

# INFO FLASH 26/04

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### Commission

**(20/04) Managing the Refugee Crisis: Commission reports on implementation of EU-Turkey Statement.** When reporting on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement, Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: "The first result of our cooperation with Turkey is that the message is starting to get through that turning to smugglers is the wrong choice to make. In the past three weeks we have seen a sharp decrease in irregular arrivals, which now needs to go hand-in-hand with opening up the legal channel of resettlement to those in need of protection. Although we have seen good progress in the initial stages of implementation, the Commission will remain engaged to ensure full and timely delivery of all elements of the EU-Turkey Statement, including projects for refugees from Syria in Turkey, the visa liberalisation process and compliance with EU and international laws." A [press release](#) and a [Q&A](#) on the report as well as a [factsheet](#) on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey are available. A state of play on the operational implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement can be found [here](#).

**(20/04) Commissioner Avramopoulos' remarks on the European Agenda on Security, radicalisation and social inclusion.** Following [Wednesday's weekly Commissioners College Meeting](#), Commissioner Avramopoulos said transition towards a genuine and effective Security Union should be speeded up, namely in responding to and preventing terrorism. While a wide range of EU instruments have been put in place since April 2015, in some cases implementation is slow or ineffective, like in key information sharing tools and legislation. In relation to prevention of radicalisation, Avramopoulos said that working on social inclusion is as essential as taking a security-focused approach. It is therefore key to consistently monitoring those who are identified as radicalised individuals and sharing this information with other Member States and EU agencies.

**(20/04) European Commission proposes visa-free travel for citizens of Ukraine.** The European Commission is today proposing to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Ukraine by transferring Ukraine to the list of countries whose citizens can travel without a visa to the Schengen area. This proposal comes after the Commission gave a positive assessment last December, confirming that Ukraine successfully met all benchmarks under the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP). Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said: "This is the result of the success of the Ukrainian government in achieving far-reaching and difficult reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs area and beyond, impacting on areas such as the rule of law and justice reform. I am very satisfied with the progress achieved, it is an important achievement for the citizens of Ukraine, and I hope that the European Parliament and the Council will adopt our proposal very soon".

**(19/04) Commission Report identify project for migrant parents and children as good practice under EaSI funded projects.** The European Commission [published](#) its fourth monitoring report in which it gathers good practices of projects across Europe, which on the one hand focused on the Your First EURES Job (YfEJ) initiative, and on the other on projects relating to employment, social protection and working conditions (the so-called PROGRESS axis of EaSI). A noteworthy project in the field of social protection and inclusion was [EMPAC](#), which stands for Engaging Migrant Parents and Children. It aimed to improve the integration of migrant pupils in the United Kingdom, Italy, the Czech Republic and Spain. A wide range of resources were developed, such as an action planning template, a teachers' attitude and confidence survey and language and cultural background country profiles, providing information on migrant pupils' main countries of origin, social customs, etiquette and education.

## Parliament

### **(22/04) EVENT: Inter-religious dialogue to defeat radicalisation (web streamed)**

How European Muslims deal with radicalisation and the role that women can play in countering it and promoting de-radicalisation will be debated in a conference to be held by EP President Martin Schulz and Vice-President Antonio Tajani (responsible for Inter-Religious Dialogue) on Tuesday 26 April. Projects on the ground and what to do to confront the phenomenon at national and EU levels will also be assessed with leading-edge experts.

The programme with the list of speakers is available in [English](#) and [French](#). Here's some [biographical info](#) on the speakers. You can follow the debate live via [webstreaming](#)

### **(21/04) Turkey must fulfil all criteria to get visa-free travel to the EU, say MEPs.**

Turkey must fulfil all the requirements laid down by the EU in order to be granted visa-free access to the Schengen area, [stressed Civil Liberties Committee MEPs](#) in Thursday's debate on Ankara's progress in delivering on its visa liberalisation roadmap. The next progress report assessing the situation will be presented on 4 May. Once the Commission approves a legislative proposal to exempt Turkey from visa requirements, the Parliament will have to decide upon it, together with the Council, under the co-decision procedure.

### **(21/04) Fate of 10,000 missing refugee children debated in Civil Liberties Committee.**

Representatives of the Europol law enforcement agency, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the NGO Missing Children Europe [briefed MEPs](#) on the numbers and reasons why the children are believed to have gone missing.

It is feared that some of these children are being exploited by criminal gangs, due to the often close ties between human smugglers, who facilitate travel for around 90% of the migrants, and criminal networks. These children may be sexually exploited, used for begging or forced to commit crimes. However, children may also disappear in search of friends or family in other EU countries or out of sheer desperation caused by cumbersome asylum procedures or detention in reception centres.

MEPs quizzed the invited speakers for facts and stressed the need to step up protection of unaccompanied minors so as to ensure their safety, as well as improving cross-border cooperation to find children who have gone missing and might have travelled on to another country.

## Council

**(22/04) Tusk: EU needs 'tough' migration policies.** One day ahead of the EU-Turkey high-level meeting between, the European Council president [said](#) countries must "regain capacity to decide who crosses our borders." Tusk defended more recent EU actions to tighten border controls and stop the flow of refugees, saying they were necessary to stop growing "radical, populist, often nationalist sentiment" that had led to "apocalyptic prophesies and questions about the future of Europe."

**(21/04) Council adopts Directive to strengthen rights of children in criminal proceedings.** [On 21 April 2016](#), the Council adopted the final text of a [directive strengthening children's rights in criminal proceedings](#). The directive provides a number of procedural safeguards for children (i.e. individuals below 18) who are suspected or accused of having committed a criminal offence. Core provisions of the directive include assistance from a lawyer, the provision of information on rights, the right to have an individual assessment, to a medical examination, and to audio-visual recording of questioning. The directive also provides special safeguards for children during deprivation of liberty, in particular during detention.

Now that the Directive has been approved, Member states will have three years to transpose the provisions into their national laws. Denmark, the UK and Ireland have opted out of this directive and will not be bound by it.

**(20/04) Federica Mogherini: "Culture at the very heart of Europe's external action".** In a [keynote speech](#) delivered at the European Culture Forum in Brussels, High-Representative Federica Mogherini stressed that "culture has to be at the core of our foreign policy. Culture can help us fight and prevent radicalisation. But it can also foster economic growth. It can strengthen diplomatic relations and mutual understanding. It can help us stand together to common threats." Mogherini also stressed the link between culture, economic development and security: investing in culture and tourism can "strengthen the resilience of societies in our neighbourhood and in Africa," improving Europe's security environment.

## Others

**(22/04) EUROPOL - 29 arrests in Spain as result of joint operation targeting traffickers in human beings for sexual operation.** The Spanish Guardia Civil and Chinese Police, in close cooperation with Europol, [successfully dismantled a Chinese organised crime group](#) which was actively trafficking to Spain Chinese women for sexual exploitation. Europol Director Rob Wainwright said: "Trafficking in human beings has for too long been perceived as a high-profit, low-risk activity. This perception has to change. This action sends a clear message that Europol and its partners are determined to pursue criminals who think they can exploit people for profit. Europol strongly supports EU Member States' investigations in this area, and we will continue our efforts in fighting this crime. But we also need to adapt our tools and strategies to the globalisation of crime. Law enforcement cooperation beyond EU level must take on greater importance. By working together with countries such as China, and by promoting fast and effective international law enforcement cooperation, we can eradicate this form of modern slavery".

**(20/04) EUROSTAT - EU Member States granted protection to more than 330 000 asylum seekers in 2015.** A [report by EUROSTAT](#) highlights that the 28 Member States granted protection status to 333 350 asylum seekers in 2015, an increase of 72% compared

with 2014. Since 2008, a total of nearly 1.1 million asylum seekers have been granted protection status in the EU.

**(20/04) FRA - Addressing the migration healthcare challenge.** The Fundamental Rights Agency took part in a WHO Consultation with UN agencies and international organisations on the European strategy and action plan for refugee and migrant health in Copenhagen. The infections, diseases migrants have caught alongside the psychological damage they have suffered pose challenges for healthcare systems of frontline countries. This has been thrown under the spotlight in the latest FRA [summary report](#) of migration-related fundamental rights concerns drawing on data from the nine Member States most affected by the migration flows.

**(20/04) FRA - Directors of FRA and OSCE's ODIHR meet discuss cooperation.** The FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty [met with](#) the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Michael Georg Link, and the Head of ODIHR's Human Rights Department. Directors specifically discussed further efforts and cooperation in the context of migration, as well as in the areas of Roma, disability and hate crime. FRA and ODIHR have developed good working relations and joint - as well as complementary - activities in several human rights areas. The ODIHR Director will be one of the keynote speakers at FRA's Fundamental Rights Forum on 20-23 June 2016.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

**(19/04) Daniel Mitov (Bulgaria) "Intolerance and hatred undoubtedly represent a threat to our democracies".** "Governments and political leaders should refrain from using xenophobic rhetoric linking migrants to social problems or security risks, thereby making the integration of the few migrants staying in the country even more problematic", said Daniel Mitov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, addressing the Assembly of the CoE. "We also need to define clearly what exactly it is that constitutes a threat to our democracies, but intolerance and hatred undoubtedly do represent such a threat" he added, highlighting the responsibility of the international community to improve the difficult humanitarian situation and to protect migrants' human rights.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

**(22/04) AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: EU-Turkey: Merkel, Tusk and Timmermans must not close their eyes to catalogue of human rights abuses against refugees.** The human rights network [made clear](#) the high-level European delegation travelling to Turkey on Saturday (23/04) must address the catalogue of human rights abuses faced by refugees in the country, not sweep them under the carpet.

**(21/04) EUROCHILD: Children's participation is a process of recognising human dignity.** Children's rights consultant and advocate Gerison Lansdown, who founded and directed Children's Rights Alliance for England (1992-2000) [provides an overview](#) on child participation in society highlighting its significance, strengths and limitations.

**(20/04) EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM: Policy paper on equality and non-discrimination.** In a series of [recommendations](#), the European Youth Forum calls for an end to discrimination against young people based on age and a variety of other factors, including ethnic origin. Particular attention is put on equality of outcome, meaning that society should make sure that

people genuinely have access to equal outcomes. People are not just offered an opportunity, but supported to take advantage of that opportunity.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**CEPS** - [The Social Pillar already exists...but more effort is needed to strengthen it](#)

**ECFR** - [Deals without borders - Europe's foreign policy on migration](#)