

INFO FLASH 15/10

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(23/10) Commission Work Programme 2019: Delivering on promises and preparing for the future. The European Commission today presented its Work Programme for 2019, setting out three main priorities for the year ahead: reaching swift agreement on the legislative proposals already presented to deliver on its ten political priorities; adopting a limited number of new initiatives to address outstanding challenges; and presenting several initiatives with a future perspective for a Union at 27 reinforcing the foundations for a strong, united and sovereign Europe. The 2019 Work Programme focuses on just 15 new initiatives, and an additional 10 new REFIT evaluations, to review existing legislation and ensure it is still fit for purpose. To ensure a focus on delivery, the Commission Work Programme also lists the 45 pending priority proposals under the [Joint Declaration](#) on legislative priorities, for adoption by the Parliament and Council before the European elections. The Commission also suggests to withdraw or repeal 17 pending proposals or existing laws. Full press release [here](#).

(18/10) EU and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation join forces to support health services in Africa. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will contribute €54 million (\$62.5 million) to EU efforts to strengthen diagnostic health services in Sub-Saharan Africa under the External Investment Plan. This cooperation will help to mobilise private investment in laboratory facilities providing timely, cost-effective and accurate diagnostic services for diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV, and malaria, as well as support maternal and child healthcare. This will allow doctors to detect diseases earlier, respond faster and better targeting treatments. Under this collaboration between the EU and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, poorer people in low-income African countries will have better access to higher quality testing and, therefore, better chances of proper treatment. The articulation of this programme followed the [announcement](#) of President Juncker and Bill Gates earlier in the year on the Gates Foundation's intention to contribute to the EU's External Investment Plan. Full press release [here](#).

(15/10) Somalia: major step in EU support to state-building. The EU and Somalia signed on 14 October an agreement to provide €100 million to the Somali budget over the next two and a half years. These funds will support the Federal Government's reforms to build a unified, federal state. Somalia is on a positive track towards stability and growth. The EU's move to budget support is a token of the partnership with Somalia to develop a viable federal system and fostering long-term recovery. The date of signature coincides with the first anniversary of Somalia's worst terror attack, which killed over 500 people in Mogadishu. On this occasion, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said: "Budget support shows the EU's trust in Somali institutions. It gives the Government resources to implement reforms and build a stronger State able to deliver basic services to its people. Those 100M€ show the EU delivers quickly, a few months after the Somali Partnership Forum. It comes at a time where the Horn of Africa is going through unprecedented changes. And Somalia can seize this momentum for its own domestic transformation. The EU plays a leading role amongst the international community supporting Somalia. It co-hosted the [Somalia Partnership Forum](#) in Brussels in July 2018, when over €1

billion was mobilised to support the country. In September, the World Bank also agreed a \$80 million pre-arrears clearance package. The engagement of the EU, IMF and World Bank will not only help accelerating national reforms, but also the process towards concessional loans and debt relief. Full press release [here](#).

(12/10) Sustainable Development Goals: High level multi-stakeholder platform presents input to the Commission Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'. On Thursday 11 October, the Commission's high level multi-stakeholder platform on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) met for the second time. The Platform members adopted a joint contribution to the Commission's Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', which will be presented soon as part of the [Future of Europe debate](#) launched by President Juncker. The Platform's contribution will help the Commission in the ongoing preparation of the Reflection Paper and its future work in this field. The Platform suggests, among other things, that the EU develop an overarching Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy to guide all EU policies and programmes. They suggest strengthening policy coherence for development, for example by aligning the European Semester process, EU public finances and financial regulations, and the EU's long-term decarbonisation plans with the SDGs. The Platform members also propose ideas in policy areas considered vital for achieving the SDGs such as social inclusion, sustainable consumption and production, climate and energy, food, farming and land-use, and cohesion. The Platform members welcomed at yesterday's meeting a delegation of independent scientists that presented the initial findings of the UN Global Sustainable Development Report. Finally, Platform members discussed plans for their future work, and were updated on the [European Sustainability Award 2019](#). Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(24/10) EU Budget 2019: focus on the young, on migration and innovation. MEPs set the overall EU Budget for 2019 at €166.34 billion for commitments and €149.3 billion in payments. Negotiations with the Council take place in November. In their [budgetary resolution](#), MEPs reaffirm their priorities: “sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness, security, tackling root causes of refugees and migration flows, managing refugee and migration flows, the fight against climate change and the transition to sustainable energy, and a particular focus on young people.” Full press release [here](#).

(23/10) Schengen: new rules for temporary checks at national borders. Internal border checks within the Schengen area would be limited to a maximum of one year, instead of the current two-year period, the Civil Liberties Committee agreed. The Schengen Borders Code currently under revision allows member states to temporarily carry out checks at internal borders of the [Schengen area](#), in the event of a serious threat to the public order or to internal security. Full press release [here](#).

(15/10) Security: better access to data for border control and migration management. New measures to improve data exchange between EU information systems for border, security and migration management were backed by the Civil Liberties Committee. The measures, adopted by Civil Liberties MEPs on Monday, would facilitate the tasks of border guards, migration officers, police officers and judicial authorities by providing them with more systematic and faster access to various EU security and border-control information systems. By enabling the exchange of data between the systems, they will become interoperable. Full press release [here](#).

(15/10) Future of development cooperation: how innovation can help. The challenges ahead for development policy and how new technologies can help Europe to face them will be debated on Wednesday with lead MEPs, Bill Gates and Federica Mogherini. The [Committee on Development](#), together with the [European Think Tanks Group](#) (ETTg), are holding a public hearing on “Innovation in Development”. MEPs and experts will debate how development cooperation needs to change to take into account global challenges such as inequalities, conflicts and continuing migration flows, as well as to what extent new technologies can turn into game-changers. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(24/10) 2019 EU budget: Council cannot accept EP amendments. The Council today informed the European Parliament that it cannot accept all the amendments for the 2019 EU budget adopted by the Parliament. This triggers a three-week conciliation period starting on 30 October. The two institutions will have until 19 November to find an agreement on next year’s budget. The presidency stands ready to engage constructively with the Parliament to reconcile our differences and agree on a budget that is both ambitious and realistic. The Council and the Parliament share the same priorities for the 2019 EU budget. These include growth, employment and innovation, fighting climate change, tackling security and migration, and a focus on young people. At the same time, the Council is concerned by the increases proposed by the European Parliament, which exceed the level of funding proposed by the Commission in its draft budget, as well as the ceilings of the multiannual financial framework. It insists on taking into account the actual needs and absorption capacities under the different programmes to ensure adequate levels of funding and good value for EU taxpayers’ money. Full press release [here](#).

(23/10) African Union - European Union relations: joint consultative meeting on peace and security. On 23 October 2018, the European Union (EU) Political and Security Committee (EU PSC) and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) held their 11th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting in Brussels, Belgium as part of their regular dialogue within the framework of the AU – EU partnership. The meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador Sofie From-Emmesberger, Permanent Chair of the EU PSC and H.E. Ambassador Lazare Makayat Safouesse (Republic of Congo), Chairperson of the AU PSC for the month of October 2018. The Joint Meeting brought together Ambassadors of EU Member States and AU PSC Member States, as well as Senior Officials from the EU External Action Service and Commission, and from the AU Commission. The Joint Consultative Meeting was preceded by the 4th Joint Retreat of the EU PSC and the AU PSC, held on 22 October 2018, which provided the opportunity for an informal exchange of views on enhanced cooperation on aspects discussed in multilateral fora and sustainable financing of AU-led peace operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and on cooperation on conflict prevention and mediation, on following up on the outcome of the 5th AU-EU-Summit in Abidjan in November 2017, the implementation of the AU-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance signed in May 2018. Full press release [here](#).

(18/10) European Council conclusions. Full Council conclusions [here](#).

Others

(24/10) FRA - Calls to action to help make human rights a reality for all. Over 700 human rights champions combined to deliver concrete calls to action that could help bring about change and counter the many threats facing human rights in Europe today. These calls have

been captured in the [Chair's Statement 2018](#) published today. It seeks to capture the spirit of FRA's Fundamental Rights Forum 2018 which took place in Vienna from 25 to 27 September. Full press release [here](#).

(17/20) FRA - Help end the child poverty plaguing Europe. Almost 25 million children in the EU live in low income households where living conditions are unacceptable and hunger is common. Inadequate education and healthcare threaten their fundamental rights and deprive them of opportunities to escape the poverty cycle, finds the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in its latest report. Full press release [here](#).

(16/10) Eurostat - 17 October: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - Downward trend in the share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU - But still around 113 million people in this situation. In 2017, 112.9 million people, or 22.5% of the population, in the European Union (EU) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This means that they were in at least one of the following three conditions: at risk of poverty after social transfers (income poverty), severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. Full press release [here](#).

(11/10) EASO - Asylum applications remain stable in the EU throughout summer months. [Analysis](#) carried out by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), based on data exchanged by EU+ Member States, reveals that this year, applications for asylum did not increase during the summer months. Indeed, some 52 500 applications were lodged in August, down slightly from July, but in line with previous months. Despite the overall decline, some citizenships were still applying for asylum in increasing numbers. Member State asylum authorities issued a total of 43 725 asylum decisions (first-instance) in August, one of the lowest levels over the last three years. This means that the number of cases awaiting a decision (first instance) started to rise for the first time since late 2016. Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

(11/10) Open minds are needed to improve the protection of LGBTI asylum seekers in Europe. "In many states around the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons face serious violations of their human rights on account of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics", says [Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), in her Human Rights Comment published today. "These include killings, violence, the criminalisation of same-sex relations, and severe discrimination. Such violations also occur within the Council of Europe area. In my statement for the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) 2018, I particularly highlighted the shocking reports of targeted persecution of LGBTI persons by law enforcement officers, including in Chechnya in the Russian Federation and in Azerbaijan. I also commented on the disturbingly widespread problem of homophobia and transphobia, including daily violent incidents, in other European states. Whilst we must work tirelessly for better protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons, we also need to be mindful and understanding of the fact that sometimes they have no other choice but to flee and seek safety outside their own states. In many Council of Europe member states, however, LGBTI asylum seekers face a number of challenges to seeking such safety, which require urgent attention." Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(17/10) SocialPlatform - Visionary & transformative – Will Europe deliver on the SDG promise? For many of us in the civil society sector, the European Union has failed miserably to capitalise on the globally agreed sustainable development goals to reset its own agenda. But maybe there are signs that the EU is now ready to shift its leadership up a gear. If we needed any more compelling evidence of climate change and its catastrophic consequences, last week's IPCC report gave us plenty. Business as usual is simply not an option. This was the backdrop to the second meeting of the multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created by the European Commission. The sense of urgency in the room was palpable. Thankfully on that occasion we were able to hand-over to the European Commission a roadmap on implementation of the SDGs, thrashed out over months between representatives of business, farmers, trade unions, academia, civil society and regional governments. Social Platform, along with Concord, Committee of the Regions, CSR Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, was member of the core drafting team. It was no small achievement to get a text to which everyone could agree. It shows a willingness to move beyond traditional silos and vested interests, knowing that the future of the planet and future generations are at stake. Full press release [here](#).

(12/10) ECRE - Cameroon: Thousands flee, country awaits election results. As conflict intensifies in Cameroon thousands of civilians are being forcibly displaced from their homes. Violence between state forces and separatists has displaced more than [246,000](#) people within the Southwest region, while at least [26,000](#) have fled to Nigeria. The population is preparing for further violence following the outcome of the October 7 presidential election. While votes are yet to be counted in an election that many see as neither free nor fair, a premature [declaration of victory](#) from opposition leader Maurice Kmato, for which he was branded an "outlaw", is threatening to cause "new strife in a tense country". The election was marred by both civil unrest and low turnout- largely because there are few residents left to vote. In some areas, it is estimated that more than 90 percent of residents have fled. Government officials, who would normally oversee the vote, are thought to have abandoned their posts in more than a dozen localities. Full press release [here](#).

(12/10) ECRE - Search and Rescue ship to operate off the Libyan coast under Italian flag. A new platform [Operation Mediterranean](#), will be coordinating rescue operations in the search and rescue zone off the coast of Libya using the boat Mare Jonio – sailing under the [Italian flag](#) making it harder for Italy to impose restrictions on its docking. The initiative follows months of [crisis](#) over denial of docking, prevention of disembarkation, or [deflagging](#) of NGO search and rescue vessels, and criminalisation of SAR operations. Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has been a central figure in the disembarkation crisis over the past months- during which he has faced investigation by Italian [courts](#)- and has threatened to [withhold](#) Italian EU funding over the disembarkation of people saved on the Mediterranean in Italian ports. The crack-down on NGO search and rescue operations culminated when Panamanian authorities recently deflagged the Aquarius, the last nongovernmental search and rescue ship operating in the Mediterranean, allegedly in response to pressure from the Italian government. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

ECRE - [Access to protection in Europe: The registration of asylum applications](#)

EPRS - [Migration](#) (Think Tank Review)

European Commission - [Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU, including resettlement](#)

EPRS - [The Cost Of Non-Europe In Asylum Policy](#)

Friends of Europe - [#Europematters - Europe 2030 Towards A Renewed Social Contract?](#)

Friends of Europe - [Real People, True Stories: Refugees For More Inclusive Societies](#)

ECPDM - [Promoting gender in the EU external response to migration: The case of the Trust Fund for Africa](#)

Bruegel - [Should we give up on global governance?](#)