



News

26 February 2021 (Issue 04/21)

www.statewatch.org

[Like us on Facebook](#) | [Follow us on Twitter](#)

Support the fight for civil liberties in Europe

Our small team of staff and volunteers works hard to bring you news, analysis, documentation and information on key civil liberties issues in Europe,

With your support, we can maintain and expand our work.

Donate £

Donate €

Our reports

"Artificial intelligence" could be used to screen and profile travellers to the EU

EU states keen for Frontex assistance in deporting unaccompanied children

New database on the oversight of intelligence agencies in Europe

Italy: Policing of marginalised populations examined in new book

EU: Pandemic propels adoption of "secure and interoperable" cross-border communications tools for police

Frontex: Agency's initial response to alleged involvement in pushbacks

Widening the net: massive expansion of Europol's data-gathering powers proposed

Frontex: European Parliament scrutiny group begins inquiry into rights violations allegations

EU: Legal actions pile up against Frontex for involvement in rights violations

UK: Home Office data protection review of "the largest vehicle surveillance system of its type in the world"

EU: New powers for Europol: Council overview of "thematic blocks for discussion"

Cyprus: 37 organisations call for the reinstatement of anti-racist NGO

EU: Revised "roadmap" for implementing the 2019 Frontex Regulation

EU: Criminal justice: Parliament's "e-evidence" position under fire from judicial practitioners

European academics against new Greek university police force

Other reports

Civic space in the era of securitised COVID-19 responses

New report examines the "climate change–migration nexus" in the Sahel

UK: New research agency must not be exempt from freedom of information law, say campaigners

Greece: Ongoing impunity for rights violations at the borders is "inhuman"

EU: New petition calls for a ban on biometric mass surveillance

New report examines the experiences of those travelling on the 'Atlantic Route' to Europe

Brexit: European Parliament analysis of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Our reports

News

26 February

["Artificial intelligence" could be used to screen and profile travellers to the EU](#)

The screening and profiling of tourists and travellers to the EU could be stepped up even further with the use of "artificial intelligence" tools developed by EU agencies as part of the new 'Innovation Hub for Internal Security'.

25 February

[EU states keen for Frontex assistance in deporting unaccompanied children](#)

Member states are broadly supportive of greater Frontex support for the voluntary and forced removal of unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups, according to a document obtained by Statewatch. Current policy prevents the border agency from providing support the removal operations themselves, a stance supported by the agency's fundamental rights consultative body. The Belgian authorities have proposed trying to convince them to change their position.

25 February

[New database on the oversight of intelligence agencies in Europe](#)

A European research project examining surveillance, intelligence and oversight has produced a new database that aims to provide "an evolving document archive of laws and regulations, court decisions and official reports surrounding intelligence oversight."

25 February

[Italy: Policing of marginalised populations examined in new book](#)

A new book by Professor Salvatore Palidda - 'Policing, security and insecurity' - is due to be published as the 20-year anniversary of the Genoa G8 (19-21 July 2001), an example of brutal police repression of social movements during a large international demonstration, approaches.

24 February

[EU: Pandemic propels adoption of "secure and interoperable" cross-border communications tools for police](#)

A document circulated by the German Presidency of the Council of the EU at the end of 2020 outlines efforts to adopt "secure and interoperable communications solutions" for cross-border police communication and cooperation, which seems likely to be a lasting change provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, commercially-available technologies are deemed inadequate.

24 February

[Frontex: Agency's initial response to alleged involvement in pushbacks](#)

Statewatch has obtained a note produced by Frontex for the November 2020 Management Board meeting, when the allegations that the agency was involved in or had knowledge of pushbacks in the Aegean were discussed.

23 February

[Widening the net: massive expansion of Europol's data-gathering powers proposed](#)

EU policing agency Europol could have the scope of its data-gathering powers expanded massively under new proposals tabled by the European Commission in December. Current limits on the categories of people the agency can gather data on – such as convicts, suspects, witnesses and victims – would be circumvented, to allow Europol to process "big data dumps" transferred by national police forces, as well as data transferred by non-EU states.

23 February

[Frontex: European Parliament scrutiny group begins inquiry into rights violations allegations](#)

A permanent European Parliament scrutiny group began work today to "oversee all aspects of the functioning of Frontex". Launched on 29 January by MEPs in the European Parliament's civil liberties committee (LIBE), the group is mandated to spend its first four months investigating the allegations of involvement in fundamental rights violations that have dogged the agency since October 2020.

23 February

[EU: Legal actions pile up against Frontex for involvement in rights violations](#)

Two recent legal actions accuse Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, of serious violations of the rights of migrants and refugees in Greece.

22 February

[UK: Home Office data protection review of "the largest vehicle surveillance system of its type in the world"](#)

The UK Home Office and National Police Chiefs Council have recently published a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for the national Automated Numberplate Recognition (ANPR) system, which captures the location of some 60 million vehicle numberplates every day.

22 February

[EU: New powers for Europol: Council overview of "thematic blocks for discussion"](#)

A document circulated to national delegations in the Council of the EU shows how the Council

intends to divide up its discussions on proposals to reinforce the powers of EU policing agency Europol.

22 February

[Cyprus: 37 organisations call for the reinstatement of anti-racist NGO](#)

An open letter signed by 37 organisations, including Statewatch, denounces the ongoing harassment of KISA and calls on the Cypriot authorities to reinstate their official registration as a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

18 February

[EU: Revised "roadmap" for implementing the 2019 Frontex Regulation](#)

The implementation of the 2019 Frontex Regulation has not been as swift as intended - in part due to the impact of the pandemic. However, media reports say that mismanagement and administrative failures have also played a role. The agency has produced a revised timetable for adopting its new roles, which Statewatch is publishing.

17 February

[EU: Criminal justice: Parliament's "e-evidence" position under fire from judicial practitioners](#)

The European Parliament's position on the cross-border gathering of "e-evidence" is confusing, unclear and inconsistent, according to the European Judicial Network, which is made up of EU member states' national contact points for criminal justice cooperation.

16 February

[European academics against new Greek university police force](#)

Academics across Europe are calling for expressions of support for their colleagues in Greece, where the government recently passed a controversial new law introducing a special police force for universities. The law, which will see the recruitment of over 1,000 new officers who do not have to go through the usual three years of police training, has been justified on a number of grounds, including the false claim that similar forces exist in countries such as the UK. The bill was passed last week by the ruling New Conservative Party with support from the far-right Greek Solution party.

Other reports

25 February

[Civic space in the era of securitised COVID-19 responses](#)

A new report from the European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law looking at how security-related legislation introduced or used by states during the pandemic has restricted civic freedoms and human rights.

25 February

[New report examines the "climate change–migration nexus" in the Sahel](#)

A new report from the EU's Joint Research Centre seeks to provide "empirical evidence of climate migration and mobility" in a region of the Sahel in Western Africa, in particular by linking "population and migration data to indicators of slow-onset climatic events". The report provides useful context and detail to the often-invoked figures of potentially hundreds of millions or even billions of 'climate refugees' in decades to come.

23 February

[UK: New research agency must not be exempt from freedom of information law, say campaigners](#)

The government is proposing a new Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), an independent body with a budget of £800 million over the term of the current parliament (until 2024), "to fund high-risk, high-reward scientific research." However, The Times has reported that the agency will be exempt from the Freedom of Information Act - a move that the Campaign for Freedom of Information says "would be wholly unjustified," as the law already protects commercial secrets and research interests.

18 February

[Greece: Ongoing impunity for rights violations at the borders is "inhuman"](#)

Six human rights organisations have condemned the Greek and EU authorities in a report that shines a light on the growing use of pushbacks at the Greek-Turkish borders in recent years, continued legal challenges and complaints, and ongoing impunity. The organisations say that "pushbacks have been rising at an alarming rate since March 2020, revealing an unsettling pattern of a practice endangering people's lives and even inhuman at its essence," and against national, EU and international law.

18 February

[EU: New petition calls for a ban on biometric mass surveillance](#)

The Reclaim Your Face campaign has launched a European Citizens' Initiative calling for a ban on biometric mass surveillance, for example through the public deployment of facial recognition technologies. If the petition gets at least one million signatures from seven EU member states, the European Commission will be obliged to respond to the campaign's demands, and the European Parliament will have to debate the topic.

17 February

[New report examines the experiences of those travelling on the 'Atlantic Route' to Europe](#)

The Mixed Migration Centre has published a new report based on recent interviews with people arriving in the Canary Islands from the coast of West Africa, exploring their motivations for travelling on that route and the risks and dangers faced by them in doing so.

17 February

[Brexit: European Parliament analysis of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

EU-UK relations post-Brexit are largely governed by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, agreed at the end of 2020. A recent analysis by the European Parliament's research service examines the different areas covered by the text, including law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

**Support the fight for democracy and civil liberties
in Europe**

Donate £

Donate €