



News

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STATEWATCH NEWS

1. EU: [Police press ahead with efforts to automate cross-border information-sharing](#)

Police forces are moving ahead with plans to increasingly automate the sharing of personal data across EU states, according to documents recently shared within the Council of the EU.

2. EU: [National security and fundamental rights: new paper examines problems with definitions and the rule of law](#)

The Council of Bars & Law Societies of Europe has issued a paper examining the protection of fundamental rights in the context of national security, focusing in particular on the way "national security" is legally defined.

3. SPAIN: [Ethnic profiling in Catalonia: for every police identity check on a Spanish national, there are seven checks on foreigners](#)

Black or ethnic minority individuals or those with a foreign nationality are stopped more frequently by Catalan police officers than those who are white and/or have Spanish nationality, according to a recent report by the organisation *Pareu de Parar-me* (Stop Stopping Me).

4. [Refugee crisis: latest news from across Europe](#) (9-15.4.19) including:

- Safe harbours: the cities defying the EU to welcome migrants
- Joint Statement – the case of Alan Kurdi
- Switzerland: Authorities must drop absurd charges against priest who showed compassion to asylum-seeker

NEWS

1. [EU lawmakers rubber-stamp European Defence Fund, give up parliamentary veto](#) (EurActiv, link):

"MEPs signed-off a deal establishing the multi-billion European Defence Fund (EDF) on Thursday (18 April), giving up parliamentary oversight of the EU's military subsidies programme.

According to plans, approved by EU lawmakers with 328 votes in favour, 231 against and 19 abstentions, the EDF is set to receive an estimated €13 billion in the EU's next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) and will finance research projects.

However, the partial agreement does not yet include the final financial figures as the seven-year EU budget still needs to be approved by the next Parliament."

2. UK: [Self-harm in detention centre up threefold in three years despite drop in population, report finds](#) (The Independent, link):

"Self-harm among detainees in one of Britain's largest immigration removal centres has surged threefold in the last three years despite a considerable drop in the population, the prisons watchdog has warned.

There were 65 incidents of self-harm recorded in Colnbrook detention centre during the six-month period to September 2018, compared with 20 in the same period in 2016, according to a report by the Prison Inspectorate."

See: HM Chief Inspector of Prisons: [Report on an unannounced inspection of Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre](#) (pdf) and: [Action plan](#) (pdf)

3. [German Police launches „National Internet Referral Unit“](#) (Matthias Monroy, link):

"Europol has requested the removal of Internet content in almost 100,000 cases. The companies addressed are responding to a considerable extent. The German BKA has now also set up a contact office, which has sent almost 6,000 reports since its short existence and cooperates closely with Europol, also about „smuggling crime“.

...With the new department the German Government precedes the EU regulation for preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online. The legislative proposal was presented by the EU Commission last September, and after only a few months and thus at a rush, the EU Parliament agreed on its position last week. The aim is to adopt the regulation as quickly as possible after the election of the new EU-parliament."

4. MALTA: [Media reports on foreign suspects show worrying trends, researchers say](#) (Times of Malta, link):

"Reports on foreign suspects show "worrying trends", making ex-plicit reference to the ethnicity of alleged perpetrators when they are foreigners, researchers said.

A National Media Report on media representation of suspects found media outlets consistently made explicit reference to the ethnicity and nationality of alleged perpetrators, particularly when they were not Maltese.

The report was carried out by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, organisation Fair Trials Europe, Human Rights House Zagreb Rights International Spain, the Vienna University and Aditus."

5. [Case filed against Greece in Strasbourg Court over Crackdown on Humanitarian Organisations](#) (GLAN, link):

"Following a two-and-a-half-year legal ordeal in Greek courts, Salam Kamal-Aldeen, founder of the non-profit Team Humanity has filed an unprecedented application with the European Court of Human Rights challenging Greece's crackdown on NGOs rescuing refugees at sea. (More on Salam's show trail in Greece here.

The application filed with the Strasbourg court exposes the illegality of the Greek authorities' crackdown on human rights defenders working to render assistance to persons in distress at sea. It challenges Greek's abuse of power to arbitrarily prosecute and expose Mr Aldeen to a minimum ten years' imprisonment, only to suspend his life-saving activities. The best evidence for the political extraneous considerations in prosecuting Salam is of course his complete acquittal."

6. IRELAND: [One country blocks the world on data privacy](#) (Politico, link):

"Last May, Europe imposed new data privacy guidelines that carry the hopes of hundreds of millions of people around the world — including in the United States — to rein in abuses by big tech companies.

Almost a year later, it's apparent that the new rules have a significant loophole: The designated lead regulator — the tiny nation of Ireland — has yet to bring an enforcement action against a big tech firm.

That's not entirely surprising. Despite its vows to beef up its threadbare regulatory apparatus, Ireland has a long history of catering to the very companies it is supposed to oversee, having wooed top Silicon Valley firms to the Emerald Isle with promises of low taxes, open access to top officials, and help securing funds to build glittering new headquarters.

Now, data privacy experts and regulators in other countries are questioning Ireland's commitment to policing imminent privacy concerns like Facebook's reintroduction of facial recognition software and data-sharing with its recently purchased subsidiary WhatsApp, and Google's sharing of information across its burgeoning number of platforms."

7. [Starving in Hungary's transit zones](#) (InfoMigrants, link):

"Since August 2018, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC), a non-governmental organization advocating for human rights in Hungary, has counted a total of 13 cases of starvation in Hungary's transit zones, affecting 21 individuals.

An Iraqi family of five with three children left Iraq in the hope of finding treatment for their 9-year-old son who is particularly vulnerable due to his mental disability. Their 6-year-old child also has autistic tendencies.

An Afghan family arrived in Hungary after fleeing Afghanistan during a family dispute over land. They were threatened with death and then mistreated in Iran because they were Afghan. Another Iraqi family of eight fled Iraq due to ISIS. They had witnessed killings and the abduction of young girls. They were afraid for their lives.

These are just some of the case studies highlighted by the HHC in their latest report about the denial of food to rejected asylum seekers inside Hungary's transit zones. In all cases, food was denied to the adults in the group for between one and five days."

8. [Libya: Detained refugees shot as clashes near Tripoli continue](#) (Al Jazeera, link):

"Refugees and migrants trapped in a detention centre on the front line of conflict in Tripoli for weeks say they were shot at indiscriminately on Tuesday by fighters aligned with eastern forces advancing on Libya's capital.

At least 10 people were seriously wounded by gunfire, detainees said.

"Right now they are attacking the centre, shooting more people ... They are shooting us directly," an Eritrean man told Al Jazeera through the messaging service WhatsApp."

And: [Migrants in Libyan jail were reportedly seriously wounded in shooting: U.N.](#) (Reuters, link)

9. [Germany: Hundreds of open warrants for far-right suspects](#) (DW, link):

"Hundreds of warrants seeking the arrest of suspects from the right-wing scene across Germany are still outstanding, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) said Thursday.

By the end of September, 467 people had warrants out for their arrest. Theft, fraud, verbal insults and traffic offenses account for 82% of the criminal acts, according to a BKA statement. In some cases, suspects have multiple warrants out for their arrest."

10. [Mass travel monitoring: 500 new posts for German Passenger Name Record system](#) (Matthias Monroy, link):

"EU-wide surveillance of air travellers is gathering pace. In the first year, the German BKA manually inspected tens of thousands of passengers after the automated screening. The authorities ordered follow-up measures for 277 passengers. These include arrests, open or discreet checks.

German authorities continue to look for personnel to implement the retention of passenger data. Of the more than 500 posts planned for the new system, around one third are currently occupied. This was written by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior in response to questions on the EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive."

11. EU-TURKEY: [10,000 irregular migrants held in Turkey this year](#) (Anadolu Agency, link):

"Some 10,000 irregular migrants were rounded up off Turkey's Aegean Sea coast in the last three months, security sources said.

Coast guard units held 5,729 migrants. Six migrants lost their lives due to drowning or hypothermia and 15 human smugglers were arrested.

Also, 3,919 migrants and 82 human smugglers were held by the land forces.

All of the migrants were later referred to provincial migration directorates.

Last year, 6,336 irregular migrants were held in Turkey."

12. [Germany sets tougher rules for deporting migrants](#) (AP, link):

"The German government has agreed on a set of rules aimed at making it harder for failed asylum seekers to avoid deportation.

The country's top security official, Horst Seehofer, said Wednesday that the package agreed by the Cabinet focuses on people who have exhausted all legal avenues to obtain asylum.

Seehofer told reporters in Berlin that people who try to hide their true identity can be jailed and those who fail to replace lost travel documents may face fines.

Authorities will double to about 1,000 the number of prison places designated for deportees."

13. GERMANY: [Investigation against activist artists dropped, but questions remain](#) (DW, link):

"The 16-month criminal investigation against the artist collective Center for Political Beauty (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit, ZPS) has been suspended, Thuringian State Premier Bodo Ramelow announced on Monday.

The fact that the art group's director, Philipp Ruch, was under investigation for "forming a criminal organization" was revealed last week and the case obtained international media attention. The criminal investigation has been described as the first of its kind in Germany's postwar history, as the country's constitution, the Basic Law, guarantees freedom of artistic activity.

Even though the investigation has been dropped, the artists say the case has raised further questions they still want answered, ZPS spokesperson Tilda Rosenfeld told DW. What were the political motivations of the prosecutors who launched the investigation? Why did it go on for so long? And why didn't the federal government react to the unfounded proceedings, even though there is proof that it had been informed?"

14. CATALONIA: [Government launches 'safe' ports plan for refugees and rescue boats](#) (Catalan News, link):

"The Catalan government has launched an initiative bringing together several departments in order to make its ports "safe" for refugees and NGO rescue boats.

Speaking as the scheme started on Monday with the first meeting of the working group, the foreign minister reminded reporters that Catalonia does not have the power to grant migrants asylum, but does have control over reception and integration policy.

Alfred Bosch said the plan was a response to the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and recognition of the "moral and political obligation" to welcome migrants, particularly in the face of what he denounced as the "inaction" of EU member states."

15. [**EXCLUSIVE: Campaigners against Uighur oppression blacklisted on terrorism database**](#) (Middle East Eye, link):

"An internationally recognised advocacy group raising awareness about the repression of the Uighur minority in western China has been added to a terrorism blacklist used by many of the world's biggest banks, Middle East Eye can reveal.

The Germany-based World Uighur Congress (WUC), which has advised the United Nations and the European Union, plans to sue the owner of the World-Check financial database after it used Chinese allegations to link the WUC to terrorism.

Dolkun Isa, the president of the WUC, and two other senior members of the organisation who were also added to the blacklist as individuals are also planning legal action."

16. [**'I'm not racist, but ...' - Daniel Trilling reviews 'Whiteshift' by Eric Kaufman and 'National Populism' by Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin**](#) (London Review of Books, link):

"Kaufmann, Eatwell and Goodwin fail to see the danger in what they are proposing. Their arguments rest on the notion that there is a normal, reasonable amount of nationalism or ethnic preference that can be accommodated in order to keep majority-white populations happy, and that this settlement needn't shade into racism and violence. They smooth over the differences in culture, history, class and political outlook that exist among people who might be categorised as white, and they are even less careful in discussing everyone else. They do not consider the ways in which the social uncertainty caused by globalisation is a worldwide phenomenon, and do not see that to retreat behind closed doors is the path to disaster. Worst of all, they close off any possibility that the prevailing order might be challenged by people coming together in their difference to work towards common goals. Unless we can move beyond arguments like theirs, sooner or later we will come to realise that the walls we build to defend ourselves are the walls of a prison."

17. [**Fighting in Libya will create huge number of refugees, PM warns**](#) (Guardian, link):

"Fayez al-Sarraj says Khalifa Haftar's attack on Tripoli 'will spread its cancer through Mediterranean

Hundreds of thousands of refugees could flee the fighting caused by Khalifa Haftar's attempt to seize the Libyan capital, Tripoli, the prime minister of the country's UN-recognised government has warned.(...)

There have been concerns that Libya could become a "new Syria", with civil war leading to massive population displacement.(...)

"There are not only the 800,000 migrants potentially ready to leave, there would be Libyans fleeing this war",

18. [**Boat with 35 Migrant Travelers in Distress Refouled to Turkey**](#) (Alarmphone, link):

"In the early hours of April 11, the Alarm Phone was contacted by a boat with 35 people on board who

had escaped from Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Somalia and were in distress at sea. The group included ten children, including infants, and five women, and there were individuals with severe war injuries on board. Our Alarm Phone shift team swiftly alerted the Greek Coastguard to the situation, at 4:57 am CEST, when the boat was clearly located in Greek territorial waters. Although we received several more GPS locations from the travelers later, which we forwarded to the Greek Coastguard, the Greek authorities informed us that the boat had been 'found' in Turkish waters."

19. [EU pushes to link tracking databases - Proposal will make it harder to find 'needle in the haystack,' critics say](#) (Politico, link):

"The European Union is about to become a lot safer — at least on paper.

Lawmakers are set to approve plans for an enormous new database that will collect biometric data on almost all non-EU citizens in Europe's visa-free Schengen area. The database — merging previously separate systems tracking migration, travel and crime — will grant officials access to a person's verified identity with a single fingerprint scan.

The question, say the plan's critics, is whether it truly represents an improvement to safety — and whether it adequately takes into account concerns about civil liberties and privacy."

20. The exceptional becomes the norm: [Border controls: state of emergency becoming state of normality](#) (euractiv, link);

"Germany, as well as other EU member states in the Schengen area, is extending the period of random border checks. The EU Commission is not pleased. EURACTIV's media partner Der Tagesspiegel reports.

Actually, border checks should only be temporary. However, the deployment of the German Federal Police at the German-Austrian border, which began at the height of the refugee crisis in September 2015, has since been repeatedly extended."

21. [Rescue ship says Spain is blocking its bid to aid refugees in Greece](#) (El Pais, link):

"A vessel operated by an NGO is trying to deliver humanitarian relief to Lesbos, but Spanish authorities say it needs a new permit despite having one from Portugal.

A Basque fishing vessel converted into a migrant rescue boat called the Aita Mari is having problems going to the Greek island of Lesbos, where it aims to deliver humanitarian aid to the thousands of refugees concentrated there."

22. [US Army terminal missile defense system is headed to Eastern Europe](#) (Defense News, link):

"So far only the Pacific region and, more recently, the Middle East have seen operational deployments of the U.S. Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, but now it's headed to Romania this summer, according to an April 11 U.S. European Command statement.

Questions have swirled for years on when, where and if THAAD would deploy to Europe, particularly as the situation on the eastern flank has heated up since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

The THAAD system, according to the USEUCOM statement, will deploy this summer "in support of NATO Ballistic Missile Defense" — in other words, it's filling in for the operational Aegis Ashore missile defense system while it undergoes a "limited period of scheduled maintenance and updates."

23. UK: [Britons going to terror hotspots face 10 years in jail under new laws](#) (The Guardian, link):

"British citizens travelling to live in foreign terrorism hotspots could face up to 10 years in prison under controversial new laws.

The Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 comes into force on Friday and creates a criminal offence of entering or remaining in a "designated area" overseas.

Ministers unveiled the measure last year as part of efforts to boost authorities' ability to tackle the threat from so-called foreign fighters. The act allows the home secretary to designate an area, subject to parliamentary approval."

And see: [Stricter laws to tackle terrorism come into force](#) (government press release, pdf)

24. [The U.S. Government's Indictment of Julian Assange poses grave threats to press freedom](#) (The Intercept, link):

"The indictment of Julian Assange unsealed today by the Trump Justice Department poses grave threats to press freedoms, not only in the U.S. but around the world. The [charging document](#) (pdf) and accompanying extradition request from the U.S. government, used by the U.K. police to arrest Assange once Ecuador officially withdrew its asylum protection, seeks to criminalize numerous activities at the core of investigative journalism.

So much of what has been reported today about this indictment has been false. Two facts in particular have been utterly distorted by the DOJ and then misreported by numerous media organizations... The first crucial fact about the indictment is that its key allegation — that Assange did not merely receive classified documents from Chelsea Manning but tried to help her crack a password in order to cover her tracks — is not new...

The other key fact being widely misreported is that the indictment accuses Assange of trying to help Manning obtain access to document databases to which she had no valid access: i.e., hacking rather than journalism. But the indictment alleges no such thing."

25. EU: [Open Letter to Members of the European Parliament "EU Defence Fund provisional agreement sets dangerous precedent against democratic functioning of the EU"](#) (pdf):

"On Wednesday 17 April [note: now Thursday 18 April], you will be asked to approve the provisional agreement on the legislative proposal creating a European Defence Fund (2018/0254(COD) in the next EU budgetary cycle (MFF 2021-2027).

This agreement sets a dangerous precedent against the democratic functioning of the EU and, in particular, against the oversight role of the Parliament on EU programmes.

It is in your hands to close this Pandora's box while there is still time. If not, it will pave the way for the EU to become merely a cash cow for profit-making companies and national short term interests, and the Parliament reduced to a rubber-stamping body.

This is not what EU citizens are expecting from you ahead of crucial elections, nor will it improve EU's legitimacy to their eyes.

We urge you to oppose the adoption of this provisional agreement and let the next Parliament have the power to decide what to do with 13 billion Euros."

See also: [What is the European Defence Fund?](#) (ENAAT, pdf)

26. EU: [Safe harbours: the cities defying the EU to welcome migrants](#) (Open Democracy, link):

"This weekend, thousands of people marched in Berlin, and several other German cities including Nuremberg and Cologne, to protest a bill, proposed by the interior minister, Horst Seehofer, that would toughen the country's asylum and deportation laws and criminalise pro-migrant activism.

The protest was not the first of its kind. Over the last few months, there have been several coordinated demonstrations over migrant policy across Germany. Between July and September last year, tens of thousands of people dressed in orange, many wearing life jackets, took to the streets to protest a growing clampdown on migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean and the civil society organisations aiding them."

27. HUNGARY: [Migrant debit cards: a tool of terrorism? Yes, so vote Fidesz](#) (Hungarian Spectrum, link):

"Commentators outside of the Fidesz propaganda media claim that Orbán's seven points, which are the basis of Fidesz's campaign program for the European parliamentary election, are meaningless and undecipherable. Naturally, they are all about migration, but none of them addresses existing EU regulations or directives, which Orbán's campaign is fighting against. For example, the fourth of the seven points is a demand to terminate the issuance of 'migrant visas' and 'migrant cards.'" In light of the Orbán government's latest propaganda effort on an international scale in the form of a news agency, V4NA, I think it might be educational to see how the regime creates fake news and uses it for propaganda purposes."

28. IRELAND: [Plans to regulate private security enforcing court orders welcomed by civil rights group](#) (Irish Legal News, link):

"Plans to regulate private security personnel employed to enforce court orders have been welcomed by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL).

The civil rights group told Irish Legal News that tensions over the conduct of security officials at evictions in Dublin last year illustrated the need for public oversight.

Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan yesterday secured agreement from his Government colleagues to bring forward draft amendments to the Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended).

Bringing enforcement guards within the licensing remit of the Private Security Authority (PSA) was the key recommendation of an inter-departmental working group report presented to the Cabinet yesterday."

29. [Joint Statement – the case of Alan Kurdi](#) (sea-watch.org, link):

"We have learned that Sea-Eye's rescue vessel, the 'Alan Kurdi', has finally been allowed to disembark the people who were rescued on April 3 when in distress on the Mediterranean Sea. These 64 people (of whom two were evacuated already due to medical emergencies) are allowed to reach land in Valletta/Malta after suffering through ten days of uncertainty at sea.

We are relieved that these people have finally reached firm land in a safe port in the EU but we by no means consider this case a victory. Instead, it was once again a shameful episode in which EU member states unnecessarily prolonged an emergency at sea, the very same countries and institutions who now declare this a successful solution."



30. [Malta announces deal on migrants stranded on Sea-Eye ship](#) (DW, link):

"Malta says some 60 migrants stranded off its coast in the Sea-Eye charity vessel will be taken by four EU countries. It said none of the migrants were to remain in Malta.

The Maltese government said on Saturday that more than 60 migrants stranded at sea for more than a week on the German rescue ship would be taken in by four EU countries after a deal was reached with the European Commission.

"Through the coordination of the European Commission, with the cooperation of Malta, the migrants on board the NGO vessel Alan Kurdi will be redistributed among four EU states: Germany, France, Portugal and Luxembourg," a government statement said."

31. [Moving Stories - Abshir's](#) (Samos Chronicles, link):

"Just over a week ago Abshir, from Somalia, was transferred from Samos to a mainland refugee camp at Nea Kavala in northern Greece. He was part of around 350 refugees taken that day from Samos as part of the Government's attempt to ease pressure on the massively overcrowded camp in Vathi. All of them left on the ferry to Athens and in Abshir's case with some others, he was bussed north. In all a journey of nearly 24 hours. No food or drink provided.

Abshir was very nervous about this move. He did not want to leave Samos. After 5 months this shy gay young man from Somalia was at last feeling more comfortable."

32. [Trapped refugees must be released and granted safety from Tripoli fighting](#) (MSF, link):

"Fighting that has broken out in Tripoli has further trapped refugees and migrants held in detention centres

- MSF is extremely concerned for the wellbeing of civilians and refugees and migrants caught in the fighting

- We reiterate our call to allow refugees and migrants held in detention to be released to an area of safety and to increase the capacity of search and r

escue in the Mediterranean Sea."

DOCUMENTATION

1. GREECE: [Racist Violence Recording Network: Annual Report 2018](#) (pdf):

"In 2018, the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) recorded an increase in incidents of racist violence, especially against refugees and migrants. This increase is linked to the political polarization at a global level regarding the reception of refugees and migrants, coupled with national and local factors shaping the situation in Greece. The reinforced presence of the far-right parties in Europe encourages the violent xenophobic groups that claim an increasing proportion of the public sphere. In view of the European elections, the more space is occupied by the far-right agenda and euro-scepticism, the more the far-right, neo-Nazi and extreme nationalist groups across Europe gain further strength and form alliances with each other or even compete in committing racist attacks."

2. UK: Home Office: [Implementation plan for the joint review of forensics provision](#) (April 2019, pdf):

"The Review was commissioned to evaluate the provision of forensic science to criminal investigations and criminal court proceedings in England and Wales, following Key Forensic Services' entry into administration in January 2018 and persistent stakeholder concerns regarding quality.

The Review's primary focus was the operation and management of the market, but Ministers and the Review team recognised that a broader set of issues have a significant impact on stakeholder's confidence in the system's ability to deliver high quality forensics into the CJS."

And see: [Forensics Review: Review of the provision of forensic science to the criminal justice system in England and Wales](#) (July 2018, pdf)

3. [ECHR: Police discriminated against Roma family by using ethnic profiling to justify raid on their home](#) (pdf):

"In its committee judgment in the case the European Court of Human Rights unanimously held, that there had been:

*- a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights as concerned the ill-treatment of the applicant family during the raid, and
- two violations of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) in conjunction with Article 3 because the raid had been racially motivated and the related investigation had been ineffective.*

The Court found that there had been no justification for the disproportionate use of force during the raid on the applicant family's home, which had left them with injuries requiring treatment in hospital. The applicants had been unarmed and had never been accused of any violent crime, while the four gendarmes who had raided their home had been highly trained in rapid intervention."

4. European Parliament: [Personal data protection achievements during the legislative term 2014-2019: the role of the European Parliament](#) (pdf):

"Considerable progress was made in safeguarding privacy during the legislative term 2014-2019 – most importantly, new EU data protection rules strengthening citizens' rights and simplifying the rules for companies in the digital age took effect in May 2018."

On the other hand: [Protection of EU external borders Achievements during the legislative term 2014-2019: the role of the European Parliament](#) (pdf):

"Considerable progress was made regarding safeguarding the EU's external borders during the legislative term 2014-2019 - most importantly after the migratory crisis of 2015 had made the deficiencies of the European common policy had become evident. (...)

EP has had mixed reactions to the development of external border management policy. It has broadly supported the upgraded organisational role of the EBCGA and the other relevant Union agencies, often calling for their role to be further enhanced as the EU grapples with the migration crisis in the Med.