

INFO FLASH 28/03

The European Commission announced it will [reinforce cooperation with the African Union](#) by setting up new peace building support, launched [education programme for 230,000 refugee children in Turkey](#), and proposed a new [EU Action Plan on Drugs](#) to enhance action against drug use and trafficking. The latest Eurostat data provided a picture of [registration of asylum applications](#). On integration of national policies, it presented the [European Interoperability Framework](#) providing new guidance for digital public services, while the Committee of the Regions debated over the [integration of health systems](#).

The Fundamental Rights Agency was particularly vocal on a wide number of migration-related topics, ranging from the [role of education, inclusion and mutual respect in countering hate speech](#) and [racial profiling](#) to [social rights](#), [LGBT asylum seekers](#) and a [new strategy to take the “crisis” out of migration](#).

The Council of Europe has released an in-depth [report on migrant and refugee children](#) that identifies the main challenges.

Among civil society, ECRE and ENAR reports on and assess major CJEU legal cases on the [risk of absconding](#) and the [workplace ban on headscarf](#) and looks at [how CJEU judgements have influenced national asylum policies](#). Several civil society groups issued press release and analyses on the first anniversary of the EU-Turkey deal, including [ECRE](#), [Caritas Europa](#) and [PICUM](#).

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(23/03) European Interoperability Framework: Commission presents new guidance for digital public services. The European Commission published a new European Interoperability Framework which will help European public administrations to coordinate their digitisation efforts when delivering public services. The announcement will be made at the [Digital Day in Rome](#), together with other initiatives that aim to promote cooperation between EU Member States to better prepare society to reap the full potential of the digital transformation. Many EU Member States are digitising their public administrations to save time, reduce costs, increase transparency, and improve the quality of services that they offer to citizens and businesses. Doing this in a coordinated way ensures that the public sector is not only digital but also interoperable. The EU framework published today will help Member States to follow a common approach when making their public services available online, also across countries and policy areas. This will contribute to reducing bureaucracy for people and businesses, for example, when requesting certificates, enrolling to services, or handing in tax declarations. Full press release [here](#).

(22/03) The European Social Fund celebrates its 60th anniversary: 6 decades of investment in people. The year 2017 marks the 60th anniversary of the European Social Fund (ESF), Europe's oldest and main instrument to invest in people. Today it is an important driver of job creation, promoting better education, more modern public administrations and social inclusion, and therefore a key tool to ensure fairer opportunities for all citizens. In the past 60 years, the European Social Fund has helped millions of Europeans find a job, gain a qualification or certificate and increase their skills levels. These outcomes are achieved through many thousands of projects carried out everywhere in Europe. Our work doesn't stop there. Also in the period 2014-2020 millions of people have benefitted and will benefit from the Fund, thanks to investments from the EU budget of €86.4 billion. During this programming period, the ESF focusses on a limited number of priorities to ensure maximum impact, with an emphasis on youth employment and social inclusion. The online [Open Data Platform](#) which gives access to data on achievements under the European Structural and Investment Funds for 2014-2020, shows that ESF projects are making very good progress: over 30% of projects have already been selected for funding. The projects under the Youth Employment Initiative even show a 60% implementation rate. Full press release [here](#).

(20/03) Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos following the Ministerial Conference on the Central Mediterranean Migration Route in Rome. Migratory flows to Italy continue to increase – the number of arrivals from January until now this year are 50% higher compared to the same period last year. This is of common interest to all: European and North African countries, both sides of the Mediterranean. This is why it is so essential that we all work together and directly with one another. And we decided to meet again in a few months on the other side of the Mediterranean (probably in Tunisia). This Ministerial conference builds on our efforts announced in January under the Central Mediterranean Communication, as well as the Malta Implementation Plan prepared by the Maltese Presidency. The Commission is working hard to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between the North African and European countries in tackling the migration flows in the Central Mediterranean Route. We cannot leave either Italy or Libya alone. Today the European Commission has awarded €12.2 million in emergency funding to Italy under the Internal Security Fund. The funding will be provided to the Italian Coast Guard to implement a specific operational framework for border surveillance and to safeguard human life at sea. Full speech [here](#).

(17/03) EU reinforces cooperation with the African Union and announces new peace building support of €120 million. On 17/03 the High Representative/Vice President, Federica Mogherini, and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, concluded an official visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The aim of the visit was to strengthen ties and boost partnership with the African Union on common areas of cooperation. In this respect, they met with the new leader of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat who took up office just two days ago. The EU announced new financial support [for the Horn of Africa region](#) as well as for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Full press release [here](#).

(16/03) EU launches education programme for 230,000 refugee children to attend school in Turkey. The European Commission [has launched](#) its largest ever humanitarian programme for education in emergencies to encourage some 230,000 refugee children to attend school in Turkey. The €34 million 'Conditional Cash Transfer for Education' (CCTE) project will provide bimonthly cash-transfers as of May 2017 to vulnerable refugee families

whose children regularly attend school. The project will be implemented in partnership with UNICEF and its partner, the Turkish Red Crescent in support of the Government of Turkey. The new education project builds upon the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme, which was launched by the European Commission in September 2016 to provide a debit card to the most vulnerable refugees so they can pay for essential needs like food and shelter.

(15/03) Commission proposes a new EU Action Plan on Drugs to enhance action against drug use and trafficking. The Commission [has proposed](#) a new EU Action Plan on Drugs for the period 2017-2020. Building on the findings of the evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy for 2013-2020 and the Action Plan for 2013-2016, the new Action Plan on Drugs provides a strengthened response to the newly-emerging health and security challenges in the area of illicit drug use and trafficking. While maintaining and updating the core policy areas and cross-cutting themes of the overall EU Drugs Strategy, the new Action Plan identifies new priority areas for action, including the monitoring of new psychoactive substances as well as the use of new communication technologies for prevention of drug abuse and evidence gathering on the potential connection between drug trafficking and financing of terrorist groups, organised crime, migrant smuggling or trafficking in human beings. Approximately 88 million adults in the EU, or almost one quarter of the adult population, are estimated to have tried illicit drugs in their lifetime. Over 17 million adults have tried cocaine and 12 million have tried amphetamines. In addition, 1.3 million adults are high-risk opioid users. EU citizens spend an estimated €24 billion every year on illicit drugs, making the illicit drugs market one of the most dynamic and lucrative criminal markets. More than one third of the criminal groups active in the EU are involved in the production, trafficking or distribution of various types of drugs according to Europol's 2017 Serious Organised Crime Threat Assessment. Over the past few years, new psychoactive substances (NPSs) have become increasingly available on the market, posing serious health threats. The Internet has the potential to further develop as a source of supply for NPSs. Moreover, Internet-facilitated drugs have also considerably impacted the mode of drugs trafficking.

European Parliament

(21/03) MEPs say unregistered lobbyists should be denied entry to Parliament's premises. All EU lobbyists looking to influence legislation, should be required to sign the transparency register before being allowed to enter the European Parliament, says a resolution [approved](#) by the Constitutional Affairs Committee. The resolution, drafted by Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA, DE), notes that non-transparent interest representation may pose a significant threat to the integrity of policymakers. It therefore suggests that all EU lobbyists looking to influence the legislative process should be required to sign the transparency register before being allowed to meet MEPs on Parliament's premises.

European Council / Council of the EU

Others

(27/03) FRA - LGBTI asylum seekers lack adequate support. Significant numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people have come to Europe fleeing persecution in their home countries but asylum barriers hinder them from receiving the protection they are entitled to. These are some of the findings from the latest summary report

of FRA on migration-related fundamental rights concerns in selected EU Member States. It examines some of the difficulties LGBTI asylum seekers face in order to draw attention to gaps in their protection. Access the [LGBTI focus section](#) and the March [monthly data collection highlights](#). Full press release [here](#).

(24/03) FRA - Towards stronger social rights across Europe. While the Europe 2020 strategy of growth and jobs sought to considerably reduce poverty and exclusion across the EU, social policies are struggling to hit their targets. With three years remaining, “there is still time to make a tangible difference to people’s lives by making bold changes and by investing our resources wisely”, [said](#) FRA at a social affairs conference in Malta on 24 March.

(23/03) FRA - UN Human Rights Council debates racial profiling and incitement to hatred. During a UN panel debate on racial profiling, the Agency [focused](#) on the challenges of confronting incitement to hatred and discriminatory ethnic profiling, while guaranteeing security and safety of EU residents and respecting fundamental rights.

(23/03) Frontex - Frontex, EMSA and EFCA strengthen cooperation on coast guard functions. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) [took a significant step](#) in structuring their cooperation on coast guard functions by signing a Tripartite Working Arrangement as foreseen by the amended founding regulations of the three Agencies of October last year.

(22/03) Committee of the Regions - CoR rapporteur: "To achieve health equity, it is essential that everyone has access to healthcare". In its opinion adopted during the plenary session, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) [agrees](#) on the need to improve the integration, cooperation and performance of health systems in the Union. European citizens live longer and healthier lives than before. While a healthy population contributes to the prosperity, the well-being and the economic development of the society, large health disparities continue to exist between and within Member States and regions. The current health systems in the EU are affected by population ageing, costs of innovative medicine and new technologies, chronic diseases and inequalities in healthcare access.

(21/03) FRA - FRA renews its civil society cooperation platform. The Agency is inviting civil society organisations to register for the renewed Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP). As per FRA’s Founding Regulation, the [FRP](#) is the Agency’s “mechanism of exchange and pooling of knowledge” created for facilitating a “structured and fruitful dialogue” with and among civil society organisations. The FRP is not an organisation and there is no membership. All interested civil society organisations are invited to register for the database of organisations. Information on [how to register](#) can be found online. Full press release [here](#).

(21/03) FRA - Education to promote inclusion and mutual respect is essential to counter hate speech. Promoting inclusion and mutual respect through education and strong positive narratives are essential to prevent incitement to hatred and counter hate speech in the digital age, the heads of three European human rights institutions [said in a joint statement](#) on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

(15/03) FRA - Taking the ‘crisis’ out of migration: integration in the EU. Risk of school segregation, discrimination and restrictions to political participation can form insurmountable barriers to the integration of migrants in EU society, as a new report from the

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) [shows](#). It examines integration strategies across the EU, providing clear evidence of the successes and failures of current policy and recommending changes in order to build a stronger and more cohesive Europe.

(16/03) Eurostat - Asylum in the EU Member States-1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2016-Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis continued to be the top citizenships. In 2016, 1 204 300 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU), a number slightly down compared with 2015 (when 1 257 000 first time applicants were registered) but almost double that of 2014 (562 700). Full report [here](#).

(15/03) Frontex - Arrival of migrants in February: surge in Italy, drop in Greece. In February, there were more than 10 900 detections of illegal border crossings on the three main migratory routes into the EU. This is less than a tenth of the figure from the same month of last year, although 46% higher than in January because of an increased activity in the Central Mediterranean. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(22/03) SRSG identifies main challenges for migrant and refugee children in Europe. The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees ([SRSG](#)), Tomáš Boček publishes a [Thematic Report on migrant and refugee children](#). The report, based on his on-the-ground experience gathered during the fact-finding missions in 2016*, calls for urgent measures to find alternatives to detention of children and guarantee minimum living conditions in camps, such as gender-separate sanitary facilities, better lighting and child-friendly spaces in order to eliminate risks of sexual abuse. The Special Representative also identified a real need to protect unaccompanied children and prevent disappearances. Other areas of concern include the lack of appropriate age-assessment measures, effective guardianship system for children and access to information and education. In the report, the SRSG calls for specialised linguistic support to refugee and migrant children to enhance their integration. This report is the first step in a renewed focus in the Council of Europe's activities on refugees' and migrants' access to rights and will be followed by the Organisation's Action Plan for the protection of migrant and refugee children, especially unaccompanied children. The adoption of the Action Plan is scheduled for May 2017. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(24/03) ECRE - CJEU: in the absence of a clear definition of 'risk of absconding', detentions on this ground are unlawful. On 15 March 2017, the CJEU delivered its [judgment](#) in case C-528/15 *Al Chodor*, which related to detention under the Dublin III Regulation. The Court decided that Member States are required to establish objective criteria of a "risk of absconding" in a binding provision of general application (for example, in a regulation or legislation) and that, in the lack of such a provision, the detention of asylum seekers on this ground should be considered unlawful. Full press release [here](#).

(24/03) ECRE - The Dublin system and its dysfunctions: the human faces. Last week, [AIDA](#) published [statistics on the application of the Dublin Regulation](#) in 2016 revealing persisting dysfunctions in the Dublin system. But as illustrated in the newly released [Migrant](#)

[Voice](#) report [Roads to Nowhere](#) the system not only proves dysfunctional by its numbers, it also tremendously affects people's personal life. Full press release [here](#).

(24/03) ECRE - EU-Libya: Another step towards “increased harm and suffering”? At a [Ministerial Conference](#) in Rome between the Ministers of the Interior of Algeria, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Libya, Malta, Slovenia, Switzerland and Tunisia and European Commissioner of Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos a closer cooperation in migration management in the Central Mediterranean, and especially with Libya were discussed. The conference was concluded with a [Declaration of Intent](#), agreed to intensify coordination, cooperation and exchange of expertise in the Central Mediterranean in line with the objectives of the [Declaration of Malta](#) of February 3. To this end, a contact group composed of the Ministers as well as the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner of Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship was established. Full press release [here](#).

(20/03) Social Platform - Digital exclusion - the unintended consequences of technology. On 13 March Social Platform members met to share good practices and discuss the role of new technologies in the accessibility and delivery of services – a first step for Social Platform towards defining our position on digital inclusion. What does digital exclusion mean? Well, imagine that you are one of the 60 million Europeans that have never used the internet, or one of the 45% of Europeans who don't have very advanced digital skills ([Digital Scoreboard 2016](#)). This would mean that you would not be reading this blog post right now; you would not access any of the information that is often only available online; you would not find or maintain friendships via social networking; you would not be able to apply for jobs, buy your online plane or train ticket or participate in other online activities. There are many reasons why someone might not have access to the internet, including location, cost, age, and disability. Full blog article [here](#).

(16/03) Social Platform - Debunking myths about social investment. Investing in services of general interest is key to unlocking the economic and social potential of the European Union. In addition to addressing present needs, it can prevent or reduce future needs that would give rise to additional costs in the future – a concept known as social investment. This is something that Social Platform – the largest network of civil society alliances fighting for social justice in the EU – advocates for, and it seems that a shift in outlook has finally begun. In its 22 February publication of its European semester country reports, the Commission stated that, “social investment is a prerequisite for a successful and lasting recovery.” In doing so, the Commission joins the OECD and the IMF in calling for a new approach to investment and public spending. Despite increased support, myths about the cost and impact of investment in services prevail. Full blog article [here](#).

(17/03) ECRE - Op-Ed by Cavidan Soykan: The EU – Turkey Deal One Year On: The Rise of Walls of Shame. This week marks the anniversary of the controversial EU–Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. The Statement placed responsibility for halting irregular crossings and deaths in the Aegean Sea in the hands of two countries: Greece and Turkey. The Statement is a prime example of externalization policy, an attempt to harden the borders of the EU against unwanted migration through readmission agreements and prevention of access to asylum in Europe. However, the fear generated in Greece and Turkey that their territory would become a buffer zone for asylum seekers and refugees who failed to reach other European countries has led them to imitate the same restrictive strategies. Full press release [here](#).

(17/03) ECRE - ECRE Report: How CJEU judgements and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights have influenced national asylum policies. A newly released ECRE [report](#) shows significant impact of three asylum-related cases from the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) and of the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) on the national asylum policies of eight Member States. Full press release [here](#).

(17/03) ECRE - No change in deeply dysfunctional Dublin system, AIDA figures reveal. A [statistical update](#) published by ECRE's Asylum Information Database ([AIDA](#)) releasing figures for 12 European countries from 2016 reveals persisting fundamental dysfunctions in the Dublin system. The inefficiency is illustrated by disproportionately low transfers compared to procedures, its inconsistency by contradictions with the EU emergency relocation scheme, and its inadequacy in safeguarding rights by Member States' restart of transfers to Greece. Full press release [here](#).

(17/03) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Dirty deals done dirt cheap. The impact of the EU Turkey – Deal is widely debated and often misrepresented. The triumphant progress reports of the Commission hail the drop in numbers of refugees arriving in Greece and people drowning in the Aegean, but ignore the wider devastating impact of Europe's containment policy on the international protection regime and beyond. If anything, one-year into its existence the deal has "succeeded" in contributing to problematic developments in four inter-linked ways. Full press release [here](#).

(17/03) PICUM - #Dealbreaker: EU Migration policy more damaging one year after EU-Turkey deal. The EU-Turkey deal, which was adopted one year ago this week, aims to return all migrants and refugees who crossed the sea to the Greek islands and did not apply for asylum in Greece or whose claim was refused back to Turkey. However, since the deal was agreed, over 60,000 people have been left in deplorable conditions in Greece and thousands remain stranded in other EU member states. Record numbers of migrants are still dying at sea. More than 520 migrants have died in the Mediterranean so far in 2017. Full press release [here](#)

(16/03) Caritas Europa - EU-Turkey deal: a bitter 1st anniversary. Caritas Europa finds it shameful how the EU-Turkey deal has left thousands of people stranded in inhumane and degrading conditions in Greece, inevitably resulting in others taking more dangerous routes to seek protection in the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(14/03) ENAR - EU Court decision on workplace ban on headscarf legitimises discrimination of Muslim women. A decision by the EU Court of Justice backing private sector workplace bans on headscarves seriously undermines the right to equality and non-discrimination of women, a group of anti-racism organisations said. The Court ruled on two cases brought by women employees who were dismissed because they wore the headscarf, and said that internal rules prohibiting visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign do not constitute direct discrimination. Full press release [here](#).

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

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

FRA - [Together in the EU: Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants](#)

OIJJ - [Participation of children in juvenile justice: A manual on how to make European juvenile justice systems child-friendly](#)

ENAR - [The Blue Card dilemma – Promoting a high standard of rights within a framework that is discriminatory in itself](#)

LSE - [Academic labour markets in Europe vary widely in openness and job security](#)

LSE - [Truth to tell: populism and the immigration debate](#)

OECD - [How we all benefit when women have access to finance](#)

EPRS - [Outcome Of European Council Meeting Of 9 March 2017 And Of Informal Meeting Of The EU27 Of 10 March 2017](#)

EPRS - [EU Support For Social Entrepreneurs](#)

EPRS - [Understanding Social Dumping In The European Union](#)

EPRS - [Turkey And The EU \(Think tank review\)](#)

EPRS - [Communicating Europe in third countries](#)

FTI Consulting - [Dutch election snapshot: Rutte wins, fragmentation prevails](#)

Bruegel - [The case for a common European refugee policy](#)

CEPS - [The Instruments providing Macro-Financial Support to EU Member States](#)