

INFO FLASH 17/04

EU INSTITUTIONS

European Commission

(13/04) The EU pledges €77 million for the DRC crisis at Geneva donors' conference.

The European Union co-hosted today in Geneva the 'Humanitarian Conference on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)'. On this occasion, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides reiterated the EU's support in response to the worsening humanitarian situation in the region, with contributions worth €77 million in emergency and development assistance to the DRC crisis. The European Union is co-hosting the [DRC Humanitarian Conference in Geneva](#), together with the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to mobilise resources to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the DRC. Humanitarian needs in the DRC have doubled over the last year, with over 16 million people being affected by the crisis and 13 million in need of humanitarian assistance throughout the country. More than 5 million people are currently displaced, which include 4.5 million internally displaced and approximately 630,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries. Full press release [here](#).

(10/04) EU remains the world's leading donor of development assistance: €75.7 billion in 2017.

The European Union and its Member States continue to be the world's leading provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) with an overall amount of €75.7 billion in 2017, confirm the newly released figures by the OECD-DAC. This amount represents 0.50% of EU Gross National Income (GNI). This is significantly above the 0.21% average of the non-EU members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), despite a small decrease compared to the previous year. Global ODA, reported to the OECD-DAC by all donors, decreased from €131 billion in 2016 to €130 billion in 2017. EU collective ODA constituted 57% of global ODA in 2017. The EU and its Member States have been consistently in the lead of global efforts on development financing. Since 2015, year of the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, EU collective aid has grown by €7.8 billion that is 12%, while the ODA/GNI ratio grew by 6%, underpinning the EU's and Member States' sustained efforts to promote prosperity, peace, and sustainable development worldwide. In 2016, EU ODA reached its highest level ever. The figures presented today show a 2.4% decrease of EU collective ODA for 2017 compared to the previous year, corresponding to €1.9 billion. The EU ODA/GNI ratio for 2017 stood at 0.50%, down from 0.53% in 2016. The decline of EU collective ODA in 2017 is linked to a reduction of 80% in the amounts of debt relief operations by EU Member States and a decrease of 8% in in-donor refugee costs. In-donor refugee costs declined from €11.2 billion in 2016 to €10.3 billion in 2017. The decrease is also linked to the reflows of European Investment Bank's (EIB) loans, which reduced the ODA reported by the EIB in 2017 by 28%. As the EIB's portfolio progressively matures, reflows increase and their amounts are subtracted from ODA. Full press release [here](#).

(9/04) EU stands ready to accelerate support to Zimbabwe during its transition process.

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, is visiting Zimbabwe, where he is meeting President Emmerson Mnangagwa, as well as visiting EU-funded projects. New EU-funded programmes worth €23 million will be launched to

improve people's access to health services and enhance their livelihoods. This visit takes place ahead of the elections in Zimbabwe due to be held by mid-2018. The majority of the funding announced today (€20.6 million) will be dedicated to ensuring equitable access to quality health services for women and children. Notably, it aims to reduce maternal mortality, as well as halve the prevalence of stunting and reduce the mortality of children under 5. It will furthermore aim to fight HIV and AIDS, malaria and other prevalent diseases. In addition, efforts will be made to improve women's access to safe sexual and reproductive health and rights services. The funds will contribute to UN agencies, UNICEF and UNFPA, through the multi donor Health Development Fund. Furthermore, a programme with NGO Save the Children worth €2.8 million will help grassroots associations to work towards improving the livelihoods of 15 000 young women and men. Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) EU supports South Africa to boost job creation, small business development and improved governance with €62 million. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica is visiting South Africa, where he is meeting, the Minister of Finance Mr Nhlanhla Nene, and the Minister for Small Business Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu. The new EU programme 'Employment Promotion through small, micro and medium enterprises Support Programme for South Africa', worth €52 million, will help to boost job creation in South Africa by supporting the country's National Development Plan 2030, which foresees that 90% of new jobs in the country should come from small and emerging business by 2030. Implemented by the South African Department for Small Business Development, the new programme will help reduce the cost of doing business for small enterprises, improve business, production and marketing skills, increase access to funding by de-risking enterprise development lending and keeping the interest rate at reasonable levels. The new Enhancing Legislature Oversight Programme of €10 million will strengthen democracy and good governance through effective execution of the core mandate of the National Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures to legislate, exercise oversight and ensure public participation. Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) The EU aims to generate €1.5 billion investments in Lebanon over 3 years. Today the European Union has announced a package of up to €150 million to support the revitalisation of the Lebanese economy as part of its longstanding commitment to the economic development of Lebanon. This support could generate up to €1.5 billion loans for Lebanon until 2020, on condition that the country's financial institutions identify and propose projects that are bankable and adopt relevant reforms. This package includes up to €50 million in grants funding that could be mobilised in each of the coming three years (2018-2020) to provide technical assistance and ensure a sufficient level of concessionality of loans. The package was announced today at the CEDRE conference in Paris, an international donor meeting in support of Lebanon's economy. This will be made available in the framework of the European External Investment Plan (EIP), a comprehensive and ambitious EU plan which encourages investment in our partner countries for the promotion of inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development. Full press release [here](#).

European Parliament

European Council / Council of the EU

(11/04) Posting of workers: Council confirms the compromise text agreed with the European Parliament. On 11 April 2018, EU ambassadors approved the compromise text

negotiated with the European Parliament on the revision of the posting of workers directive. The final adoption of the directive will come at a later stage, once the legislation has been voted in the Parliament. The aim of the revised directive is to facilitate the transnational provision of services whilst ensuring fair competition and respect for the rights of those workers who are employed in one member state and sent to work temporarily in another by their employer (posted workers). More specifically, the directive aims at ensuring fair wages and a level playing field between posting and local companies in the host country whilst maintaining the principle of free movement of services. Full press release [here](#).

Others

(11/04) EU Committee of the Regions - Reflecting on Europe: How Europe is perceived by people in regions and cities. This week the first [preliminary report](#) on the Reflecting on Europe initiative has been released, providing some interesting insights into the ways citizens want to see the EU developing in the future. Since March 2016, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been listening to about 30.000 citizens in 81 regions and 114 cities and municipalities. The results of the citizens dialogues and the online survey/app collected so far are presented in this report. Thank you to those who shared their thoughts and contributed to this listening process! The final report will be delivered in view of the CoR opinion on the future of Europe due for adoption in October 2018. The CoR will continue its citizens' dialogues over the coming months in the run-up to the European elections in May 2019. Full press release [here](#).

(9/04) Eurostat - Acquisition of citizenship in the EU-EU Member States granted citizenship to almost 1 million persons in 2016-Moroccans, Albanians and Indians were the main recipients. In 2016, around 995 000 persons acquired citizenship of a Member State of the European Union (EU), up from 841 000 in 2015 and 889 000 in 2014. Of the total number of persons obtaining the citizenship of one of the EU Member States in 2016, 12% were former citizens of another EU Member State, while the majority were non-EU citizens or stateless. Full press release [here](#).

(9/04) Eurostat - Labour costs in the EU-Hourly labour costs ranged from €4.9 to €42.5 across the EU Member States in 2017-Lowest in Bulgaria and Romania, highest in Denmark and Belgium. In 2017, average hourly labour costs in the whole economy (excluding agriculture and public administration) were estimated to be €26.8 in the European Union (EU) and €30.3 in the euro area. However, this average masks significant gaps between EU Member States, with the lowest hourly labour costs recorded in Bulgaria (€4.9), Romania (€6.3), Lithuania (€8.0), Latvia (€8.1), Hungary (€9.1) and Poland (€9.4), and the highest in Denmark (€42.5), Belgium (€39.6), Luxembourg (€37.6), Sweden (€36.6) and France (€36.0). Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) FRA - Many EU Roma face life like people in the world's poorer countries. Poor sanitation, hunger, youth unemployment – Roma in the EU face these basic challenges in their daily life, finds the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' latest report. It underlines the persistent inequalities that have long plagued Europe's Roma in many countries of one of the world's richest regions. Full press release [here](#).

(5/04) FRA - Innovative Italian legislation updates approach to guardianship. The Agency, together with the Italian Independent Authority for Children and Adolescents, has prepared a note summarising the main changes relating to guardianship for unaccompanied

children in Italy. The note (both in Italian and English) looks into the implementation of Italian law on protective measures for unaccompanied children in Italy. The law entered into force in May 2017. It regulates all aspects of protecting foreign unaccompanied children in Italy. For the first time in Italy, but also in the EU, a general legislative measure has been used for protecting unaccompanied migrant children. In particular, it allows youth courts to create lists of volunteer guardians for unaccompanied children. Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) FRA - UN expert meeting looks at protecting the rights of migrants in the context of return. The Agency contributed to an expert meeting looking at the human rights consequences, obligations and possible remedies in the context of current return practices. The one-day event was organised by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It took place on 6 March in Geneva. The expert meeting was structured around under three topics: 1) lawfulness of returns; 2) voluntariness of returns; and 3) sustainability of returns. The event brought together a selection of migration and human rights experts, from international organisations (UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, UN special rapporteurs, ICRC), academia and NGOs. The expert meeting also sought to identify areas of focus for OHCHR's future work on migration and human rights, with a view to feeding into the current negotiations on the Global Compact on Migration as well. Full press release [here](#).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(10/04) No Hate Speech Movement: first broad international initiative that helped recognise hate speech as human right abuse. Hate speech continues to poison public debate, and the urgency to counter it has not diminished over the past years. The youth campaign No Hate Speech Movement (NHSM) conducted by the Council of Europe in 2012-2017 as the first broad international initiative in this field has contributed to recognising hate speech as an abuse of human rights, and has offered valuable lessons for the future. This is a key message of the conference that has brought together some 150 representatives of national campaign committees, European campaign partners and youth organisations at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg today to evaluate the campaign and design way forward. Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) New reports on protection of regional and minority languages in Austria, Cyprus and Romania. The [Committee of Ministers](#) of the Council of Europe on 4 April 2018 examined the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and provided recommendations to [Austria](#), [Cyprus](#) and [Romania](#), based on the country-specific reports of the Committee of Experts under the Charter. Full press release [here](#).

CIVIL SOCIETY

(16/04) DW - All EU ID cards to include fingerprints - EU commissioner. The EU Commission plans to launch a proposed law Tuesday to increase security within the bloc's borders, including fingerprinting in ID cards, according to an interview with Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos in German daily Welt. The move would make fingerprinting and other biometric elements compulsory for all EU ID cards. They are already required for EU passports, along with biometric pictures. Universal use of them in ID cards as well would curb the spread of fake documents. Full article [here](#).

(13/04) ECRE - Asylum systems in 2017: AIDA Comparative Report. An AIDA Comparative [Report](#) published this week offers an overview of key developments in the asylum systems of the 23 countries covered by AIDA. Several countries have announced restrictions in their asylum procedures, such as Austria, where the onward appeal has been abolished and obligations on asylum seekers have been extended. In Belgium, legislative reform has shortened certain appeal periods and in some cases deprives asylum seekers of a suspensive appeal. In Hungary, new reforms have drastically shortened deadlines for seeking judicial review against inadmissibility decisions and applications can only be submitted in the transit zones on the border, with only one person admitted to each transit zone per day. Full press release [here](#).

(13/04) ECRE - Germany: Further restrictions and political differences on family reunification. The new German Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer, [seeks](#) to introduce new restrictions on who can bring family members to Germany and which family members they can bring. A contentious point during talks to build the government coalition-between the Christian Democrat Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Social Democrats (SDP) – the issue returns to the forefront. Under a [draft law](#) currently being discussed by the Interior Ministry, family reunification will only apply to spouses, parents of unaccompanied minors and underage unmarried refugees. Access for any other family members, including siblings, would be restricted. Recipients of social benefits could also be banned from bringing their family members to Germany. Full press release [here](#).

(13/04) ECRE - Increase of asylum applications from Venezuelans in the EU, but Latin American neighbours host the vast majority. The number of Venezuelans forced to leave their homes continues to increase. They leave for a variety of reasons, including insecurity and violence, lack of food, medicine or access to essential social services as well as loss of income. UNHCR has [affirmed](#) that international protection considerations have become apparent for a very significant proportion of Venezuelans. Full press release [here](#).

(13/04) ECRE - Push for transfers at any cost – the Dublin system in 2017: AIDA Comparative Report. The [2017 Dublin Update](#), published by the Asylum Information Database, releases figures for 18 European countries revealing an increase in transfers in the aftermath of European Union and domestic political commitments for a stricter enforcement of the Dublin system. Germany continues to spearhead the Dublin system with a record-high 64,267 outgoing requests to other countries. France issued 41,500 requests, Austria 10,490 and Greece 9,784. With the exception of Greece, the majority of countries make marginal use of the family unity provisions (0.4% of requests in Slovenia, 1.5% in Switzerland, 4.1% in the United Kingdom) and the humanitarian clause of the Dublin Regulation (0% in Spain and the United Kingdom, 0.1% in Slovenia, 0.2% in Hungary and 0.9% in Romania). Most states overwhelmingly rely on the irregular entry criterion and applications previously made by asylum seekers in other countries. Full press release [here](#).

(13/04) ECRE - Turkey responds to increasing arrivals of Afghans with mass deportation. [Statistics](#) from the General Directorate of Security reveals that around 20,000 undocumented Afghan migrants have arrived within the last three month and 17,847 have been captured by security forces in Turkey between January 1 and 29 March 2018. According to media reports Turkey has reached an [agreement](#) with Afghanistan on returning undocumented Afghan nationals and more than 200 have [already](#) been deported. Full press release [here](#).

(11/04) PICUM - Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants: New manual on regularisations for children, young people and families. The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) has launched a [new manual on regularisations for children, young people and families](#) which has been prepared by – and for – organisations working on advocating for mechanisms to regularise undocumented children, young people and families. Uncertain, precarious or irregular status has negative impacts on the health and well-being of children and young people. As well as facing the risk of being deported, undocumented children and young people have restricted access to further education, training, employment and vital services. Having an irregular or precarious status gives rise to issues around identity and belonging, and planning for the future, at a critical time in young people’s development. Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) ECRE - IT systems for data collection poses a risk for people in need of protection. The [report](#) ‘Under watchful eyes – biometrics, EU IT-systems and fundamental rights’ published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) concludes that EU IT systems for collecting personal data poses significant risks to the rights of people in need of international protection. The FRA report illustrates rapid developments of EU IT systems with the [Visa Information System](#), the [Schengen Information System](#) and [EURODAC system](#) to be supplemented by the Entry-Exit System (EES), European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), the European Criminal Records Information System for Third-Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN), and “most crucially, an IT system that seeks to ensure interoperability across existing and planned systems.” And the report [presentation](#) states: “Such systems provide invaluable support to border management efforts, but also have wide-ranging fundamental rights implications. The persons affected – including both regular travellers and persons who may be in situations of vulnerability – typically do not fully understand the implications of the use of such systems.” Full press release [here](#).

(6/04) ECRE - Deal no deal – total confusion on Israeli deportation plans. On April 2 UNHCR [confirmed](#) an agreement to find solutions for 39,000 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers facing the [choice](#) of either jail or deportation from Israel to an undefined third country. On April 3 UNHCR [expressed](#) regret that Israel had cancelled the agreement. At the same time a number of countries [mentioned](#) by Israel as potential hosts for deported asylum seekers including [Italy](#), [Germany](#), [Rwanda](#) and [Uganda](#) denied any such intentions. The agreement signed by Volker Türk, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr. Arye Machluf Deri, Minister of Internal Affairs aimed at the departure of 16,000 Eritreans and Sudanese under various programmes, whilst also giving legal status in Israel for an unspecified number. Prime Minister Netanyahu [allegedly](#) cancelled the deal after internal pressure in his government coalition. Full press release [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

ECRE - [Roundtable: Informal Agreements and Return: Legal Status and Oversight](#) (Event)

Eurobarometer - [Integration of immigrants in the European Union](#)

UNHCR – [Desperate Journeys](#)

MPI - [It's Relative: A Crosscountry Comparison of Family-Migration Policies and Flows](#)

MPI - [Responding to the ECEC Needs of Children of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Europe and North America](#)

Clingendael - [Why the EU should help former smugglers get a job](#)

ECDPM - [Sailing new waters in international cooperation: on the way to framing future eu engagement with more advanced developing countries](#)