



News

15 July (Issue 13/21)

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Frontex in hot water

Border agency condemned by European Parliament working group

After years of allegations from human rights organisations and campaigners that EU border agency Frontex has facilitated, been actively involved in, or turned a blind eye to fundamental rights violations, a European Parliament investigation looking at the agency's activities and its internal procedures and safeguards concluded yesterday.

The working group's [damning report](#) concludes that the agency "did not prevent" rights violations in a number of EU member states, "nor reduced the risk of future fundamental rights violations." You can find our write-up of the report [here](#).

The root of the problem?

While the report is highly critical of the agency, its management board, its executive director, EU member states and the European Commission, it does not question the fundamental role of the agency nor the policies it seeks to enforce. One assertion made in the report is that Frontex's border surveillance and control operations can go "hand in hand with adequately preventing and combating fundamental rights violations."

[Our latest analysis](#), the first in a four-part series, questions that view.

EU's war on terror to target the political left?

Europol and national police forces in Europe have long kept tabs on – and, in many cases, actively sought to undermine – organisations aligned or affiliated with anarchism and left-wing ideologies. However, a recent paper from the EU's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator raises the possibility of "specific EU action against violent left-wing and anarchist extremism and terrorism." If member states choose to take this project up, it would likely give a green light to increased EU and national state action against non-violent groups and organisations on the left.

Read more [here](#).

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Analysis

15 July 2021

[To SAR or not to SAR, part 1: Why is Frontex expected to save lives at sea?](#)

The first in a four-part series looking into the activities and operations of EU border agency Frontex, examining the evolution of the agency's search and rescue obligations since it was founded in 2004. Many organisations have warned that "protecting borders" may conflict with "protecting lives" and experience suggests that, what are presented as two distinct objectives are, more often than not, part of conflicting policy agendas. The controversial and deadly practices that have been brought into the spotlight by the Aegean allegations are ultimately the result of political decisions that highlight the dubious priorities of the EU, its member states and its agents – Frontex included.

News

15 July 2021

[EU: Communications data retention: Commission seeks member state views on the way forward](#)

The European Commission is seeking the views of EU member states on how to frame a possible new EU law on the retention of telecommunications metadata, in a way that is compatible with the various court rulings that have severely restricted the ability of the authorities to undertake data retention measures.

15 July 2021

[Frontex has failed on fundamental rights, says European Parliament scrutiny group](#)

EU border agency Frontex failed both to prevent human rights violations and to reduce the risk of future violations, says the report of the European Parliament's Scrutiny Group looking into allegations of Frontex's involvement in breaches of fundamental rights.

13 July 2021

[EU: Tracking the Pact: Presidency proposals on determining state responsible for an asylum claim](#)

The Council of the EU is continuing discussions on the proposed Asylum and Migration Management Regulation. A paper circulated amongst member state delegations by the Slovenian Presidency on 6 July makes proposals on the sections of the text dealing with the criteria and mechanisms for determining the state responsible for an asylum application.

13 July 2021

[Ireland: New report highlights devastating effects of delays in the asylum process](#)

A new report from the Irish Refugee Council examines the human cost of delays in Ireland's asylum procedure, where thousands of individuals have been waiting for longer than a year - and in many cases longer than two years - for an outcome to their request for international protection.

13 July 2021

[European Parliament: unlawful internal border controls must be halted and rights upheld at external borders](#)

The European Parliament's resolution on the functioning of the Schengen Area calls for an end to illegal internal border controls imposed by EU member states, the upholding of individual rights at the external borders of the Schengen area, and calls for more stringent evaluation of the operational activities of Frontex and close oversight of the implementation of the security and law enforcement provisions in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

13 July 2021

[Over 2,000 people die on migration routes to Spain so far this year](#)

2,087 people died on migration routes towards Spain in the first half of 2021, says a new briefing from the organisation Caminando Fronteras, an increase of 526% when compared to the first half of 2020.

12 July 2021

[Polish and Hungarian pushbacks violated human rights, court rules](#)

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the Polish and Hungarian authorities violated the prohibitions on torture and collective expulsion and breached the right to an effective remedy in two separate pushback cases.

08 July 2021

[UK: Parliamentarians say there is "no case" for amending the Human Rights Act](#)

The Joint Committee on Human Rights, made up of members of the House of Commons and House of Lords, says that there is "no case" for amending the Human Rights Act, something that has long-been part of government plans as part of the effort to limit accountability measures and undermine protections for individuals.

08 July 2021

[EU: Outgoing Portuguese Presidency report on "e-evidence" state of play](#)

Just prior to handing over the Council Presidency to Slovenia, the Portuguese authorities circulated a note setting out the state of play with negotiations on the controversial "e-evidence" proposal. The proposal would make it simpler for law enforcement and judicial authorities to obtain electronic data held in another member state, but without sufficient safeguards it poses grave risks to fundamental rights.

08 July 2021

[EU: New Slovenian Presidency discussion paper on a "sustainable return policy"](#)

In a discussion paper focusing on Frontex's deportation activities, the new Slovenian Council Presidency proposes more strategic cooperation with "crucial third countries of origin and transit", as well as stronger internal structures and improved procedures at EU and member state level, to overcome "fragmentation" between national approaches.

07 July 2021

[UK: Cruelty and illegality in "anti-refugee" asylum proposals](#)

The government has announced a new Nationality and Borders Bill that it claims will "fix the broken asylum system" - a system that the Conservative Party has now been in charge of for more than a decade. It includes a variety of proposals that have been branded as illegal, cruel

and "anti-refugee", which will only serve to increase the hardship faced by people in need attempting to reach the UK, and by refugees who make it to UK territory.

05 July 2021

[EU: "Specific EU action against violent left-wing and anarchist extremism and terrorism" on the agenda](#)

On 7 July, the Council of the EU's Working Party on Terrorism will discuss whether the EU should launch a specific initiative to counter "violent left-wing and anarchist extremism and terrorism," with a background paper from the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator providing a menu of possible activities that the member states and EU institutions could undertake.

29 June 2021

[EU: Tracking the Pact: Member state comments on the proposed Screening Regulation](#)

Comments from 14 member states show significant divergences on the proposed Screening Regulation, which would entrench hotspot-like infrastructure at the EU's external borders "in the interest of the Member States and to the detriment of the exiled persons".

29 June 2021

[EU: New powers for Europol: Proposed Council mandate for negotiations](#)

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council is approaching agreement on its position on granting new powers to EU policing agency Europol. A compromise text, published here, was sent by the Presidency to the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) yesterday. If approved, it will form the basis for negotiations with the European Parliament.

29 June 2021

[Brexit: EU "non-paper" on foreign and security policy cooperation with the UK](#)

"The UK is an important global player with which the EU has an interest in cooperating in many fields in the international arena... At the same time, the UK can become a competitor on several fronts vis-à-vis the EU, for instance by trying to bolster its position as a global norm-setter and decision-shaper, or by promoting trade deals with third countries that put it in direct competition with the EU."

25 June 2021

[EU: Austrian proposals on upping Frontex's role in "voluntary return and reintegration"](#)

"To effectively incentivise voluntary return and promote sustainable reintegration, well-established reintegration programmes are needed. Against this background, the ERRIN take-over by Frontex constitutes big potential but at the same time a major challenge," says a document produced by the Austrian authorities on increasing Frontex's role in "voluntary return and reintegration."

25 June 2021

[Law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies brought together in hunt for "battlefield information"](#)

"It is important that Member States' law enforcement and judicial authorities which have not yet done so establish a regular dialogue with their military forces and relevant intelligence and security services," as part of the attempt to gather and use "battlefield information" to prosecute terrorists, says a note from the EU's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

23 June 2021

[UK: New anti-protest powers breach human rights, says parliamentary committee](#)

The UK parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights has condemned the public order powers in the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, saying that they would further increase restrictions on non-violent protests "in a way that we believe is inconsistent with our rights."

23 June 2021

[EU: Tracking the Pact: Member states get to grips with "solidarity" proposals](#)

After 13 meetings, the Council has made a number of changes to the proposed Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, mainly to the provisions on "solidarity". The document, published here, gives an indication of what exactly the member states think solidarity means in the context of migration and asylum.

21 June 2021

[Frontex Observatory updates: Ombudsman closes two inquiries](#)

On 15 and 16 June, the European Ombudsman closed enquiries relating to different aspects of Frontex transparency: complaints, and access to documents.

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