



News

29 January 2021 (Issue 02/21)

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28 January

[EU: Frontex and pushbacks: Management Board "very concerned" over agency's compliance with investigation](#)

Frontex's Management Board met on 20 -21 January 2021 to discuss the preliminary report of its 'Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea'. Its conclusions express concern over the agency's compliance with the investigation.

27 January

[EU: Frontex unrepentant about chasing transparency activists for court costs](#)

Fabrice Leggeri, director of the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency, recently defended the continued pursuit of five-figure legal fees from two transparency activists, despite heavy criticism from MEPs.

26 January

[EU to Australia: send us your travel surveillance data](#)

The European Commission recently published the results of a review of the EU-Australia Passenger Name Record agreement, which governs the transfer of data on air passengers

travelling between the EU and Australia to police surveillance and profiling units. One conclusion of the review is that Australia should submit more "analytical information obtained from PNR data" to EU member states and agencies.

26 January

[When informal means illegal: Italian interior ministry guilty of pushbacks to Slovenia](#)

A court in Rome has ruled that "informal readmissions" from Italy to Slovenia are unlawful, in a case concerning a Pakistani asylum seeker who was subjected to a series of violent pushbacks stretching from Italy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

25 January

[EU: Agreement between Frontex and Mediterranean military force: cooperation on pullbacks to Libya?](#)

A new agreement between Frontex and Operation Irini aims to increase cooperation on "the promotion of European integrated border management standards" and "situational awareness and risk analysis". Critics are likely to question whether the agreement will support 'pullbacks' by the so-called Libyan coast guard.

25 January

[EU: Compendium of bilateral agreements on police cooperation](#)

A document recently published by the Council of the EU outlines the complex web of bilateral agreements that govern cross-border police cooperation between EU member states, which may be replaced - in part or in whole - by a proposal due later this year for a 'Police Cooperation Code.

25 January

[Brexit: Commission answers to EU member state questions on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

The rushed entry into force of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 31 December 2020 left a lot of questions unanswered, as made clear by a 300-page document circulated amongst EU member states and published today by Statewatch.

21 January

[EU: Encryption and facial recognition amongst upcoming internal security priorities](#)

The issues of encryption and discussions on a pan-EU police facial recognition database are high on the Portuguese Presidency's security agenda over the next six months, according to a presentation obtained by Statewatch that was given to the steering group of the Council of the EU's working party on internal security.

19 January

[EU: New transparency obligations for justice and home affairs agencies following Statewatch complaints](#)

A new transparency framework for EU justice and home affairs agencies has been laid down by the European Ombudsman, in response to complaints from Statewatch that highlighted the failure of Europol and Frontex to meet their legal obligations under EU rules on public access to documents.

18 January

[Immigration and asylum round-up: 8 December 2020 - 18 January 2021](#)

Including:

- EU: Renewed deportation agreement with Afghanistan close to approval
- Greece: Legal actors express serious concerns regarding the lack of state free legal aid for asylum applicants in Lesbos
- Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013-2020
- EU: The 'Black Book of Pushbacks': testimonies of pushbacks affecting over 12,000 people
- Mediterranean: Nine new legal proceedings against civil search and rescue ships since June 2020

Other reports

29 January

[EU's proposed screening rules for migrants are based on "failed and violent" Greek law](#)

The EU's proposed 'Screening Regulation', published as part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, foresees "pre-entry screening that should be applicable to all third-country nationals who are present at the external border without fulfilling the entry conditions or after disembarkation, following a search and rescue operation." Many of the provisions correspond to those introduced in Greek law in recent years, say a group of NGOs. They argue that understanding these similarities is essential for "preventing the entrenchment of failed and violent border policies in the 'new' EU Pact on Migration and Asylum."

29 January

[USA: Will the Biden administration close Guantanamo?](#)

In an article for Newsweek, former Guantanamo detainee Mohamedou Ould Salahi argues that the administration of new US president Joe Biden must do what the Obama administration promised, but failed to do: close Guantanamo Bay. Forty people are still held at the facility and continue to have their human rights violated, as detailed in a new report by Amnesty International. Salahi was held in the military prison for 14 years and was eventually released in 2016. He was never charged with any crime.

29 January

[Living conditions in Greek hotspots under examination at the European Court of Human Rights](#)

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is examining living conditions in four of the five "hotspots" in Greece, in which migrants and refugees are 'housed' in appalling conditions. The ECHR recently asked the Greek government a number of questions in relation to the cases, and HIAS Greece and Equal Rights Beyond Borders - representing four of the individuals with cases before the court - say they "demonstrate the structural illegality and impossibility to implement the hotspot approach and border procedures in a way that does not violate human rights," with serious implications for the ongoing attempt to introduce new EU legislation on border procedures for assessing asylum applications.

29 January

[How the Five Eyes countries share immigration data](#)

The 'Five Eyes' countries - Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA - are perhaps best known for their role in global spying and surveillance for the purposes of "national security". However, this is not the only way in which they cooperate. A report for Radio New Zealand looks at how and why they share immigration data.

29 January

[UNHCR warns asylum under attack at Europe's borders, urges end to pushbacks and violence against refugees](#)

In a press release, the UNHCR calls on European states to "investigate and halt" pushbacks and violence against refugees, about which it has received a "continuous stream" of reports.

28 January

[Denmark: Lowest number of asylum seekers ever](#)

A report for the EU's European Website on Integration notes that Denmark appears to be rapidly approaching its goal of receiving no asylum-seekers whatsoever. In 2020 just over 1,500 people sought asylum in the country, the lowest number since the country's current statistical methods were introduced in 1998. The Immigration and Integration Minister cited coronavirus as one reason for this drop in numbers, but said "we can also thank our strict policy on foreigners for this."

28 January

[The role of technology in illegal pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia](#)

Border Violence Monitoring Network has published its submission to a recent UN Special Rapporteur inquiry on race, borders and digital technologies. The submission highlights how "drones, thermal imaging cameras, and vehicle scanners have been weaponised against people-on-the-move, making them easier to detect and thus compounding their vulnerability and the dangers they face."

28 January

[Italy let more than 200 people die in 2013 shipwreck, finds UN Human Rights Committee](#)

In October 2013 more than 200 people died in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa. Some of those who survived ended up coming ashore in Libya. They subsequently filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee, which has now ruled that Italy failed to uphold the right to life of those involved in the shipwreck.

27 January

[Italy: Court of Auditors should investigate use of public funds in Libyan detention centres, say ASGI](#)

The Italian legal organisation ASGI (Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione) has called on the Italian Court of Auditors to investigate the use of public funds for detention centres in Libyan, noting in a press release that Italian NGOs appear to have carried out "a series of actions pursuing the benefit not of the detainees but of the detention facilities".

25 January

[Brexit: MPs call for ongoing parliamentary scrutiny of UK-EU relationship](#)

The UK parliament's Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union has published its final report, setting out ways to ensure parliamentary scrutiny of the ongoing UK-EU relationship.

21 January

[Shipwreck off Libya claims over 40 lives](#)

Press release published by the IOM and UNHCR, 20 January 2021. The first known shipwreck in the Mediterranean this year has claimed the lives of 43 people.

21 January

[European Parliament Think Tank: briefings on counter-terrorism, migrant smuggling, search and rescue](#)

The European Parliament Think Tank has recently published new briefings on a number of key topics: understanding EU counter-terrorism policy, EU action against migrant smuggling and search and rescue in the Mediterranean

21 January

[State xenophobia and criminalisation of solidarity in Cyprus: KISA is again under attack by government](#)

Communiqué from the Migreurop network on the deregistration of the Cypriot anti-racist NGO KISA. The organisation was removed from the country's register of NGOs, accused of not complying with administrative procedures. However, the organisation has repeatedly been subject to the hostility of the government and officials.

Support the fight for democracy and civil liberties in Europe

