

INFO FLASH 24/10

The European Commission has presented the latest data on unemployment and new measures to protect EU citizens under the Security Union. The Council has put an end to the legislative procedure behind the EU Pillar of Social Rights and issued conclusions on human rights, migrations and security.

Many agencies and civil society organisations issued comments and analyses on the European Day Against Trafficking and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(18/10) Security Union: Commission presents new measures to better protect EU citizens. As announced by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union [Address](#), the Commission is today presenting alongside its 11th Security Union Report a set of operational and practical measures to better defend EU citizens against terrorist threats and deliver a Europe that protects. The measures aim to address vulnerabilities exposed by recent attacks and will support Member States in protecting public spaces and help deprive terrorists of the means to act. The Commission is also proposing to further strengthen the EU's external action on counter-terrorism — including through Europol — and is recommending the EU open negotiations on a revised Passenger Name Record agreement with Canada. Full press release [here](#). Q&A session [here](#).

(17/10) 1 million refugees in Turkey reached by EU's Emergency Social Safety Net. The EU funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme has now reached one million refugees living in Turkey. Launched by the European Commission in September 2016, and implemented by the World Food Programme and the Turkish Red Crescent in collaboration with the Turkish government, the flagship programme is the largest ever humanitarian aid operation funded by the European Union. The €348 million programme, which is financed through the [EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#), provides monthly transfers (of around €30 per person per month, plus quarterly top-ups) to the most vulnerable refugees. Assistance is channelled through a special debit card that can be used to purchase essential items in local shops. This approach is cost-effective and provides refugees with the dignity of choice, while stimulating local economies. All funding is also closely monitored to ensure it is well spent. The registration of refugees for the programme started in November 2016, and the first financial transfers began at the end of December the same year. The EU and its partners will continue to pursue the project with the aim to reach 1.3 million refugees by the end of this year. Full press release [here](#).

(16/10) 17 October: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - Downward trend in the share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU - But still over 115 million people in this situation. In 2016, 117.5 million people, or 23.4% of the population, in the European Union (EU) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This means that they were in at least one of the following three conditions: at-risk-of-poverty after social transfers (income poverty), severely materially deprived or living in households with very

low work intensity. After three consecutive increases between 2009 and 2012 to reach almost 25%, the proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU has since continuously decreased to 23.4% last year, only 0.1 percentage points above its 2009 low-point. The reduction of the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU is one of the key targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. Full report [here](#).

(13/10) Employment: Commission report shows increased wage growth and swifter transitions from unemployment to employment. Today, the Commission published its yearly report on Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe. This year's edition confirms the positive labour market trends that have been witnessed in the EU. EU employment has surpassed pre-crisis levels with more than 235 million people at work. Unemployment which now stands at 7.6% is also approaching levels prior to the recession. In addition, the report shows that it has become easier for unemployed people to find a job. On the other hand, more flexible working arrangements have brought advantages to both firms and individuals, but have led in some cases to a divide between workers holding different types of contracts, with people in temporary employment and self-employment being less well protected. The 2017 Labour Market and Wage Development Report also shows that in 2016, wages in the euro area rose by 1.2% and they increased in almost all Member States. Member States with comparatively low wage levels (such as the Baltics, Hungary and Romania) recorded the highest increases. This means wages are converging across Europe. However, in many countries, the growth rate of wages is still lower than expected based on the recent falls in unemployment. In addition, in almost all Member States, wages of temporary workers are lower than those of permanent workers, especially in Member States where the share of temporary employment is higher. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

(19/10) Wikström: asylum seekers should be fairly distributed in EU. The European asylum system collapsed due to the refugee crisis. A reform of current rules should make it fair and sustainable. Watch our interview with Cecilia Wikström to find out more. The Dublin regulation needs updating to better meet today's challenges. The limits of the current system became apparent in 2015 when more than one million people fled war, conflicts and persecution and applied for international protection in the EU. [Cecilia Wikström](#) is the MEP responsible for steering the new rules through Parliament. In her report she set out three priorities. Full press release [here](#).

(17/10) Human trafficking: nearly 16,000 victims in the EU. EU countries reported 15,846 victims of human trafficking between 2013 and 2014, 76% of which were women and girls, according to a European Commission report. However, the actual number of victims could be far higher than the ones reported. Two out of three (67%) registered victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation; 21% for other types of forced labour and 12% for other reasons such as begging, organs removal or domestic servitude. The majority of identified victims are from an EU country. MEPs adopted an [anti-trafficking directive](#) in 2011, covering anything from prevention, to victims support and the prosecution of offenders. Full press release and infographic [here](#).

European Council / Council of the EU

(23/10) Pillar of Social Rights: Council gives green light for proclamation by the institutions. Today in Luxembourg, EU Employment and Social Policy ministers agreed unanimously on the text of the Proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and gave the authorisation to sign it on behalf of the member states at the Gothenburg Summit. The President of the Council, Jevgeni Ossinovski, Minister for Health and Labour of Estonia, said: "The ministers were unanimous in their support for the Social Pillar. We all recognise that in the face of globalisation, digitalisation and the changing nature of work, our social systems need to change but remain robust. The proclamation summarises what Europe believes in and what makes it unique: a continent of equality, fairness and support for the vulnerable." The Pillar is a political commitment and provides guidance to the member states and the EU institutions; it aims at strengthening the social acquis and delivering more effective rights to citizens. It focuses on employment and social aspects and at making the European social model fit for the challenges of the 21st century. The objective of the Pillar is to contribute to social progress by supporting fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. It sets out 20 principles and rights, divided into three categories. Full press release [here](#).

(19/10) European Council conclusions on migration, digital Europe, security and defence. The European Council on 19 October 2017 adopted conclusions on: migration, digital Europe, security and defence. Conclusions available [here](#).

(16/10) Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to promote and protect human rights. The Foreign Affairs Council discussed the EU policy on human rights and on how to best promote them in bilateral and multilateral contexts. The Council reaffirmed the EU's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights everywhere in the world. The Council adopted conclusions on the mid-term review of the action plan on human rights and democracy. It also adopted its annual report on human rights and democracy in the world (2016). Full press release [here](#).

Others

(19/10) FRA - Guidance on detention of asylum seekers and migrants. New guidance from the European Law Institute lays down legal standards which have to be respected to prevent unlawful or arbitrary detention of asylum seekers and migrants in an irregular situation. The guidance, elaborated with FRA, incorporates EU law as well as relevant case law from the EU Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights on immigration related detention. It is a valuable tool for judges in the EU, complementing the guidance included in the [Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration](#) published by FRA together with the European Court of Human Rights and FRA latest [report on immigration detention of children](#) in the EU. Full press release [here](#).

(18/10) European Court of Auditors - EU Auditors publish 2018 work programme. Today the European Court of Auditors published its work programme for 2018. As well as giving details of the special reports which the EU Auditors intend to publish in 2018, the programme provides information on the institution's annual reports and the work programming process. All in all, the auditors plan to produce some 90 publications in 2018, including annual reports, special reports and opinions. Full press release [here](#).

(18/10) Frontex - Migratory flows in September: arrivals in Italy lower than a year ago, more departures from Tunisia and Algeria. In September, there were 13 900 detections of illegal border crossings on the four main migratory routes into the EU. The total number of

detections on the four main migratory routes in the first nine months of 2017 fell by 64% from the same period of last year to 156 000. Full report [here](#).

(17/10) FRA - Living in poverty violates the fundamental right to dignity. Today, 17 October marks the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 has provided a new agenda to address poverty eradication. While globally one billion people live in extreme poverty and more than 800 million endure hunger and malnutrition, in the European Union, one of the richest regions of the world, every fourth person experiences at least one of three forms of poverty or social exclusion. Full press release [here](#).

(17/10) FRA - Stronger protection in migration hotspots to guard against human trafficking. Human trafficking remains a grave concern in the European Union. It is also one of the protection challenges in the migration hotspots where various initiatives are aiming to help address the phenomenon. Full press release [here](#).

(16/10) Frontex – What is vulnerability assessment? Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, adopted an expanded mandate in October 2016. Frontex continuously monitors developments and trends at Europe's borders. One of the key new tasks of the Agency is to carry out annual vulnerability assessments of EU Member States' and Schengen Associated Countries' preparedness to face threats and challenges at their external borders. In practice, these annual assessments allow the agency to create an EU-wide overview of available border control means and capacities, and thus identify potential weaknesses in countries' abilities to handle increased migratory pressure at their borders. The vulnerability assessment is an important part of the agency's mission to manage migration more effectively, improve the internal security of the European Union and safeguard the principle of free movement of persons within the Schengen Area. Full press release [here](#).

(13/10) FRA - Finalising the Frontex handbook children at sea borders. Frontex held a workshop in Warsaw from 5 to 6 October [focusing on its children at sea borders handbook](#). The purpose of the workshop was to finalise the text of the handbook and discuss input provided by Frontex Consultative Forum members, including FRA. The workshop was the last in the series of four workshops where the content of the handbook was discussed and follows similar developments in Frontex's air borders and land borders sectors.

(13/10) FRA - Mental health and migration under the spotlight at European Parliament. On World Mental Health Day on 10 October, the Agency contributed to a Mental Health Europe's conference at the European Parliament on mental health and migration. The Agency shared its finding from recent reports, highlighting the low awareness about the negative impact of [immigration detention on children](#). It spoke about how mental health problems, relating to trauma both in the country of origin and along the migration route, are particularly common. However, efforts to address such issues are hampered by a [lack of resources and inadequate training for relevant staff in reception and detention centres](#). Full press release [here](#).

(13/10) Eurofund - More attention must be given to Europe's working poor. [In-work poverty](#) increased during the economic and financial crisis that hit European shores in 2008. By 2014, ten per cent of European workers were at risk of poverty, up from eight per cent in 2007. Ten per cent is a significant figure: the working poor represent a substantial group that

can't be ignored. Just as disconcerting is the finding that 13 per cent of European workers are materially deprived. This latter measure helps to capture the impact of the crisis on people's real living conditions. [A new study by Eurofound](#) looks at what it means to be working poor and finds that in-work poverty is associated with lower levels of subjective and mental well-being, problems with accommodation, as well as poorer relationships with other people and feelings of social exclusion. This demonstrates the importance of paying particular attention to the working poor and of better documenting their social situation. Full article [here](#).

(11/10) EU Committee of the Regions - European Pillar of Social Rights must be supported by a strong cohesion policy. The establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights should promote a sustainable and inclusive Europe, boost the fight against social and regional inequalities and contribute to the creation of a social market economy, the European Committee of the Regions argues in an opinion adopted at its plenary session on Wednesday. Full press release [here](#).

(11/10) EU Committee of the Regions - Urgent, growing and long-term challenge of children in migration needs better EU response. The growing challenge of children and adolescents travelling illegally to Europe requires a "coherent system" that should aim at providing "normality and stability" for them, whether that involves integrating or resettling them in Europe or returning them, the European Committee of the Regions has said. The recommendations adopted on 11 October by the EU's assembly for local and regional politicians would have implications for the guardianship, legal access, accommodation and integration of migrants and would entail a sharper focus on child migrants in the work of local, national and EU officials. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(19/10) Report: The situation of migrants and refugees in Serbia and transit zones in Hungary. "Thousands of migrants and refugees who travelled along the Western Balkans' migration route in 2015 and 2016 are now stranded in Serbia in a precarious legal situation" says the [Secretary General's Special Representative on migration and refugees](#) Ambassador Tomáš Boček in a [report](#) published today. While Serbia has adopted a genuinely humanitarian approach, receiving thousands of refugees and migrants, a strategy which goes further than the provision of humanitarian assistance is now needed to address issues related to their legal status and to find sustainable solutions in order to guarantee their social and economic rights in the case of an eventual prolongation of their stay in the country. Full press release [here](#).

(19/10) Testimonies and debate on reception of unaccompanied migrant children in European towns. On 18 October 2017, during its 33rd session, the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe](#) held a debate on the reception of unaccompanied migrant children in European towns. Yoomi Renström (Sweden, SOC) commented that although, in this year's statistics, the number of migrant children in Europe had decreased, it had not been due to the further tightening of migration policies. Three moving testimonies by refugees from Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan, holding migrant status as minors, confirmed that integration measures helped them continue their studies and succeed in their host country (Germany, Sweden and France). During the debate which followed, Congress members commended the personal efforts made by these young people and reiterated the need to mobilise authorities, in order to increase the number of host families for migrant children, prevent child trafficking and establish a system to provide each

young person with a guardian. The introduction of an exchange platform with local residents would help prevent the creation of a parallel society and ensure that children's rights are respected. Full press release [here](#).

(18/10) First evaluation of Greece's compliance with the Council of Europe's Anti-trafficking Convention: progress made, but gaps remain. In its first [report](#) on Greece, the Council of Europe's expert group against human trafficking ([GRETA](#)) praises positive steps taken by Greek authorities to combat human trafficking, but also highlights a number of shortcomings. GRETA welcomes the adoption of anti-trafficking legislation, the setting up of co-ordinating and specialised structures, the provision of training to relevant professionals and awareness-raising activities. But the report also underlines gaps in the fight against human trafficking, such as the absence of a national anti-trafficking strategy or action plan. Full press release [here](#).

(17/10) Switzerland should reinforce its human rights protection framework and better respond to the needs of vulnerable migrants. Reinforcing the institutional and legal framework for safeguarding and promoting human rights and enhancing the protection of migrants and asylum seekers are the key recommendations addressed to the Swiss authorities by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, in a report published today following his visit to the country in May 2017. The Commissioner welcomes the new law on asylum, which should result in faster and higher quality procedures for determining refugee status, in particular through the provision of free legal assistance from the outset. Full press release [here](#).

(11/10) Commissioner seeks clarifications over Italy's maritime operations in Libyan territorial waters. In a letter addressed to Mr Marco Minniti, Minister of Interior of Italy, published today, the Commissioner requests information with regard to Italy's maritime operations in Libyan territorial waters aimed at managing migration flows. Expressing appreciation for Italy's efforts in saving lives at sea and in receiving migrants arriving at its shores in the last years, the Commissioner underscores that, even when a state faces difficulties in coping with the influx of migrants, it still has the duty to protect and safeguard their human rights. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(13/10) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Progressively compromised – left parties on refugee rights. A key issue in contemporary European politics is the response of progressive parties to the political crisis on migration. It is playing out now in the elections in Austria and the Czech Republic, both of which are more worrying than the elections of early this year, which generally saw extremists do worse than feared. The changing positions of progressive parties in four central European countries is also the subject of an interesting new study by FEPS and Policy Solutions. Full article [here](#).

(13/10) ECRE - MSF report discloses violence by EU border authorities along 'Balkan Route'. In the recently published report ['Games Of Violence – Unaccompanied Children And Young People Repeatedly Abused By EU Member State Border Authorities'](#) Doctors without borders (MSF) documents cases of abuse and unlawful conduct from EU border authorities along the Serbian borders with Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary on children and young adults. Full article [here](#).

(13/10) ECRE - Migration control top priority at Member State level – substantial growth of EU Agency Frontex. The European Council included trafficking of human beings among priorities in [the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021](#), and the facilitation of illegal migration tops the list of EU crime priorities among [member states](#). The [EU Observer](#) quotes Erkki Koort, chair of an internal security group at the European Council, for saying that “for the upcoming [EU policy] cycle, the areas with the biggest number of member states participating are first [against] the facilitation of illegal migration.” It also establishes that member states rate the prevention of irregular arrivals to the EU as more important than fighting terrorism and child pornography as EU policy priorities. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EESC - [2017 Social Innovation for Refugee Inclusion](#) (Event)

MPI - [Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe](#)

EPRS - [EU Enlargement, Western Balkans And Turkey](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [The EU, Middle East And North Africa](#) (Think Tank Review)

EPRS - [The Reintegration Of Returning Migrants](#) (Podcast)