

# INFO FLASH 4/04

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(2/04) Supporting refugees in Greece: €180 million in emergency support.** The European Commission has announced today new funding of €180 million for aid projects in Greece, including to scale up the flagship '[Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation](#)' (ESTIA) programme which helps get refugees into urban accommodation and out of camps and provides them with regular cash assistance. The funding comes as Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides met today with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens. Launched in July 2017 with the UN Refugee Agency, ESTIA is the biggest EU aid operation in the country and works in line with the Greek government's 'out of camps' policy. So far it has created more than 23,000 urban accommodation places and set up a cash assistance scheme serving more than 41,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Full press release [here](#).

### European Parliament

**(27/03) Support for development projects must continue in all EU regions after 2020, MEPs say.** All EU regions should continue receiving sufficient resources to co-fund their regional development projects after 2020, MEPs say. The EU cohesion policy budget must remain large enough after 2020 to fund EU investments in regional development projects that are capable of meeting current and future challenges, say Regional Development Committee MEPs in a non-legislative resolution passed by 35 votes to 4, with 1 abstention. They stress that concentrating cohesion policy on the EU's least-developed regions in response to a loss of funds due to Brexit "would hinder progress in political priorities of the whole European Union". Full press release [here](#).

### European Council / Council of the EU

### Others

**(30/03) Frontex - Frontex conference to boost cooperation at Europe's air borders.** This week, Frontex invited the top officials from airports around Europe to Venice, Italy, to discuss maintaining high border control standards at EU airports amid the rapidly growing numbers of travellers. As millions of travellers take to the sky each year, effective exchange of information and the use of the newest border management tools such as biometrics on the move are essential to maintain the freedom of movement within the EU, while ensuring the safety of its external borders. "Europe is only as secure as its outside borders. Maintaining our freedom of movement and the further development of our economies has to go hand in hand with efficient and modern border control. With this conference we want to enhance integrated border management at European airports, making sure that the rise in air travel does not negatively affect border security and the comfort of travellers," said Frontex Deputy Executive Director Berndt Koerner. Full press release [here](#).

**(28/03) ECB - Taking back control of globalisation: Sovereignty through European integration.** There has been a backlash against globalisation and international cooperation in recent years<sup>[1]</sup>. In Europe, Brexit and Euroscepticism have challenged the notion of the European Union (EU) as a political construct based on shared sovereignty, freedom of movement across borders and economic integration under a common legislative framework. In the United States, meanwhile, the benefits of free trade have been openly called into question. Europe was generally believed to be under the greatest threat from this trend. Even if the United States were to retreat from globalisation, that would not undermine the integrity of the country itself. In the case of Europe, however, the EU and the commitment to shared values and an open society are in many ways inseparable. Full speech [here](#).

**(28/03) European Economic and Social Committee - Jordan is a key partner for the stability of the EU neighbourhood, insist EU civil society representatives.** A delegation from the European Economic and Social Committee met local civil society representatives and government officials on 26 and 27 March in Amman. The discussions during the visit focused on the difficulties faced by the country due to the regional instability. The refugee situation and the challenges that Jordan is facing in terms of integration and support were some of the major issues discussed. The EESC delegation acknowledged the need for international support and detailed measures as the country has developed a comprehensive approach to the massive influx of refugees, mostly fleeing the war in Syria, over the past years. According to 2017 data from the UN Refugee Agency, Jordan hosts the second highest number of refugees (89) per 1000 inhabitants in the world. Representatives from the European and Jordanian civil society expressed their concern about the unprecedented economic and political difficulties the country has to deal with being surrounded by countries in turmoil. Over recent years the situation in Iraq and Syria has resulted in Jordan losing major export markets and regional trading partners. Full press release [here](#).

**(27/03) EU Court of Auditors - EU Auditors to examine Facility for Refugees in Turkey.** The European Court of Auditors is conducting an audit of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. The Facility was established on 1 January 2016 following a call from the European Council for significant additional funding to support refugees in Turkey. It has a budget of €3 billion, made up of €1 billion from the EU budget and €2 billion from the Member States. The auditors will examine whether the Facility is providing effective support. They have also published a Background Paper on the Facility as a source of information for those interested in the subject. Full press release [here](#).

**(26/03) Eurostat - Young people on the labour market in 2016 - Half of unemployed young people in the EU ready to relocate for a job.** 50% of unemployed people aged 20-34 in the European Union (EU) are reluctant to change their place of residence for a job, 21% are ready to move for a job but only in the same country, whereas 12% would consider moving to another EU Member State. 17% would even be ready to move for a job outside EU. Full press release [here](#).

**(26/03) FRA - Migrant pushbacks a growing concern in some Member States.** Migrants at border crossings face being turned back in a number of Member States without the chance to exercise their right to asylum, finds the Agency's latest report on migration-related fundamental rights issues. Pushbacks and cases of people being returned to where they risk persecution are just some of the challenges facing migrants when trying to enter or travel through the EU. Full press release [here](#).

**(26/03) Frontex - Frontex and Moldova sign new cooperation plan.** Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri and Fredolin Lecari, Head of the General Inspectorate of Border Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, signed a cooperation plan for the period from 2018 to 2020. The cooperation, which builds on a working arrangement signed in 2008, paves the way for improved exchange of information on migratory flows, the use of relevant data to combat cross border crime and initiatives to support technical assistance to the Moldovan authorities. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) EU Committee of the Regions - Reform of the European Citizens' Initiative: further improvement needed to deliver ECI's full potential for participatory democracy.** The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) welcomes the European Commission's reform proposal to improve the European Citizens Initiative (ECI), which it sees as "a step in the right direction" to make it more accessible and user-friendly. The EU's Assembly of local and regional representatives however regrets that the proposal falls short of achieving the ECI potential as a transnational tool of participative democracy at European level. In an [opinion](#) led by Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP), Member of the Management Board of the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency and Special Adviser to the European Commission on outreach towards citizens, the CoR is concerned that the proposal fails to solve the current conflict of interest whereby the European Commission is both judge and party in the procedure. The Assembly also calls for the European Parliament to play a greater role in political scrutiny and follow up. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) EU Committee of the Regions - Cities and regions critical about top-down reform delivery strategy proposed by the European Commission.** The members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) reject the European Commission's proposal to divert money from cohesion policy to finance top-down structural reforms in the Member States. The [opinion](#), drawn up by Olga Zrihen (BE/PES), Member of the Walloon Parliament and adopted during the CoR plenary session, further highlights the importance of adopting a mixed bottom-up and top-down approach involving local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of reform processes. Full press release [here](#).

**(22/03) EU Committee of the Regions - Migration in Europe: EU must act together and do more to support local authorities.** The European Union needs to increase support for cities and regions and border countries that are on the front line of managing migration, the European Committee of the Regions said on 22 March. The EU's assembly for local and regional politicians expressed particular concern about the challenges faced by islands and coastal regions in the Mediterranean and called for greater shared European responsibility and investment. Full press release [here](#).

**(22/03) EU Committee of the Regions - EU investment in jobs, education and social inclusion must be managed in partnership with regions and cities.** Between 2007 and 2014, 9.4 million Europeans gained employment and 8.7 million obtained a qualification thanks to the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the partnership between the EU and national and regional governments. The European Committee of the Regions is mobilising its efforts to ensure that [these achievements](#) are duly taken into account and the fund will not be cut in the forthcoming EU long-term budget, or diverted to incentivise heavily centralised measures. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) Europe needs a proactive policy for the long-term care sector.** EESC holds the second of its 'going-local' meetings on the live-in care industry in the EU, revealing dire conditions of care workers employed in German households. Despite the rise in the number of foreign care workers living in German homes, the live-in care sector in the country is highly fragmented and unregulated, with underpaid carers who are denied basic working rights or social protection, and with care recipients who have no guarantees of the quality of the care they receive, a meeting held by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) revealed. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) As millions remain exposed to racism, equality bodies must be strengthened, say heads of European human rights institutions on International Anti-Racism Day.** Promoting equality and combating racism are essential to fortify social cohesion and democratic security, the heads of three European human rights institutions said in a joint statement on today's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) Popular non-discrimination legal guide updated.** Building on the widely popular practical handbook on European non-discrimination law, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Court of Human Rights have just published an update. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/03) Eurostat - Higher poverty risk for children with foreign parents.** In 2016, the risk of poverty for children in the EU who had at least one parent with foreign citizenship stood at 35.8%, almost twice as high than it was for children whose parents were both nationals (18.8 %). This pattern was to be found in all but four of the EU Member States for which data are available: the exceptions being Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary. Full press release [here](#).

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**(4/04) Council of Europe issues policy guidelines to protect children of imprisoned parents.** The Council of Europe today issued policy guidelines to its 47 member states aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of children of imprisoned parents. Some 2.1 million children in Europe have one of their parents in prison, according to estimates based on the number of inmates in prisons. These children may experience trauma, stigma, anxiety, and loss of parental care and material status which may be detrimental to their well-being, personal development and sometimes life. Full press release [here](#).

**(3/04) 21st century slavery: European anti-trafficking experts raise the alarm over labour exploitation.** Trafficking for labour exploitation is on the rise across Europe. In several countries, it has overtaken sexual exploitation as the main form of human trafficking. Official figures underestimate the true scale of the problem and there have been few successful prosecutions and convictions. These are among the main findings of the latest [annual report](#) from the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#)), published today. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) Stronger, more independent equality bodies needed to combat intolerance and discrimination in Europe, says anti-racism commission.** To better protect and support people exposed to discrimination, states should put in place strong equality bodies established by constitutional or parliamentary legislation, set up as separate legal entities

with a wide mandate, enjoying political, financial and operational independence, and provided with adequate resources, says the Council of Europe's anti-racism commission in [a new set of recommendations](#) to the European governments launched today, on the International Day against Racial Discrimination. Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) Intercultural Cities in Action : International Day Against Racial Discrimination.**

Fighting discrimination and upholding human rights is not only a legal obligation of Council of Europe members states but a moral, social, and economic necessity for inclusive and well-functioning European societies. Cities and local authorities are key in this regard. In a European context more and more dominated by identity politics, fears, xenophobia, populism and hatred, there are more and more cities that defend the idea of a positive management of diversity as a key factor for the development of cohesive and sustainable societies. Supported by the Council of Europe – the guardian of human rights, democracy and the rule of law on the continent – these cities devise, adopt and implement policies based on the Intercultural integration model and on its three core principles. Full press release [here](#).

**(20/03) European prisons are almost full, according to latest Council of Europe survey.**

European prisons are on average close to full capacity, with inmates occupying over 9 out of ten available places, according to the Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) for 2016, published today. The survey shows that the incarceration rate grew from 115.7 to 117.1 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants from 2015 to 2016. This rate had previously fallen every year since 2012, when it reached 125.6 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. The incarceration rate is mainly influenced by the length of the sanctions and measures imposed. In that perspective, the average length of detention, which can be seen as an indicator of the way criminal law is applied, increasing slightly to 8.5 months. The countries where the incarceration rate grew the most were Bulgaria (+10.8%), Turkey (+9.5%), the Czech Republic (+7.6%), Serbia (+6.6%) and Denmark (+5.5%). The prison administrations where it fell the most were Iceland (-15.9%), Northern Ireland (-11.8), Lithuania (-11.1%), Belgium (-10.1%) and Georgia (-6.7%). Full press release [here](#).

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

**(30/03) ECRE - Algeria: mass deportations of African migrants.** Algeria has been deporting hundreds of African migrants at a time, in an ongoing crackdown on illegal migration. Algeria, along with [other](#) North African countries, refused to [sign](#) the protocol on the freedom of movement of people and right of residence attached to the African Union's African Continental Free Trade Area agreement. Full press release [here](#).

**(30/03) ECRE - Israel: the government delays plans for mass deportations of African asylum seekers amid mounting pressure.**

The Israeli government's controversial plan to initiate the forced deportation of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers has been delayed, while hundreds of those affected remain detained in Israeli prisons over the Passover holiday weekend. The delay was announced after [mass protests](#) last week, during which 25,000 people took to the streets of Tel Aviv to denounce the policy of ordering asylum seekers to leave Israel for unnamed destination in Africa in exchange for €2,800 and a plane ticket. Those who refuse deportation are detained indefinitely in Saharonim prison. Full press release [here](#).

**(30/03) ECRE - CJEU: Actions brought against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for failing to fulfill relocation obligations.** The Court of Justice of the European Union has

recently published the actions brought by the European Commission against [Poland](#), [Hungary](#) and the [Czech Republic](#) for failing to fulfil their obligations under the Council Relocation Decisions ([Council Decision \(EU\) 2015/1523](#) and [Council Decision \(EU\) 2015/1601](#)). This is the next stage of the [infringement procedure](#) against the three Member States launched by the European Commission in June 2017, after the Commission found the answers to its reasoned opinion to be unsatisfactory. Full press release [here](#).

**(30/03) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Tactics, compromises and solutions.** International human rights NGOs are often called on to compromise or be more pragmatic on migration and asylum. The calls come from those on the sharp end of criticism who simply don't want to hear it anymore, but it also comes from those who claim that it will lead to better human rights outcomes. In the current context that just doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Full press release [here](#).

**(30/03) Social Platform - Social protection for all workers – Signs of progress on the Social Pillar.** On 13 March the European Commission released the [Social Fairness Package](#), a set of measures to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The package includes a legislative proposal for the establishment of a [European Labour Authority](#) and an initiative to ensure access to social protection for all workers, including self-employed people. A Communication on the monitoring of the implementation of Pillar – which will be closely linked to the [European Semester](#) – completes the package. Full press release [here](#).

**(29/03) Social Platform - Making the next EU budget deliver for people.** The clock is ticking fast for the future long-term EU Budget. The European Commission is expected to publish its proposal for the next [multi-annual financial framework](#) (MFF) on 29 May and to roll out all corresponding legislative texts for financial programmes and instruments shortly thereafter. The post-2020 EU budget, most likely programmed for a seven-year duration, also foresees new elements allowing for greater flexibility to respond to new challenges and unforeseen circumstances in the fields of migration, security and climate change. In the meantime, not everybody wants to foot the bill created by the United Kingdom's impending exit, with some Member States fiercely opposing increased contributions to the next MFF. Full article [here](#).

**(28/03) Social Platform - Building Social Europe 2/4 – Balancing the Social Pillar through good governance.** It's nearly twelve months since the European Commission released its first concrete proposals for a [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which aims to deliver new and improve existing social rights for people in the EU. As Social Platform we welcome the Pillar; it's the right tool to bring about the necessary policy changes to address key trends, such as poverty and social exclusion, job precariousness and in-work poverty, and barriers to accessing social protection. However, its success hinges on the use of a comprehensive implementation approach encompassing policy, governance, funding and civil dialogue. In this series of four 'Build Social Europe' blogs I'll take a look at each of these areas in turn, and layout Social Platform's recommendations on how the EU institutions and Member States can turn the Pillar from words into action. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) ECRE - Weekly Editorial: Reclaiming security from migration.** At a meeting in Niamey last week European and African interior and foreign affairs ministers and international organisations met to discuss smuggling and trafficking. The meeting is the next

step in the initiative for cooperation on security and migration launched at the Paris meeting convened by President Macron last year. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) ECRE - Interview: Free Movement – inclusion on wheels.** We are a charity that provides skateboarding lessons on our portable skate park to young refugees and locals in Athens. We teach in community centres, squats and camps. We started almost exactly a year ago. Prior to that I was volunteering with a charity [SkatePal](#), which makes skate parks and run other youth engagement activities in the West Bank. This is where I met Ruby who I run Free Movement with. All these ideas about what skateboarding can do – particularly in places where it doesn't yet exist were really fresh in my head. It was very inspiring to see what a difference skateboarding was doing for the communities we were working with in the West Bank. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) ECRE - AIDA 2017 Update Italy: obstacles in accessing asylum procedures and lack of reception capacity.** The updated AIDA [Country Report](#) on Italy documents developments in the asylum procedure, reception conditions, detention of asylum seekers and content of international protection throughout 2017. The year 2017 has been characterised by media, political and judicial crackdown on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) saving lives at sea, and by the implementation of cooperation agreements with African countries such as Libya, while barriers to access to the territory have also been witnessed at the northern borders of the country, against the backdrop of increasing arrivals from Austria. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) ECRE - Op-Ed: New Statelessness Index reveals protection gaps across Europe and points to a better approach to tackling statelessness.** Statelessness is a legal anomaly affecting more than half a million people in Europe – not only recent migrants and refugees, but also people whose families have lived in the same place for generations. For many people, statelessness means denial of the basic rights many of us take for granted: to go to school or work, to get married or register the birth of your child, to 'legally exist'. All European states have obligations in international law to protect stateless people and prevent statelessness, but in many cases, [these have not been translated into effective laws](#) at the national level. More than half a million men, women and children in Europe are falling through these gaps. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/03) ECRE - European Commission presents proposal to reform EU Visa Policy as leverage to ensure return of irregular migrants.** The European Commission has [put forward](#) a proposal to reform the EU's common visa policy with the goal of making it easier for tourists to obtain a visa to come to Europe, while strengthening security and "mitigating irregular migration risks". [According](#) to the EU migration commissioner, the EU will "introduce stricter conditions for processing visas when a partner country does not cooperate sufficiently on the readmission of irregular migrants". Full press release [here](#).

**(21/03) ENAR - No progress in curbing racial discrimination in the European labour market – in particular for women of colour.** Despite anti-discrimination laws, ethnic and religious minorities and migrants continue to face racial discrimination when looking for a job and in the workplace, according to a new [report](#) by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR). Women of colour are disproportionately affected, as a result of the intersection of race, gender and class. Full press release [here](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**MPI** - [Responding to Early Childhood Education and Care Needs of Children of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Europe and North America](#) **(Webinar)**

**MPI** - [Making Every Encounter Count: Using Peer Support to Improve Refugee Resettlement](#) **(Webinar)**

**Council of the EU General Secretariat** - [Think Tank Review](#) **(March 2018)**

**UCL et al.** - [Symposium: Controls and Hospitality: Towards Migration Policies which Strengthen Contemporary Democracy](#) **(Event)**

**Middlesex University** - [Managing Asylum: A Conference on Legal and Procedural Information for Asylum Seekers in the European Union](#) **(Event)**

**EuropeanMigrationLaw** - [The new German Government and EU Migration Policy](#) **(Podcast in French)**