

# INFO FLASH 24/05

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### Commission

**(22/05) Turkey appoints new Prime Ministers - Statement by VP Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn.** In reaction to the appointment of Mr Binali Yıldırım as new Prime Minister of Turkey, Commission Vice-President and High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Johannes Hahn said the appointment comes at an important moment not only for Turkey, but also for the EU-Turkey relationship. Both representatives look forward to continuing to work together on common regional and international challenges, and to further implement all aspects of the EU-Turkey joint partnership, as agreed at the first EU-Turkey summit last November and in the EU-Turkey Statement from 18 March.

**(19/05) Commission adopts first Report on progress in the fight against trafficking in human beings.** The European Commission has reported on progress in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The report presents trends and challenges in addressing trafficking in human beings, examines progress made and highlights key challenges that the EU and its Member States need to address as a priority. According to the Report, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is still the most widespread form (67% of registered victims), followed by trafficking for labour exploitation (21% of registered victims). Over three quarters of the registered victims were women (76%), while at least 15% were children. One of the most sharply increasing trends has been in the number of children falling victim to human traffickers. Victims with disabilities and victims of Roma ethnic background were also identified as increasing in number. EU Member States need to fully and correctly implement the EU Anti-trafficking Directive in order to increase the number of investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators, establish appropriate mechanisms for the early identification and protection of victims and enhance measures to prevent the trafficking of human beings. By the end of 2016, the Commission will publish two reports on compliance and criminalisation as well as a post-2016 Strategy on trafficking in human beings. Child protection along the migration route is a top priority the Commission is also addressing in its reform of the Common European asylum system, namely on unaccompanied minors.

**(19/05) Commission reports on state of fundamental rights in the EU.** The European Commission has published its Report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2015. The report gives an overview of how fundamental rights have been applied across a range of EU policies and in Member States. The report notes that in 2015 a number of legislative projects that promote fundamental rights have been brought forward, including amongst others the Data Protection reform package, the Directive on special safeguards for children in criminal proceedings or the Victims' Rights Directive. It explains how the European Commission has taken into account the Charter in its legislative and policy work in 2015, such as the measures put forward to better manage migration at EU level (European Agenda on Migration) or to reinforce security (European Agenda on Security). Finally, it provides examples of how the Charter was applied by the European Court of Justice and presents the main developments of the case law. This year's report also includes a special focus on the first Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights which took place in October

2015 on 'Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating Antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe', and takes stock of the key actions that the Commission has put into place. The second Annual Colloquium on "Media Pluralism and Democracy" will be held in Brussels on 17 and 18 November 2016. The Commission has today published a public consultation that will feed into discussions of the Colloquium.

**(18/05) Relocation and Resettlement: EU Member States must act to sustain current management of flows.** The Commission adopted its latest progress report on the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes, assessing actions taken up to 13 May 2016. Overall, progress remains unsatisfactory since the Commission's second report, despite signs of increased preparation for future action: few relocations have taken place since mid-April, though the pipeline of future relocations has been strengthened. Progress has been made on resettlement as part of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, but must be accelerated to avoid migrants returning to irregular routes. Greater efforts on relocation are increasingly urgent in view of the humanitarian situation in Greece and the increase in arrivals to Italy.

**(18/05) Spring 2016 European Semester package: Commission issues country-specific recommendations.** The European Commission proposed its 2016 country-specific recommendations (CSRs), setting out its economic policy guidance for individual Member States for the next 12 to 18 months. The CSRs also reflect the Commission's efforts to make the European Semester of economic governance more effective and relevant. The Commission has this year proposed fewer recommendations with a focus on key economic and social priorities identified in its Annual Growth Survey 2016. The Member States have advanced reforms over the last year, but the pace of such progress needs to be accelerated to contribute, as it should, to jobs, growth and investment. The implementation of country-specific recommendations varies across policy areas. This can be due to the complexity of the reforms to be undertaken, such as reforms of labour and product markets, pensions systems and banking sector. Concerning the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP), the Commission confirms that Croatia and Portugal are to be considered to be experiencing excessive imbalances. They should implement their reform agendas rigorously and in a timely manner. Reports from Belgium, Italy and Finland have been considered as being in line with the rules.

## Parliament

**(23/05) MEPs assess refugee camps in Greece and call for smoother implementation of EU-Turkey deal.** A delegation from the civil liberties committee visited Greece last week to assess refugees' situation at the EU's external borders and the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal to manage the influx of migrants and refugees. The delegation was led by Hungarian S&D member Péter Niedermüller. Members also met with representatives from the Greek authorities, international organisations and non-governmental organisations. Péter Niedermüller said: "In the short term, we need to ensure on the ground health care, social care, psychological support and access to education for children. In the medium term, we need a process based on legal alternatives by which these people can be relocated or granted international protection in Greece. In the long term, we need a genuinely common European asylum system based on solidarity and acceptance of the realities of human migration". He also asked for an improvement of the information given to migrations: "The failure to provide meaningful information leads to anger and frustration. We also need to move as quickly as possible towards processing formal asylum procedures, in order to offer them a perspective for a better future."

**(23/05) Security: civil liberties MEPs debate changing trends in terrorist threats.** The rise in jihadist attacks, terrorists' profiles and the special role of women in ISIS, recruitment of young people on social media and ISIS communication strategies, terrorist financing, the links between terrorism and crime and striking the right balance between privacy and security on encryption were among the topics debated by Civil Liberties Committee MEPs and Head of the Europol Counter Terrorism Centre Manuel Navarrete Paniagua. The debate followed a presentation of two reports by the EU law enforcement agency Europol, on the "Terrorism Situation" in the EU for 2016 and on "Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks" respectively. In a separate debate, MEPs discussed counter-terrorism cooperation among EU member states with Chair of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) Arie Ijzerman.

## Council

**(23/05) Council conclusions on the external aspects of migration.** In view of the June European Council, the Council stressed the urgency of strengthening a EU's common and holistic approach where Member States integrate migration as a permanent and structural component of EU foreign policy to support further, collective and strengthened EU action towards third countries. The Council highlighted the need to accelerate the work related to the external aspects of the European Agenda on Migration, the High-Level Dialogues promoted by the HRVP, the tailor-made country packages prepared by the Commission services and the EEAS, the Valletta Action Plan, the Declaration of the High-level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean - Western Balkans Route, and welcomes the presentation of innovative proposals by all Member States, including the "Migration Compact" proposed by Italy. The Council will also continue to look into the proposal by Hungary on "Schengen 2.0" In addition, it recalls the Council conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the EU approach to forced displacement and development.

**(23/05) Council conclusions on EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia (Libya).** Recalling its conclusions on Libya of 18 April and also in the light of the ministerial meeting on Libya in Vienna on 16 May, the Council underlined the need to enhance the capacity of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia to disrupt the business model of human smugglers and trafficking networks and to contribute to broader security in support of the legitimate Libyan authorities. To continue and strengthen cooperation, the Council agreed to extend the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia by one year and to add two further supporting tasks (capacity building and training of, and information sharing with, the Libyan Coastguard and Navy; support to information sharing, as well as implementation of the UN arms embargo on the High Seas off the coast of Libya on the basis of a new UNSC Resolution). The Council stressed the importance of continuing coordination with international partners such as UN and NATO.

**(20/05) Outcome of the last Justice and Home Affairs Council.** During last week's Council, Ministers debated over the Commission's recent proposals on visa liberalisation. The Council stressed that visa requirements can only be lifted when previously agreed benchmarks are fulfilled. The Council also agreed its negotiating position on the proposed regulation to revise the suspension mechanism ("emergency brake") which can be applied to all existing visa liberalisation agreements to prevent abuse. On the basis of this mandate, the Netherlands presidency will start negotiations with the European Parliament as soon as the latter has adopted its position. Talking about migration, participating states were invited to speed up the resettlement of Syrian refugees from Turkey in the framework of the 1:1 scheme and were

also urged to accelerate the relocation of asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, according to the Council decisions of September 2015. Finally, Ministers were informed about progress on the draft regulation on a European Border Guard. The aim of the Presidency is to reach an agreement by the two co-legislators by the end of June, as requested by the European Council.

**(19/05) France, United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands met at Eurojust and set up a task force on illegal immigrant smuggling in the North Sea region.** Judicial and law enforcement professionals from France, United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as liaison magistrates and specialists from Europol, recently came together at Eurojust for an operational meeting on illegal immigrant smuggling in the North Sea region. The meeting enabled specialists from Europol to present the work of their team in disrupting migrant smuggling networks, and participants from Member states to highlight the complexity of the migrant smuggling phenomenon, in which national authorities are confronted with highly adaptable and mobile transnational criminal networks. The participants emphasised the need to improve information sharing between the competent national law enforcement and judicial authorities, as well as with Europol, Frontex and the relevant administrative and port authorities; to facilitate financial investigations aimed at seizing the considerable profits generated by smuggling activities; to increase the focus on counterfeit and forged official documents; and to enhance cross-border surveillance operations in order to better map smuggling offences and build stronger prosecution cases. In conclusion, the participants decided to set up a task force comprising representatives of national judicial and law enforcement authorities as well as liaison magistrates. The task force will meet regularly at the Court of Lille with the aim of enhancing practical cooperation in cross-border investigations and prosecutions to ensure an effective collective response to illegal immigrant smuggling. The task force will complement arrangements already in place between the four Member States.

**(19/05) Finland joins many European countries in restricting the space for asylum (ECRE).** New guidelines issued by the Finnish Immigration Service this week are restricting the requirements for the granting of residence permits to asylum seekers in the country. Under the new amendments to the Aliens Act, residence permits on the basis of humanitarian protection will no longer be granted (read here).

**(19/05) Greece to start registration of asylum seekers residing in open reception facilities in the mainland (ECRE).** From the end of May and for two months, the Greek Asylum Service will conduct a **pre-registration exercise** together with UNHCR and EASO for all those who arrived in Greece before 20 March. This initiative is meant to improve the system for applying for international protection in the country, which is currently overloaded and at a standstill, with thousands of applications which cannot be processed in a decent time, and thousands more of people who are waiting to be registered (read here).

## Others

**(19/05) FRA - Roundtable focuses on child poverty in Vienna.** FRA took part in a roundtable event on child poverty. The event was hosted by the City of Vienna's Human Rights Office. The roundtable is part of several discussions which by the end of 2016 will result in an action plan for the Vienna municipality in the area of human rights. FRA's presentation focused on policies and data related to child poverty in Europe.

**(19/05) FRA - 5 crucial areas to better support trafficked victims.** The current migration situation is putting greater numbers of people at risk of being trafficked and exploited for prostitution, for crime or for work as they seek refuge from persecution or turmoil in their home countries. FRA's latest summary report of migration-related fundamental rights concerns, throws the spotlight on five crucial areas that affect the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims.

**(19/05) FRA - Developing reception condition indicators for asylum seekers.** FRA took part in the second meeting of a working group organised by EASO to discuss indicators on reception conditions. Eight Member States, the European Commission and the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, also participated in the meeting in Malta. The aim of the working group is to develop reception standards and clear and measurable indicators. This will allow conditions to be monitored uniformly in line with the EU Directive on Reception Conditions. FRA's input focused on ensuring an adequate protection to the applicants with special needs, such as children, people with disabilities or victims of gender-based violence.

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**(23/05) World Humanitarian Summit: Council of Europe commitment.** Attending the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland reaffirmed the commitment of the CoE to prioritising the protection of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers across the Council of Europe's 47 member states, and to ensuring that legislation introduced by CoE member States to control the flow of migrants and asylum seekers into their territories complies with the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. It also reiterated that the CoE will train civil servants and police officers in Member states on the rights of migrants and refugees, that it will seek political support from member states for a new pan-European Action Plan to protect the rights of asylum seeking and refugee children, and that it will seek ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (the "Lanzarote Convention").

**(20/05) No Hate is in the air: young people talk youth-friendly politics.** More than 7,000 young people have got together in Strasbourg on 20-21 May 2016 to exchange ideas on fighting political apathy among young people; to discuss and test innovative ways of engaging young people in decision-making around issues that affect them; and to learn from each other's experiences in fighting hate speech online. The Council of Europe was one of the partners of the European Youth Event Yo!Fest organised by the European Parliament. Activists of the No Hate Speech campaign of the Council of Europe held workshops and opened events at the Yo!Village to talk about securing human rights and countering hate speech and discrimination online. Twenty living books were available to narrate their stories of equality and discrimination to the event participants who also had an opportunity to travel to the imaginary DignityLand where social rights, non-violence and inclusion are there for each and every one.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

**(23/05) EUROCHILD - Country specific recommendations: a missed opportunity to tackle increasing child poverty.** While Eurochild welcomes an increased number of country specific recommendations with a focus on poverty reduction, the Commission has missed another opportunity to guide Member States to prioritise implementation of the Recommendation on Investing in Children and tackle the rising tide of child poverty, currently estimated to affect 27 million children in the EU.

**(23/05) European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) - Response to country-specific recommendations.** Reacting to last week's Commission country-specific recommendations (CSRs), EAPN acknowledges that while refugees and migrants are given increased attention, together with Roma, women and children, other target groups facing increased risk of poverty seem to be missed, e.g. homeless, people with disabilities and health problems.

**(20/05) VOLONTEUROPE - What makes an active citizen?** Volonteuropa has teamed up with European Civic Forum to answer this question, but it needs your help to do it! Help Volonteuropa get to the bottom of what it means to be an active citizen by completing this 10-minute survey by 5 June 2016 (available in 7 languages).

**(20/05) ECRE - Italy's proposed idea of 'hotspots at sea' is unlawful, says ASGI.** ECRE member ASGI published a press release highlighting strong concerns in relation to an idea proposed by the Italian government and Interior Ministry to introduce the practice of 'hotspots at sea'. According to news sources, ahead of last week's Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Brussels, the Italian Interior Minister Angelino Alfano stated that Italy has been working on the idea for over a month and is ready to implement it if necessary (read here).

**(19/05) HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH - Atmosphere of chaos and insecurity in Greek 'hotspots'.** Police are failing to protect people during frequent incidents of violence in closed centers on the Greek islands known as "hotspots," Human Rights Watch said. The centers were established for the reception, identification, and processing of asylum seekers and migrants. None of the three centers Human Rights Watch visited on Samos, Lesbos, and Chios in mid-May 2016, separate single women from unrelated adult men, and all three are unsanitary and severely overcrowded.

**(18/05) BUSINESS INSIDER - A prominent economist destroyed the argument against rehoming refugees across Europe.** Refugees repay double the money countries spend taking them in, according to the former economic adviser to the president of the European Commission Philippe Legrain (read here).

## PUBLICATIONS

**LSE** - Contrary to popular opinion, business lobbyists are less effective than NGOs (article)

**CEPS** - EU Budgetary Responses to the 'Refugee Crisis': reconfiguring the Funding Landscape

**EPC** - Policy Update for the European Programme for Integration and Migration (briefing)

**THE MIGRATION OBSERVATORY (UK)** - The labour market effects of immigration (briefing)