

# INFO FLASH 21/06

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(19/06) Joint Statement ahead of World Refugee Day 2016.** On the occasion of World Refugee Day, four Commissioners issued a joint statement - Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, and Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management. The Commissioners said the EU has not and will not turn a blind eye to this crisis and we will continue to share in the global efforts to address it. The EU is continuously looking at ways to strengthen our humanitarian response and increase support to refugees, internally displaced people and the millions affected by crisis around the world. As the world's leading humanitarian donor, the EU humanitarian response has helped millions affected by the crisis in Syria. They added it is clear that any sustainable solution requires close cooperation with countries of origin and transit and legal avenues for those fleeing conflict and persecution in order to reach Europe safely. Migration will become even more central to the European external action through the new Partnership Framework we presented this month. The Commission is working to establish strong partnerships with key countries of origin and transit and to provide support to those countries hosting large refugee populations. You can read the full statement [here](#).

**(15/06) Federica Mogherini appoints Helga Schmid as Secretary General of the European External Action Service.** High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini [decided to appoint](#) Helga Schmid as Secretary General of European External Action Service (EEAS), following the resignation of Alain Le Roy, currently holding the post, for personal reasons. This decision will enter into force on 1 September. Alain Le Roy has been Secretary General of the EEAS since 1 March 2015, and Helga Schmid worked as EEAS Deputy Secretary General/Political Director since 2011.

**(15/06) Commission adopts second Recommendation identifying steps to restore Dublin transfers to Greece.** The Commission [adopted](#) its [second Recommendation](#) on the specific measures that Greece needs to take to fully implement the EU asylum standards to better manage the refugee crisis and to possibly resume transfers of asylum seekers from other Member States under the Dublin Regulation. The Recommendation notes that despite the difficult situation Greece is confronted with, it has made continuous efforts in improving its asylum system since the first recommendation adopted in February, including increasing the overall reception capacity as well as the capacity of the asylum service, setting-up a framework for free legal aid and new appeal authorities. However, there is still a significant amount of progress to be achieved before Dublin transfers to Greece can be resumed by the end-of-year objective. It is for Member States' authorities, under the control of their courts and the European courts, to decide whether they consider that the conditions are adequate to resume Dublin transfers to Greece. Since 2011, Member States have not been able to carry out Dublin transfers to Greece following two judgements of the European Court of Human Rights

(ECHR) and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which identified systemic deficiencies in the Greek asylum system. The Commission's recommendation is a roadmap that sets out the steps to be taken by Greece to have a well-functioning asylum system and be fully part of the European Dublin system. Today's Recommendation finds that since the adoption of the [first Recommendation](#), there have been continuous efforts by the Greek authorities, assisted by the Commission, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Member States and international organisations to improve the functioning of the asylum system, in line with the concerns identified.

**(14/06) Preventing and fighting: stronger action at EU level to better tackle violent radicalization.** The European Commission has presented a series of measures to support Member States in their efforts to prevent and fight radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. Actions countering radicalisation take place mainly on the ground, at local but also regional or national levels, and fall primarily within the competences of the Member States. EU research has provided useful comparative results on radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes and on the evolving and complex social context of religions, multiculturalism and political extremism in many Member States. There is a growing consensus that drivers conducive to radicalisation may include a strong sense of alienation, perceived injustice or humiliation reinforced by social marginalisation, xenophobia and discrimination, limited education or employment possibilities, criminality or psychological problems. Local actors such as teachers, youth and social workers, community leaders, psychologists, NGOs, think-tanks, community police, prison and probation officers as well as representatives of local authorities are usually best placed to prevent and detect radicalisation both in the short term and the long term. At the same time, the process of violent radicalisation has important transnational implications which require a more coordinated approach and support from the European level. To support Member States in their efforts, the Commission will primarily mobilise its policy and funding instruments as well as European networks. Most actions in the Communication will be implemented in close collaboration with the Member States (more info [here](#)).

## European Parliament

**(17/06) Palestine refugees: "Another generation is facing the trauma of lost homes and family members".** The situation continues to be dire for Palestinians: 95% of Palestine refugees in Syria are dependent on humanitarian aid and 65% of young Gazans are unemployed. Pierre Krähenbühl, head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), [discussed their plight with Parliament's foreign affairs and development committees](#) on 13 June, calling on the international community to work towards a credible political solution for the problems of the Middle East.

**(15/06) Strengthening the ACP-EU Assembly to meet today's global challenges.** Local governance, stepping up intra-ACP trade and common management of ACP-EU migration were among the topics discussed by the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) at its 31st session, which closed on Wednesday 15 June, in Windhoek, Namibia. In a debate on Wednesday, [Members called for](#) a renewed post-Cotonou architecture to adapt the ACP-EU partnership to new global challenges. Co-President ad interim Michèle Rivasi (Greens/EFA, FR) stressed the need to strengthen the parliamentary dimension and include civil society in the new form of cooperation. MEPs and their ACP counterparts were also joined by Mozambique's former President Joaquim Chissano to debate the changing face of conflict and global security threats and their impact on global peace and stability. MEPs and MPs also

discussed the prevention and management of epidemics in a post-Ebola context and the Zika virus threat. One major topic was the Common management of ACP-EU migration. MEPs and MPs called for an urgent co-ordinated initiative to improve the deplorable situation of migrants and refugees within the European Union or en route to Europe. The complex links between climate change and migration deserve special attention and the countries concerned should get technical assistance, they added. The Assembly reiterated the inalienable right to migrate in order to escape persecution and seek better living conditions. It also stressed the importance of exploiting the possibilities offered by legal migration policies and inclusive reception programmes.

**(14/06) No EU visa-free travel for Turks, if rule of law is undermined, say MEPs.** If Turkey goes on undermining rule of law principles and stripping Members of the Turkish Parliament of their immunities, then it should not expect to be granted an EU visa-free regime, [said Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs](#) on Tuesday in a debate with Selahattin Demirtaş, co-chair of pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). They also voiced solidarity with Mr Demirtaş' efforts to revive the Kurdish peace process talks. Mr Demirtaş, the leader of one of Turkey's major opposition parties, noted that his country is living through extraordinary times, as its constitution is suspended, political and media rights are violated, and Turkish MPs are stripped of their immunities. Coupled with the halt of Kurdish peace process talks, this has become an "Erdoğan strategy" to ignite national feelings and make President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "a single man in power", Mr Demirtaş explained.

## European Council

**(20/06) Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world in 2015.** The Council adopted the thematic part of the [EU annual report on human rights and democracy in the world in 2015](#). The report underlines that 2015 has been a year of challenges for the EU and the international community at large, it describes the EU human rights approach to conflicts and crisis, how the EU addresses the main human rights and democracy challenges worldwide, and how human rights are mainstreamed throughout EU external policies, including trade and development cooperation.

**(20/06) Foreign Affairs Council - Council conclusions on child labour.** As part of the agenda of the last Foreign Affairs Council, the Council [reaffirmed](#) its strong commitment to ensuring every child is protected from child labour including its worst forms and stressed the importance of eradicating the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict including child soldiers. In addition, Ministers from 28 EU Member States expressed concerns about the increasing number of children, many of them unaccompanied, engaged in large scale migratory flows and the current refugee crisis, including as a result of forced displacement. They said those children are even more vulnerable to trafficking, all kinds of exploitation, including labour exploitation and other child rights violations.

**(17/06) Outcome of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council.** As part of the Agenda, Ministers from 28 EU Member States adopted [conclusions on social dialogue and on combating poverty and social exclusion](#). They acknowledged that preventing and fighting poverty and social exclusion, especially in-work poverty, in an effective way requires acknowledging the multidimensional nature of poverty. This calls for an integrated approach also at the household level by considering each specific situation from a holistic perspective, ranging from a lack of income to social exclusion, and by recognising the role of and consequences for other life domains, such as employment, health and longterm

care, reconciliation of work and family life, education and housing. An integrated approach requires cooperation of stakeholders within all relevant public policy domains and across all required disciplines by connecting services between public parties, social partners, private partners, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the target groups. Cooperation should lead to a coordination of comprehensive and personalized, timely and continuous interventions aimed at the respective life domains. The text provides recommendations to the European Commission, Member States and other Council in-house services and bodies.

## Others

**(17/06) FRA - Women refugees at high risk of being victims of gender-based violence.** Women and girls fleeing from persecution or turmoil in their home countries are particularly at risk of physical, sexual and psychological violence when seeking sanctuary, in transit and when they arrive in the EU. In advance of World Refugee Day on 20 June, [FRA's latest summary report of migration-related fundamental rights concerns](#), throws the spotlight on the plight of female refugees at reception and accommodation centres. This issue will also feature during discussions on improving refugee protection as part of FRA's 4-day Fundamental Rights Forum (20-23/06).

**(16/06) Committee of the Regions - Europe's demographic challenges require a strong EU response.** All EU policies and measures should take demographic challenges into consideration, [suggests](#) the European Committee of the Regions in an opinion adopted. A comprehensive European strategy is needed, as growing demographic disparities among territories risk having major economic, social, budgetary and environmental impact in Europe. This view is supported by a new OECD report on regional development which was presented to the CoR members at the plenary session. The [opinion](#) prepared with the support of eight Spanish regions calls for a comprehensive European strategy aligning different EU policies, ranging from cohesion, innovation and employment to transport and rural development. Recommendations include promoting family-friendly policies to increase birth rate, developing transport and telecommunications infrastructure in rural and sparsely populated areas, as well as supporting immigration policies, mainly based on employment, which can temper the negative demographic trends.

**(16/06) EUROSTAT - Asylum in the EU Member States - Number of first time asylum seekers down to fewer than 290 000 in the first quarter of 2016 - More than 1 out of 3 continued to come from Syria.** During the first quarter of 2016 (from January to March 2016), 287 100 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU), down by 33% compared with the fourth quarter of 2015 (when 426 000 first time applicants were registered). Read the EUROSTAT report [here](#).

**(15/06) FRA Annual Activity Report now available online.** [FRA's Consolidated Annual Activity Report](#) details the achievements and initiatives taken by FRA in 2015 [has been published on the Agency's](#) website. In 2015, FRA strongly focused on fundamental rights challenges arising due to the significant increase in refugees and migrants coming to the EU. In line with its mandate and its objective to provide assistance as well as to formulate evidence-based advice in the form of opinions to the EU institutions and Member States, FRA offered its expertise at 240 presentations and hearings at the EU and Member State levels, as well as at events organised by other international organisations.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

**(20/06) World Refugee Day: “Share our cities – Share the future”.** The Intercultural Cities (ICCs) are working hard on ensuring inclusive integration and equal rights and opportunities for the people that chose Europe as host continent, after being uprooted because of conflicts and instability in their own countries. On World Refugee Day 99 cities which are member of the Intercultural Cities network jointly [celebrated the World Refugee Day](#) through [a dedicated campaign](#) under the slogan “Share our cities – Share the future”. The campaign aims to promote migrants as a resource for local economic, social and cultural development, rather than threat or a burden for the host society.

**(17/06) World Refugee Day: Council of Europe head calls for renewed effort to protect migrant children from sexual abuse.** Ahead of World Refugee Day, [Secretary General](#) called on Europe’s governments to make protection of migrant and asylum-seeking minors against sexual abuse a top priority. “Child protection is a moral duty and legal obligation for all European states. Last year, an estimated 300,000 migrant and asylum-seeking children have entered Europe alone, many of them unaccompanied. It is essential that national authorities take the necessary measures to provide safe, secure and suitable accommodation for these children, assign them appropriate legal guardians and protect from abuse. “Refugee children are at grave risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, and face a very real danger of passing from the hands of smugglers to traffickers, compounding the trauma many have already endured.” Read the full text [here](#).

**(17/06) World Refugee Day - Say “No” to hate speech against refugees: 20 June is European Action Day.** Ahead of the Action Day against Hate Speech Targeting Refugees marked on the 20th of June, the Council of Europe called for a speedy and systematic reaction by public figures to the instances of hate speech against refugees and asylum seekers, and stressed the positive role the youth can play in integrating refugees in European societies. “Every person has a right to seek protection from persecution and war,” said Tomáš Boček, [Special Representative of the Council of Europe Secretary General on migration and refugees](#). “I would like to encourage public figures – politicians, religious and community leaders – to swiftly and decisively condemn hate speech and also to reinforce in their discourse those values that unite Europeans during the most difficult times: respect for human rights for all”. Read the full text [here](#).

## CIVIL SOCIETY

**(20/06) Human Rights Watch - Sweden: Restrictive Asylum Bill.** The [Swedish](#) Parliament is expected to approve a restrictive new asylum bill on June 21, 2016, that could harm the well-being of [migrant children in need of protection](#) and undermine their opportunity to effectively integrate into Swedish society, Human Rights Watch said today. The bill, which will apply to all children and adults who applied for asylum after November 24, 2015, will temporarily roll back some rights currently available under Swedish asylum law. Read full article [here](#).

**(17/06) Social Platform - Building Social Europe: The potential and pitfalls of the European pillar of social rights.** Social Platform has been advocating for rights-based EU social standards for the last two years and has been engaging with decision makers and stakeholders giving its inputs and comments on the proposed European Pillar of Social Rights since the very beginning. On 15 June, it [organised](#) an ad-hoc [event](#) on the pillar, gathering

exceptional expertise to discuss its potential and pitfalls, focusing both on its design and on concrete implementation tools.

**(15/06) Caritas Europa - Dutch EU Presidency delivers on its promise to push poverty up on EU agenda.** Caritas Europa is [pleased](#) to see that, as promised, the Dutch EU Presidency has pushed poverty onto the EU Council's agenda. We now invite the Council to take a step forward in eradicating poverty in Europe and to adopt the conclusion on "Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: An integrated approach".

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**EPRS** - [Cohesion Policy Support For Migrants And Refugees](#) (Briefing note + lists of publications)

**EPRS** - [Key Policy Challenges For The EU In 2017](#) (blog)

**EPRS** - [World Refugee Day: Gender-Sensitivity Is Called For In Asylum And Refugees Policies](#) (blog)

**MPG** - [Refugee Integration Tool](#) (research project)

**Council of the EU** - [Think Tank Review](#) (June 2016)

**European Court of Auditors** - [EU external migration spending in Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbourhood countries until 2014](#) (available in several languages)