

INFO FLASH 26/09

The EU institutions have been quite active in the external dimension of EU migration policies. The European Commission has strengthened [humanitarian aid budget for education](#) in emergency situations, also by setting up new funding for [Syria](#). The Council has given its green light to the [European Fund for Sustainable Development](#), while the S&D Group in the European Parliament launched several initiatives in the framework of its [Africa week](#).

[Commission President Juncker's State of the Union](#) (2017) was presented at the Parliament and has been the target of several comments from the academia.

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(25/09) Moving forward on the European Pillar of Social Rights: Commission continues work on fair and predictable employment contracts. The European Commission has [entered into further discussions](#) with trade unions and employers' organisations at EU level on how to modernise the rules on employment contracts, in order to make these contracts fairer and more predictable for all types of workers. With this initiative, the Commission continues to roll out the European Pillar of Social Rights, aiming to create convergence between Member States towards better working and living conditions. The Commission wants to broaden the scope of the current Directive on employment contracts (the so-called [Written Statement Directive](#)), extending it to new forms of employment, such as on-demand workers, voucher-based workers and platform workers, so that no one is left behind. The current rules should also be modernised, taking account of developments on the labour market in the past decades. By improving the timeliness and information that is given at the start of an employment contract, workers will be better aware of their rights, and therefore more able to enforce these rights. For employers, bringing the rules up to date will bring more legal clarity and certainty and will avoid unfair competition. Social partners will be able to share their views on the envisaged updates of EU legislation on employment contracts until 3 November 2017. The Commission aims to present a legislative proposal before the end of the year.

(22/09) The EU to host the second Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. The European Union [will organise a second Brussels Conference](#) on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region in spring 2018. This was announced yesterday by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini during a high-level event on the Syria crisis, hosted by the EU in the margins of the 72nd UN General Assembly in New York and attended by close to 50 countries and partners. The 2018 Conference will come as a follow up to the 2017 Brussels Conference, and will aim at keeping the international community's attention and response to the Syrian crisis on top of the international agenda, and will encourage the full implementation of commitments taken in Brussels in April 2017. This includes continued support to the UN-led process for a negotiated political solution in line with UNSCR 2254, and ensuring respective needs for Syrians inside Syria and in neighbouring countries are met. The European Union will continue mobilising all its resources – political, diplomatic and humanitarian – in support of the UN efforts to put an end

to the crisis, to assist stabilisation and post-agreement planning and to keep delivering vital humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid to the Syrian people and their hosting communities.

(20/09) EU increases humanitarian aid budget for education of children in emergencies. Access to education for children in emergency situations is among the top priorities for the EU in its humanitarian funding. The European Commission [has announced today](#) it will further increase the part of humanitarian funding dedicated to getting children into education in crisis zones around the world. In 2018, 8% of the EU's humanitarian budget will go to education in emergencies, which is far above the global average of less than 3%. The EU's contribution in 2018 of over €86 million will support access to formal and non-formal education, including life skills and vocational training, recreational activities and psychosocial support for girls and boys in crisis areas around the world. Several EU projects will be focussed on girls; giving them access to education and helping them learn life and vocational skills. Children will also benefit from the provision of school materials and the creation of new learning spaces. Teachers and parents will also be supported and benefit from training. Commissioner Stylianides has made education in emergencies a priority since the beginning of his mandate, continuing to increase the EU's financial support to education projects for children affected by crises every year since he took office. EU support allocated to education in emergencies went from 1% of its humanitarian budget in 2015 to 6% in 2017 and will eventually go to 8% in 2018. This aid has reached 4 million children and teachers in 50 countries between 2012-2016.

(19/09) EU strengthens its Syria crisis response through additional funding to UNICEF. With an additional €90 million support from the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis, [the EU is enabling UNICEF](#) to provide critical services and support to Syrian refugee and host community children and young people in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The additional EU funding was signed today by EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. This latest contribution brings the total funding from the EU Trust Fund for UNICEF's work on the Syria crisis response to nearly €200 million. As families around the world prepare for the return to school, the European Union (EU) has renewed its commitment to get children affected by the war in Syria into education. This €90 million support is provided by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and will enable UNICEF to provide critical education and protection services to some 260,000 Syrian refugee and host community children and young people in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, so that they can attend school and learn.

(15/09) State of the Union 2017 - Democracy Package: Reform of Citizens' Initiative and Political Party funding. On 13 September, in his annual State of the Union address, President Jean-Claude Juncker stated: "Our Union needs a democratic leap forward. Too often Europe-wide elections have been reduced to nothing more than the sum of national campaigns. European democracy deserves better. We should be giving European parties the means to better organise themselves." Increasing democratic legitimacy in the EU through stronger citizen participation is among the [Ten Priorities of the Juncker Commission](#) (Priority 10 - Democratic Change). To continue delivering on this commitment, the European Commission adopted two legislative proposals to revise the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation and the Regulation on European Political Parties and Foundations. First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: "With these proposals, we are empowering Europeans to participate in the democratic process. We want to make the European Citizens' Initiative more accessible for all Europeans, and by lowering the age limit from 18 to 16, we have invited 10 million more young Europeans to step forward and help shape the EU's policy agenda. At the

same time, our political party reform will ensure that Europeans are better informed about the link between national and European parties, and will ensure that their funding better reflects the democratic choices made by citizens in the European elections.". More information [here](#).

(14/09) European Union steps up efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter-terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa. The European Union [adopted a programme](#) under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) worth €17.5 million to address the terrorist threat in the Middle East and North Africa. Terrorism and radicalisation leading to violent extremism continue to pose a significant threat to states and societies in the Middle East and North Africa. This three-year programme will address drivers and threats from terrorism in the region to foster human security and build resilience in both states and societies. The programme will include a first component to contribute to strengthening the capacity of state actors that play a key role in countering terrorism and violent extremism. The second component of the programme will focus on partnerships between authorities, youth and communities to address underlying factors that can make communities vulnerable to violent extremism. The European Union's security is directly linked to the security and stability of its neighbourhood. In order to ensure prosperity, stability and security for all, the EU has been working towards enhancing the coherence between internal and external security policies, as outlined in the [Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy](#). This programme will be coordinated with other initiatives in the region, including from EU Member States, and feed into EU counter-terrorism, as well as bilateral and regional dialogues.

(13/09) The State of the Union 2017: Catching the wind in our sails. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker today delivered his 2017 State of the Union Address, before the Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, presenting his priorities for the year ahead and outlining his vision for how the European Union could evolve by 2025 (see [full speech](#)). He presented a Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union (see [Roadmap Factsheet](#)). European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said today: "The wind is back in Europe's sails. But we will go nowhere unless we catch that wind. (...) We should chart the direction for the future. As Mark Twain wrote, years from now we will be more disappointed by the things we did not do, than by the ones we did. Now is the time to build a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe for 2025." President Juncker's speech in the European Parliament was accompanied by the adoption of concrete initiatives by the European Commission on trade, investment screening, cybersecurity, industry, data and democracy, putting words immediately into action. A series of [factsheets](#) published today also expand on some of the key elements touched upon in the President's speech. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

European Council / Council of the EU

(25/09) Council greenlights the setup of the European fund for sustainable development. On 25 September, the Council [adopted a regulation](#) establishing a European fund for sustainable development (EFSD). The fund will be setup on 28 September. The EFSD is the main instrument for the implementation of the European external investment plan (EIP) which supports investments in African and neighbourhood countries. The main

objective of the plan is to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 through boosting jobs and growth, while addressing the root causes of migration. With an initial budget of 3 350 million euros, the fund is intended to trigger up to 44 billion euro of investments. This amount could be doubled if member states and other donors match EU contributions. The fund will contribute to financing projects in a wide range of sectors, such as energy, transport, social infrastructure, digital economy, sustainable use of natural resources, agriculture and local services. The EFSD will encourage the private sector to invest in countries or sectors where it otherwise would not do so, such as fragile or conflict-affected countries. Similarly to the European Fund for Strategic Investment that will support investments within the EU, the fund will offer guarantees and support the use of blending mechanisms to support more risky projects. It will operate as a "one-stop shop", receiving financing proposals from financial institutions and public or private investors and delivering a wide range of financial support to eligible investments.

Others

(25/09) EuroFund - Annual review shows working life in Europe in transition. Working life in Europe is in a period of transition; economic growth has picked up, unemployment rates are generally in decline, and 2016 was the the third consecutive year of increased employment. However, social partners are concerned about the challenges posed by the UK's withdrawal from the EU, particularly in relation to business, trade, and conditions for workers in the UK. There has also been a renewed focus on the issue of pay inequality throughout Europe. The [EurWORK annual review 2016](#) is the latest in the series and summarises the most recent working life developments, particularly in terms of industrial relations and working conditions, at EU level and in the EU Member States and Norway. The review is based on the inputs of more than 50 contributors from Eurofound's [Network of European correspondents](#) and analyses changes to the economic and labour market situation, policy developments at EU level related to working life, and relevant political developments. Full press release [here](#).

(22/09) FRA - Stronger control over standards in migrant reception centres needed. Providing adequate control over the standards in reception centres adds to EU Member States' challenges in ensuring appropriate living conditions for asylum seekers. This was [one of the findings from the latest summary](#) from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on migration-related fundamental rights concerns in some Member States. It assesses how Member States are ensuring that appropriate oversight and standards are maintained in migrant reception centres.

(22/09) Frontex - Frontex and Germany lead operation against people smuggling and trafficking at airports. This month, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and German authorities led an international operation focused on people smuggling and trafficking in human beings at airports. The action took place between 5 and 14 September at 39 European airports in and outside the European Union. As a result, eight people suspected of facilitation of illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings and the supply of false documents were arrested. During the action, 16 falsified and counterfeit documents were also seized. Full press release [here](#).

(21/09) FRA - Muslims in the EU: High levels of trust despite pervasive discrimination. The vast majority of Muslims in the EU have a high sense of trust in democratic institutions despite experiencing widespread discrimination and harassment, a major survey by the

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) [shows](#). The survey captures the experiences of Muslim immigrants and their EU-born children, revealing that public attitudes have changed all too little over the last decade.

(21/09) EIGE - Education is key for breaking gender stereotypes. Gender related challenges in the education system are an obstacle for economic growth and better career opportunities, especially for women. One of the main challenges is that girls and boys tend to choose subjects according to traditional gender roles. This is [one of the findings of new research](#) by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

(20/09) FRA - Collecting human rights data for Sustainable Development Goal indicators. On 5-6 September, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [held a consultation meeting](#) in Geneva with selected national statistical institutes, national human rights institutions and international organisations to discuss the methodological details of collecting data for some of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

(20/09) EuroFund - Being poorly educated increases the risk of in-work poverty. This graph highlights the importance of education, indicating that in all EU countries except Finland, the at-risk-of-poverty rate is highest among people with the lowest level of education. The differences on the basis of education are largest in Romania, where 52% of those with primary education only are at risk of in-work poverty, compared with just 1% of those who have completed tertiary education. Download the full report: [In-work poverty in the EU](#). Full press release [here](#).

(20/09) EASO - EASO Executive Director is visiting Cyprus to reaffirm EASO's support to the country's asylum services. The Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), José Carreira, [is visiting Cyprus today](#) in the framework of the agency's ongoing efforts to enhance its support to Cyprus. Mr Carreira had the opportunity to discuss EASO's operational support with Cyprus' Minister of Interior, Constantinos Petrides and with the Head of the Cyprus' Asylum Service and Acting Head of the Civil Registry and Migration Department, Makis Polydorou.

(19/09) FRA - Further aiding Italy to address the migration situation. The FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty [visited Italy](#) from 14 to 18 September to assess the evolving migration situation in the Central Mediterranean and the need for further FRA support. The Director visited the hotspot in Pozzallo (Sicily), met with representatives of EU agencies and the Italian authorities operating the hotspots, as well as with border guard units undertaking search and rescue operations. Speaking to NGO staff working in the hotspots, he also witnessed the invaluable role played by non-governmental actors in providing specialist support to the migrants and refugees, particularly to children and vulnerable people. He also witnessed a disembarkation operation and had debriefing meetings with the European Commission and the Ministry of Interior in Rome.

(18/09) Frontex - Migratory flows in August: numbers continue to fall in Italy, pressure still high in Spain. In August, there were approximately 12 200 detections of illegal border crossings on the four main migratory routes into the EU as the number of migrants arriving in Italy fell by almost two-thirds from the previous month. Meanwhile, [Spain continued to see the heavy migratory pressure](#).

(14/09) EUROSTAT - Eurostat regional yearbook 2017 - How is my region doing within the European Union? - Facts and figures at subnational levels. National figures alone cannot reveal the full and sometimes complex picture of what is happening at a more detailed level within the European Union (EU). EU Member States are often compared with each other, but in reality it is very difficult to compare a small country like Malta or Luxembourg with Germany, the most populous EU Member State. Full press release [here](#).

(14/09) FRA - Religion and human rights stronger together. “To strengthen a culture of human rights we need to rediscover our shared space between faith and human rights,” [said FRA Director Michael O’Flaherty](#) opening the Agency’s expert meeting that sought to identify how people motivated by faith and people motivated by human rights can better come together to help shape fair and just societies.

(13/09) Frontex – Experts meet to tackle document fraud. On 11 and 12 September, a kick-off meeting of the Horizontal Expert Working Group on Document Fraud, led by France and supported by Europol and Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, [was held](#) at Europol’s headquarters in The Hague. The meeting addressed the increasing problem of document fraud as a key element for all types of criminal activity, as well as terrorism.

(13/09) EIB - EIB conference in Egypt calls for private sector to lead new push for investments in the Mediterranean region. The drive for jobs and growth in the Mediterranean region should be led by the private sector. This was the call today, as the European Investment Bank (EIB) held an international conference in Cairo dedicated to “Boosting investments in the Mediterranean region”, in partnership with the Ministry of International Cooperation and Investment, the European Union Delegation to Egypt and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The conference participants discussed regional challenges and opportunities in the context of the Bank’s recent efforts to mobilise finance to build economic resilience in the Mediterranean countries and offer new opportunities, particularly for young people and women under its new [Economic Resilience Initiative](#). Full press release [here](#).

[COUNCIL OF EUROPE](#)

[CIVIL SOCIETY](#)

[PUBLICATIONS](#)

EPDS - [Hate speech, Fake News and Security](#) (Conference Speech)

Jean Claude Juncker - [State of the EU](#) (Speech)

Council of Europe - [Report on the conditions of migrants in the Aegean](#) (and [response of the Greek Gov](#))

CEPS - [The Commission’s Views on Strengthening the Euro Area: Barking up the wrong tree?](#)

LSE - [German election reaction: Merkel wins, but her fourth term won’t be an easy one](#)

LSE - [How support from other Member States affects influence in the Council of the European Union](#)

LSE - [Juncker's State of the Union: Where now for multispeed Europe?](#)

LSE - [Book Review: A Sharing Economy: How Social Wealth Funds can Reduce Inequality and Help Balance the Books by Stewart Lansley](#)

EPRS - [Youth Challenges And Opportunities In The Western Balkans](#)

EPRS - [The State Of The Union](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [How The Budget Is Spent: Youth Employment Initiative](#)

Social and Democrats (EP) - [S&Ds Africa Week: the Youth and the Future of Africa](#) (Event)