



Issue 03/23, 16 February

**Frontex and interoperable databases: a vast data trove**

**Social media profiles to facilitate deportations**

**Spain: 88 organisations condemn undercover police abuse**

And **three new analyses**: child migration to Spain; the European Union and its crises; EU support for authoritarian regimes.

**Frontex and ‘interoperable’ databases: a vast data trove**

The EU’s border agency, Frontex, will be able to access vast quantities of data once the EU’s ‘interoperable’ policing and migration databases are fully operational. Those databases contain biometric and biographic data on hundreds of millions of non-EU nationals – over whom greater control has been a political priority since 2015.

[Our latest briefing](#) considers the agency’s use of data from two different perspectives – operational and statistical. Operational access allows members of Frontex “teams” to carry out border control or deportation tasks. Meanwhile, vast quantities of new statistical data aim to make Frontex’s policy recommendations more fine-grained, detailed and influential. The briefing also examines the emerging field of “travel intelligence”.

This briefing follows [our previous report on the new powers granted to police agency Europol](#), which includes an overview of its access to the EU’s interoperable databases. Our [online map](#) helps make sense of the interoperability architecture.

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**Social media profiles to facilitate deportations**

Thirteen non-EU countries sometimes accept "social media profiles and phone contacts" as evidence of identity for the purpose of deportations, according to [an internal Commission assessment of third country cooperation on readmission](#). The assessment, which is produced annually, is used to determine where and how to apply pressure on third states not deemed to be sufficiently cooperative with deportations from EU member states.

The news emerged at the same time as the European Council reaffirmed its support for an increasingly hardline approach to asylum and immigration – as indicated by [draft conclusions](#) and [a letter from eight EU member states that we published](#). The [final conclusions](#) put heavy emphasis on stepping up deportations. They make one mention of “the protection of fundamental rights” – but there is nothing included about how to make that happen.

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## 88 organisations speak out against undercover police abuse in Spain

Following the recent unmasking of three undercover police officers infiltrating social movements in Spain – two in Barcelona and one in Valencia – [88 organisations from 20 countries have published a statement](#) calling for answers and for justice.

The [most recent officer unmasked in Barcelona](#) used sexual and intimate relationships “to create and consolidate a bond of trust with those movements. His actions were endorsed and backed up by the rest of the police structure,” says the statement, which calls for the Spanish authorities to “respond with consequences for the perpetrators,” undertake a “thorough, effective and independent investigation” and “cease any further police operations of a similar nature.”

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## News

"Police have crossed the line": Statement on police infiltration in social movements in recent years in Barcelona

EU: Deportations organized on the basis of "social media profiles"?

Eight states appeal to European Council: more fortification, deportation, externalisation, and "strategic communication"

EU preparing new efforts to increase Libyan border controls

EU: Interoperable migration and police databases: a data trove for Frontex

Tarajal Manifesto 2023: justice for the dead

## Analysis

Unaccompanied and separated children: patterns of child migration are changing at the southern Spanish border

Pushbacks, migration policy and returns at the core of EU support for authoritarian regimes

The European Union and its crises

## News

16 February

### ["Police have crossed the line": Statement on police infiltration in social movements in recent years in Barcelona](#)

Following recent revelations about undercover police officers infiltrating social movements by using sexual and intimate relationships as cover, 88 organisations - including Statewatch - have joined a statement initiated by the legal centre Irídia calling for a "thorough, effective and independent investigation" and for an end to "any further police operations of a similar nature". Two undercover officers have been unmasked in Barcelona in the last nine months, and more recently another was outed in Valencia. Referring to similar cases in the UK, the statement notes that "the infiltration of police officers into social and political movements is a practice that has also been used in other countries."

13 February

### [EU: Deportations organized on the basis of "social media profiles"?](#)

Thirteen non-EU countries sometimes accept "social media profiles and phone contacts" as evidence of identity for the purpose of deportations, according to an internal Commission assessment of third country cooperation on readmission. The assessment, which is produced annually, is used to determine where and how to apply pressure on third states not deemed to be sufficiently cooperative with deportations from EU member states.

7 February

### [Eight states appeal to European Council: more fortification, deportation, externalisation, and "strategic communication"](#)

The call comes in a letter signed by the prime ministers of Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Latvia and Slovakia that argues "the current asylum system is broken and primarily benefits the cynical human smugglers who take advantage of the misfortune of women, men and children."

7 February 2023

### [EU preparing new efforts to increase Libyan border controls](#)

A draft "action file on Libya" is circulating within the Council of the EU. A version from January obtained by Statewatch indicates that there will be a fresh push to improve the ability of authorities in Libya to control the country's southern borders and to prevent refugees from leaving the country by sea.

6 February

### [EU: Interoperable migration and police databases: a data trove for Frontex](#)

The EU's border agency, Frontex, will be able to access vast quantities of data once the EU's 'interoperable' policing and migration databases are fully operational. In particular, its access to extensive new sets of statistics is intended to increase the detail, influence and reach of its risk analyses and policy recommendations.

4 February

**[Tarajal Manifesto 2023: justice for the dead](#)**

Today, the 10th March For Dignity will take place in Ceuta to commemorate and demand justice for the 14 people who died attempting to cross the border into Spain on 6 February 2014. The Tarajal Manifesto 2023 has been produced to mark the occasion.

## Analysis

13 February 2023

**[Unaccompanied and separated children: patterns of child migration are changing at the southern Spanish border](#)**

Since the early 1990s thousands of "unaccompanied and separated children" have arrived on Spanish territory. The authorities have frequently violated their rights. Policy changes and other events have led to migration patterns shifting over the years. A debate is needed over the facilities and care provided for child migrants, who at the moment are often housed in large facilities that do not meet their needs or uphold their rights.

8 February 2023

**[Pushbacks, migration policy and returns at the core of EU support for authoritarian regimes](#)**

The ongoing debate on pushbacks and rights violations at external EU borders neglects an important aspect: the EU and its states betray their claimed goal to promote human rights, the rule of law and civil society development worldwide by helping authoritarian regimes oppress their citizens, and also to stop them from leaving.

8 February 2023

**[The European Union and its crises](#)**

Since the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999, various crises have served as a pretext for expanding EU security structures and the powers of repressive authorities. Politically motivated human rights abuses remain the order of the day and have been exacerbated by the recent "migration crisis" at the EU's eastern borders.

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## New material

Material we have shared on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

[Asylum, immigration and borders](#)

[Civil liberties](#)

[Law](#)

[Military](#)

[Policing](#)

[Prisons](#)

[Privacy and data protection](#)

[Racism and discrimination](#)

[Secrecy and transparency](#)

[Security and intelligence](#)

[Surveillance](#)

## Asylum, immigration and borders

PolskieRadio, 16 February

[Poland has taken in 9.85 million refugees from Ukraine](#)

“Meanwhile, more than 7.98 million people have left Poland for Ukraine since February 24, 2022, the agency also reported.

(...)

A deputy prime minister said in December that Poland was home to more than 2 million Ukrainians after many who had fled Russia's invasion moved on to other countries or decided to return to Ukraine.”

Getting the Voice Out, 15 February

Belgium: [Death at Merksplas closed centre after hunger strike](#)

“This morning, February 15, 2023, we received several calls from detainees informing us of the death of a person at the Merksplas detention centre. This 40 year old Georgian man had been on hunger strike for several days and had been placed in isolation. He was the father of three children living in France, a country where he had a residence permit. He was passing through Belgium and had been arrested because he did not have his papers on him about twenty days ago.”

New York Times, 14 February

[Greece Border Abuses Highlight Europe's Clashing Priorities on Migration](#)

“The top rights officer at Europe’s border agency said in a confidential report that it should stop working with Greece because border guards there were mistreating asylum seekers.

Instead of following the recommendation, taking legal action against Greece or investigating the findings, the E.U. set up an obscure “working group.” In a follow-up finding submitted last month, the rights chief said that there had been “no change in the reported practice.”

The reticence to act highlights a major tension in Europe’s migration policy: how to keep the number of migrants low while adhering to European laws.”

DW, 13 February

[German court to decide over phone searches of asylum-seekers](#)

“Judges could announce this week if authorities broke the law when they combed an asylum-seeker’s phone to find out where she was from. The searches are common practice — and the ruling could have major consequences.”

The Guardian, 13 February

[Post-Brexit rules leave British woman with Alzheimer’s facing removal from Sweden](#)

“Bed-bound Kathleen Poole, 74, who lives in a dementia care home, has been unable to complete required paperwork.”

Radio Televisión Canaria (RTVC), 13 February

[Albares insiste en que Marruecos es la prioridad en política exterior](#)

[Albares insists that Morocco is the priority in foreign policy]

“The foreign affairs, European Union and Cooperation minister, José Manuel Albares, insisted on Monday that there is a need to maintain good relations with Morocco, as it is the «number 1 priority» in foreign affairs.”

The Guardian, 13 February

[Modern slavery survivors could be re trafficked in UK, charities warn](#)

“Fears are mounting that modern slavery survivors could be left at risk of re trafficking within the UK due to a lack of resources to support them, charities are warning.

The Salvation Army said it had recently taken an ‘unprecedented emergency measure’ to temporarily suspend accepting referrals of potential victims, while other charities doing similar work said the system appeared to be at breaking point.”

European Commission, 10 February

[Opening remarks by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel following the special meeting of the European Council of 9 February 2023](#)

Main themes: climate neutrality and migration, for which operative measures must flank development of the Pact, and joint action is necessary to multiply deportations.

“So, the lesson learnt in the past is: We need to act together. When we do so, there is no challenge we cannot overcome... The second track was the main focus tonight. It relates to operational measures we can take now. The first one: Borders must be managed. We will act to strengthen our external borders and prevent irregular migration. For that, we will focus on two pilot projects on borders. In other words, we will provide an integrated package of mobile and stationary infrastructure – from cars to cameras, from watchtowers to electronic surveillance.”

Politico, 10 February

[EU vows more cash for frontier policing as border fence debate revives](#)

“EU leaders agreed ‘significant’ funds to bolster cameras and personnel at the frontiers, but won’t cross the red line of directly funding wall-building.

The EU that once largely dismissed border walls as a crude Trumpian solution is vowing to channel ‘substantial’ funds into frontier guards and surveillance equipment, as countries ramp up calls for help paying for their border fences.”

Deutsche Welle, 10 February

[Germany mulls sending refugees to Africa](#)

“The German government has installed a special representative to make deals with African countries and other states to help with asylum procedures. But migration experts say they've seen these proposals before.”

ENASS, 10 February

Morocco: [Two years in prison for the six migrants from Ouled Ziane](#)

"The migrants do not have access to legal aid and the NGOs have not provided them with a lawyer. The translation was improvised... The trial was rushed."

Human Rights Watch, 9 February

[Denmark, Sweden Offer Protection to All Women, Girls from Afghanistan](#)

“In a noteworthy decision, last week, Denmark’s Refugee Appeals Board announced in a statement that it will grant asylum to all women and girls from Afghanistan “solely based on their gender.” The appeals board cited “worsening conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan” as the basis for its decision.

Likewise, Sweden had announced in December that all women and girls from Afghanistan would be granted refugee status and a three-year residence permit.”



Avvenire, 8 February

[Libyan coastguards attempt to capture four fishing boats. And Italy yields](#)

"The failed ambush on the fishermen took place on Friday, less than a week after... Italy, through Eni, promised 8 billion euro for new hydrocarbon and gas exploration."

Financial Times, 7 February

UK-EU: [Brussels demands answers after UK abruptly rejects residence for thousands of EU citizens](#)

"Brussels is demanding clarification from London after tens of thousands of EU citizens living in the UK were abruptly denied the right to remain, leaving them potentially liable to repay welfare benefits."

Brexit commissioner Maroš Šefčovič told ministers from the bloc's 27 member states that he was taking up their case at a meeting on Monday, diplomats told the Financial Times, after several raised the issue."

Migreurop, 6 February

[Podcast and photo report : The detention camps on the Greek islands of Kos and Leros](#)

"This 7-episode podcast, produced with the "sound studio" of la Parole errante remain in the Greek islands of Kos and Leros, lends the voices of migrant people stranded on these islands, as well as of the people working or volunteering alongside them. It highlights and denounces the hotspot approach which only serves to sort, lock up and deport migrant people."

Border Violence Monitoring Network, 6 February

[EU Member States' Use of New Technologies in Enforced Disappearances](#)

"BVMN is highly concerned at reports received of the use of new technologies by EU Member States and the EU that contribute to incidents of enforced disappearances at external EU borders and target human rights defenders (HRDs) who are engaged in monitoring these crimes. BVMN has recorded incidents of pushbacks conducted by representatives of a total of 15 different countries, 10 of which are EU Member States. Those countries are: Austria, Italy, France, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece."

Il Fatto Quotidiano, 4 February

[Immigrazione, per contrastarla la Commissione Ue consiglia intese 'segrete': ecco gli effetti](#)

"L'ordinamento dell'Unione parla di accordi formali, non di intese informali e segrete. La differenza è sostanziale: gli accordi sono pubblici e sottoponibili al controllo parlamentare e giurisprudenziale, rispettano uno dei principi fondamentali dell'ordinamento dell'Unione, la certezza del diritto, che concretamente si articola sia nella possibilità di conoscere le conseguenze legali delle azioni sia nella prevenzione degli atti arbitrari dell'autorità. Le intese, invece, sono decisioni a porte chiuse, arbitrarie e sfuggono a qualsiasi controllo pubblico. Eppure, parallelamente, la Commissione ritiene che per quanto riguarda gli stranieri le garanzie giuridiche siano d'intralcio al raggiungimento dei suoi obiettivi politici."

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 4 February

[The evolution of EUropean border governance through crisis: Frontex and the interplay of protracted and acute crisis narratives](#)

“Crisis narratives are widespread in migration and border governance globally, including in EUrope. In response, a body of scholarship that critically scrutinizes crisis narratives and imaginaries has emerged. Building on and further extending this scholarship, this article questions the dichotomy between ‘normality’ and ‘crisis’ in border governance. Focusing on four moments in which crises were declared in relation to migration and EUropean borders and their immediate aftermath, we examine how the European Union border agency Frontex framed these events through an analysis of its press releases, annual reports, and practices. In so doing, we argue that narratives pertaining to border practices beyond moments of ‘crisis’ invoke fears of uncontrolled mass migration of unruly ‘others’ as an ever-present possibility and perpetual threat to EUrope.”

EUobserver, 3 February

[Greece faces possible court over 'prison-like' EU-funded migration centres](#)

“A European Commission threat to take Greece to court over asylum violations may involve EU-funded centres.

Although details of the individual cases remains under wraps, Greek media is reporting that the violations deal with detention at those centres, as well as access to social benefits for recognised refugees.”

BTA, 2 February

[Bulgaria Wants Clear, Unified Policy for the Way Europe Protects Its External Borders](#)

“Europe must have a clear and unified policy for the way it protects its external borders, Bulgarian Interior Minister Ivan Demerdzhiev said at Thursday's international conference in Sofia on effective management of the EU's external borders. The Interior Ministry quoted him as saying that the protection of the external borders is a shared responsibility which each Member State must realize and take.”

And see: [Frontex at ministerial conference to discuss situation at EU's land borders](#) (Frontex)

LBC, 1 February

UK: [Union boss Mark Serwotka brands Suella Braverman a 'liar', after border left unguarded for nine days](#)

“Public and Commercial Services Union's Mark Serwotka puts the govt on blast after they "operated a policy of open borders" for 9 days over Xmas.”

Save the Children Resource Centre, February 2023

[Safe for Some: Europe's selective welcome to children on the move](#)

"The response of the European Union (EU) and European states to the arrival of refugees fleeing the conflict in Ukraine has in many ways been exemplary. European governments and institutions have proved themselves able to adopt policies that effectively support children who have fled a devastating conflict. ... Almost twice as many refugees from Ukraine have claimed protection as those who applied for asylum in 2015 and 2016, when there was a significant increase in refugee arrivals. But the response to that crisis was dysfunctional at best and cruel at worst. It ushered in and hardened measures that continue to restrict the ability of children to seek asylum in the EU, to contain those who have arrived, and deter others from coming."

Schengen Visa, 31 January

[EU Parliament Approves Plan to Make Schengen Visa Application Procedures Completely Online](#)

"...the EU Parliament said that digital visa applications would speed up the process, reduce the efforts and costs... and would promote security."

## Civil liberties

Book launch, 15 March

[Torture and Torturous Violence: Transcending Definitions of Torture](#)

"This event brings together leaders in the fields of torture intervention, gendered and sexualised violence, and migrant rights to critically consider how we move forward discussions on violence interventions, and support provision for refugee survivors of violence."

Institute of Race Relations, 10 February

UK: [Britannia Enchained: Part 1. Policing Racialised Communities](#)

"As the economy unravels, we are seeing an increasingly aggressive government squaring up to an expanding list of enemies, heedless of legal and moral restraints and of the impact on country and people, argues Frances Webber.

'Move fast and break things' used to be the mantra of tech whizz-kid entrepreneurs. It seems to have been adopted as the motto of the government, which in the course of the past year has continued casually breaking laws, promises, conventions, codes, human rights obligations, and people, as it lurches along apparently heedless of everything except its hard-right donors and supporters."

And: [Part 2: Policing migration & Britishness](#)

Reuters, 9 February

[Spain's Constitutional Court rules in favour of 13-year-old abortion law](#)

"Spain's Constitutional Court on Thursday upheld a 13-year-old law that allows women to abort on demand within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, after the divisive issue resurfaced following a regional far-right party's effort to limit abortion access."

EDRi, 7 February

[e-Evidence compromise blows a hole in fundamental rights safeguards](#)

In December 2022, the Council and the European Parliament agreed on a final compromise text on the so-called 'e-Evidence' proposals. With major concessions given to the Member States' position, the results of these trilogues negotiations are of bad omen for people's rights and freedoms.

Byline Times, 7 February

UK: [Supreme Court to Consider if Protest-Banning Injunctions Against Political Groups and Travellers Should be Struck Down](#)

"Those breaching 'persons unknown' injunctions face an unlimited fine and up to two years in prison, with the potential for their assets to be seized. Their quiet roll-out goes far further than the Policing Act passed last year, Josiah Mortimer reports"

WIN, 7 February

[Civil society urges Spanish Senate to amend harmful whistleblower protection bill before it is too late](#)

"Whistleblower protection experts Xnet, Whistleblowing International Network (WIN), the Government Accountability Project, The Signals Network, and Blueprint for Free Speech express serious concern about the Spanish Government's lack of "serious political commitment" to transpose the EU Directive on the protection of whistleblowers."

Phil Lewis, 7 February

[Inside the battle to preserve African American studies in Florida](#)

"Floridians aren't idly watching. Some have decided to take matters into their own hands to prevent DeSantis's creeping authoritarianism and ensure students are able to learn all aspects of Black history — not just what the governor deems appropriate.

After DeSantis announced he would ban AP African American studies in Florida's schools, Pastor Andy Oliver felt it was essential that his church, Allendale United Methodist in St. Petersburg, Florida, open up its space to partner with educators willing to teach students the course."

OpenDemocracy, 2 February

UK: [Exclusive: Environmental campaigners 'spied on' ahead of Sadiq Khan event](#)

"Security agents linked to London mayor Sadiq Khan "spied" on a group of environmental activists and blocked them from participating in a public debate, openDemocracy can reveal."

Atlatszo, 1 February

[“I am a mother, not political opposition” – protest march against the battery gigafactory in Debrecen](#)

“Átlátszó has accompanied the protesters from Mikepércs to Debrecen, who were protesting against the battery factory under construction. The mothers from Mikepércs, who organised the civil demonstration, said they were worried about the health and peace of their families and children. The dangerous plants being built in the Déli Industrial Park in Debrecen will be the closest to their homes.”

AlgorithmWatch, 1 February

[What to expect from Europe's first AI oversight agency](#)

“Spain announced the first national agency for the supervision of Artificial Intelligence. In its current shape, the plan is very industry-friendly and leaves little space to civil society.”

UNICRI and UNCCT, 2021

[Algorithms and Terrorism: The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence for Terrorist Purposes](#)

“New technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in particular, can be extremely powerful tools, enabling big advances in medicine, information and communication technologies, marketing, transportation among many other research fields. However, they can also be used for malicious purposes when falling into the wrong hands. The scope of this report - Algorithms and Terrorism: The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence for Terrorist Purposes - is to contribute to understanding the potential risk of AI falling into the hands of terrorists.”

A UN agency report "made possible with the generous support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

Greenham Women Everywhere

UK: [GREENHAM COMMON WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP AND ACTIVISM: STUDY SUPPORT PACK](#) (pdf)

“Greenham Common Peace Camp was established in 1981 to protest the siting of 94 American nuclear missiles at RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire.

It quickly became the first and only women-led peace camp and its scale and influence would be unparalleled in recent British history.”

## Law

European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), 15 February

[Sea rescuers under attack: luventa crew criminalized by Italy](#)

“The Luventa mission set sail in 2016 to save lives at sea and in protest against Europe’s fortified borders. Over the course of just one year, the crew of volunteers rescued more than 14,000 refugees and migrants in distress in the Mediterranean Sea. Italian authorities, however, seized the ship in August 2017 and after lengthy investigations issued members of the crew with an indictment for ‘facilitating irregular entry’ of migrants to Italy.

The case is demonstrative of an alarming trend in the criminalization of humanitarian work, shrinking civic space in a key area of human rights defense.”

Free Movement, 14 February

UK: [Differential treatment of Ukrainian and Afghan applications justified on national security grounds](#)

“In *AB v Secretary of State for the Home Department & Ors* [2023] EWHC 287 (Admin), the High Court found that the Home Office did not discriminate against Afghan nationals, compared to Ukrainian nationals, in the context of the biometrics requirement for entry clearance applications.”

EU law analysis blog, 12 February

[Of Third ‘States’, ‘Countries’ and Other Demons - The CJEU's Judgment in Case C-632/20 P Spain v Commission \(Kosovo\)](#)

“On 17th January 2023, the Court of Justice of the European Union delivered its judgment in Case C-632/20 P Spain v Commission (Kosovo) ruling that notwithstanding the EU’s non-recognition of Kosovo as a State, Kosovo may participate in an EU agency, namely the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC). The judgment is significant since it clarifies the meaning of the concept of ‘third country’ - as including territorial entities which have not been recognized by the EU as sovereign States - and confirms that such entities may participate in EU agencies. The judgment may also have more far-reaching consequences in the light of Kosovo’s 2022 bid for EU membership.”

Iuventa Crew, 11 February

[Italian government apologises for erroneous and defamatory motion to join trial as a joint plaintiff](#)

Problems on defendants’ rights and a government apology for flawed request to appear as a joint plaintiff.

“The judge rejected the Iuventa’s lawyers objection that the quality of the interpretation during the interrogations had been insufficient. He acknowledged that many mistakes were made, but was of the opinion that these could only be considered as irregularities and that the overall meaning of the translated parts was sufficient for general fairness.”

Furthermore, “Some errors were indeed so serious that the defense lawyers threatened to file a counterclaim for defamation as the motion also included offences for which the defendants are not even charged, like belonging to a transnational crime organization. This led to the government representative having to apologize and entire passages to be deleted from the application.”

Home Office, 7 February

UK: [Review of the Computer Misuse Act 1990: consultation and response to call for information](#)

Consultations seeks views on new law enforcement powers for domain takedowns, freezing of data and possibility of "action to be taken against a person possessing or using data obtained by another person through a CMA offence"

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 7 February

UK: [CPS charging decisions - examining demographic disparities in the outcomes of our decision making](#)

"This research has found evidence of disproportionality in relation to ethnicity in the outcomes of our decision-making. These findings are troubling. While we cannot yet identify what is driving these disparities, it is clear we must do further work to establish this as a matter of urgency. I am personally committed to ensuring we take whatever action is needed to reduce disproportionality in our Service."

See: [Defendants of colour more likely to be charged than white people, finds CPS study](#) (The Guardian): Mixed ethnicity suspects in England and Wales charged 10 percentage points higher than rate of white counterparts for similar offences.

Politico Europe, 7 February

[Crunch time in Poland for tackling EU rule of law dispute](#)

"WARSAW — Years of bitter battles between Poland and the EU over allegations that the country's nationalist government hobbled the independence of its courts — which is holding up billions in EU funds — come to a head this week.

The Polish parliament is due to take a final vote on a bill that rolls back some of those reforms, aimed at meeting "milestones" set out by the European Commission to release €36 billion in grants and loans from its pandemic recovery fund that have been held up over worries that Poland is backsliding on the bloc's rule of law principles."

## **Military**

Stop Wapenhandel, 13 February

[Danger of structural increases of military production](#)

The report 'Empty bins in a wartime environment; the Challenge to the U.S. Defense Industrial Base' by Seth G. Jones of the CSIS think tank on military affairs "added to the strong language here and there on the need for a stronger defence industry. In clear wording it formulates the demands by the Military Industrial Scientific Complex (MISC) for more support both organisational and resource wise, although the gigantic US military budget is already larger than China, EU and big spenders Saudi Arabia and India combined\*."

DW (Deutsche Welle), 13 February

[NATO: Germany urges swift approval of Finland, Sweden bids](#)

"Finland and Sweden's NATO membership bids remain blocked by members Turkey and Hungary. Germany's top diplomat Annalena Baerbock said she expected their NATO accession to take place "without further delay."

Declassified UK, 9 February

[The 183 American troops deployed at secret locations across Britain](#)

“The Ministry of Defence (MoD) recently told parliament that 11,912 US military personnel are deployed in Britain across seven RAF bases, while 52 are inside the US embassy in London.

But the ministry added that 135 US Department of Defense (DoD) personnel are also permanently based in “multiple” undisclosed locations across the UK.

A further 48 DoD personnel are based at undisclosed locations in London.”

UN, 30 January

[Libya: human rights abuses must be addressed, says UN probe](#)

“The panel's latest official visit to Libya which ended on Sunday heard testimony from victims' relatives of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, human trafficking, internal displacement, the existence of mass burial sites and morgues containing corpses that families cannot access.”

## Policing

Washington Post, 14 February

[Dutch appeals court prohibits border police ethnic profiling](#)

“An appeals court on Tuesday prohibited the Netherlands' military police from using racial profiling as a way of selecting people for identity checks at borders, marking a victory for two citizens and rights groups who sued the government.

The Hague Court of Appeal overturned a 2021 ruling that said ethnicity could be one of the criteria for singling out passengers, but not the only one. The checks are carried out at airports and on trains and buses from European Union destinations to prevent people illegally coming and staying in the Netherlands.”

Irish Legal News, 14 February

[GSOC warns new Garda watchdog lacks institutional independence](#)

Ireland's proposed new police ombudsman will not have institutional independence under the government's current legislative plans, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) has warned.

ICPO, 13 February

UK: [Oversight of the UK-US Data Access Agreement](#)

“IPCO has today published an Advisory Notice outlining how its oversight of the UK-US Data Access Agreement (the Agreement) is carried out.

The [Advisory Notice](#) provides advice and information on the role of IPCO's Judicial Commissioners under the Agreement. This activity is undertaken in accordance with The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and provides independent assurance of necessary and proportionate practice. IPCO's Inspectorate also audits and inspects public authorities' compliance with the Agreement.”



La Directa, 13 February

[Un talp policial en l'activisme de València](#)

[A police mole among Valencia's activist groups]

The officer of the Spanish National Police Corps R, M. F., under the false identity of Ramón Martínez Hernández, infiltrated the popular and antifascist movement in Valencia for two years, through Cuidem Benimaclet and the anarchist occupied social centre l'Horta.

BBC, 11 February

UK: [Eight Avon and Somerset officers kept jobs after misconduct rulings](#)

"All eight officers, dealt with since 2018, remain employed by the force despite the ruling against them. ... The force revealed the cases after facing questions in light of crimes committed by serving officers in the Metropolitan Police. The offences of Avon and Somerset officers included sexual harassment of a colleague, a discriminatory comment overheard by a colleague, misuse of police data and inappropriate viewing/sharing of CCTV."

Middle East Eye, 8 February

UK: [Prevent review lambasted by critics as Shawcross calls for focus on Islamism](#)

"...contentious review of counter-extremism programme is finally published - and immediately denounced as 'deeply prejudiced'"

The review: [Independent Review of Prevent's report and government response](#)

The Guardian, 25 January

UK: [Two or three Met police officers to face trial every week, commissioner predicts](#)

"Sir Mark [Rowley] has vowed to clean up the Met, which has been dogged by scandals, shattering trust in Britain's biggest force, with an official report finding it had been too lax about bigoted or corrupt officers.

Rowley said the Met was already bracing for its officers regularly appearing before the courts for months – if not years – to come: "Most weeks there are two or three officers going to court for criminal cases, which tends to be a mix of dishonesty, violence against women and girls – domestic abuse and sexual offences."

## Prisons

The Justice Gap, 9 February

UK: [Why are we still sending children to prison?](#)

"The latest Youth Justice Statistics paint a grim picture for children on remand. They now make up 45% of the youth custody population – almost double the proportion 10 years ago, and the highest on record."

Evening Standard, 6 February

UK: [Prisoners to be held in police cells in bid to cut jail overcrowding](#)

“Prisoners are set to be held in police cells within weeks as plans to cut “acute and sudden” overcrowding in jails were put into action.

Last year, the Government announced it had asked to use 400 police cells to hold inmates after a surge in overcrowding in male prisons and youth jails over the last few months.”

Center for Constitutional Rights, 2 February

[Longtime Client Majid Khan Released from Guantánamo, to Begin New Life in Belize](#)

“February 02, 2023, Belize City, Belize – Today, more than 16 years after he was brought to Guantánamo Bay and almost a year after he completed a military commission sentence there, pursuant to a plea and cooperation agreement with U.S. authorities, Majid Khan was transferred to Belize. He is the first of the prisoners transferred from secret CIA detention to Guantánamo in September 2006 to be released, and the first third-country resettlement by the Biden administration. Mr. Khan and his legal team are deeply grateful to Belize for offering him a chance to begin a new life.”

See: [Statement by Majid Khan on His Transfer \(February 2023\)](#) and: [Rendition: the use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners](#)

## Privacy and data protection

Security Architectures in the EU, 16 February

Germany: [Mobile phone forensics against asylum seeker unlawful](#)

“The Federal Administrative Court rejects an appeal by the Office for Migration and Refugees. Instead of demanding the handover of mobile phones and log-in data, asylum authorities must choose milder means”

International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP), 9 February

[CJEU issues ruling on DPOs and conflict of interest](#)

Data protection officers can maintain other tasks and duties within their role, if they do not result in a conflict of interest, the Court of Justice of the European Union has affirmed.

“In a Feb. 9 ruling centered around Article 38 of the EU General Data Protection Regulation, the CJEU stated DPOs should ‘be in a position to perform their duties and tasks in an independent manner’ but ‘cannot be entrusted with tasks or duties which would result in him or her determining the objectives and methods of processing personal data on the part of the controller or its processor.’

EDPS, 8 February

[EDPS Opinion on the Proposals for Regulations on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information \(API\)](#)

“While the EDPS considers the proposed solution for intra-EU flights broadly sufficient to ensure compliance with the CJEU judgment on Article 2 of the PNR Directive, he nevertheless invites the co-legislators to consider the development of harmonised criteria for the selection of intra-EU flights, from which API data should be collected, in line with the conditions spelled out by the Court. Furthermore, the EDPS recommends further strengthening of the security of processing of API data in the router with additional safeguards, such as pseudonymisation and/or encryption of the API data, if technically and operationally feasible.”

## **Racism and discrimination**

ANSA, 14 February

Italy: [Carabinieri raid fascist terrorists in Sardinia](#)

“They said the neo-fascist group, which called itself the Sardinian Legionary Front, had committed numerous intimidatory acts including with arms and explosives, also targeting a local mayor and several other officials in northern Sardinia, with the intention of warning people off local elections by death threats and sending bullets, among other things.”

The Guardian, 16 February

[When asylum seekers are attacked, don't be surprised: the UK system ensures that will happen](#)

“The violence in Knowsley is symptomatic of a dysfunctional approach that makes vulnerable refugees even more vulnerable”

Together with Refugees, 14 February

UK: [Call for a clear stand from political leaders after attack on Knowsley hotel](#)

180 organisations (including Statewatch) have signed an open letter to leaders of all parties in response to the attack on Friday 10th February on a hotel in Knowsley where asylum seekers are housed. The letter calls on party leaders to ‘take a clear stand and condemn any further violence against those who come here to find safety’.

The Independent, 14 February

UK: [Politicians urged to take clear stand against violence towards asylum seekers](#)

An open letter signed by charities calls for leaders to create a ‘system that is fair and compassionate, and brings cohesion instead of division’.

“The letter, co-ordinated by coalition campaign Together With Refugees, criticised ‘inflammatory language’ and policies that ‘demonise’ people seeking refuge, and warned of a ‘high risk of more premeditated extremist attacks around the country’ following the violence outside the Suites Hotel in Knowsley.”

Care4Calais, 12 February

UK: [Knowsley hotel update](#)

Yesterday we went back to the hotel to visit the asylum seekers and see if they were okay. The mood was muted. People were naturally disturbed. The most common things we heard were “We just want to be safe” “we haven’t done anything wrong” and “Please, can you help us move to another town?”

The saddest thing I heard was a man from Afganistan who said “I wasn’t safe in my country and I’m not safe here.”

BBC, 12 February

UK: [Knowsley: Three arrested after protest at Merseyside asylum seeker hotel](#)

“Three people have been arrested on suspicion of violent disorder following clashes outside a Merseyside hotel providing refuge for asylum seekers.

A police van was set on fire after a rally against refugees and a counter-protest by pro-migrant groups took place near the Suites Hotel, Knowsley.”

RTL, 7 February

[France: Val-d'Oise: Residents destroy a Roma camp and put its inhabitants to flight](#)

Residents demonstrated against the presence of a Roma camp in a forest in the commune. They started to destroy the houses before a digger finished razing the camp.

European Law blog, 6 February

[EU law protection from discrimination extends to self-employed workers, confirmed the CJEU in a landmark judgment with LGBT+ rights in the background](#)

“On 12 January 2023, the Second Chamber of the CJEU delivered its decision in Case C-356/21 J.K. v TP S.A. which represents an important contribution to EU anti-discrimination law. Having examined the Framework Directive 2000/78, the Court has confirmed that the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation applies not only to access to employment, but also to self-employment, provided there is a stable relationship with the client. This case also touches upon the broader issue of the rights of self-employed persons which lacks clarity at the EU level.”

‘Never Again’ Association, January

Poland: [Report on hate speech on the National Media \(Media Narodowe\) YouTube channel in the years 2021-2023](#) (pdf)

“The ‘NEVER AGAIN’ Association publishes a report on hate speech, antisemitic and anti-Ukrainian conspiracy theories propagated on the far-right Media Narodowe (National Media) YouTube channel, which receives subsidies from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.”

## Secrecy and transparency

Solomon, 14 February

[Lack of Transparency in the Greek Ministry of Migration's €1.7 Million in Special Funding](#)

“When the Migration Minister created a classified fund he claimed full transparency, so that spending “would not need to be marked ‘confidential’ in the end”. Three years later there has been no transparency at all.”

EUobserver, 6 February

[The man who won't stop filing info requests until every EU doc is public](#)

“EU Council officials should expect a flood of new requests for internal documents in the wake of a pro-transparency court ruling.”

## Security and intelligence

Seymour Hersh, 8 February

[How America Took Out The Nord Stream Pipeline](#)

“The New York Times called it a “mystery,” but the United States executed a covert sea operation that was kept secret—until now”

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