

INFO FLASH 20/02

The European institutions worked around migration from different perspectives. The European Commission published its [9th report on relocation and resettlement](#) amidst its proposal to [reform comitology](#) by bringing more transparency and accountability in procedures for implementing EU law (including migration-related decisions). The European Parliament voted on a regulation that aims at [stopping foreign fighters at EU external borders](#) and a directive to [tackle foreign fighters and prevent terrorism](#). The Council of the EU met in Malta and released a declaration on the external aspects of migration, with a specific focus on the [Central Mediterranean route and Libya](#). The Committee of the Regions called on the EU to strengthen legal support for migrants and [work more with non-EU cities](#).

Among civil society, ECRE provided the [latest legal developments in Italy](#), presented a [new project on solutions to inadequate family care for unaccompanied minors](#) and reported on debate on [protection as a pull factor](#). Social Platform [debunked myths on migration](#) and pointed out the [EU Facilitation Directive is not aligned with human rights standards](#) (a theme that was echoed by [a publication by EPRS](#))

Relevant publications include a series of analysis on the impact of migration in development aid and cooperation by [EBA](#), [EUI](#) and the [OECD](#).

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(15/02) EU-OIC towards a closer partnership. The High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini [met in Brussels](#) with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Dr Yusuf bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen. This first bilateral meeting since the Secretary General took office allowed for discussions on relations with the Muslim world and with Muslim communities in Europe. The High-Representative/Vice-President and the Secretary General exchanged views on possible areas of cooperation, building also on the fruitful exchanges, the previous day, at the first EU-OIC Senior Officials Meeting. There was a common resolve to reach out to Muslim communities notably in Europe, as a way to increase Muslim youth participation and civic involvement in the political and social life in Europe and to counter radicalisation and terrorism.

(14/02) Comitology: Commission proposes more transparency and accountability in procedures for implementing EU law. The Commission [proposed to amend the Comitology Regulation](#), increasing transparency and accountability in the procedures for implementation of EU legislation. The package of four targeted amendments will enhance transparency about the positions taken by Member States, allow for greater political guidance, and ensure more accountability in the decision-making process. The four measures proposed are: 1) changing the voting rules at the last stage of the comitology procedure (the Appeal Committee), so that only votes in favour or against an act are taken into account. This will reduce the use of abstentions and the number of situations where the Committee is unable to take a position and the Commission is obliged to act without a clear mandate from the Member States; 2)

involving national Ministers by allowing the Commission to make a second referral to the Appeal Committee at Ministerial level if national experts do not take a position; this will ensure that sensitive decisions are discussed at the appropriate political level; 3) increasing voting transparency at the Appeal Committee level by making public the votes of Member State representatives; 4) ensuring political input by enabling the Commission to refer the matter to the Council of Ministers for an Opinion if the Appeal Committee is unable to take a position.

(8/02) Relocation and Resettlement: Member States need to build on encouraging results. The Commission adopted [its ninth progress report on the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes](#), assessing actions taken since 8 December 2016. During the reporting period, Member States have continued to increase their efforts on resettlement offering legal and safe pathways to 13,968 people so far. Regarding relocation, the overall positive trend has also been maintained with an additional 3,813 relocations taking place during the reporting period, and December seeing the highest monthly number so far (1,926). The total number of relocations now stands at 11,966. However, further efforts are still needed from Member States to sustain the progress made and reach the monthly targets set by the Commission of 1,000 relocations from Italy and 2,000 from Greece. Full press release [here](#).

(6/02) Commission launches public consultation to further shape the European Solidarity Corps. [The European Commission launches a public consultation](#) to consult young people, teachers, youth workers, organisations, employers and other stakeholders on the priorities and the strengthening of the recently launched European Solidarity Corps. As announced at the launch last December, the Commission is preparing a legislative proposal in the first half of 2017 to create a dedicated legal base for the European Solidarity Corps. The results of the consultation will further shape and consolidate the European Solidarity Corps by feeding into the Commission's work on that legislative proposal. The public consultation will run for eight weeks and builds on an earlier stakeholder consultation that took place in late 2016 in preparation of the [launch of the European Solidarity Corps](#) in December. Young people and organisations participating in the public consultation will get the opportunity to evaluate the different aims of the initiative, inform about their motivation to participate, communicate their needs on information and guidance, and share best practice. It will be complemented by targeted consultations with key stakeholders involved in youth work in the EU.

European Parliament

(16/02) Stopping foreign fighters at EU external borders. All EU citizens and third country nationals entering or leaving the EU will be systematically checked against databases, e.g. of lost and stolen documents, [under a regulation voted](#). The new rules were agreed by Parliament's negotiators and the Council of Ministers on 5 December 2016. The new regulation, which amends the [Schengen Borders Code \(SBC\)](#), was presented by the European Commission in December 2015. It obliges member states to carry out systematic checks on all persons crossing EU external borders against databases of stolen and lost documents, the Schengen Information System (SIS) and other relevant EU databases. The checks will be mandatory at all air, sea and land borders, on both entry and exit. The rule change is a response to terrorist threats in Europe, as demonstrated by the recent attacks in Brussels, Paris and Berlin, and the phenomenon of "foreign fighters", i.e. EU citizens joining terrorist groups in conflict zones, such as Daesh in Syria and Iraq.

(16/02) Preventing terrorism: clampdown on foreign fighters and lone wolves. To counter the growing threats from “foreign fighters” travelling to conflict zones for terrorist purposes and “lone wolves” planning solo attacks, new EU-wide rules [were approved by Parliament](#). The new directive on combatting terrorism will update the current EU “framework” rules on terrorist offences and widen their scope to include emerging threats. The extended list of preparatory acts to be criminalised includes: travelling abroad to join a terrorist group and and/or returning to the EU with the aim of carrying out a terrorist attack; recruiting for terrorism; training or being trained for terrorism; aiding, abetting or attempting to carry out an attack; public incitement or praise of terrorism; financing of terrorism and terrorist groups. The new directive also includes provisions to ensure immediate assistance to victims and their relatives after an attack. For example, EU member states should ensure that support services are in place to help families find out which hospital their relative has been taken to, and help victims to return to their home countries, if they have been caught in an attack while visiting another EU country. Assistance should also include medical and psychological support as well as advice on legal and financial matters such as legal procedures for making claims.

European Council / Council of the EU

(13/02) Afghanistan: EU to sign a cooperation agreement on partnership and development. On 13 February 2017, [the Council decided to sign a cooperation agreement on partnership and development between the EU and Afghanistan](#). The agreement will be signed on Saturday, 18 February 2017 at 18.20 in Munich by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and the Minister of Finance of Afghanistan Eklil Ahmad Hakimi, in presence of President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani. The cooperation agreement on partnership and development will constitute a new framework for EU-Afghan relation. It formalises the EU's commitment to Afghanistan's development under the "decade of transformation" (2014-2024), building on the undertakings given at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan on 4-5 October 2016. Among other things, the agreement entails actions to combat corruption, money laundering, terrorist financing, organised crime and narcotics. It also foresees cooperation on migration, based on the Joint Way Forward on migration issues adopted in early October 2016.

(7/02) Schengen area: Council recommends prolongation of internal border controls. On 7 February 2017, [the Council adopted an implementing decision](#) setting out a recommendation to prolong temporary internal border controls in exceptional circumstances. Starting from 11 February 2017, when the previous decision expires, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway should prolong proportionate temporary border controls for a maximum period of three months. Before prolonging such controls, those member states concerned should exchange views with the relevant member states to ensure that internal border controls are carried out only where it is considered necessary and proportionate. They should also ensure that internal border controls are only carried out as a last resort when other alternative measures cannot achieve the same effect.

(3/02) Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route. “A key element of a sustainable migration policy is to ensure effective control of our external border and stem illegal flows into the EU. In 2016, arrivals decreased to one-third of the levels in 2015. On the Eastern Mediterranean route, while pressures remain, arrivals in the last four months of 2016

were down 98% year-on-year. (...) On the Central Mediterranean route, however, over 181,000 arrivals were detected in 2016, while the number of persons dead or missing at sea has reached a new record every year since 2013. With hundreds having already lost their lives in 2017 and spring approaching, we are determined to take additional action to significantly reduce migratory flows along the Central Mediterranean route and break the business model of smugglers, while remaining vigilant about the Eastern Mediterranean as well as other routes. We will step up our work with Libya as the main country of departure as well as with its North African and sub-Saharan neighbours. (...) Efforts to stabilise Libya are now more important than ever, and the EU will do its utmost to contribute to that objective. In Libya, capacity building is key for the authorities to acquire control over the land and sea borders and to combat transit and smuggling activities. The EU remains committed to an inclusive political settlement under the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement and to supporting the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord backed by the United Nations. Where possible the EU and Member States will also step up cooperation with and assistance to Libyan regional and local communities and with international organisations active in the country.” Read the full declaration [here](#).

Others

(16/02) FRA - Promoting social inclusion in rural areas. The Agency [highlighted](#) the benefits of having a rights-based approach to social inclusion at a workshop on ‘Social Hubs in Rural Europe’. It highlighted the importance of collaborating and linking social inclusion policies targeting different vulnerable groups. The capacity-building workshop was organised by the [European Network for Rural Development \(ENRD\)](#). It allowed the exchange of good practices on tackling social exclusion in rural areas among refugees and migrants, Roma, youth or women. The event in Brussels brought together more than 100 representatives from regional and Member States authorities participating in the network, as well as representatives from EU such as the European Commission.

(15/02) Eurojust - Eurojust and Europol support joint investigation into international human trafficking. As a result of coordinated and joint operational activities, authorities from Slovakia and the UK, supported by Eurojust and Europol, [have dismantled an organised criminal group](#) involved in trafficking Slovak victims for the purposes of sham marriages and sexual exploitation. The modus operandi of this organised criminal group was to recruit vulnerable women from challenging socio-economic backgrounds by deception, promising them attractive and well-paid jobs abroad, and then forcing them into sham marriages and prostitution. Europol actively supported this human trafficking operation and provided operational and analytical support to Slovakia and the UK throughout the investigation. Europol specialists in THB delivered real-time cross-checks of the data gathered using a mobile office and data extraction device during the actions. Eurojust and Europol facilitated judicial and police cooperation within a joint investigation team, bringing together efforts from both Member States. Several operational and coordination meetings were held at Europol and Eurojust.

(15/02) Frontex - Frontex publishes Risk Analysis for 2017. In 2016, migration pressure at Europe’s external borders remained high with the detection of over half a million illegal border-crossings. Frontex estimates that this figure corresponds to about 382 000 migrants coming to Europe from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Compared to the 1.8 million illegal border-crossings reported in 2015, 2016 saw a significant decrease, but this figure is still

higher than any annual figure for arrivals between 2010 (104 060) and 2014 (282 933). Most migrants arrived in Italy and Greece, with each country reporting roughly 180 000 new arrivals. While arrivals in the Central Mediterranean steadily grew throughout the year, in Greece more than 80% migrants arrived between January and March. The subsequent drop in arrivals was a consequence of both the EU-Turkey statement that came into effect on 18 March, which permitted the readmission of migrants to Turkey, and the closure of the Western Balkan route due to stricter management of the FYROM border. Read the full press release [here](#) and the latest data on arrivals on the three major migratory routes [here](#).

(9/02) Committee of the Regions - Strengthen legal support for migrants, work more with non-EU cities. The European Union's plans to align its rules on asylum and standardise conditions for asylum-seekers are welcome but fail to recognise adequately that migration to Europe is long-term and structural in nature, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) [agreed on 8 February](#). In separate recommendations agreed on the same day, the CoR welcomed the EU's drive to manage migration through country-specific partnerships with neighbouring states and argued that the EU should work more with regions and cities in these countries.

(9/02) FRA - Migration, discrimination, security and rights promotion - FRA priorities for 2017. We live in strange times for fundamental and human rights with rights violations continuing to be unacceptable; but now also increasingly the systems guaranteeing rights are being rejected and considerable parts of the population are losing confidence in rights, feeling they belong to others not them. These were the opening words of the FRA Director when outlining the Agency's 2017 priorities of migration, discrimination, security and rights promotion [during the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs \(LIBE\)](#) meeting in Brussels on 9 February. However, he made assurances that the Agency is acutely sensitive of this environment and is seeking to engage with it at every turn.

(3/02) Eurojust - Release of final evaluation on Eurojust's Action Plan against human trafficking. Tackling trafficking in human beings (THB) calls for further cooperation at EU level, including in financial investigations, finds Eurojust's Final evaluation of its 2012-2016 Action Plan against THB. The [Implementation of the Eurojust Action Plan against THB 2012-2016 Final evaluation report](#) marks the completion of a five-year-long process that started with the [Strategic Project on Eurojust's Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#), which identified and proposed solutions to the main challenges stemming from the investigation and prosecution of THB cases from a judicial cooperation perspective. The Final evaluation follows a [mid-term Report](#) released in November 2014. The Final evaluation confirms that the complexity of THB cases, due to their multinational nature, the involvement of sophisticated criminal groups and the targeting of vulnerable victims, is the main obstacle to the successful repression of THB in Europe. The Final evaluation highlights Eurojust's crucial role in facilitating essential cross-border judicial cooperation to dismantle THB networks. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(3/02) New search engine to follow the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe's [Department for the Execution of Judgments](#) launched a new search engine which aims to improve the visibility and transparency of the process of execution of judgments of the European Court of Human

Rights: [HUDOC-EXEC](#). This new search engine (based on the existing [HUDOC-ECHR](#) search engine of the European Court of Human Rights), provides access, via a single unified interface, to relevant information and documentation in all cases pending before the Committee of Ministers, as well as in cases closed by a final resolution. Searches can be made using a multitude of search criteria as State, date, status of execution, violation, theme etc. Full press release [here](#). Handbook : [How to use HUDOC-EXEC](#) & [video explaining the supervision process](#) (in 30 languages).

(2/02) Challenges to gender equality and women’s rights continue to thrive in Europe. The Council of Europe has just published the [2016 annual report](#) on the implementation of its [2014-2017 Gender Equality Strategy](#) by its member states which looks at how existing challenges to women’s rights are being addressed. Among the challenges identified in the report is the critical vulnerability of refugee women, increasing sexist hate speech and other forms of violence against women, attacks to women’s reproductive health and rights, reduced resources allocated to gender equality due to budgetary cuts and austerity measures, barriers preventing women from disadvantaged groups to benefit from gender equality policies and standards, shortcomings to achieving women’s balanced participation in political and public decision-making, and the spread of misconceptions about gender equality through the label of “gender ideology”. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(17/02) ECRE - Italy curtails appeal rights and expands rebranded detention centres. On 10 February, the Italian Council of Ministers [adopted](#) a law that foresees the acceleration of asylum procedures and returns, following heavily [criticised](#) plans set out in the second half of 2016. The Decree Law is only provisionally binding until it is voted on in the Parliament. The new law creates specialised immigration chambers to hear asylum appeals. These chambers are established in 14 courts (Bari, Bologna, Brescia, Cagliari, Catania, Catanzaro, Florence, Lecce, Milan, Palermo, Rome, Naples, Torino and Venice), and are competent to decide on asylum appeal cases under a single judge. The reform also limits the possibility to be heard in such appeals: asylum appeal procedures are to be accelerated, as a decision by the specialised chamber must be taken within four months instead of six, and the decision can no longer be appealed to the Court of Appeal. In regard to return, Identification and Expulsion Centres (Centri di identificazione ed espulsione, CIE) are renamed Return Detention Centres (Centri di permanenza per il rimpatrio, CPR). While currently only four CIE are operational in Italy, the new closed detention centres will be rolled out across the Italian territory. The location of the new CPR is to be decided in consultation with the Presidents of the Regions concerned, on the basis of “easily accessible” sites and structures. By “easily accessible” the government is [said](#) to envisage small-scale CPR, hosting up to 80 to 100, which will be located close to airports or highways so as to facilitate returns. Full press release [here](#).

(17/02) ECRE - Protection as a pull factor? The contested end of the Dubs amendment. The UK government announced that it would end resettlement of child refugees under the ‘Dubs amendment,’ amid widespread criticism. The amendment resettled in the UK unaccompanied refugee children who had arrived elsewhere in Europe. On 8 February, Robert Goodwill UK Minister of State for Immigration [announced](#) that only 350 unaccompanied refugee children, including 200 who have already arrived, will be relocated under the [section 67 of the Immigration Act](#), known as the Dubs amendment. Home Secretary Amber Rudd [defended](#) the decision by stating that the scheme works as a pull factor encouraging traffickers to bring children to Europe. The Dubs amendment was [introduced](#) in

May 2016. While the original campaign [called for](#) 3,000 children to be relocated, in the end no target was specified. In November 2016, the scope of the scheme was limited for the first time, with the introduction of [new guidelines](#) introducing eligibility criteria for refugee children in Calais. Ending the Dubs amendment has earned wide-spread criticism. Steve Symonds, Refugee and Migrant Programme Director at Amnesty International UK [stated](#) that “By shutting off this lifeline to vulnerable young people living in precarious, unsafe and freezing conditions (...) she [Home Secretary Amber Rudd] has in fact forced thousands of vulnerable girls and boys straight into the hands of traffickers.” Full press release [here](#).

(17/02) ECRE - Civil Society Networks demand clarity and cessation of use of the European Travel Document. On 7 February European and African civil society networks released a [statement](#) calling on the EU Member States to immediately suspend the use of the European Union Travel Document and to provide transparent information on its use in the past. The [Regulation on the establishment of a European travel document for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals](#) was adopted in October 2016 and silently implemented without human rights safeguards and without published information on rules for issuance. The travel document was designed in an attempt to promote acceptance by third countries of a uniform European travel document, thereby reducing bureaucratic burdens and lengthy return procedures. After the launch of the idea of creating such a document at the Valletta Summit in November 2015, the plan was immediately [opposed](#) by several African countries but nevertheless put into effect by the EU. The travel document has already caused a rift between the EU and Mali when two people were sent back to Mali on the document, [triggering](#) a reaction from civil society. Consequently, the Malian government [decided](#) to refuse access to their territory for people with a European travel document. Full press release [here](#).

(10/02) ECRE - New project seeks solutions to inadequate family care for unaccompanied children. [Research shows](#) that children who grow up in institutions fall behind in their development compared to children who grow up in families. The [ALFACA-project](#) aims to improve family care for unaccompanied minors in Europe by increasing the basic knowledge among professionals working with reception families. The training consists of [e-learning](#) and a [manual](#) that provides general knowledge on working with unaccompanied minors and knowledge on recruitment, screening, matching and guidance of the reception families. The training materials have specifically been developed for social workers, reception professionals and guardians who are responsible for counseling reception families that take care of unaccompanied children. The EU co-funded ALFACA-project partners include Nidos (the Netherlands) in cooperation with Minor-Ndako (Belgium), Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen (Germany), OPU (Czech Republic) and the Danish Red Cross. Full press release [here](#).

(6/02) Social Platform - Debunking myths on migration. In December 2016, Social Platform published a [myth buster on investing in services](#) to debunk some common misconceptions about the costs and impact of health, housing, social, employment and education services. A presentation made at a [Centre for European Policy Studies \(CEPS\) conference](#) last Monday [30 January] by Florence Jaumotte, senior economist in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Research Department, showed that there are many mistaken beliefs on the issue of migration that cannot withstand analysis. Indeed, the IMF study [“Impact of Migration on Income Levels in Advanced Economies”](#) presents strong evidence to contradict the populist discourse spreading in the European Union.

Firstly, migrants are not a burden to economic growth. Secondly, migrants are not all low-skilled workers with little chance of entering the labour market in their hosting country. Thirdly, it is essential to underline that both high- and low-skilled migrants have a positive effect on growth by raising productivity. Fourthly – and perhaps the most important takeaway from this research – migration benefits the population as a whole, and not only affluent people. Full analysis [here](#).

(3/02) Social Platform - The EU Facilitation Directive is not aligned with human rights standards. On 31 January the European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs presented its [study](#) on the [EU Facilitation Directive](#), focusing on the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants. [Decriminalising Solidarity](#) was one of Social Platform’s key campaigns last year. We have actively tried to influence decision-makers to revise the EU Facilitation Directive; our main recommendation is to rephrase the “humanitarian clause” of the Facilitation Directive to ensure that those who provide services of humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants without a profit-making motive are not criminalised or punished (it currently states that they “may not” face sanctions). Among some of our advocacy activities we partnered with WeMove.eu and [delivered a petition](#) of more than 133,000 signatures to the responsible European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, and organised a [round table meeting](#) in the parliament co-hosted by several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) across the political groups. Full analysis [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission - [Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills - Responding to skills mismatches at sectoral level](#)

EPRS – [Guide to EU Funding \(2014-2020\)](#)

EPRS - [The EU And Migration \(Think Tank Review\)](#)

EPRS - [EU Rural Development Policy And The Integration Of Migrants \(Policy Podcast\)](#)

EPRS - [Integration Of Refugees And Migrants: Participation In Cultural Activities](#)

EPRS - [Fit for purpose? The Facilitation Directive and the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants](#)

Clingendael - [Turning the tide The politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya](#)

CER - [The EU and Libya: Realism or irrelevance?](#)

EBA - [Making Waves: Implications of the irregular migration and refugee situation on Official Development Assistance spending and practices in Europe](#)

Bruegel - [Why is it so hard to reach the EU’s ‘poverty’ target?](#)

EUI - [The integration of migrants and refugees : an EUI forum on migration, citizenship and demography](#)

EUI - [A Democratic Dividend From Emigration?](#)

MPI - [Constrained by its Roots: How the Origins of the Global Asylum System Limit Contemporary Protection](#)

OECD - [New Affordable Housing Database](#)

OECD - [The economic effects of labour immigration in developing countries: A literature review](#)

Open Society - [EU Plan on Migration Will Only Give North Africans More Reason to Flee](#)