by the Organisation covering all areas of migration management”, said the [Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees](#), Tomáš Boček, in his [first activity report](#), published today. More stringent border controls have led to a steady fall in the overall number of new arrivals in Europe, although it is likely that refugees and migrants will continue to arrive in significant numbers over the next years. The challenge for member states will be to ensure that the measures they adopt to reduce migration flows and to return failed asylum-seekers respect human rights standards. A further challenge will be to put in place policies to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants with the right to remain in Europe. Full press release [here](#).

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

(2/03) ECRE - New funding for Sahel confirms link between development efforts, security and migration control. In the context of the High Level Conference on the Sahel, an international commitment of 414 million Euro's was [announced](#) by the European Commission on February 23. The ambition of tackling root causes of instability and irregular migration resembles the [focus areas](#) of the EU Partnership with Sahel. The announcement of funding confirms the willingness of EU and Member States to commit substantial economic and political investment in the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) including 8 billion Euro in development assistance (2014-2020), and 100 million Euro additional contribution to the [Joint Force of the G5](#) Sahel. Full press release [here](#).

(2/03) ECRE - Special Representative on Migration and Refugees calls for solidarity and respect for human rights in his first activity report. The Council of Europe's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, Ambassador Tomáš Boček, has published his first [activity report](#) covering the period of his first mandate (February 2016 to January 2018). The report provides an overview of the Special Representative's fact-finding missions, his co-operation with different countries and the different thematic reports published in that period. Full press release [here](#).

(2/03) ECRE - Libya: migrants and refugees out by plane and in by boat. The joint European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) [Task Force](#) visited Tripoli [last week](#) welcoming progress made evacuating and returning migrants and refugees out of Libya. EU has announced [three new programmes](#), for protecting migrants and refugees in Libya and along the Central Mediterranean Route, and their return and reintegration. [Bundestag Research Services](#) and [NGOs](#) raise concerns over EU and Member State support to Libyan Coast Guard. Full press release [here](#).

(23/02) ECRE - Migrant control in the Western Balkans - EU borders on the move. Migration control is a key-element in EU [enlargement efforts](#) in the Western Balkans. A draft [status agreement](#) on strengthened operational cooperation between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and Albania has been announced by the European Commission while Serbia recently signed an [agreement](#) worth 28 million Euros with the Commission in support of the country's border and migration management. Full press release [here](#).

(23/02) ECRE - Humanitarian Corridors for vulnerable refugees to Italy opening. On 14 February, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) implemented the second [evacuation](#) to Italy, bringing the total number of highly vulnerable refugees directly [evacuated](#) to Italy to 312. Additionally, more than 1000 refugees [have arrived](#) in Italy since February 2016 using a humanitarian corridor based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) initiated by an ecumenical church initiative. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EPIM – [EPIM Policy Update \(February\)](#)

EPRS - [Democracy support in EU external Policy](#)

EPRS - [Outcome Of The Informal Meeting Of The 27 Heads Of State Or Government Of 23 February 2018](#) (Briefing note)

ECRE – [Beyond Solidarity: Rights and Reform of Dublin](#)