

INFO FLASH 10/05

EU INSTITUTIONS

Commission

(6/05) President Juncker appoints the first Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the European Union. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced his decision to appoint Mr Ján Figel' (former European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth from 2004-2009) as the first Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the European Union. Mr Figel' assumes this new role as of today for an initial mandate of one year.

President Juncker said: "Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental right which is part of the foundation of the European Union. The persistent persecution of religious and ethnic minorities makes protecting and promoting this freedom inside and outside the EU all the more essential. I trust that Ján Figel', our Special Envoy, will help us in this endeavour, sharpening our focus and ensuring that this important issue gets the attention it deserves". The European Parliament supports and has called for this initiative in its [Resolution](#) of 4 February 2016. Given the importance of promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief outside the EU in the context of the European Union's dialogue and assistance programmes with third countries, the Special Envoy will serve as Special Adviser to the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica.

(4/05) Commission presents proposal to reform of Common European Asylum System.

The European Commission [has made proposals](#) to reform the Common European Asylum System by creating a fairer, more efficient and more sustainable system for allocating asylum applications among Member States. The basic principle will remain the same – asylum seekers should, unless they have family elsewhere, apply for asylum in the first country they enter – but a new fairness mechanism will ensure no Member State is left with a disproportionate pressure on its asylum system. This reform is intended to form the medium term response to future migratory challenges. For a detailed Q&A see [here](#).

The text proposes a corrective allocation mechanism ("the fairness mechanism") that will automatically establish when a country is handling a disproportionate number of asylum applications, by reference to the country's size and wealth. If one country is receiving disproportionate numbers above and beyond that reference (over 150% of the reference number), all further new applicants in that country will (regardless of nationality) be relocated across the EU until the number of applications is back below that level. A Member State will also have the option to temporarily not take part in the reallocation against a solidarity contribution of €250,000 for each applicant that will go to the receiving Member State. The fairness mechanism will also factor in the effort being made by a Member State to resettle those in need of international protection direct from a third country, in line with the effort to implement legal and safe pathways to Europe. The text sets out clear obligations for asylum applicants to discourage abuses and secondary movements, including the duty to remain in the Member State responsible for their claim, geographic limits to the provision of material reception benefits and proportionate consequences in case of non-compliance. At the same time, the text aims at protecting asylum seekers' best interests with stronger guarantees for unaccompanied minors and a balanced extension of the definition of family members;

Today's proposals also include transforming the existing European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into a fully-fledged European Union Agency for Asylum to reflect its enhanced role in the new system and reinforcing of the EU's fingerprinting database, Eurodac, in order to better manage the asylum system and to help tackle irregular migration.

(4/05) European Commission appoints a new Director-General to its department for International Cooperation and Development. The European Commission [appointed](#) Stefano Manservigi as Director-General of its department for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) as of 16 May. Mr Manservigi, an Italian national, is currently Head of Cabinet of High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini.

Mr Manservigi brings more than thirty years of experience in the Commission to this job. He worked as Director-General of the department for Development and Relations with Africa, Caribbean, Pacific States (DG DEV) and the department for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME). He also served as Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey. In congratulating Mr. Manservigi on the appointment, Federica Mogherini [said](#) this "will allow [me and Mr. Manservigi] to pursue our close collaboration, notably in view of the work that must be done jointly on the fight against poverty, development in Africa, and also on the external aspects of migration.

(4/05) Eurojust and Montenegro sign Cooperation Agreement. At a ceremony at the European Commission, Ms Michèle Coninx, President of Eurojust, and H.E. Mr Zoran Pažin, Minister of Justice of Montenegro, [signed](#) an Agreement on Cooperation in the presence of Ms Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

As an EU candidate country currently undergoing accession negotiations, Montenegro's formal cooperation with Eurojust is a necessary precondition for closure of Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security. Entering into a cooperation agreement with a third State often leads to a greater number of cases between the third State and Eurojust. Cooperation with third States is a crucial step in combating serious crime, particularly organised crime and terrorism.

Parliament

(4/05) Italian project on integration of refugees wins Charlemagne Youth Prize. The InteGREAT [project](#) created by AIESEC (Italy) aiming to encourage young people from all over Europe to help integrate refugees [has been awarded](#) the Charlemagne Youth Prize. The Prize aims to encourage the development of European consciousness among young people, as well as their participation in European integration projects. The InteGREAT project includes workshops, leisure activities, seminars and others events and involves international volunteers, local non-governmental organisations and local communities.

(4/05) MEP Panzeri on Libya: "The sooner we act the better it will be for all of us". Not only does Libya faces political instability and an increasing Islamic State presence, it is also at risk of attracting more migrants trying to reach Europe by boat from there. Italian MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D), chair of the Parliament delegation for relations with the Maghreb, [talked about](#) how the EU-Turkey agreement on migration will affect Libya.

Panzeri said the agreement reached with Turkey will inevitably affect Libya, as once the Balkan route is closed off, more migrants will pass through Libya. He added the EU should act and try to stabilise the countries that are nearby, like Niger and Mali.

Council

(9/05) President Tusk's Report on the European Council (December 2014 to April 2016). The European Council faced critical political challenges from December 2014 to April 2016. These included unprecedented flows of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and the threat of terrorism. In this [report](#), President Donald Tusk [looks back](#) at the European Council's work since he took up office on 1 December 2014, and provides his personal account of the main decisions taken by European leaders since then.

(6/05) UK: Sadiq Khan elected in London, becoming its first Muslim mayor. In a Europe struggling with a rise in Islamophobia, riven by debates about the flood of Syrian migrants and on edge over religious, ethnic and cultural disputes, [London has elected its first Muslim mayor](#). Mr. Khan, 45, won a striking victory after a campaign dominated by anxieties over religion and ethnicity. His election is also considered [to have a major impact on the Brexit debate](#).

(6/05) Italy: violation of the right to asylum reported at the Police station in Milan. ECRE (European Council of Refugees and Exiles) member ASGI in collaboration with the Italian organisations APN and NAGA, [have highlighted a worrying practice](#) taking place at the police station ("Questura") in Milan, whereby people asking for international protection who are not deemed in clear need of it, without any proper assessment, are handed an expulsion order on the spot, without any assessment of their protection claims.

Others

(4/05) Boost to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. On 3-4 May, Pedro Antonio Sánchez, President of the Region of Murcia (ES/EPP), [hosted](#) an international meeting on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation attended by the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Markku Markkula, Hani Abdelmasih Al-Hayek, co-president of ARLEM (the assembly of local and regional elected representatives from the EU and its Medit. partners) and Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is more essential than ever, and local and regional authorities are at the forefront of major issues such as the management of the refugee crisis, job creation and the implementation of sustainable energy policies.

(4/05) FRA - How do Equality Bodies, NHRIs and Ombudsmen and National Parliaments cooperate? At the end of the last year, FRA [consulted](#) Equality Bodies, National Human Rights institutions and Ombudspersons about their experiences of cooperation with national parliaments. Over 40 institutions from 27 EU Member States responded. Most cooperate with their national parliaments in one or another way such as presenting their annual report to parliament or through consultations on legislative proposals or regulatory amendments. All respondents were involved in joint events or are invited to each other's meetings and conferences.

(4/05) FRA talks equality and policing during international human rights law event. FRA [presented](#) its work in relation to equality and policing in the context of an international conference on the police and international human rights law in Berlin. FRA's presentation served to underline the importance of data with respect to oversight of the law in practice, drawing on evidence from FRA's surveys and their specific findings on ethnic profiling and crime victimisation amongst immigrant and minority communities.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(9/05) EVENT - Roundtables on the ECHR and the protection of Asylum-seekers. The Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals Programme ([HELP](#)), will launch courses on Asylum and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in Greece and Turkey, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)). This follows on from the recent EU-Turkey Agreement on irregular migration and is particularly relevant given the ongoing refugee situation in Europe. The course has been developed jointly by HELP and UNHCR with a group of experts and covers the main provisions of the ECHR relating to asylum together with relevant European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law. The kick-off roundtable in Greece will also include a parallel session on vulnerable asylum-seekers in the ECtHR case law with a particular focus on LGBTI claims.

CIVIL SOCIETY

(9/05) SOCIAL PLATFORM - VulnerAble Project - improving the health of those in isolated and vulnerable situations. Social Platform [is involved](#) in the EU-funded '[VulnerAble](#)' project, led by ICF International. The project targets specific vulnerable and isolated populations, who may be more at risk of poor health and/or face barriers in accessing healthcare services. The project will assess their particular health needs and challenges, as well as identify best practices to support them and ultimately improve their health.

(6/05) CHARLEMAGNE PRIZE - Pope Francis castigates Europe in speech on solidarity. In Charlemagne prize acceptance speech, the Pontiff [criticises](#) union's position on refugees, economy and youth employment. The prize has traditionally been presented in the German city of Aachen, which was liberated from the Nazis by allied forces in 1944, but Francis accepted his award at a ceremony in Rome.

PUBLICATIONS

MPI - [Brexit: The Role of Migration in the Upcoming EU Referendum](#)

EPRS - [Implementation of the Directive on Human Trafficking from a gender perspective](#)

CEPS - [Facilitating Mobility and Fostering Diversity Getting EU Migration Governance to Respect the Human Rights of Migrants](#)

Canergie Europe - [Turkey Power Shift Upends EU Refugee Deal](#) (Op-Ed)

EPRS - [Cohesion Policy Support For Migrants And Refugees](#) (blog)

EPRS - [World Humanitarian Summit 2016](#) (EP Plenary Podcast)