

INFO FLASH 9/05

The European Commission has proposed measures to [enhance cooperation between the EU and Africa](#) (also based on [digitalisation](#)), responded on questions on [visa reciprocity](#) and issued recommendation on [temporary border checks within Schengen](#). A report by Friends of Europe sums up the recent and future scenarios of [EU-Africa relations](#).

Upon presentation of [the European Social Pillar](#) by the European Commission (see also [here](#)), the [European Parliament](#) and Social Platform ([here](#) and [here](#)) have issued their reactions, while the EPRS has published a think tank review on [EU Social Policies](#).

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(4/05) EU proposes enhanced partnership with Africa on peace and security, and job creation for youth. The European Commission and the High Representative/ Vice-President have set out the EU's political priorities and concrete proposals for a stronger strategic partnership with Africa. The European Commission and the High Representative / Vice-President presented a revitalised framework for joint action, to build a stronger strategic partnership between Europe and Africa for more prosperity and stability in the two continents. The Communication presents innovative proposals in a number of key areas – such as peace and security, migration, job creation or energy – based on priorities defined by African countries and stepping up the existing fruitful cooperation between the two continents. This comes ahead of the Africa-EU Summit in November this year, which will put a specific focus on youth. Full press release [here](#). Q&A [here](#).

(4/05) The European Commission presents a strategy to mainstream digitalisation into EU development policy. The European Commission presented "Digital4Development", a strategy to mainstream digital technologies into European Union development policy, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For the last two decades the EU has been active in the promotion of digital technologies and services in partner countries, but has lacked an appropriate framework for mainstreaming and ensuring an effective delivery. The exponential spread and scale-up of digital technologies and services has profound global implications, creating opportunities for sustainable development and inclusive growth, but at the same time bring new threats and challenges. Digitalisation has an important role to play in a wide range of areas (e.g. gender, good governance, transparency and accountability, the fight against corruption, job creation and private sector development, access to micro-finance, education and health. Full press release [here](#).

(2/05) Visa Reciprocity: Commission responds to Parliament. The European Commission responded to the European Parliament resolution calling on the Commission to adopt a delegated act to suspend the visa waiver for Canadian and American nationals. The Commission considers that, in view of the significant progress achieved during the last year and the positive momentum of ongoing work, the temporary suspension of visa waivers for nationals of Canada and the United States would be counterproductive at this moment and would not serve the objective of achieving visa-free travel for all EU citizens. The

Commission's diplomatic approach meanwhile has already started to bring tangible results: Canada lifted the visa requirements for some categories of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens on 1 May 2017 and is set to achieve full reciprocity as of 1 December 2017 and contacts have been re-launched with the new U.S. administration to push for full visa reciprocity for the five EU Member States concerned. Full press release [here](#). Q&A [here](#).

(2/05) Back to Schengen: Commission recommends phasing out of temporary border controls over next six months. The Commission has recommended that Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway phase out the temporary controls currently in place at some of their internal Schengen borders over the next six months. Whilst the overall situation continues to stabilise, there are still a significant number of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in Greece. That is why, as a precautionary measure and whilst alternatives are put in place, the Commission is recommending that the Council prolong controls for the last time, meaning they will have to be lifted in six months' time. During this time, as in the previous periods, controls should only be carried out in a targeted and limited manner and only as a means of last resort. At the same time, the Commission is calling on Member States to increasingly make use of alternative measures that can provide the same level of security, such as proportionate police checks in border areas and along main transport routes. To that effect, the Commission has today also presented a Recommendation on proportionate police checks and police cooperation in the Schengen area. Full press release [here](#). Q&A [here](#).

(28/04) EU approves €59 million to support peace, stability and job creation in the Horn of Africa. The EU announced today 4 new actions worth €59 million to improve stability and address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in the Horn of Africa region. EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said: "This new package illustrates how the EU Trust Fund provides sustainable solutions to address instability and lack of economic opportunities, as they are two main root causes of forced displacement in the Horn of Africa. By promoting peace, stability and job creation, these new actions will help create alternatives for people to improve their lives to ensure that migration can become a choice for people, and not a necessity." Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) Commission presents the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Commission delivers on its promise to adopt its proposal for the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. The Pillar is designed as a compass for a renewed process of upward convergence towards better working and living conditions in Europe. It is primarily conceived for the euro area but applicable to all EU Member States wishing to be part of it. The Pillar was prepared by the Commission, under the leadership of Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen, in close consultation with stakeholders at all levels. It reaffirms rights that are already present in the EU and international legal acquis and complements them to take account of new realities. The [principles and rights](#) enshrined in the Pillar are structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion. They place the focus on how to tackle new developments in the world of work and society at large so as to deliver on the promise of the Treaties of a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress. Full press release [here](#) and [here](#). Q&A [here](#) and [here](#).

European Parliament

(5/05) Great expectations: Europeans reveal what they want the EU to do more on.

Europeans increasingly realise the need for common solutions to the most pressing problems, yet question whether politics will be able to deliver, according to a new survey. The Eurobarometer survey, carried out in March, was commissioned by the European Parliament to get an idea of what people want. Check out our infographic to see in which areas people expect more from the European Union and read on for an overview of the survey's main findings. Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) European Pillar of Social Rights: call for highest possible common standards.

Common EU-wide social rights, as proposed by the European Commission, the “European Pillar of Social Rights”, should be pegged at the highest level and not lead to a “race to the bottom”, MEPs stressed in a debate on Wednesday. The Pillar’s three key parts - equal opportunities in access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection – were presented by Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, who stressed the need to promote “upward convergence” among EU member states by reforming working and social conditions on the best available model. In the ensuing debate, MEPs mostly agreed with the proposals, although several speakers called for more ambitious legislation at EU level. They also felt that more needed to be done to fight poverty and youth unemployment. Others pointed out that social security systems, which are costly, are the responsibility of national governments, and therefore opposed shifting more powers to EU level. Commissioner Marianne Thyssen wrapped up the debate by reiterating that the pillar is the start of the process and provides guidance for better employment, while the details will have to be hammered out in consultations with social partners, and debates between the European Parliament, the EU Commission and the member states. Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) Employment: MEPs to discuss plans to reinforce workers' rights.

The labour market has drastically changed in recent years due in part to the digital economy, leading to more temporary jobs and more people being treated as independent contractors. However, the EU is preparing legislation to reinforce workers' rights as part of the European pillar of social rights initiative. The European Commission will present the plans to MEPs on Wednesday 26 April. We asked two MEPs about the best ways to create fair working conditions for employees. The [European pillar of social rights](#) initiative aims to achieve equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and adequate and sustainable social protection. Portuguese S&D member [Maria João Rodrigues](#) is responsible for steering the proposals through Parliament. She said: “[Parliament] defends a directive on fair working conditions for all workers, ensuring a core set of enforceable labour rights, health insurance and social protection even for those who work in temporary contracts, on-demand, in internships or as self-employed under digital platforms. All these people need to make a decent living and need to be protected.” In January MEPs adopted a resolution on the European pillar of social rights, calling on the Commission to extend existing minimum standards to new kinds of employment. Full press release [here](#).

(25/04) Ease access to labour market for asylum-seekers to boost integration, MEPs say.

Asylum seekers should be able to work in the EU no later than two months after applying for asylum, instead of the current nine months, said Civil Liberties Committee MEPs on Tuesday. But for reasons of labour market policies, and especially regarding youth unemployment levels, member states may verify whether a vacancy could be filled through preferential access by their nationals, other EU citizens or by third-country nationals lawfully residing in the country, they added. To improve their integration prospects and self-sufficiency, applicants for international protection should also get access to language courses

from the moment their application is filed, say MEPs. In amending the directive on reception conditions for asylum-seekers, MEPs aim to ensure equal and high reception standards in all member states, which should contribute to a more dignified treatment and fairer distribution of applicants across the Union. Full press release [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

Others

(4/05) FRA - Major EU-funded fundamental rights project holds closing conference. At the closing conference of a major EU-financed research project ([FRAME](#)), the Agency gave presentations during panels that explored social and economic rights and another one on terrorism. The gathering of some 300 people on 26 April in Brussels, brought together researchers and practitioners in a highly stimulating exchange that centred on exploring the recommendations flowing from the four-year project. The project sought to investigate the contribution of the EU's internal and external policies to the promotion of human rights worldwide. Full press release [here](#).

(3/05) EASO - The true story of Salem, Eritrean successfully relocated from Italy to Portugal. This is the testimony of Salem, an Eritrean successfully relocated from Italy to Portugal, mother of beautiful baby Joana. Salem fled her country to find freedom, she has the courage to speak up about the smugglers, and to recount her terrible journey to Europe. She is one of the many hidden heroes, and one of the thousands of people for which the EU Relocation Programme has proved to be a unique chance to start a new life in Europe, in a safe and legal manner. The video presents her experience, her journey from Eritrea to Portugal, the relocation from Italy to Portugal, and focuses on her new life in Portugal and on what this beautiful country offers both in terms of rights, such as accommodation, healthcare, language courses, permanent support, etc., and hospitality. She recounts how Portuguese people received her with their open arms, gave her a real chance to pursue her dreams, and, most importantly, the power to smile again... (Full press release [here](#)).

(3/05) FRA - Mainstreaming child participation to ensure children's voices are heard. Children and experts underlined the need to give children the chance of being agents of change during an event at the Agency on 28 April on improving child participation. They spoke of the importance of mainstreaming child participation across policies to ensure the views of children are captured in all matters that affect them. The children underlined why change is needed when they recounted their experiences of being scared, frustrated, ignored or belittled in judicial proceedings. Full press release [here](#).

(28/04) FRA - Experts on methodologies for recording and collecting hate crime data meet. Experts gathered at the Agency on 26 April to discuss a draft paper on tackling hate crime. The draft paper is an overview of practices from across EU Member States and sets out core common elements for recording and collecting data on hate crime. The discussions will help the Agency finalise the paper before submitting it to the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance which next meets from 31 May to 1 June. The experts are part of Member State delegations of the High Level Group's [subgroup on methodologies for recording and collecting hate crime data](#) that FRA coordinates. Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) Committee of the Regions - Making cohesion more effective, relevant and visible to citizens: President Markkula congratulates Maltese Presidency and welcomes EU Council conclusions. As the EU's assembly of regional and local political representatives we are pleased to see that EU ministers made clear commitments in favour of cohesion policy as an investment lifeline for many regions and cities. If implemented effectively and in synergy with other public and private funding, this investment will contribute to achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion. It will continue to spark innovation, create jobs and prosperity, support social integration and tackle regional disparities. More importantly, it directly benefits citizens' lives showing that the EU does matter. The future of Europe now needs a stronger, simpler and more effective cohesion policy. Local and regional authorities know how cohesion funds can best serve their communities so their role must be strengthened to make this cornerstone of EU policy fit for the future. Full press release [here](#).

(25/04) Court of Auditors - Migration hotspots are working, but critical issues remain, say EU Auditors. The EU's so-called "hotspot" approach for irregular migrants arriving in Italy and Greece has helped to significantly improve the registration, identification and security checking of migrants. But more needs to be done as thousands of migrants are still stranded on the Greek islands after their arrival, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. Many of those affected are unaccompanied minors, say the auditors, and more should be done to help them. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(26/04) A critical turning point, not business as usual, for human rights in Europe. "2016 will likely be remembered as a critical turning point for human rights in Europe" said the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Nils Muižnieks today while presenting his annual activity report for 2016. "We will either see it as a low point from which European countries, individually and collectively, bounced back to reaffirm their commitment to human rights, or it will mark the beginning of the end of the European human rights system and European integration." The Commissioner underlined the unprecedented situation whereby three countries – Ukraine, France and now Turkey – have derogated from the European Convention on Human Rights. 2016 also stood out as a result of moves undercutting the right to asylum at national and European level, the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, the attempted coup in Turkey and the ensuing deterioration of the human rights situation there, policy initiatives seriously threatening the rule of law in Poland, and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(5/05) ECRE - Council of Europe calls for improved funding and assistance for migrants and refugees. The Council of Europe [passed](#) a resolution this week calling for improved funding for emergency situations in the field of migration, based on targeted and transparent expenditure prioritising the protection of migrants and refugees. The [resolution](#) of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stresses that financing of humanitarian assistance in the field of migration needs to be based on the commitment to fundamental human and social rights. It expresses regrets that complex decision-making and budgetary procedures slow down the implementation of EU assistance. It further encourages EU Member States to step-up financial burden sharing and for the EU to continue efforts to fulfil

the “Grand Bargain” agreed upon at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Full press release [here](#).

(3/05) Social Platform - The European Pillar of Social Rights – the ultimate test for Europe...and civil society. Perhaps more than ever before, the European project finds itself in a make-or-break situation. The road ahead is littered with potholes that could see the EU injured beyond repair, with the French elections next Sunday and the never ending Brexit spectacle as just two examples. But in the face of such challenges, the EU has drawn its ace card: the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar is a huge test for the EU and Member States and could be the first concrete example of multi-speed Europe in practice. It is a huge test for the media, the important role of which is under close scrutiny in light of the growing trend of fake and biased news. Full press release [here](#).

(28/04) ECRE - Report highlights massive problems for refugee children in Calais – UK to re-open Dubs scheme for 130 children. A [report](#) released by the [Refugee Rights Data Project](#) reveals severe problems for refugee children in the Calais area six-months after the makeshift camps’ demolition. The British Minister of State for Immigration announced the re-opening of the Dubs scheme for 130 unaccompanied refugee children this week. Based on interviews with 86 refugee children- almost half of the total refugee child population in the area, excluding Dunkirk, , almost exclusively unaccompanied boys the report reveals concerning results. 96.5% stated that they experienced police violence and more than half (56%) of the children had experienced violence by citizens in the form of verbal abuse or physical violence. Further, almost half of the children suffering health problems had received no medical assistance. 89.3% of the interviewed children believed that the United Kingdom would be the best destination for them many referring to family members in the country as the principle reason. Full press release [here](#).

(28/04) ECRE - European Parliament LIBE Committee votes to improve the Reception Conditions Directive. On April 25 the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) approved the report on the Commission proposal to recast the Reception Conditions Directive. The report, prepared by MEP Sophie in’t Veld, and based on consultations with civil society including ECRE, presents substantial improvements to the proposal and a robust call for better living conditions for those seeking asylum in Europe. The European Parliament has rejected the punitive approach of the Commission proposal by deleting the exclusion of asylum seekers who move between EU Member States from material reception conditions. This position is echoed by the opinion of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL). Full press release [here](#).

(28/04) ECRE - FRA reports that migrant child protection is still grave concern. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) [reports](#) that the treatment of asylum seeking and migrant children is still a reason for grave concern in many parts of Europe. Their [latest summary report](#) on migration-related fundamental rights underlines the inadequate living conditions and protection of children. The report identifies a number of problem areas including the lack of guardians and staff with the skills or time to support migrant children, the lack of adequate and secure facilities and the housing of unaccompanied children with adults they do not know. Among other concerns is an increasing anxiety among unaccompanied children about the results of age assessments, resulting in deteriorating mental health and suicide attempts. Full press release [here](#).

(26/04) Social Platform - Delivering Social Europe – promising signs in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Commission’s first concrete proposals for a European Pillar of Social Rights are welcomed as a promising step towards a strong social Europe by Social Platform. The European Union’s largest network of rights- and value-based civil society organisations now calls on decision-makers to clarify how the Pillar will be implemented. The Pillar brings to the table a number of changes and recommendations that social civil society has been advocating for. It encompasses issues including work-life balance, quality employment with adequate wages, and minimum income and social protection that ensure dignity across the life-cycle. Particularly important is the emphasis of social concerns on a par with economic priorities. Too often business interests take precedence over people and this proposal clearly sets out to redress the balance, ensuring that the economy works to the benefit of everybody in society. Full blog article [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

IWK - [The state and social partners working together: Germany's response to the global financial and economic crisis](#)

Friends of Europe - [EU-Africa relations: Strategies for a renewed partnership](#)

Council of the EU General Secretariat - [Think Tank Review](#) (April)

EPRS - [EU Social Policies](#) (Think Tank Review)

CEPS - [It wasn't me! The Luxembourg Court Orders on the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal](#)

ENAR - [Racism plays a key role in migrants' exclusion and violations of rights in the European Union](#)

Canergie Europe - [Shrinking Space for Civil Society: The EU Response](#)