

# INFO FLASH 4/09

## EU INSTITUTIONS

### European Commission

**(25/07) The European Union pledges to rebuild the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in Sévaré, Mali.** Following the deadly attack against the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in Sévaré in Mali, on 29 June, the EU has decided to finance in full the rebuilding of a new headquarters and to continue its support in order to ensure the operational continuity of the Force's staff on the ground. This decision follows close consultation between the Commander of the Force and the '[EUTM' European military mission in Mali](#), the French Defence Cooperation and the forces of 'Operation Barkhane'. The EU will continue this consultation work with the new Commander of the Force as soon as he takes up his post. Full press release [here](#).

**(24/07) Managing migration: Commission expands on disembarkation and controlled centre concepts.** Following the call by EU leaders at the June European Council, the Commission is today expanding on the concept of controlled centres as well as short-term measures that could be taken to improve the processing of migrants being disembarked in the EU, and giving a first outline of the possible way forward for the establishment of regional disembarkation arrangements with third countries. Regional disembarkation arrangements should be seen as working in concert with the development of controlled centres in the EU: together, both concepts should help ensure a truly shared regional responsibility in responding to complex migration challenges. Commissioner Avramopoulos said: "Now more than ever we need common, European solutions on migration. We are ready to support Member States and third countries in better cooperating on disembarkation of those rescued at sea. But for this to work immediately on the ground, we need to be united – not just now, but also in the long run. We need to work towards sustainable solutions." Full press release [here](#).

**(19/07) Migration and Asylum: Commission takes further steps in infringement procedures against Hungary.** The European Commission has today decided to refer Hungary to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) for non-compliance of its asylum and return legislation with EU law. The Commission has also today sent a letter of formal notice to Hungary concerning new Hungarian legislation which criminalises activities that support asylum and residence applications and further restricts the right to request asylum. The Commission first launched an infringement procedure against Hungary concerning its asylum laws in [December 2015](#). Following a series of exchanges on both administrative and political levels and a [complementary letter of formal notice](#), the Commission sent a reasoned opinion in [December 2017](#). After analysing the reply provided by the Hungarian authorities, the Commission considers that the majority of the concerns raised have still not been addressed and has therefore now decided to refer Hungary to the Court of Justice of the European Union – the last stage of the infringement procedure. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/07) Legal migration: Commission refers Belgium to the Court of Justice for failing to provide common rules for non-EU seasonal workers.** The European Commission

decided today to refer Belgium to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) for failing to fully implement the Seasonal Workers Directive (Directive 2014/36/EU). The Directive determines the conditions of entry and stay of non-EU seasonal workers and defines the rights of those seasonal workers. Belgium, having failed to meet the initial transposition deadline of 30 September 2016, has still not fully implemented the Directive. The Seasonal Workers Directive sets out the conditions that Member States should apply when deciding to grant access to their labour markets to non-EU citizens wishing to work in an EU Member State as seasonal workers for short periods (up to nine months), often in agriculture and tourism. It ensures that these workers are treated in the same way as national workers with regard to a number of important factors such as working conditions, pay, health and safety, social security, and it provides safeguards that protect them from exploitation. Full press release [here](#).

**(18/07) European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers initiative on 'Permanent European Union Citizenship'**. The College of Commissioners has today decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'Permanent European Union Citizenship'. The main objective of the proposed initiative is to guarantee that European citizenship and its associated rights cannot be lost once they have been attained. The organisers cite in particular the context of Brexit and the future loss of EU citizenship and rights of UK citizens. The Commission's decision to register the Initiative concerns only the legal admissibility of the proposal. The Commission has not analysed the substance at this stage. The registration of this Initiative will take place on 23 July 2018, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances **would be required to explain its reasoning**. Full press release [here](#).

**(13/07) Employment and Social Developments in Europe: 2018 review confirms positive trends but highlights challenges, in particular linked to automation and digitalization**. This year's edition confirms the ongoing positive labour market trends as well as an improving social situation. The numbers of people in employment reached new record levels. With almost 238 million people having a job, employment has never been higher in the EU. In 2017 over three and a half million more people were in employment, compared with 2016. However, while the number of hours worked per person employed has grown in recent years, they are still below the 2008 levels. At the same time we witness rising disposable incomes and lower levels of poverty. Severe material deprivation has receded to an all-time low, with 16.1 million fewer people affected, compared with 2012. But looking at the impact of technological developments, there are uncertainties about the future effects of automation and digitalisation. This is why the 2018 ESDE review is dedicated to the changing world of work. Full press release [here](#).

**(11/07) The EU's External Investment Plan: first projects in Africa and the Neighbourhood**. As part of its External Investment Plan, the EU gave its green light to a package of financial guarantee programmes worth around €800 million on 10 July. This will help to leverage an estimated €8-9 billion in public and private investment in Africa and the Neighbourhood. Yesterday's decision is a major milestone towards delivering investments in Africa and the Neighbourhood through the EU's External Investment Plan (EIP), which is expected to leverage €44 billion of investments through an EU contribution worth €4.1 billion. The EIP aims to promote inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development

and in this way to tackle some of the root causes of irregular migration. One of the new programmes for example will benefit people who currently have difficulty borrowing money at affordable rates, such as internally displaced people, refugees or returnees. Another programme will enable over 25,000 small businesses to access mobile accounts and long-term credit, in order to support the financial inclusion driven by diasporas, migrants' families and returnees. Full press release [here](#). Q&A session [here](#).

**(11/07) EU steps up humanitarian aid in Somalia with €89.5 million.** The European Union has released €89.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Somalia and Djibouti, as millions are grappling with the consequences of prolonged extreme weather conditions. The funding comes ahead of the Somalia Partnership Forum co-hosted by the European Union taking place next week over 16-17 July. "The devastating effects of two years of drought and the recent intense flooding are taking their toll on the livelihood of millions of people in Somalia," said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides. "Our aid will target the most vulnerable and provide life-saving support to those affected by climatic shocks and internal conflict." Out of the aid package, €89 million in emergency assistance will be channelled in Somalia to reach communities displaced by severe drought, focussing on the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, water supply and livestock protection, as well as health measures against epidemics. A further €500,000 is going to Djibouti to support refugees in the country (mostly fleeing the conflict in Yemen, but also from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea) by providing water, sanitation and protection to the communities living in the Ali Addeh, Hol Hol and Markazi refugee camps. With €119 million allocated to Somalia in 2017 alone, the EU has drastically scaled up its humanitarian assistance to the country, helping to avert a catastrophe similar to the 2011 famine which resulted in 260,000 deaths. Full press release [here](#).

**(10/07) EU mobilises over €191 million in humanitarian aid for Africa's Sahel countries.** As the Sahel region experiences its worst food and nutrition crisis in five years and continued insecurity, the Commission has announced a humanitarian aid package worth €191.3 million. "There is no time to waste with many affected by a worsening food security crisis in the Sahel. Our EU aid will throw a lifeline to the most vulnerable. Our new support aims to reach more than 1.1 million people in need of emergency food assistance while supporting treatment to over 650,000 severely malnourished children," said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides. The assistance announced today will go to eight countries in the region: Burkina Faso (€11.1 million), Chad (€40.2 million), Cameroon (€13.9 million), Mali (€35.3 million), Mauritania (€11.4 million), Niger (€32.2 million), Nigeria (€35.3 million), and Senegal (€1 million). In addition, regional funds amounting to €10.8 million will also be allocated. EU funding will also support disaster risk reduction initiatives that can help populations better prepare for natural hazards. Full press release [here](#).

**European Parliament**

## European Council / Council of the EU

**(30/07) Central African Republic: military training mission expanded and extended.** On 30 July 2018, the Council extended the mandate of the EU military training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) by two years, i.e. until 19 September 2020. The Council also modified the mandate of the mission to enable it to give strategic advice not only to the Ministry of Defence, military staff and the armed forces, but also to the President's cabinet, and to allow it to provide advice on civil-military cooperation, including to the Ministry of the Interior and the gendarmerie. The Council has allocated a budget of around €25.4 million for the common costs of EUTM RCA for the period 20 September 2018 to 19 September 2020. Full press release [here](#).

## Others

**(31/08) Frontex - Frontex sends first liaison officer to EU Member State.** Today Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency introduces its first liaison officer to an EU Member State to enhance the cooperation between the agency and national authorities responsible for border management, returns and coast guard functions. The first liaison officer will work in Bulgaria. Today she was presented to the national authorities by Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri. "One of the increasingly important responsibilities of our agency is to contribute to the strengthening of EU's internal security, which requires an ever stronger cooperation between Frontex and EU Member States. Our liaison officers play a central role in this task," said Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri. Frontex will deploy 11 liaison officers to Member States. They will be posted in various EU Member States, often covering a cluster of neighbouring countries. Full press release [here](#).

**(13/08) Frontex - Migratory flows in July: Total number drops, Spain accounts for more than half of detections.** In the first seven months of 2018, the number of irregular border crossings into the EU via the top four migratory routes fell by 43 per cent from a year ago to about 73 500, mainly because of lower migratory pressure on the Central Mediterranean route. In July, some 14 900 irregular crossings were detected on the main migratory routes into the EU, 18% fewer than in the same month of last year. Full press release [here](#).

**(29/08) FRA - Freedom of movement: rights versus reality for EU citizens.** EU citizens have the right to move freely from country to country but in practice pitfalls exist when it comes to receiving residence permits or social assistance, finds the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' latest report. Full press release [here](#).

**(23/07) FRA - Continuing concerns as governments adopt tough stance on migration issues.** Developments in the EU continue to be of concern as some governments adopt a tough stance on migration issues, according to the FRA's latest periodic report on migration-related fundamental rights issues. Conditions in the reception centres in the hotspots remained problematic and various border issues also persist. Full press release [here](#).

**(19/07) FRA - Better education key to breaking Roma poverty cycle.** Young Roma remain trapped in a vicious poverty cycle linked to poor education and job prospects, finds a new report from the EU Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA). Full press release [here](#).

**(11/07) Eurostat - A new Eurostat publication - A statistical portrait of the European Union compared with G20 countries - The EU in the world - 2018 edition.** The fifth

edition of the Eurostat publication "[The EU in the world](#)" compares the European Union (EU) with the 15 non-EU Group of Twenty (G20) countries in the areas of society, the economy and the environment. It looks at population, living conditions, health, education and training, the labour market, economy and finance, international trade, agriculture and fisheries, industry and services, research and development, transport, environment and energy. Full press release [here](#).

**(10/07) Eurostat - First population estimates - EU population up to nearly 513 million on 1 January 2018.** Full press release [here](#).

**(9/07) Frontex - Frontex reaches milestone in return operations.** Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, continues to expand its capacity to support EU Member States in returns after launching the European Centre for Returns earlier this year. In the first half of 2018, Frontex has coordinated and co-financed 165 return operations by charter flights, returning nearly 6400 non-EU nationals to non-EU countries. Full press release [here](#).

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**(23/07) Submit your examples of good practices on child-friendly procedures in the migration context.** The Office of the Special Representative on migration and refugees is looking for examples of good or promising practices of migration-related procedures that are child-friendly. Selected examples will be published in a compilation of good practices being prepared under the [Council of Europe Action plan on protecting refugee and migrant children \(2017-2019\)](#). Responding to this call will give states and other relevant stakeholders the opportunity to publicise their good practices, resulting in increased attention for and possible adoption of the practice in other Council of Europe member States. The deadline for submission of good practice examples is 30 September 2018. Submissions should be sent to [SRSR.Migration.Office@coe.int](mailto:SRSR.Migration.Office@coe.int). Full press release [here](#).

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

**(31/08) ECRE - Austria plans to scrap asylum seeker apprenticeships.** The Austrian government tabled a bill on Monday to remove the possibility for young asylum seekers to take up apprenticeships. Since 2012, persons below the age of 25 who are awaiting a decision on their asylum claim can obtain a work permit for an apprenticeship in shortage occupations in Austria. The abolition of the scheme is liable to affect high numbers of people seeking protection in the country. According to [figures](#) published by AIDA, managed by ECRE, Austria issued 1,526 work permits to asylum seekers in 2017, of which 697 concerned apprentices, while 727 young asylum seekers held an apprenticeship work permit at the end of the year. [UNHCR](#) and [civil society organisations](#) have sharply criticised the government plans for undermining refugees' integration prospects and swift access to qualifications. Full press release [here](#).

**(31/08) ECRE - UNHCR: 4 million refugee children without access to school.** The study [Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis](#) released by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on August 29 reveals that within the last year alone there has been an alarming increase of half a million refugee children that are without access to school, bringing the total to 4 million. By the end of 2017 there were 7.4 million refugee children across the globe. A modest 61 per

cent attend primary school, just 23 per cent attend secondary school and only 1 per cent will have access to higher education. Full press release [here](#). (24/08) ECRE - At sea and in the port – search and rescue ships continue to be stuck in limbo. A vessel containing rescued migrants has been stuck at the port of Catania, without authorisation to disembark, since Tuesday. After 48 hours of docking, prosecutors opened an [investigation](#) into the illegal detention of those on board and the European Commission has called an [emergency meeting](#) today. The Italian coast guard ship, Diciotti, [rescued](#) 190 people on the 15 August and remained at sea until 21 August, 13 of those rescued were evacuated for emergency medical treatment whilst at sea. The ship was initially prevented from docking as the Italian government claimed Malta should take responsibility since the rescue took place within their search and rescue zone. It was finally allowed to dock at the Sicilian port of Catania but people on board were not permitted to disembark. Full press release [here](#).

**(24/08) ECRE - “Too straight” Afghan man denied asylum in Austria, for not fitting into homosexual stereotypes.** An 18-year-old homosexual asylum seeker from Afghanistan was [denied](#) asylum in a decision based on physical traits and general social behaviour in clear conflict with UNHCR [Guidelines](#) and the [line](#) taken by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The young man arrived in Austria in 2016, as a minor, and initially sought asylum based on his belonging to the Hazara people, a minority ethnic group that is widely persecuted in Afghanistan. After his first application was rejected, he appealed on the grounds of sexual orientation, something he had concealed in the beginning out of fear of exposure. Despite the significant [risks](#) a homosexual identity entails in Afghanistan, the applicant’s claims were dismissed for a second time last May. The explicit reference to the way the young man walks and behaves as proof that he cannot be homosexual has drawn international [criticism](#). Full press release [here](#).

**(13/07) ECRE - Editorial: Towards a place of no return.** Horst Seehofer has managed to illustrate the inhumanity and futility of Europe’s return policy with a “joke” about the deportation of 69 people on his 69<sup>th</sup> birthday. The numbers no longer match: one of the group committed suicide after being returned to Afghanistan. He was a young man who had arrived in Germany as a child and had lived there for eight years, “returned” to a town he’d never been to. For ECRE, return is a valid part of migration policy but only if certain pre-conditions are in place. First, fair asylum decision-making. Here, the huge variation in the rate of recognition of protection claims, particularly from key nationalities such as Afghanistan, demonstrates this is not the case – and probably indicates political interference in judicial decision-making. That the likelihood of a protection claim from an Afghan varies from 3% to 98% from one Member State to another with no objective explanation for the difference is evidence of injustice. Full press release [here](#).

**(13/07) ECRE - AIDA briefing: Withdrawal of reception conditions of asylum seekers.** The latest AIDA [Legal Briefing](#) analyses European countries’ national legal frameworks and practice on the reduction and withdrawal of reception conditions of asylum seekers under the [recast Reception Conditions Directive](#). It identifies circumstances in which the intention to restrict the possibility of ‘abuse’ of the asylum system can take precedence over the need to ensure an “adequate” or “dignified” standard of living for all applicants throughout the status determination process. Trends have developed within national interpretations of the recast Reception Conditions Directive and domestic practices that utilise the reduction and withdrawal of reception conditions as a punitive measure, arguably beyond what is permitted under EU law. The withdrawal of reception conditions as punishment of violations of reception centre house rules remains a contested measure, and one that will likely be clarified

by the Court of Justice of the European Union following a recent [preliminary reference](#). Full press release [here](#).

**(13/07) ECRE - France: Court decision is a triumph for solidarity.** Last week the French Constitutional Council delivered a landmark [decision](#) which ruled the so-called “crime of solidarity” (*délit de solidarité*), which criminalises a person who facilitates the irregular entry, should not be charged for any act provided for humanitarian purposes. The [European Parliament](#) last week also passed a non-legislative resolution, seeking to prevent the criminalization of those providing humanitarian assistance to migrants. The Constitutional Council noted that the freedom to help others with a humanitarian goal, without taking into consideration the legality of their stay in France, can be inferred from the constitutional “principle of fraternity”. It is up to the legislator to ensure that there is a fair balance between the principle of fraternity and the safeguarding of public order. The Constitutional Council observes that assisting a foreigner with his transit in the country does not necessarily lead to an unlawful situation, differently from assisting with the irregular entry into the French territory. Therefore, by condemning all assistance to the transit of an irregularly staying migrant, including assistance motivated by humanitarian purposes, the legislator has not ensured a fair balance between the principle of fraternity and the safeguard of public order. The question was brought by the Court of Cassation in relation to the proceedings against [Cédric Herrou](#), a high profile “crime of solidarity” case as he helped people crossing the border from Italy. Full press release [here](#).

**(10/07) ECRE - Austria backs migration centers in non-EU countries.** Austria will this week propose that the EU open migration centers outside the bloc, according to a document seen by POLITICO. The Alpine country, which holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, has prepared an unofficial document ahead of a meeting of interior ministers in Innsbruck on Thursday. It says that in the case of a “negative final decision on an application for international protection,” the person in question “leaves the EU and is either transferred to his/her country of origin or possibly to a third country” — in the latter case the third country would be responsible for the rejected applicant after reaching a deal to respect EU standards, said an Austrian official. Full press release [here](#).

**(9/07) Social Platform - Summer reflection on EU budget and the Sustainable Development Goals.** With all post-2020 budget proposals currently on the table, the negotiations phase for the next EU budget, otherwise known as multi annual financial framework (MFF) have officially kicked off last month. From the European Parliament side, most of the rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs for various MFF files have been appointed. From what we know so far, the timeline is ambitious for the future European Social Fund (ESF+) proposal, for which all amendments are scheduled to be finalised before mid-September. While this puts the work of the Parliament on a fast track, the same cannot be said about the European Council. The future budget proposal was meant to be discussed at the General Affairs Council at the end of June, but as migration, security and defence took over the leader’s agenda, discussions on the MFF were relegated to ‘[other issues](#)’ which did not leave the time to talk about substance. This is unfortunate, as delays in the negotiation process jeopardise a timely agreement. A late agreement on the future EU budget, and according to rumours this could mean waiting until the German Council presidency in 2020, would also delay the actual programming on Member State level, with negative consequences for beneficiaries due to late disbursement of funds. To advocate for progress on that matter, Social Platform has already sent a letter to EPSCO council ministers, with a request to discuss

the future European Social Fund in an appropriate council configuration. The full letter is available [here](#). Full press release [here](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**ECRE** - [Voluntary departure and return: between a rock and a hard place](#)

**ECRE** - [Asylum At The European Council 2018: Outsourcing Or Reform?](#)

**Bruegel** - [The macroeconomic implications of healthcare](#)

**CEPS** - [The legal framework to address “fake news”: Possible policy actions at the EU level](#)

**EPRS** - [Acquisition And Loss Of Citizenship In EU Member States: Key Trends And Issues](#)

**EPRS** - [Global Trendometer – Essays On Medium- And Long-Term Global Trends – July 2018](#)

**EPRS** - [2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework And New Own Resources: Analysis Of The Commission’s Proposal](#)