

INFO FLASH 10/10

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(8/10) Commission brings together religious leaders to discuss "The Future of Europe: addressing challenges through concrete actions". European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans hosted today a high-level meeting with eight representatives of religious organisations from across Europe. The participants debated "The Future of Europe: addressing challenges through concrete actions". First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: "Europe is home to people of many faiths, and every European has the right to practice his or her faith in peace and security. Ahead of next year's European elections, I reassured the participants in today's meeting that the European Commission will continue to stand up and speak up against any discrimination or attacks that their communities might face. Every European citizen will have a chance to shape our common future at the ballot box next year, and I invited the participants in today's meeting to engage actively in the political process and to encourage their communities to do so as well. While we may worship in different ways, our values are universal, including our commitment to democracy and equality." Today's meeting builds on the high-level meeting with religious leaders of 7 November 2017 dedicated to the future of Europe and how to develop a values-based and effective Union. Today's meeting focused on the main policy challenges Europe faces in the next year, as well as the perspectives for the future, beyond the European Parliament elections. Participants discussed in particular how the EU is addressing migration, social integration and the sustainability of our way of life. Full press release [here](#).

(5/10) Border management: EU signs agreement with Albania on European Border and Coast Guard cooperation. On 5 October 2018, the European Union signed an agreement with Albania on cooperation on border management between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The agreement was signed on behalf of the EU by Herbert Kickl, Minister of the Interior of Austria and President of the Council, Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship and on behalf of Albania Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj. This agreement allows the European Border and Coast Guard Agency to coordinate operational cooperation between EU member states and Albania on the management of the EU's external borders. The European Border and Coast Guard will be able to take action at the external border involving one or more neighbouring member states and Albania. This can include intervention on Albanian territory, subject to Albania's agreement. The activities included by the agreement are aimed at tackling irregular migration, in particular sudden changes in migratory flows, and cross-border crime, and can involve the provision of increased technical and operational assistance at the border. For each operation, a plan has to be agreed between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Albania. Full press release [here](#).

(28/09) Factsheet: Political negotiations on a new ACP-EU Partnership to start today in New York. Full factsheet [here](#).

(27/09) JOINT COMMUNIQUE between the European Union and the United Nations: A renewed partnership in development. Full statement [here](#).

(27/09) European Union and United Nations join forces to end femicide in Latin America under the Spotlight Initiative. The European Union and the United Nations are announcing today a €50 million financial contribution to end femicide in Latin America. Femicide claims the lives of 12 women in Latin America every day. With today's €50 million investment, the [EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#) will fund new and innovative programmes in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, to help women and girls live lives free from violence and to eradicate femicide in Latin America. "Ending violence against women and girls is on top of our agenda. With the Spotlight initiative, we have a global coalition around this objective and are mobilising all efforts and actions in education, awareness raising, prevention and delivering justice," said High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini. "We want to make sure that women and girls never have to live in fear again, in Latin America, in Europe and around the world." Full press release [here](#).

(26/09) Statement by Commissioner Gabriel on the Code of Practice on Online Disinformation. Online platforms and the advertising industry have unveiled a self-regulatory Code of Practice that includes a wide range of commitments to fight online disinformation. Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel welcomed this as a step in the right direction, but urges the platforms to increase their efforts to fight the spread of disinformation online. In May, the Commission convened a multi-stakeholder forum on disinformation. It consisted of a working group of representatives from the major online platforms and the advertising industry; and a sounding board of fact-checkers, academia, media and civil society organisations. The working group was charged with drafting a self-regulatory Code of Practice on Disinformation for online platforms, the advertising sector, and advertisers. The sounding board was tasked to assess and adopt an opinion on the Code of Practice and monitor its implementation. Full press release [here](#).

(23/09) Third African Union-European Union-United Nations Trilateral Meeting: Joint Communiqué. Full statement [here](#).

(20/09) European Border and Coast Guard: Agreement reached on operational cooperation with Serbia. Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Nebojša Stefanović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, initialled a status agreement that will allow European Border and Coast Guard teams to be deployed in Serbia. The Agency will be able to assist Serbia in border management and carry out joint operations with Serbia, in particular in the event of a sudden change in migratory flows. Supporting and cooperating with non-EU countries is essential for the protection of the EU's external borders. In 2016, the Commission strengthened the European Border and Coast Guard's mandate to allow for deployments in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Last week, following President Juncker's [State of the Union Address 2018](#), the Commission proposed to [further reinforce the European Border and Coast Guard](#), giving it the right level of ambition and allowing the joint operations and deployments to take place in countries beyond the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Today's status agreement with Serbia is the third agreement initialled with partner countries from the Western Balkan region, following [Albania](#) in February and [the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) in July. Negotiations with Montenegro and with Bosnia and Herzegovina are ongoing. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(10/10) Humanitarian visas to avoid refugees' deaths. EU countries should be able to issue humanitarian visas at embassies and consulates abroad, so people seeking protection can access Europe without risking their life. With 39 votes to 10, the Civil Liberties Committee agreed on Wednesday to ask the European Commission to table, by 31 March 2019, a legislative proposal establishing a European Humanitarian Visa, giving access to European territory - specifically to the member state issuing the visa - for the sole purpose of submitting an application for international protection. MEPs stress that despite numerous announcements and requests for safe and legal pathways for asylum-seekers into Europe, the EU lacks a harmonised framework of protected entry procedures. They underline that, due to insufficient legal options, an estimated 90% of those granted international protection reached the European Union through irregular means. Full press release [here](#).

(10/10) EU Budget 2019 to focus on young people. Budgets Committee MEPs demanded an EU budget for 2019 capable of tackling the numerous challenges that the EU continues to face, in a vote on Tuesday. MEPs' priorities for next year's budget are "sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness, security, tackling the root causes of refugee 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." They "refuse to accept" the [cuts proposed by the Council](#) to the European Commission's draft budget, especially those to the research and infrastructure programmes, which are "the very programmes designed to make the EU economy more competitive and innovative." Budgets Committee MEPs thus decided to restore all those cuts, with limited exceptions. In addition, MEPs intend to particularly boost programmes supporting the young, with significant increases to Erasmus+ and the Youth Employment Initiative. Further major top-ups to the Commission's 2019 draft budget that MEPs want to push through during upcoming negotiations with the Council concern research and infrastructure programmes and those tackling migration. Full press release [here](#).

(4/10) Free flow of non-personal data: Parliament approves EU's fifth freedom. New rules aimed at removing obstacles to the free movement of non-personal data within the EU for companies and public authorities were adopted by MEPs. This EU law, already provisionally agreed with the Council, will prohibit national rules requiring that data be stored or processed in a specific member state. Non-personal data includes, for instance, machine-generated data or commercial data. Specific examples are aggregated datasets used for big data analytics, data on precision farming that can help to monitor and optimise the use of pesticides and water, or data on maintenance needs for industrial machines. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

Others

(10/10) EIB - Multilateral Partnerships are the only way to tackle global challenges, says EU Bank President ahead of annual IMF/World Bank Group meetings. The European Investment Bank (EIB) will be announcing a number of major initiatives with its partners on the margins of the IMF/ World Bank Group annual meetings, taking place in Bali Nusa Dua, Indonesia this week. The EU bank will be meeting regional partners from across the globe, as well as the world's Multilateral Development Banks and fellow International

Financial Institutions. Together, they will stress the need to cooperate and crowd-in private investors to address today's challenges such as mitigating and adapting to climate change, building resilient cities and regions, supporting green infrastructure and protecting our natural capital such as oceans. Full press release [here](#).

(9/10) EASO - EASO undertaking series of measures aimed at strengthening good governance. New management in the process of implementing an ambitious set of reforms contained in its Governance Action Plan, including an ongoing recruitment programme, which will more than double the Agency's staff complement by the end of 2020. Full press release [here](#).

(5/10) Frontex - Europol and Frontex strengthen cooperation to tackle cross border crime. Europol and Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, are stepping up their cooperation to strengthen the European area of freedom, security and justice. At a joint meeting on Thursday in The Hague, the Management Boards of both Agencies agreed to expand the exchange of information between them to strengthen their joint fight against terrorism and cross-border crime. Full press release [here](#).

(27/09) FRA - Coalition of hope commits to human rights for all. Calls to action to counter the pressing human rights threats facing Europe were captured during Vienna's Fundamental Rights Forum 2018. They emerged from the talents, ideas, and expertise shared by over 700 leading experts from around the world during the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' event. Full press release [here](#).

(27/09) Frontex - Frontex begins testing unmanned aircraft for border surveillance. This week, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, has begun testing the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) in Greece, Italy and Portugal to monitor the European Union's external borders. Frontex is exploring the surveillance capability of the medium altitude long endurance RPAS and evaluating the related cost efficiency and endurance. The agency will test the unmanned aircraft in several operational situations. These include surveillance of the sea, support of Search and Rescue operations, detection of vessels suspected of criminal activities, such as drug and weapon smuggling and information sharing with multiple users in real time. Full press release [here](#).

(25/09) FRA - Fundamental Rights Forum 2018: kicks off. Over three days, from 25 September, the Agency's Fundamental Rights Forum 2018 opens its doors to over 600 participants. There will be over 50 lively sessions, five working groups, plenary panel debates, arts-related events, a virtual zone and sports activities. much more and engage in stimulating debate. Full press release [here](#).

(25/09) Eurostat -Eurobarometer: 4 out of 5 EU citizens support private sector in development cooperation. The latest Eurobarometer survey shows that EU citizens increasingly view the private sector as having a greater role to play in international development, as well as seeing development cooperation as a means to address irregular migration. "European citizens back our efforts to boost private investment in development cooperation, deliver gender equality and address the root causes of irregular migration. This shows that our proposal to deepen our economic relationship with Africa by focussing on private investment is on the right track with citizens. We should see this as a call to do more on development, and do it now", said Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica. Full press release [here](#). Data set [here](#).

(21/09) FRA - Hardening migration policies continues to cause concern. As some governments continue to take a hard line on migration, fundamental rights remain in jeopardy, finds the Agency's latest report on migration-related fundamental rights concerns. It points to stricter border controls, poor reception conditions, particularly affecting women and children, as well as problems with hate crime. Full press release [here](#).

(20/09) European Economic and Social Committee - EESC to advocate for an ambitious EU budget of at least 1.3% of EU GNI. The negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the European elections come as the European Union finds itself at a crossroads. From growing Euroscepticism to challenges of migration, it faces a wide range of pressing political and socio-economic challenges; some of them are even calling the EU itself into question. Full press release [here](#).

(14/09) FRA - How the Eurosur Regulation affects fundamental rights. The Agency has evaluated the Eurosur Regulation's impact on fundamental rights, following a request from the European Commission. The [evaluation](#) looked at how Eurosur is being implemented. It also reviewed the related work of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and relevant cooperation agreements between EU Member States and non-EU countries. The evaluation was shared with the European Commission and presented to EU Member States in the Eurosur expert group. Full press release [here](#).

(14/09) Frontex - Migratory flows in August: Overall arrivals down, Spain accounts for more than half of the total. In the first eight months of 2018, the number of irregular border crossings into the EU via the top four migratory routes fell 40 per cent from a year ago to about 86 500, mainly because of lower migratory pressure on the Central Mediterranean route. In August, some 12 500 irregular crossings were detected on the main migratory routes into the EU, roughly in line with the number from the same month of last year. Full press release [here](#).

(14/09) FRA - Privacy risks to EU citizens from plans to strengthen ID security. EU plans to overhaul national identity documents by adding fingerprints and facial imagery could put EU citizens' privacy and personal data at risk, finds the latest Opinion from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. Full press release [here](#).

(10/09) FRA - Long-term EU residents at risk from wider scope of EU visa system. Long-term residents could find their sensitive personal data stored indefinitely, under new proposals for the EU's Visa Information System (VIS). This poses privacy and data protection risks, according to latest Opinion from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(10/10) Slovenia adopts a declaration on the creation of a Children's House for child victims of sexual abuse. Representatives of Slovenian authorities have signed and adopted the [Declaration](#) on the creation of a Barnahus (Children's House) for child victims of sexual abuse in Slovenia. The declaration was signed by the Slovenian Minister of Justice Andreja Katič; Minister of Family, Labour, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities Ksenija Klampfer; State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior Natalija Kovač Jereb; State Secretary of the Ministry of Health Pia Vračko; the State Prosecutor General Drago Šketa; the Deputy Director

General of the Police Directorate Jože Senica, and Mateja Končina Peternelj, the Supreme Court Judge. On signing and adopting this Declaration, Slovenia has joined the club of the Council of Europe member states stepping out of the shadows, bringing the reality of children being sexually abused into the light and offering them a safety net. In the Declaration, the parties have stated their commitment to a coordinated investigation of cases where children may have been victims of sexual abuse; to the provision of the least traumatic and disruptive investigative measures; to the coordination of medical and mental health interventions, as well as to the development of a child-friendly setting where interviews, treatment and other services may take place for such children. Full press release [here](#).

(3/10) More must be done to help women and girl refugees and migrants. At a Council of Europe conference today in Athens to focus on challenges faced by women and girl refugees and migrants, Anna Zobnina, Strategy & Policy Coordinator for the [European Network of Migrant Women](#) stressed that not enough is being done to care for the specific needs of women and girl migrants. More should be done to construct facilities for women specific needs, she told some 100 participants, including government staff and NGOs dealing with refugees in both origin and destination countries. Many more boys are being officially recorded as unaccompanied, but what about the girls, she stressed, pointing out that half of the refugee population is made up of women and girls: “Girls are going missing”. From female genital mutilation and forced marriage to human trafficking and rape, women and girls are the “most vulnerable” among the migrants and refugees, says José Rui Velez Carço, Executive Director of the Council of Europe’s [North-South Centre](#), which organized the conference in cooperation with the Greek NGO [METAdrasi-Action](#) for Migration and Development. At least 1 in 5 female migrants are estimated to have suffered gender based violence, stressed Lora Pappa, METAdrasi’s president. Full press release [here](#).

(26/09) Why NGOs matter. One of the most important issues raised at the FRA forum this week in Vienna was the need for greater funding and support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Anna Rurka, President of the Council of Europe’s Platform of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) told forum participants that without the meaningful participation of civil society groups in public affairs, democracy cannot work properly. Protecting the rights of NGOs to assemble and to freely express their perspectives remains an essential concern in a Europe today threatened by illiberal movements, she explained. The [Conference of INGOs](#), which represents 320 NGOs throughout Europe, is one of the four pillars of the Council of Europe, along with the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It is composed both of specialised advocacy organizations that defend particular groups and NGOs that represent different trades (such as lawyers, teachers, and social workers, among others). Full press release [here](#).

(20/09) Mental health of children on the move. Mental health of children affected by migration, their well-being and their rights was the key subject of the address by Regina Jensdottir, the Head of the Children’s Rights Division and Programme Co-ordinator at the Council of Europe, to the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) Annual Conference in Paris. In her speech Jensdottir stressed that children affected by migration are one of the most vulnerable groups: “These children suffer violations of their rights within our borders which can have severe consequences on their mental health and development.” She specified that the violations arise from the use of detention practices rather than welfare protection, lack of or ineffective guardianship and family reunification procedures, as well as demeaning age assessment procedures, and spoke about their negative impact on the mental health of children. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(5/10) ECRE - Taking the migration debate beyond gender clichés. The spat between Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn and Italy's Deputy PM Matteo Salvini was secretly filmed and circulated online by Salvini allies who declared their man the victor. Watching the clip, there is however much to satisfy those of us on the other side of this conflict. Of course, politics shouldn't be conducted in this way, but it was somehow refreshing to see a mainstream politician (and who could be more mainstream than Luxembourg's senior diplomat?) losing their temper with the idiocies of the far right, to the point of swearing and tearing off his headphones to cut the interpretation. We were all Jean in that moment. Asselborn made some good points too, drawing a parallel between migrants arriving in Europe now and Italians in Luxembourg, reinforced later by the discussion of Italian immigration and the prejudice people faced, stimulated by a letter and articles from a group of descendants of Italian migrants to Belgium, who urged that current migration policy be based on lessons from its past. Full press release [here](#).

(21/09) Eurochild - Eurochild to support feasibility study of a child guarantee. Eurochild is part of the consortium that will carry out a feasibility study of a Child Guarantee for vulnerable children together with a team of researchers and experts. The study aims to examine how a specific funding programme (i.e. a Child Guarantee as proposed by the European Parliament) could contribute to combating poverty and social exclusion particularly amongst the EU's most disadvantaged children. The study will focus on how a funding programme can improve children's access to the five key policy areas identified by the European Parliament (i.e. free healthcare, free education, free ECEC, decent housing and adequate nutrition). The study will first map the situation of children in each EU Member State focusing in particular on 4 vulnerable groups: children in institutional care; children of recent migrants or refugees; children with disabilities and children living in precarious family situations. It will also lay out a clear picture of the causes of poverty and inequality affecting children. The study will also identify best practices and effective ways of delivering policies and programmes and funding initiatives that can help promote an integrated approach to tackling child poverty. There will also be an online consultation as well as focus group consultations with children. The child guarantee is expected to be funded within the EU budget - inspired partly by the existing Youth Guarantee - in order to help address the high levels of child poverty and social exclusion in Member States. It should also contribute to the effective implementation of the European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank Review](#) (September)

EPRS - Public Opinion And The EU Budget - [Who Supports The EU Budget?](#)

EPRS - [Post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework](#)

EPRS - ['Fake News'](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [The State Of The Union](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [The Juncker Commission's Ten Priorities: State Of Play In Autumn 2018](#)

EPRS - [Social protection in the EU: State of play, challenges and options](#)

EPRS - [Establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#)

EPRS - [EU asylum, borders and external cooperation on migration Recent developments](#)

ECDPM - [A crucial week for Africa and Europe beyond 2040](#)

ECDPM - [Tackling the triggers of violence-induced displacement](#)

ECDPM - [Advancing the impossible? Progress of the joint African, European and international response to the migration crisis in Libya](#)

CEPS - [The impact of refugees on the labour market: a big splash in a small pond?](#)

CEPS - [Offshoring Asylum and Migration in Australia, Spain, Tunisia and the US: Lessons learned and feasibility for the EU](#)

FTI - [Juncker's State of the Union – Time for Action](#)