

# INFO FLASH 8/05

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(26/04) Tackling online disinformation: Commission proposes an EU-wide Code of Practice.** Today, the Commission is proposing measures to tackle disinformation online, including an EU-wide Code of Practice on Disinformation, support for an independent network of fact-checkers, and a series of actions to stimulate quality journalism and promote media literacy. Based on the independent [report](#) published in March 2018 by the High-Level Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation as well as wider consultations carried out over the past six months, the Commission defines disinformation as "verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm". In the latest [Eurobarometer survey](#), 83% of respondents said that fake news represents a danger to democracy. Respondents were particularly concerned by intentional disinformation aimed at influencing elections and immigration policies. The survey also emphasised the importance of quality media: respondents perceive traditional media as the most trusted source of news (radio 70%, TV 66%, print 63%). Online sources of news and video hosting websites are the least trusted source of news, with trust rates of 26% and 27% respectively. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has published a [study on fake news and disinformation](#). It points out that two thirds of consumers of online news prefer to access it through algorithm-driven platforms such as search engines and news aggregators, and social media websites. It also states that market power and revenue streams have shifted from news publishers to platform operators who have the data to match readers, articles and ads. Press release [here](#).

**(23/04) Special Eurobarometer: How fair do Europeans think life in the EU is? New poll shows most Europeans think life is generally fair, but have concerns over justice, political decisions and income inequality.** European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker made fairness in the EU the cornerstone of his political priorities. To support this effort with scientific evidence, the Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) produced its first [Fairness Report](#) last year. The results of the Special Eurobarometer survey published today will contribute to tackling wider questions of perceived unfairness in employment, education, health and society at large. According to the Eurobarometer published today, a majority of Europeans think that most things that happen in their lives are fair and that they have equal opportunities to get ahead. Nevertheless, they are less convinced that justice and political decisions are applied in an equal and consistent way in their countries- regardless of people's social status, wealth and connections. The vast majority also feel that income inequalities are too great and that governments should address them, while fewer than half believe that equality of opportunity and their social status have improved over time. Full press release [here](#).

**(18/04) Integration of migrants: Commission and OECD publish check list to support local, regional and national authorities.** Today the European Commission and OECD are publishing a report that identifies the main challenges to the integration of migrants and sets out concrete policy recommendations in response. Gathering best practice examples from large European cities including Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Paris and Rome, the report highlights [12 key points](#) for local, regional and national policy-makers and practitioners to

consider as they develop and implement local integration programmes. Recommendations focus on policy sectors such as health, labour, housing and education, and range from better matching migrant skills with the needs of local labour markets to creating shared spaces for communities to meet and bond. Full press release [here](#).

**(17/04) Enlargement package: Commission publishes reports on the Western Balkans partners and Turkey.** The European Commission adopted today its annual Enlargement Package, including seven individual reports, assessing the implementation of the European Union's enlargement policy which is based on established criteria and fair and rigorous conditionality. Progress along the European path is an objective and merit-based process which depends on the concrete results achieved by each individual country, with the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights being an utmost priority. A credible enlargement perspective requires sustained efforts and irreversible reforms. The EU Enlargement is an investment in peace, security and stability in Europe: a prospect of EU membership has a powerful transformative effect on the partners in the process, embedding positive democratic, political, economic and societal change. The Commission recommended today that the Council decides that accession negotiations be opened with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, in light of the progress achieved, maintaining and deepening the current reform momentum. More specifically, for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, delivering on the urgent reform priorities will be decisive for the country's further progress. For Albania, progress will be crucial in the key field in the rule of law, in particular across all five key reform priorities, and continuing to deliver concrete and tangible results, in the re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors (vetting). To support this, the Commission would apply the reinforced approach for the negotiating chapters on judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security. This step forward in a long process is in line with merit-based approach and strict conditionality, most recently confirmed by the Commission's Western Balkans strategy. As stated in the [Strategy for the Western Balkans](#), the EU itself needs to be ready for new members – once they have met the conditions – including from an institutional and financial perspective. The Union must be stronger, more solid and more efficient before it can be bigger. Full press release [here](#).

## European Parliament

**(3/05) Children must not be detained for immigration purposes, Parliament says.** All migrant children and families with children should be housed in non-custodial facilities while their immigration status is processed, MEPs insisted on Thursday. “Children shall not be detained for immigration purposes” and the EU Commission should act against EU member states “in instances of protracted and systematic immigration detention of children and their families”, Parliament stated in a non-legislative resolution passed by show of hands. According to the latest [data from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency \(FRA\)](#), in September 2016, Bulgaria was the country with the most migrant children in detention, while there were also high numbers of detained children in Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. No children were detained on the days when on-the-spot checks were carried out in Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Spain or the United Kingdom. Full press release [here](#).

**(25/04) MEPs support reforms to speed up assessment of asylum requests in the EU.** Requesting and granting asylum in the EU will be quicker and simpler, with stronger safeguards, particularly for children, under new rules approved in committee on Wednesday. A proposed new Regulation on a common procedure for granting international protection in the EU, which lays down how national authorities are to manage asylum applications, was

backed by the Civil Liberties MEPs. The text, passed by 36 votes to 12 with 8 abstentions, aims to ensure asylum applications are processed more consistently across the EU, so as to discourage applicants from lodging multiple applications in different member states. Full press release [here](#).

**(18/04) MEPs urge member states to reach agreement on tackling migration crises.** In a debate assessing the outcome of the last EU summit in March, in the presence of European Council President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, MEPs stressed the need to put the EU's migration package back on the agenda for upcoming summits, in order for EU leaders to reach a breakthrough and define a common position. Amongst other measures, MEPs called for better protection of the EU's external borders, introducing national quotas for receiving migrants and reiterated the idea of an EU Marshall Plan for Africa. Full press release [here](#).

## European Council / Council of the EU

**(19/04) Simpler use of EU funds: Council confirms deal with Parliament.** The EU is simplifying the rules on using money from the EU budget. On 19 April 2018, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) endorsed an agreement reached with the European Parliament on the so-called Omnibus regulation on EU financial rules. The regulation will amend the existing financial regulation which sets out a general framework for budget management, as well as a series of acts governing EU multiannual programmes in specific fields, including cohesion policy. There will be simpler rules on using different types of funds, whether these are managed directly by the Commission, indirectly by various organisations and bodies, or jointly with national authorities. Full press release [here](#).

## Others

**(26/04) EU Court of Auditors - New cost options for rural development better, but should be more widely used by Member States, say EU Auditors.** A new method of reimbursing the cost of rural development projects is easier for beneficiaries and for those who check the claims, but it should be more widely used, according to a report by the European Court of Auditors. Simplified Cost Options are intended to complement the old system of reclaiming costs incurred, which was difficult and prone to error. Member States may now choose from three additional methods: standard scales of costs, lump sum payments and flat-rate finance. Full press release [here](#).

**(25/04) Eurostat - Europe 2020 education indicators in 2017: The EU has almost reached its target for share of persons aged 30 to 34 with tertiary education - The share of early leavers from education and training continues decreasing.** Today, Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, publishes the most recent data for the EU and its Member States on achievement against the two Europe 2020 education headline targets. Full press release [here](#).

**(25/04) FRA - How age limits children's access to rights.** Only four EU Member States prohibit the solitary confinement of child detainees even though such detention can harm a child's health and development. This is just one of the many ways age limits can impact child's rights, outlined in a new European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights report. It suggests

how Member States can remove inconsistencies to better deliver child protection. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/04) European Economic and Social Committee - Towards fairer working conditions for all forms of employment across the EU.** The SEDEC commission of the European Committee of the Regions has endorsed the European Commission's efforts to secure a minimum level of transparency and predictability of working conditions across the EU for all different forms of employment contract. Rapporteur Isolde Ries (DE/PES), First Vice-President of the Saarland Regional Parliament, urged to pay special attention to non-standard forms of employment and to the 4-6 million workers in the EU with on-demand and intermittent employment contracts. Full press release [here](#).

**(20/04) European Economic and Social Committee - Securing social triple A rating for EU requires political engagement and proper funding.** The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has used an own-initiative opinion to call for sufficient funding resources to be put in place for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. Adopted at its plenary session on 19 April 2018, the opinion calls for improvements in the Member States and a robust commitment in terms of budget, investment and current spending to make the Social Pillar a reality. Full press release [here](#).

**(20/04) EIB - MDBs launch new platform to coordinate support for economic migration and forced displacement.** Seven Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) launched a new platform to enhance their collaboration on economic migration and forced displacement today on the margins of the IMF-World Bank Group Spring Meetings. The platform will advance strategic dialogue and operational coordination to maximize the impact of MDBs' growing engagement in these two areas. While economic migration and forced displacement are distinct issues and require a different response, each has emerged as a complex development challenge. There are an estimated 250 million international economic migrants worldwide, and roughly 66 million people are forcibly displaced as refugees or internally displaced persons fleeing conflict and persecution. Full press release [here](#).

**(20/04) EIB - EU Bank pioneers new bond in support of sustainable development.** The European Investment Bank (EIB) has today announced on the margins of the IMF/World Bank Group Spring Meetings plans for a new debt product: a Sustainability Awareness Bond, highlighting the Bank's key role in sustainable finance both in and outside of Europe. The aim is to support the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by further unlocking investment in social, green and sustainable projects. Speaking ahead of a debate co-hosted by the EIB and the Washington DC based Brookings Institution on "[A new EIB bond product in support of the Global Goals: Building a sustainable financial system](#)", EIB President Werner Hoyer said, "With our new Sustainability Awareness Bond we hope also to launch a new dialogue on sustainable investment. We want to discuss how we can contribute to raising the trillions that we know are needed to tackle poverty, raise living standards and combat disease around the world. This is also a debate about impact, transparency, and reaching out to new investors." Full press release [here](#).

**(19/04) EIB - EIB and IMF join forces to build capacity on financial inclusion and stability in Africa.** Today, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the EU Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), signed a Letter of Understanding to pool their expertise and experience to promote sustainable economic development, financial stability and inclusive growth in Africa. The EIB will contribute with EUR 3m to IMF economic institutions,

namely the African Regional Capacity Development Centers (AFRITACs) and the Financial Sector Stability Fund (FSSF), and will launch a new course with the IMF on financial intermediation and financial inclusion. As well as funding, the EIB will provide guidance to the AFRITACs and FSSF by participating in their governing bodies. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/04) EIB - EIB and African Development Bank to support private sector investment in Nigeria with Development Bank of Nigeria backing.** The European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank have agreed to support the creation of the new Development Bank of Nigeria to strengthen lending for business and agriculture investment in the country. The EIB has finalized a US \$20-million equity stake in the new financing institution, alongside US \$50-million equity participation from the African Development Bank. The Development Bank of Nigeria has been created by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address financing challenges hindering private sector investment in the country. The Bank is called to play an important and catalytic role in providing funding and risk sharing facilities to micro, small and medium enterprises as well as small corporates. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/04) Eurostat - Asylum decisions in the EU-EU Member States granted protection to more than half a million asylum seekers in 2017-Almost one-third of the beneficiaries were Syrians.** The 28 Member States of the European Union (EU) granted protection status to 538 000 asylum seekers in 2017, down by almost 25% from 2016. In addition to these, the EU Member States received nearly 24 000 resettled refugees. Full press release [here](#).

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**(27/04) Hungary must better identify victims of human trafficking among migrants and asylum seekers – including children, says expert group.** The ability to detect potential victims of human trafficking among migrants and asylum seekers in Hungary has worsened, according to a new [report](#) published today, along with the Hungarian government's reply, by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#)). The report, based on a recent visit to transit zones located at the border between Hungary and Serbia, concludes that concerns raised in GRETA's previous report on Hungary have been "magnified" by more restrictive legislation and measures on immigration and asylum. The GRETA delegation, which monitors compliance with the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, to which Hungary is party, found that most staff working in transit zones could not provide a clear explanation as to what procedures would be followed or who were the competent authorities to take decisions on victim identification and referral. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/04) Strengthening the system of protection of migrants and refugees in Bulgaria.** In a [report](#), published today, the [Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees](#), Tomáš Boček, recognises the efforts made by Bulgaria to cope with the challenges of a high number of arrivals of migrants and refugees, but highlights concerns about difficulties they face in entering into Bulgarian territory, notably at the border with Turkey, and in accessing international protection. "Bulgaria has made significant progress in enrolling refugee children in schools; however, the social inclusion of migrants and refugees in local communities is slow due to the fact that municipalities' responsibilities are not mandatory, as well as a generally negative public attitude towards migrants and refugees", the Special Representative said. Full press release [here](#).

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

**(8/05) Social Platform - EU budget – Hope and hazards for social spending.** On 2 May, the European Commission presented its long awaited multi-annual financial framework (MFF) proposal, also known as the European Union’s long-term budget for the years 2021–2027. [The package](#), released together with the main budget headings and figures foresees to strengthen several existing as well as emerging priorities including digital transformation, youth, research, migration and border management, security, and external action. While the proposed budgetary envelope amounts to an equivalent of 1.11% of the EU 27’s gross national income (GNI) – which is less than the [European Parliament](#) had proposed, but more than some [Member States](#) might be willing to accept – 12% of the total budget may be financed from own resources including [three new own resources](#) developed as a proposal to reform the revenue side of the EU budget. Ideally, negotiations should be concluded by the next European Parliament elections in May 2019 to allow for sufficient time to programme funds at national level, but divergent positions at Member State level may still delay the adoption of the file. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/05) Social Platform - How to ensure adequate funding for social policies and services at national level? The role of taxation and EU budgetary rules.** Providing adequate funding for social policies and services is vital to effectively implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. This is true for the EU level – and that’s why this week with the release of the first proposals on the [next EU budget](#) was so hectic for everyone here in Brussels – but it is even more valid for the national and local level. Indeed, we mustn’t forget that while the proposed EU budget for the period 2021-2027 accounts to 1.11% of the EU27’s gross national income, with about 34.6% of these resources to be dedicated to cohesion and social inclusion, general government expenditure of EU Member States amounted to 45.8 % of EU gross domestic product in 2017, with [28.7%](#) of this public money dedicated to social protection in 2014 (according to latest Eurostat data available). If we want to fight inequality, poverty and social exclusion and promote social progress and sustainable development, mobilising enough resources at national and local level is fundamental. Full press release [here](#).

**(8/05) Social Platform - Building Social Europe 3/4 – The Social Pillar is civil dialogue’s time to shine.** It’s nearly twelve months since the European Commission released its first concrete proposals for a [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which aims to deliver new and improve existing social rights for people in the EU. As Social Platform we welcome the Pillar; it’s the right tool to bring about the necessary policy changes to address key trends, such as poverty and social exclusion, job precariousness and in-work poverty, and barriers to accessing social protection. However, its success hinges on the use of a comprehensive implementation approach encompassing policy, governance, funding and civil dialogue. In this series of four ‘Build Social Europe’ blogs I’ll take a look at each of these areas in turn, and layout Social Platform’s recommendations on how the EU institutions and Member States can turn the Pillar from words into action. Full press release [here](#).

**(4/05) ECRE - Court of Justice of the EU rules on scope of subsidiary protection for torture victims.** On 24 April 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [ruled](#) in case C-353/16 MP that a person who has in the past been tortured in his country of origin is eligible for subsidiary protection if he faces a real risk of being intentionally deprived, in that country, of appropriate physical and psychological health care. The main proceedings concern a national of Sri Lanka who lodged an asylum application in the UK claiming that he had been detained and tortured by Sri Lankan security forces for being a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). His application was rejected since it was not established that he

would be at risk of further ill-treatment if returned to his country. His case was appealed and reached the UK Supreme Court, which sought the CJEU's assistance regarding the scope of the subsidiary protection under the EU Qualification Directive. Full press release [here](#).

**(4/05) ECRE - Position paper from Southern Member States on Dublin reform.** Approaching the self-imposed [deadline](#) of the European Council meeting in June 2018 for reaching a Council position on the reform of the Dublin system a group of 5 Southern EU Member States are rocking the EU Boat in a [joint non paper](#). The position paper lists a number of red lines for the countries concerned in the ongoing difficult negotiations on the Council position on the highly controversial reform of the Dublin Regulation. Emphasising the need for a balance between responsibility and solidarity, the group proposes inter alia to reduce the time period of State responsibility for an asylum applicant to a maximum of two years instead of the currently proposed 10 years. The latter would, according to an EU diplomat [quoted](#) by Politico: "result in the responsibility of asylum and border control to be completely on the shoulders of southern border states. Full press release [here](#).

**(3/05) Social Platform - Take action for a #WelcomingEurope.** "Every day I had to make the hardest decision anyone could ever face – who to save from drowning. [...] We tried to save them [children] first. When we pulled them out of the freezing water, their feet were the coldest feet I have ever felt in my life." This is what firefighter Manuel Blanco from Spain experienced every day on Lesbos. He, and many others, worked tirelessly for months to save human beings risking their lives at sea. We have reported about Manuel in the framework of our campaign on Decriminalising Solidarity; his story can be found [here](#). Instead of recognising and supporting his actions, Manuel and his colleagues were arrested. Because they have been pulling drowning men, women and children to safety, they are accused of human smuggling. In just one week Manuel will be tried in a Greek court, facing up to 10 years in jail. People like Manuel have shown that there is another face to Europe – #WelcomingEurope, a Europe of Solidarity – and a Europe that does not support governments in criminalising solidarity. Together we can take action: The European Citizens' Initiative on a #WelcomingEurope is open to be signed! Full press release [here](#).

**(27/04) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Europe's support for Syria starts at home.** The international conference on support to Syria took place in Brussels this week, with the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini reiterating EU support for UN-led peace efforts and continuing its efforts to bring in more money to deal with the effects of the devastating war. The EU has been largely side-lined by the big power play and proxy wars that have so decimated Syria but there are still positive steps it can take. Humanitarian response is important – and something that Europe does well. It may well be dismissed by the men with guns who create the mess but dealing with the consequences of war is crucial work, especially given the massive level of displacement in this case. In these efforts and in its support of peace processes, such as they are, the EU must continue to support the involvement of Syrians themselves at every level. An important publication from Carnegie this week presents the views of Syrian refugees, many very pessimistic about the prospects for peace and political transition, even if the violence abates. Full article [here](#).

**(24/04) Caritas Europa - Caritas Europa: Family reunification – from Syria to Germany through Belgrade.** During 2016, then 10 year old Yazan Irwani fled from Syria to Germany, where his older brother arrived a few months before him. After two years, in March 2018, the brothers received the approval of family reunification from the German authorities, so that

their father, mother, brother and sister, who were in a refugee camp in Lebanon, could get all the necessary documents and fly directly to Germany. Full press release [here](#).

**(20/04) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Valuing Europe: the European Values Instrument advances.** The European Parliament yesterday voted by a large majority to endorse the proposal for a European Values Instrument (EVI), this is a welcome development for European civil society and indeed for all who defend rule of law and democracy in Europe. The EU's Member States now need to decide where they stand on European values. The EVI is a funding programme (instrument in EU terms) which civil society has campaigned for and which could be one of the funding programmes that collectively make up the EU's next multi-year budget, the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027, which will be negotiated over the next two years. The European Commission, which has been lukewarm on the EVI idea, will put out the draft plans for the MFF next month. Preliminary information indicates a "European Values Fund" may be included. If it remains in the final proposal from the Commission it must have the ambition and scope of the EVI proposals developed by the civil society and Parliament. This will be determined by the content of the legal instrument (thematic scope, geographic coverage, eligibility requirements, objectives) and how much money is allocated to it, which can change radically during the horse-trading of the MFF negotiations. Full article [here](#).

**(20/04) ECRE - Copenhagen Declaration: controversial reform agenda came to a soft landing.** The [Copenhagen Declaration](#) on the reform of the European Convention on Human Rights system was adopted by all 47 member states of the Council of Europe on April 13 following a meeting in Copenhagen. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR's) dynamic interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) that was a [key-concern](#) for the Danish Chairmanship- as reflected in the [draft declaration](#) from February 5, 2018- remained unchallenged. The ambition of limiting the dynamic interpretation by the European Courts has raised critique from [NGO's](#) and at the [political level](#) but is not reflected in the final declaration. In his speech Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland [stated](#) "Sometimes politicians will not like judgments handed down by a court. But that is the nature of the legal process." And further added, "There are also those who claim that the Court can go too far in its interpretation of the Convention. This too is wrong. We have to keep in mind that the Convention is a living instrument which must be interpreted in the light of present day conditions and of the ideas prevailing in democratic States today. This is fundamental." The same position was reflected in the [contribution](#) of Anna Rurka the President of the Conference of INGOs who also underlined the importance of execution of judgments from ECtHR and involvement of civil society in the implementation of the ECHR; both elements were [included](#) in the final declaration. Full press release [here](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**EASO - [Migration needs better reporting](#) (Event)**

**European Commission - [Many More to Come? Migration From and Within Africa](#)**

**European Commission - [Demographic and human capital scenarios for the 21st century](#)**

**European Commission - [Migration Policy Indexes](#)**

**European Commission - [European Migrations Dynamics, drivers, and the role of policies](#)**

**European Commission - [Patterns of immigrants' integration in European labour markets](#)**

**European Commission** - [A global analysis of intentions to migrate](#)

**CEPS** - [The Dilemma of the EU's Future Trade Relations with Western Sahara](#)

**EPIM** - [The EPIM Policy Update April 2018](#)

**EPC** - [Lebanon on the edge](#)

**EPRS** - [The Future Of Europe](#) (Think Tanks Review)

**PICUM** - [Manual on regularisations for children, young people and families](#)

**ETUC** - [Defending undocumented workers – means defending all workers](#)