



News

6 May (Issue 07/22)

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Welcome to our latest edition, featuring:

- **A new report from Statewatch and the Transnational Institute: At what cost? Funding the EU's security, defence, and border policies, 2021–2027**
- **Event: AI at the borders: negotiations, regulations and fundamental rights**
- **EU sanctions against “radical rhetoric”, intelligence agencies in asylum proceedings**
- **Spain and Morocco renew security cooperation agreement linking organised crime and "irregular" immigration**

We also have the latest text produced by the Council Presidency containing amendments to the EU's proposed AI Act, and interviews on the Abolish Frontex! network and the upcoming Swiss referendum on whether the country should increase its financial contributions to the EU border agency.

Don't forget to check out [our extensive roundup of news from across Europe](#) from the last fortnight, now categorised by theme.

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At what cost? Funding the EU's security, defence, and border policies, 2021–2027

A new report published by Statewatch and the Transnational Institute provides a critical guide on the EU's security, military and border budgets for the 2021-27 period, explaining how the budgets work, who will make decisions and set spending priorities, and what degree of transparency and democratic accountability is in place.

Read the report [here](#).

Event: AI at the borders: negotiations, regulations and fundamental rights

On 16 May at 16:00 GMT/17:00 CET, two days before the European Parliament's deadline to table amendments to the AI Act, Statewatch and EDRi will be hosting a webinar to discuss vital changes that must be made to the text to foreground issues of fundamental rights in onward negotiations.

Statewatch will be presenting the findings of a new briefing, published to be published in the week starting 9 May, covering how artificial intelligence is already used for migration and border, and how this affects people and their rights.

We will be joined by panellists Petra Molnar, expert in migration and technology, Alyna Smith, deputy director of PICUM, and Caterina Rodelli, EU policy analyst at Access Now. The panel will be moderated by Sarah Chander, senior policy advisor for EDRi.

Read more and register [here](#).

EU counter-terror shopping list: sanctions against “radical rhetoric”, intelligence agencies in asylum proceedings

Not content with cracking down on civil liberties at home, the French Presidency of the Council is moving ahead with plans to allow the use of financial sanctions against "individual or entities promoting radicalisation and violent extremism that may lead to terrorism" within the EU, as part of wide-ranging conclusions on counter-terrorism that seek to promote cooperation between asylum authorities and intelligence agencies, and reassert the need for mass data retention and action against encryption.

Read more [here](#).

Spain and Morocco renew security cooperation agreement linking organised crime and "irregular" immigration

On 30 April a renewed security cooperation agreement signed by Spain and Morocco entered into force. A statement by Migreurop and EuroMed Rights denounces the agreement for "[anchoring] migration in a logic of securitisation, which can only lead to more rights violations at the borders." Statewatch is a member of Migreurop.

Read the statement [here](#).

News and publications

At what cost? Funding the EU's security, defence, and border policies, 2021–2027

EU: Artificial Intelligence Act: latest Presidency compromise text

EU: Unprecedented funding for security policies will boost militarisation and border externalisation, new report shows

Interviews: Transnational action in support of upcoming referendum on Switzerland's funding for Frontex

Spain and Morocco renew security cooperation agreement linking organised crime and "irregular" immigration

EU counter-terror shopping list: sanctions against "radical rhetoric", intelligence agencies in asylum proceedings

Publication

3 May

[At what cost? Funding the EU's security, defence, and border policies, 2021–2027](#)

A critical guide for civil society on how EU budgets work. Co-published with the Transnational Institute.

News

3 May

[EU: Artificial Intelligence Act: latest Presidency compromise text](#)

The latest compromise text circulated by the French Presidency of the Council on the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act deals with the chapters on notifying authorities, notified bodies and national competent authorities; as well as the titles on an EU database for high-risk AI systems and post-market monitoring and market surveillance.

3 May

[EU: Unprecedented funding for security policies will boost militarisation and border externalisation, new report shows](#)

A new report published by Statewatch and the Transnational Institute provides a critical guide on the EU's security, military and border budgets for the 2021-27 period, explaining how the budgets work, who will make decisions and set spending priorities, and what degree of transparency and democratic accountability is in place.

28 April

[Interviews: Transnational action in support of upcoming referendum on Switzerland's funding for Frontex](#)

To find out more about the Abolish Frontex! network and the upcoming Swiss referendum on whether the country should increase its financial contributions to the EU border agency, we spoke to Luisa Izuzquiza of Frag den Staat and Abolish Frontex! and to Lorenz Nagel, a member of Watch the Med/AlarmPhone and the Migrant Solidarity Network that proposed and campaigned for the Swiss referendum.

28 April

[Spain and Morocco renew security cooperation agreement linking organised crime and "irregular" immigration](#)

Translation of a statement published by Migreurop and EuroMed Rights regarding the recent agreement between Spain and Morocco, which "anchors migration in a logic of securitisation, which can only lead to more rights violations at the borders." Statewatch is a member of Migreurop.

27 April

[EU counter-terror shopping list: sanctions against "radical rhetoric", intelligence agencies in asylum proceedings](#)

The Council of the EU is moving ahead with plans to allow the use of financial sanctions against "individual or entities promoting radicalisation and violent extremism that may lead to terrorism" within the EU, as part of wide-ranging conclusions on counter-terrorism that seek to promote cooperation between asylum authorities and intelligence agencies, and reassert the need for mass data retention and action against encryption.

The Roundup

Material we have shared on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts in the last fortnight, now categorised by theme:

- [Asylum and immigration](#)
- [Civil liberties](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Military](#)
- [Policing](#)
- [Prisons](#)
- [Racism and fascism](#)
- [Secrecy and transparency](#)
- [Surveillance](#)

Asylum and immigration

European Parliament, 5 May

[Discharge: MEPs delay signing off on accounts of EU border control agency Frontex](#)

“As justification, in a resolution adopted by 492 votes in favour, 145 against and 8 abstentions, MEPs cite a failure to fulfil the conditions set out in Parliament’s previous discharge report, as well as the ongoing investigations by the EU’s Anti-Fraud watchdog OLAF regarding fundamental rights incidents, including migrant push-backs. MEPs point to the fact that they have not seen the full investigation report and thus are unable to take an informed decision at this point.”

National Crime Agency, 4 May

[Alleged small boats kingpin arrested by the NCA in east London](#)

“A man suspected of being the leading figure in an organised crime group supplying significant numbers of small boats to people smugglers has been arrested by the National Crime Agency.”

EUobserver, 2 May

[Why Leggeri's resignation won't change Frontex](#)

“The problems facing the EU's border force, Frontex, remain despite the resignation of its chief, Fabrice Leggeri, last week.

Aija Kalnaja, the most senior executive deputy executive director in the agency, will take on the role until someone more permanent is found.”

European Data Journalism Network, 30 April

[Digital Fortress Europe #2: Trapped in a digital surveillance system](#)

“The impact of surveillance systems on vulnerable populations, money for Frontex drones, and monitoring the movement of citizens within the European area.”

RFI, 29 April

[UN says more than 3,000 Europe-bound migrants died at sea in 2021](#)

“Last year, a total of 3,077 people were lost while trying to negotiate the Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to the continent. The figure for 2020 was 1,544.”

UNHCR report: **[Protection, saving lives & solutions for refugees in dangerous journeys: Routes towards the central & west Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic](#)**

Refugee Council, 28 April

[Nationality and Border Bill: cruel legislation becomes law](#)

“Thousands of people fleeing extreme situations of war and persecution will now find it harder to find safety in the UK and could face years in prison as a result of new legislation that has been voted through by MPs this week.”

InfoMigrants, 28 April

[Poland: Detained Syrian asylum seekers continue hunger strike](#)

“A hunger strike by a group of Syrian asylum seekers being detained in a closed center south of Warsaw is into its ninth day. The men say they have been treated “like criminals”.”

The Guardian, 28 April

[Revealed: EU border agency involved in hundreds of refugee pushbacks](#)

“The EU’s border agency has been involved in the pushbacks of at least 957 asylum seekers in the Aegean Sea between March 2020 and September 2021, according to a new investigation.”

Sea-Watch, 28 April

[Sea-Watch takes Frontex to court](#)

“The civil sea rescue organization Sea-Watch has filed a lawsuit against Frontex before the General Court of the European Union (EGC) in Luxembourg. Previously, the border protection agency had refused requests under the Freedom of Information Regulation.”

The Guardian, 27 April

[‘Unsafe’ UK accommodation threatens asylum seekers’ health – report](#)

“Asylum seekers’ accommodation is “unsafe” due to inadequate healthcare, while poor living conditions are exacerbating or creating mental and physical health problems, according to a new report by Doctors of the World.”

Report: **[“They just left me”: Asylum seekers, health and access to healthcare in initial and contingency accommodation](#)**

InfoMigrants, 26 April

[Belgium rejects asylum claims of hundreds of Afghans](#)

“Hundreds of Afghans have had their asylum applications refused by Belgian authorities. They could face deportation to Afghanistan, where the Belgian Commissioner General for Refugees says the security situation has improved.”

InfoMigrants, 25 April

[Frontex arme de plus en plus ses agents pour les années à venir](#)

“Frontex devrait augmenter ses effectifs permanents à 10 000 garde-frontières et garde-côtes à l’horizon 2027. Dans cette perspective, l’agence européenne de surveillance des frontières commence à répondre à ses futurs besoins en matière d’équipement. Dès 2023, elle envisage des commandes d’armes “létales et non-létales”, révèle l’ONG StateWatch.”

The Independent, 24 April

UK-France: **[Keir Starmer says asylum seekers should apply to UK from ‘misery’ of French camps, to ease crisis](#)**

“Keir Starmer is calling for asylum seekers trapped in “misery” in French camps to be allowed to apply to come to the UK to ease the Channel crossings crisis.

The policy – also proposed by Paris, but rejected by Priti Patel – would succeed where sending refugees on what’s been dubbed “a one-way ticket” to Rwanda will fail, the Labour leader said.”

LBC, 19 April

UK: **[Govt Homes for Ukraine helpline giving ‘false information’ as ‘pattern’ emerges over ‘lost visas’](#)**

“The service has been branded “dysfunctional and useless” by a Government call handler who claims staff have no way to check visa application status.

The whistle-blower, who wanted to remain anonymous, told LBC that staff tell callers “what they want to hear” in a bid to “appease” refugees who are desperate to find out the progress of their application.”

Welcome! Initiative, 16 April

[**The Netherlands suspends refugee returns to Croatia, Dunja Mijatović calls for an end to pushbacks in Europe**](#)

The country "may not send the two asylum seekers back to Croatia without an investigation," the Council of State ruled.

Migration Control, 15 April

[**New EU-Document: Operationalization of the Pact – Migratory Relations with Serbia**](#)

"In the document, the Presidency of the Council proposes to draw up priorities for the elaboration of an action plan. In addition to that, the Presidency proposes to identify Serbia as an additional priority country for the developing New Pact's action plan. In the following, we contextualize this document in the ongoing externalization of the European migration and border regime to Serbia."

AlarmPhone, 31 March

[**La marchandisation des frontières - Comment la militarisation de l'UE alimente les réseaux de trafic entre l'Afrique du Nord et l'Espagne**](#)

"Alarm Phone: Analyse régionale de la Méditerranée occidentale et de l'Atlantique, 1 novembre 2021 - 28 février 2022"

Civil liberties

The Guardian, 3 May

[**Record 28 countries rated 'very bad' in press freedom index**](#)

"A record 28 countries are rated "very bad" places for journalism in the World Press Freedom Index, which warns that autocratic regimes are increasingly willing to crack down on independent media outlets."

International Press Institute, 2 May

[**Strengthening press freedom at home and abroad: 10 recommendations for the world's democracies**](#)

"On World Press Freedom Day 2022, IPI offers 10 recommendations for what democratic governments must do to better protect press freedom at home and around the world."

EUobserver, 25 April

[**Relief in Slovenia following 'Mini-Orbán' election defeat**](#)

"Slovenia's three-time prime minister Janez Janša got beaten by green-liberal newcomer Robert Golob on Sunday (24 April) because voters did not want their country to follow in Hungary's footsteps."

Coalition 4 Creativity, 23 April

[C4C Statement on the Political Agreement on the EU Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#)

“Following the political agreement reached between the EU institutions during the 5th and final trilogue negotiations on the Digital Services Act (DSA) on 22-23 April, the Coalition for Creativity (C4C) would like to express its initial disappointment about potential pitfalls in this regulation.”

Law

Verfassungsblog, 29 April

[Bulgaria’s Failed Specialized Criminal Justice Experiment](#)

“On 14 April 2022 Bulgaria’s Parliament adopted legislative amendments, which finally put an end to the Specialized Criminal Court, acting as a first and second instance, and its mirroring Specialized Prosecutor’s Office. Both institutions were set up during Boyko Borissov’s first term as Prime Minister in 2011 and severely undermined the rule of law in Bulgaria. Sadly and frustratingly, the creation and development of these structures was encouraged and marked as progress in the reports under the European Union’s (EU) Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) on Bulgaria. This inconsistency calls into question the European Commission’s ability to objectively monitor the rule of law in its Member States, to recognize threats, and to give adequate recommendations.”

The Guardian, 27 April

[Joint enterprise ruling has not led to fewer homicide charges, report finds](#)

“A landmark UK judgment that was expected to lead to a reduction in joint enterprise prosecutions and convictions for homicide has had no discernible effect, while the number of Black people convicted of murder under the controversial doctrine has risen, research suggests.”

Centre for Crime and Justice Studies report: **[The usual suspects](#)**

EurActiv, 27 April

[European Commission presents directive to tackle abusive lawsuits against journalists, NGOs](#)

“The European Commission published its long-awaited anti-SLAPPs directive on Wednesday (27 April), legislation aimed at combating the rising use of abusive lawsuits designed to silence journalists and activists.”

Military

Scientists for Global Responsibility, 5 April

[Militarising research: The dark side of Global Britain’s science agenda](#)

“The British government wants the nation to be a 'science superpower' – but, asks Dr Stuart Parkinson, SGR, is this just a smokescreen to hide the expansion of military and economic priorities within the science and technology sectors?”

Policing

European Parliament, 4 May

[Parliament backs giving more powers to Europol, but with supervision](#)

“Under the new rules, Europol will be able to pursue research and innovation projects, process large datasets, and help national authorities screen foreign direct investment in security-related cases. When dealing with terrorist content or child sexual abuse material, Europol will be able to receive data from private companies, for example communication services.”

Matthias Monroy, 4 May

[EU Parliament approves: New Europol Regulation on the home straight](#)

“The EU police agency gets a new legal basis after six years. The expansion of its powers is hardly matched by new possibilities for supervision. A parliamentary control group even proves to be a driver for the expansion of an already powerful agency.”

Amnesty, 27 April

[UK: Dark day for civil liberties as 'deeply-authoritarian' Policing Bill passed by Lords](#)

“The Bill significantly widens the range of situations in which police officers can place conditions on protests including being able to ban ‘noisy protests’ one of the many controversial elements of the Bill. In the end, after months of fierce debate and opposition from across Parliament and the public, Peers rejected moves to strip the controversial curbs from the legislation.

Previous amendments were also defeated by the government including efforts to remove discrimination against travellers and measures which will compound racism in policing and disproportionately impact marginalised groups.”

Sky News, 27 April

[Noisy protesters could feel full force of the law after new Bill is approved](#)

“After a stand-off at Westminster, the House of Lords voted by 180 to 113, to approve a new Bill that will widen the range of situations in which police officers can place conditions on protests - allowing officers to specifically set conditions to prevent noise.”

Public Technology, 25 April

[UK: Home Office's secretive anti-extremism comms unit signs £1m media monitoring deal](#)

“A mysterious communications unit within the Home Office that aims to combat extremism has signed a £1m deal for “media monitoring and evaluation services”.”

Prisons

Council of Europe, 21 April

[Anti-torture committee calls for setting a limit to the number of inmates in every prison and promoting non-custodial measures](#)

“During an exchange of views with the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe on 20 April 2022, the President of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) presented the General Report of Activities for 2021. In this report, published today, the CPT calls on European states with persistent prison overcrowding to address this problem with determination by setting a maximum threshold to the number of prisoners in every penal institution - to be strictly respected - and by increasing the use of alternative measures to imprisonment.”

Racism and fascism

Politico Europe, 27 April

[How climate change is fueling the rise of Spain’s far right](#)

“In Los Palacios y Villafranca, the farmers are turning away from their traditional political home on the socialist left into the arms of the far-right Vox party. Their reassuring and upbeat message that technology and investment will overcome any climate threat — allowing rural continuity and prosperity — is resonating. As is Vox’s willingness to bash other, wetter parts of Spain for not sharing water and to snub EU rules that forbid irrigation from tapping the nearby protected Doñana wetlands.”

Evening Standard, 20 April

[UK: Child Q: Head teacher of east London school stands down after black pupil strip-searched](#)

“The head teacher of an east London school where a 15-year-old black school girl was strip-searched has stood down due to health issues.

... The search of pupil, known as Child Q, was unjustified and racism was “likely” to have been a factor, a safeguarding report found.”

Biometric Update, 15 April

[USA: GSA finds ‘bias’ in facial recognition errors, plans tests but no deployment](#)

“Tests conducted by America’s General Services Administration have shown higher false rejection rates in face biometric systems for African Americans accessing digital government services, leading the agency to decline the use of facial recognition and liveness technologies until the issue is resolved.”

Antifascist Europe, 2 April

[**Putin claims that he wants to “denazify” Ukraine. Yet, the Kremlin’s best friends in Europe for many years have been the far-right.**](#)

“One of the Kremlin’s declared goals in attacking Ukraine is the “denazification” of that country. According to the official version, the Ukrainian authorities have been under the influence of neo-Nazis for the past few years. Meanwhile, since the annexation of Crimea, the Moscow government has had no better friends in Europe than the far-right parties of Germany, France, Italy, and Austria.”

Secrecy and transparency

OpenDemocracy, 28 April

[**Boris Johnson’s government slammed by MPs over FOI ‘Clearing House’ secrecy**](#)

“Boris Johnson must reverse the government’s worrying “slide away from transparency”, an excoriating parliamentary report warns today.

Commissioned in the wake of a string of revelations by openDemocracy about a secretive Freedom of Information (FOI) ‘Clearing House’ within the Cabinet Office, the report is the harshest official criticism levelled at the government over transparency since the landmark FOI Act was passed in 2000.”

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee report: [**The Cabinet Office Freedom of Information Clearing House**](#)

EUobserver, 22 April

[**MEPs sue EU commission for Covid contract transparency**](#)

“A handful of European lawmakers are suing the European Commission to fully disclose its Covid vaccine contracts.

Asked to comment, the European Commission on Friday (22 April) told reporters in Brussels that it is bound by confidentiality clauses.”

European Ombudsman, 21 April

[**Exchange of views on access to EU documents. European Ombudsman’s address to LIBE committee**](#)

“In a world of disinformation, fake news and the increasing manipulation of democratic institutions through the use of communication tools not even invented when 1049 was established, the failure to modernise the EU’s transparency regime seems out of step with the march of history.

The scope of the Regulation, I would respectfully suggest, should be broad, exceptions to public access should be limited and the law should reflect the modern reality of how we communicate.”

Surveillance

EurActiv, 4 May

[Pegasus: MEPs lash out at EU Commission for inaction](#)

“EU lawmakers revisited on Wednesday (4 May) new revelations of spying on European officials by the Pegasus software, criticising the lack of action by the European Commission, which prefers to leave the affair to the member states to handle.”

Bundesverfassungsgericht, 26 April

[Bavarian Constitution Protection Act unconstitutional in part](#)

“In a judgment pronounced today, the First Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court found several provisions of the Bavarian Constitution Protection Act (*Bayerisches Verfassungsschutzgesetz – BayVSG*) incompatible with the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz – GG*) because certain powers conferred upon the Bavarian domestic intelligence service, the Land Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz*), violate fundamental rights.”

Patrick Breyer, 26 April

[Belgium: What “geographically targeted” data retention would really mean](#)

“In the future, call detail records and the mobile phone locations of all citizens in areas with certain crime rates are to be collected indiscriminately. The threshold is low enough to cover the Brussels region and probably most of the country. Data retention would also apply in “important infrastructures” such as highways, border areas, hospitals and parliament buildings. In the draft legislation, the Belgian government expresses the view that “targeted data retention” could cover the entire national territory, if the statistical criteria allow it.”

Matthias Monroy, 21 April

[Disrupted supply chains: Chip shortage hampers new EU databases](#)

“An EU agency is building a recognition system with biometric data on 400 million travellers. The contractors seem to have overstretched themselves”

Support the fight for civil liberties in Europe

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