



## News

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## Our reports

### Briefing

11 March

#### [External action: Frontex operations outside the EU](#)

The EU has negotiated five agreements with states in the Balkans that allow Frontex operations on their territories, and most of the agreements have now been approved by both sides. This briefing looks at the main provisions of those agreements, highlights key differences and similarities, and argues that they will likely serve as a template for future deals with states that do not border the EU, as made possible by the 2019 Regulation governing Frontex.

### News

11 March

#### [EU: Tracking the Pact: Migration obsession drives plans to boost the "external dimension"](#)

The Portuguese Council Presidency and the EU's foreign affairs chief have prepared a 'Joint issues paper on The External Dimension of the EU's Migration Policy under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum', which will be discussed at a joint meeting of EU interior and foreign affairs ministers next week.

11 March

**[UK: New anti-protest measures follow hot on the heels of 'spycops' law](#)**

At the beginning of this week, the highly-controversial Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act became law. Now, the government has proposed the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which contains new powers to clamp down on the right to protest, as well as an array of other dangerous measures. Campaign groups are preparing to oppose the Bill.

10 March

**[Italy: Charges pressed against search and rescue crews](#)**

Activists have condemned the Italian authorities' decision to charge 21 individuals from three human rights with aiding and abetting illegal immigration, following the closure of an investigation into the groups' search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean.

10 March

**[UK: Commission proposes new laws against "hateful extremism"](#)**

A report published by the government-appointed Commission for Countering Extremism has called for new laws to criminalise the possession of terrorist material, amongst a host of other recommendations.

9 March

**[Northern Ireland: Gun "believed to have been smuggled with the help of British intelligence" implicated in up to 12 murders](#)**

An assault rifle linked to a series of murders carried out by loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland between 1988 and 1991 is believed to have been smuggled into the country with the help of British intelligence operatives, according to a recent media report.

9 March

**[EU: Frontex: "human intelligence" sources will provide "actionable intelligence", says document](#)**

Fourteen Frontex officers have been trained on "Interrogation, questioning and debriefing tactics" and "How to recruit an informant" as part of a plan for "a long-term increase in the flow of incoming intelligence related information," a document obtained by Statewatch reveals.

8 March

**[EU: Data retention: Council Presidency tells national ministers that "a solution is necessary"](#)**

A discussion paper from the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU to national justice ministers says that "a solution is necessary" on the issue of telecommunications data retention for law enforcement purposes.

8 March

**[UK Home Office to lead discussion on "encryption and public safety" at UN crime congress](#)**

The UK Home Office is hosting a discussion on "end-to-end encryption and public safety" at the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which kicked off this week with a mixture of online and 'real-world' events in Kyoto, Japan.

4 March

**[Council of the EU: Proposal for the possible inclusion of national databases on firearms and their owners in the future Prüm framework](#)**

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council has proposed that "national databases on firearms and their owners" be included in the "Prüm" network of national law enforcement databases.

4 March

**[EU: Pushbacks scandal: Frontex correspondence with national and EU authorities](#)**

On the day that the European Parliament's inquiry into Frontex begins, we are publishing correspondence between Frontex executive director Fabrice Leggeri and the European Commission, Council and Parliament, the Frontex Management Board, and the border authorities Greece, Romania, Portugal and Sweden, on the subject of alleged complicity in pushbacks in the Aegean region.

3 March

**[EU: New databases and information systems: "a paradigm shift in the area of border management"](#)**

"The new architecture for EU information systems for borders, migration and security will completely change the way in which border control and other related activities will be carried out," says a document from the Portuguese Presidency of the Council.

3 March

**[EU: New judicial cooperation deals with dubious regimes proposed](#)**

The EU will seek agreements between EU judicial cooperation agency Eurojust and a range of non-EU countries - including states with dismal human rights records such as Egypt, Turkey, Israel and Algeria - following approval from the Council of the EU for the opening of negotiations.

2 March

**[Greece: Crackdown on civil society groups working with refugees](#)**

A survey of 70 groups working with migrants and refugees in Greece reveals widespread problems provoked by changes to the country's legislation governing civil society organisations.

2 March

**[Immigration and asylum round-up: 19 January - 1 March 2021](#)**

This Frontex-heavy issue of our immigration and asylum round-up includes items looking at criticism of, responses to and inquiries into the agency's alleged involvement in pushbacks in the Aegean, non-compliance with its fundamental rights obligations and a European Parliament inquiry into its mode of operation and internal affairs.

2 March

**[Libya: Interceptions of people fleeing by sea increase as EU border mission seeks two-year extension](#)**

The EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) wants to continue its support for the Libyan coast guard agencies that intercepted almost 3,000 more people at sea in 2020 than in 2019, according to a document obtained by Statewatch.

2 March

**[Italy: Police operation against life-saving civil society organisation](#)**

At dawn on Monday 1 March the Italian authorities launched an operation against the NGO Mediterranean Saving Humans, which undertakes missions in the Mediterranean to save people in distress at sea, accusing them of receiving money in exchange for taking on board migrants who had been rescued by the Maersk Etienne tanker.

1 March

**[EU: Blanket telecoms surveillance: data retention back on the agenda in the Council](#)**

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU is continuing long-standing discussions on the retention of telecommunications data for the purposes of law enforcement, with the focus currently on "selective/targeted retention" and "retention of source IP addresses and civil identity data".

## Other reports

11 March

**[Brexit: Draft EU data protection decision ignores spy agency-shaped "elephant in the room"](#)**

A draft European Commission decision published in February declared that the UK offers "adequate" protection for personal data, thus proposing that transfers between the EU and UK should be permitted. Data protection experts Douwe Korff and Ian Brown argue that this ignores a whole host of factors, including the "elephant in the room... the UK's intelligence agencies' actual surveillance practices."

11 March

**[European Parliament briefings: Returns Directive, common asylum procedure, pushbacks at the external borders](#)**

Three recent briefings published by the European Parliament Think Tank look at key current issues in proposed EU migration and asylum legislation: the proposal to recast the 2008 Returns Directive, governing deportations from the EU; the recent proposal for a common asylum procedure; and pushbacks at the external borders.

8 March

**[Controversial EU plans for blanket message and chat control: third trilogue will take place tomorrow](#)**

The EU institutions will continue discussions tomorrow on whether providers of email, messaging and chat services should be able to automatically screen all communications for potential child sexual abuse material. Critics are concerned that the use of automated technology will wrongly block legitimate content, bypass judicial authorisation for accessing electronic communications and lay the groundwork for further intrusive automated screening tools.

4 March

**[EU: Ad-hoc relocation: A lottery from the sea to the hotspots and back to unsafety](#)**

A new report shows how people rescued at sea and brought ashore in the EU are "being

denied their fundamental rights" through the ad-hoc relocation mechanism, through which people seeking international protection are relocated from maritime border states such as Italy and Malta to elsewhere in the EU.

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