



European moves against search and rescue missions?

Frontex takes the lead on deportations

Europol extends its reach across the Atlantic

And: European Commission argues for legality of anti-encryption plans; latest documents on new EU migration and asylum laws; border police watchlist “progressing well”; open letter on the Artificial Intelligence Act.

European moves against search and rescue missions?

The European Commission is aiming for "standardisation/convergence of registration and certification rules on private vessels carrying out SAR [search and rescue] as their predominant activity."

This could be used to hinder the activities of humanitarian organisations. A recent plan by the German government to tighten ship registration rules would put humanitarian vessels "on an equal footing with commercial shipping and thus be subject to the requirement of a ship safety certificate."

Multiple technical and administrative rules have also been invoked by member states in recent years to impede the activities of humanitarian SAR organisations, as highlighted by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

Read the full story [here](#).

Frontex takes the lead on deportations

EU border agency Frontex has recently sought to take on a more prominent role in deportations, and has been testing the possibility of organising the "initiative, destination, date," amongst other tasks - roles previously reserved for national authorities.

A pilot phase of “Frontex Return Operations” (Frontex RO) involved three deportation flights in 2022 and 2023 that removed a total of 143 people to Albania, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

The key novelty is highlighted by the presentation's section on member states' roles: "No organising Member State" - until now, Frontex had acted as a facilitator, rather than as an organiser, of deportation flights.

Read the full story [here](#), and explore data on 15 years' of Frontex's involvement in deportation operations [here](#).

Also: explore our interactive map on EU agencies and “interoperable” databases [here](#), which was recently updated with new information on Frontex teams and the Central Repository for Reporting and Statistics (CRRS), which will be [used to feed Frontex's risk analyses](#).

Europol extends its reach across the Atlantic

The Council of the EU is set to authorise the opening of negotiations between the European Commission and Brazil, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru on agreements that would allow the exchange of personal data between Europol and law enforcement authorities in those states.

Police forces in those states have brutal records of violence and torture and the deals need explicit safeguards if they are to uphold fundamental rights, the European Data Protection Supervisor said at the beginning of May.

EU officials are particularly interested in more strident police action against the international drug trade, and are working hard to forge closer links with security agencies in Latin America.

Read the full story [here](#), take a look at our detailed report on the extensive new powers granted to Europol [here](#).

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Our reports

European Commission wants common rules on "registration and certification" for Mediterranean search and rescue organisations

European Commission: "the content is the crime," so let's break encryption

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EU rules allowing "exceptional" use of spyware against journalists need "fine-tuning"

EU: Tracking the Pact: Compromise texts, member state comments, "balance between solidarity and responsibility"

Development of EU border police watchlist is "progressing well"

Europol data deals with violent police forces need "strong data protection safeguards"

Open Letter to the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Ensuring the protection of fundamental rights on the AI Act

News

25 May

[European Commission wants common rules on "registration and certification" for Mediterranean search and rescue organisations](#)

A "Draft Roadmap towards a 'European Framework for Operational Cooperation on Search and Rescue in the Mediterranean Sea'," obtained by Statewatch and published here, indicates that the European Commission is aiming for "standardisation/convergence of registration and certification rules on private vessels carrying out SAR [search and rescue] as their predominant activity." This could be used to hinder the activities of search and rescue organisations.

24 May

[European Commission: "the content is the crime," so let's break encryption](#)

The EU's proposed Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) Regulation is perfectly legal, the European Commission has argued, in response to the Council Legal Service's arguments that the "detection orders" set out in the proposal would be illegal.

23 May

[Frontex takes the lead on deportations](#)

EU border agency Frontex has recently sought to take on a more prominent role in deportations, and has been testing the possibility of organising the "initiative, destination, date," amongst other tasks - roles previously reserved for national authorities.

23 May

[EU rules allowing "exceptional" use of spyware against journalists need "fine-tuning"](#)

Agreement within the Council on the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) is "very close", according to a recent document circulated by the Swedish Presidency - but provisions on the "exceptional" use of spyware against journalists are still the subject of discussions.

22 May

[EU: Tracking the Pact: Compromise texts, member state comments, "balance between solidarity and responsibility"](#)

Council documents detailing the state of play with the Asylum Procedure Regulation (including comments from the member states), the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, and a Presidency discussion paper on the "balance between solidarity and responsibility".

22 May

[Development of EU border police watchlist is "progressing well"](#)

The development of a new watchlist for "identifying connections" between people seeking authorization to travel to the EU and terrorist or criminal suspects is "progressing well", according to a Europol report obtained by Statewatch.

22 May

[Europol data deals with violent police forces need “strong data protection safeguards”](#)

Proposed data-sharing deals between Europol and five states in Central and South America needs explicit safeguards if they are to uphold fundamental rights, the European Data Protection Supervisor said at the beginning of May. Police forces in those states have brutal records of violence and torture.

17 May

[Open Letter to the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Ensuring the protection of fundamental rights on the AI Act](#)

With the European Parliament and Council of the EU heading for secret trilogue negotiations on the Artificial Intelligence Act, an open letter signed by 61 organisations - including Statewatch - calls on the Spanish Presidency of the Council to make amendments to the proposal that will ensure the protection of fundamental rights.

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Upcoming events

re:publica, 6 June, Berlin

[Tracked, read out, destroyed: smartphones of people on the move in the focus of state authorities](#)

“The smartphone is always with us, helps us keep in touch, find our way. Accordingly, smartphones are indispensable for people on the move. In Germany, Europe and around the world, however, cell phones of refugees are increasingly being targeted by Frontex, the police and migration authorities. What is happening? Why? And what can we do about it?”

Jean Monnet Centre, 31 May, online

[Roundtable "Implementing the Pact. Strategies and Challenges"](#)

“Organised by the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence on the Integration of Migrants in Europe (IntoME - University of Tuscia, Italy), in cooperation with Tilburg University and Radboud University, the Roundtable will focus on the main issues still on the table through the lens of implementation ("what will happen 'on the ground' if..."), from both Mediterranean and Central European perspectives. It aims to make this kind of contribution to the political and institutional debate as the negotiations enter the decisive phase of the trilogues.”

New material

[Asylum and immigration](#)

[Civil liberties](#)

[Law](#)

[Military](#)

[Policing](#)

[Privacy and data protection](#)

[Racism and discrimination](#)

[Security and intelligence](#)

[Surveillance](#)

Asylum, immigration and borders

La Cimade, 25 May

[Albania: Migration issues in the Balkans: Transit, emigration, forced returns: mobility obstructed](#) (pdf)

“In the context of ongoing discussions on Albania’s integration into the European Union (EU), the country represents a laboratory for EU cooperation with non-EU states, particularly on migration issues. While Albania is a country of transit for people in exile passing through, for Albanians it is also a country of emigration to other regions of the world, including the EU, as well as a country of return for nationals who have been deported from EU territory, particularly from France.

This note aims to contribute to the understanding of Albania's position in the following two areas: the situation of foreign nationals in transit, and the deportation of Albanian nationals from France with the assistance of the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex).

The information presented is based on the findings of a mission conducted by La Cimade in Albania in June 2022, as well as preparatory research.”

Security Architectures in the EU, 22 May

[Bosnian refugee camp Lipa: Dispute over „Austrian Guantanamo“](#)

“20 governments participate in the Vienna ICMPD and finance or receive its activities. The ÖVP-affiliated organisation handles migration control for the EU.”

Legal Centre Lesvos, 22 May

[New York Times' Publication Demonstrates With Indisputable Evidence the Modus Operandi of Pushback Operations, Which the Greek Authorities Have Meticulously Been Trying to Hide for Years](#)

“As those who face the violence of EU’s border policies know best, “pushbacks” are a state policy – a policy that had already reached the level of undeniability years ago. The publications by the New York Times on Friday (19 May), including new video evidence showing the violent reality of a pushback operation from Lesvos island, is adding to the long list of widely documented collective expulsion operations carried out by Greek authorities against asylum seekers on a daily basis at Greece’s sea and land borders.”

Europe Must Act, 22 May

[Greece bans access to food and water for 571 people on the move](#)

“On Thursday 18/05/2023, the Greek Ministry of Migration decided to restrict access to food for people living in the "Mavrovouni" camp. Since Friday, 19/05/2023, only people with an ongoing asylum procedure have been granted access to food and water. 571 people are now being prevented from having the right to access food and water.”

Inkyfada, 23 May

Italy-Tunisia: **[Des migrants enfermés sous sédatifs dans les centres d'expulsion en Italie](#)**

Before expulsion from Italy, migrants (including many Tunisians) are held in detention centres where they are kept calm through the misuse of sedatives.

Altreconomia, 23 May

[Il Politecnico di Torino ha rinnovato l'accordo con Frontex fino a giugno 2024](#)

Despite denials that a decision had been made, Turin Polytechnic has renewed the agreement with Frontex until June 2024.

See:

EUobserver, 23 May

[Predicting migration: the opaque science behind AI technologies](#)

“In recent years, European states and international organisations have developed various technologies to detect migration patterns and predict the number of people from third countries seeking asylum in the EU. But doubts have been raised about both the effectiveness and desirability of using predictive technologies to impede migration.”

South China Morning Post, 22 May

[Austria tightens border checks with Hungary after thousands of people smugglers released from jail](#)

“Austria is tightening controls along its border with Hungary after Budapest said it would release thousands of convicted people smugglers from prison.”

FragDenStaat, 19 May

[The Migration Managers](#)

“How a little-known organization far from public scrutiny is helping to shape Europe's migration policy.”

CJEU, 17 May

[Case C-402/22: Staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid contre M.A. \(referred from the Netherlands\)](#)

Important CJEU Advocate General opinion on the threshold for serious criminal acts to lead to withdrawal of refugee status.

Al Jazeera, 17 May

[The EU's secret weapon against refugees — time](#)

“When boats with refugees are at risk of capsizing in the Mediterranean Sea, the speed of rescue operations is essential. Any delay in the emergency response can lead to serious bodily harm or the loss of life.

Still, offering a speedy response in such situations is not one of Europe's priorities. In a study recently published in the journal Security Dialogue, I argue that time has become increasingly “weaponised” in Mediterranean migration governance.”

DW, 11 May

[Deportations: Africa's role in EU migration management](#)

“Algeria has been deporting African migrants to neighboring Niger for years. Authorities force thousands to cross the border through the desert to Assamaka, where the humanitarian situation reportedly is catastrophic.”

Boza Fii, 7 May

["It would have been easier to regularise them": Rapport deportation 3 May 2023, Allemagne-Senegal](#)

Account of the experience of deportees removed on a chartered deportation flight from Munich to Senegal on 3 May with Sundair airline carrying 13 people.

European Commission, 16 May

[Border management: EU signs status agreement with Montenegro](#)

“Today, the European Union and Montenegro have signed an upgraded agreement on operational cooperation in border management with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The agreement was signed by Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, and Minister of Justice Gunnar Strömmer representing the Swedish Presidency to the Council, on behalf of the European Union, and by Interior Minister Filip Adžić, on behalf of Montenegro.”

InfoMigrants, 16 May

[Italy, Greece, Czech Republic, and UK: Aligned on tougher migration laws](#)

“The latest events around Europe indicate an increasing alignment to get tougher on migration. The UK’s plans to outsource asylum procedures or a recent meeting between Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her Czech counterpart are just two examples.”

The Guardian, 16 May

[Asylum seekers in England and Wales to lose basic protections in move to cut hotel use](#)

“Ministers are removing basic housing protections from asylum seekers under new rules designed to move tens of thousands out of hotels and into the private rented sector.”

Border Criminologies, 16 May

[A Steel Fence for Europe’s External Borders](#)

“From the US-Mexico fence, to Hungary, Poland, and Greece to name a few, border walls and fences persist and, in most cases, are designed specifically with the aim of deterring unauthorized entry. Eleven EU member states have built walls and fences at their borders for the explicit purpose of deterring irregular migration. Amidst the expansion of globalization, and growth of technology there is something anachronistic in the proliferation of border walls. Tangible, rather than abstract, this is perhaps also what renders them attractive to policy makers.”

Schengen Visa Info, 15 May

[5 NGOs Accuse France of Violating Migrant Rights at Spanish Border](#)

“Five NGOs – Amnesty International France, Anafe, La Cimade, Doctors of the World, and Doctors without Borders – have accused France of violating the rights of migrants at the French-Spanish border.

Through a joint report entitled “Migration controls at the Franco-Spanish border: between violations of rights and solidarity struggles”, the NGOs sounded alerts and said that measures should be taken as soon as possible to put an end to such activities, SchengenVisaInfo.com reports.”

Libération, 15 May

[A french women still detained in Turkey after being pushed back from Greece](#)

Euronews, 13 May

[Far-right anti-immigration activists take credit for burning Dublin refugee camp](#)

“Far-right anti-immigrant activists have claimed responsibility for setting fire to a makeshift camp housing asylum seekers in Dublin.

Posting on social media, the group Real Message Eire says they were angry at the presence of what they call a “shanty town” with “illegal migrants and communists”, in a predominantly working-class neighbourhood of the Irish capital.”

Altreconomia, 25 April

[La 'stretta' italiana \(promossa dall'UE\) per rimpatriare più cittadini del Gambia](#)

EU-inspired Italian crackdown to return more Gambians: more Gambians detained; Gambia designated safe third country; EU pressure to accept more deportation charter flights.

Civil liberties

Freedom News, 25 May

[Two imprisoned for dismantling Runcorn weapons factory](#)

“Two people who took direct action to dismantle and occupy a weapons company, were sentenced to prison on Tuesday 16th May, after pleading guilty to charges of criminal damage. A third, who took part in the action was acquitted at Chester Crown Court. Out of the two imprisoned, Mike Lynch White, a scientist, was sentenced to 27 months. The other, was sentenced to 16 months. Usually, approximately half of a custodial sentence is served in prison.”

The Guardian, 18 May

[UK will lead on 'guard rails' to limit dangers of AI, says Rishi Sunak](#)

“The UK will lead on limiting the dangers of artificial intelligence, Rishi Sunak has said, after calls from some tech experts and business leaders for a moratorium.”

Security Architectures in the EU, 17 May 2023

[Slap in the face for public prosecutor: Linking to „Indymedia Linksunten“ legal](#)

“Linking is part of journalistic duties and therefore cannot constitute support for a banned criminal association, according to a court ruling on a raid and indictment. It dismisses charges against a radio editor and orders compensation.”

Public Interest Law Centre, 11 May

UK: [Criminalising Dissent – a bonfire of liberties](#)

“The recent extension of police powers should concern everyone who cares about the right to protest and the very idea of democracy itself. In our view the reactionary legislative agenda from the Government is a response to the growth in protest in the UK. Increasingly working class people are opposing cuts in wages, jobs and services. Make no mistake, the powers used against the campaigners from ‘Republic’ today will be used with enthusiasm against trade unionists, socialists, environmentalists, anti-monarchy protesters and Palestine activists tomorrow.”

Law

CCBE, 25 May

[CCBE Statement on the use of AI in the justice system and law enforcement](#) (pdf)

“The CCBE is observing an increased desire to use AI tools in the justice system and the CCBE recognises the potential benefits that such use may bring. The CCBE is also aware of the application of AI tools for law enforcement purposes.

Despite recognising how AI tools can be beneficial, the CCBE at the same time, highlights the need for careful consideration of the risks of their use and their impact on human rights and the rule of law.”

The Guardian, 15 May

[‘No longer relevant to the UK’: list of 600 EU laws to be scrapped is published](#)

“Ministers have published the list of 600 EU laws the government plans to scrap by the end of the year in a much-reduced Brussels “bonfire” that has enraged hardline Brexiters in the Conservative party.”

Military

Migration-Control.info, 17 May

[The horrors of the Khartoum war and its repercussions on the lives of refugees from South Sudan](#)

“Tahani is a resident of a refugee camp for South Sudanese in White Nile State in Sudan. She writes about the lives and struggles of refugees to bring visibility to them and their right to life.”

Policing

The Irish News, 25 May

[Ethnic minorities and children 'disproportionately' affected by PSNI stop and searches](#)

“STOP and search figures in Northern Ireland show a bias against ethnic minorities and children, Amnesty International has said.

The latest PSNI figures showed 23,650 people were stopped and searched in the year ending on March 2023, an increase of four per cent.

Amnesty says that people from ethnic minorities were twice as likely to be stopped and searched while the figures also included more than 2,500 children.”

The Guardian, 24 May

UK: [Cardiff: commissioner concedes police may have chased boys before deaths](#)

“The South Wales police and crime commissioner has conceded that officers may have pursued two teenagers shortly before they were killed in a road accident, sparking a riot in Cardiff.”

Egyptwide, 22 May

[MADE IN ITALY PER REPRIMERE IN EGITTO: Il ruolo delle armi piccole e leggere italiane nelle violazioni dei diritti umani](#)

“Il rapporto "MADE IN ITALY PER REPRIMERE IN EGITTO" documenta l'esportazione di armi leggere e di piccolo calibro di fabbricazione italiana in Egitto tra il 2013 e il 2021, e il loro utilizzo in violazioni dei diritti umani commesse da attori statali.”

European Data Protection Board, 17 May

[EDPB adopts final version of Guidelines on facial recognition technology in the area of law enforcement](#)

“Following public consultation, the EDPB has adopted a final version of its Guidelines on facial recognition technology in the area of law enforcement. The guidelines provide guidance to EU and national lawmakers, as well as to law enforcement authorities, on implementing and using facial recognition technology systems.”

RTBF, 17 May

Belgium: **[Décès d'Adil à Anderlecht : le policier qui a percuté le jeune homme accusé de racisme par plusieurs collègues](#)**

Adil's death in Anderlecht: police officer who crashed into young man accused of racism by several colleagues. Adil died in April 2020.

The Guardian, 16 May

UK: **[Ministers looking at body-worn facial recognition technology for police](#)**

“Ministers are calling for facial recognition technology to be “embedded” in everyday policing, including potentially linking it to the body-worn cameras officers use as they patrol streets.”

EDRi, 12 May

[Commissioner Johansson cannot be trusted with the EU's proposed CSA Regulation](#)

“In the midst of a wide range of concerning practices and behaviours, EDRi has found it necessary to raise a formal complaint against the EU's Home Affairs department for possible breaches of independence.”

Privacy and data protection

EU Law Live, 19 May

[Analysis: “Right to obtain a copy: The data subject should be provided with an intelligible reproduction of complete personal data processed \(Österreichische Datenschutzbehörde, C-487/21\)”](#)

“This ruling not only clarifies the interpretation of Article 15(3), but also reinforces the significance of the right to access as a crucial element of the GDPR. Furthermore, the decision is important as it aligns with the Court’s longstanding tradition of broadly interpreting relevant concepts, e.g., personal data, processing, and controllership, to safeguard the rights of data subjects.”

European Parliament, 11 May

[MEPs against greenlighting personal data transfers with the U.S. under current rules](#)

EU citizens need legal certainty and a future-proof regime

Rights to redress and access to information must be respected

Current proposal likely to be invalidated by a court ruling, say MEPs

Racism and discrimination

The Guardian, 25 May

[Gypsy, Roma and Travellers suffer ‘persistent’ discrimination in UK](#)

“There is “troublingly persistent” levels of discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT) in the UK, an expert group from Europe’s leading human rights body has found.

The Council of Europe committee said the GRT community suffer “shocking” amounts of bullying in the education system, prejudiced reporting in the media and threats to their legal status and rights, including as a result of recent legislative changes.”

Council of Europe: [full report](#) (link to pdf)

El País, 21 May

[Vinicius: “En Brasil, España se conoce como país de racistas”](#)

Ancelotti (Real Madrid manager) reacts appropriately after Vinicius suffers abuse after placing spotlight on La Liga’s “problem” with racism.

IRR, 15 May 2023

[An anatomy of the British war on woke](#)

“The British war on woke is an intensive ideological campaign against social justice movements that is mobilising far-right tropes and conspiracy theories within mainstream British political discourse. It sees itself in a battle of good versus evil, reason against the dark forces of pre-modernity, ‘Cultural Marxists’ and a ‘globalist elite’ intent on ruining ‘western civilisation’ and replacing ‘white’ British culture with woke multiculturalism. The authors examine this campaign’s discourses on various digital media including magazines, blogs, news sites and Twitter, and used search engines and a media database to capture a network graph of a community waging its war on woke.”

Security and intelligence

EUobserver, 16 May

[The secretive EU body that likes to say 'no'](#)

“Not every scandal results in a public outcry. Some scandals remain in the dark. Without public pressure for positive change, problematic cases persist — for too long.”

Surveillance

Big Brother Watch, May

UK: [Biometric Britain](#)

“The boom in facial recognition technology in the UK, operating in a largely lawless space, is a mortal threat to privacy as we know it.

To power the fight back, we’ve compiled detailed research and analysis on the spread of this technology – and what needs to be done to combat it.”

Politico Europe, 17 May

[Top French court backs AI-powered surveillance cameras for Paris Olympics](#)

“PARIS — France's top constitutional court on Wednesday backed the use of AI-powered surveillance cameras for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics but also gave guidelines for implementation.”

Wired, 15 May

[The UK’s Secretive Web Surveillance Program Is Ramping Up](#)

“A government effort to collect people’s internet records is moving beyond its test phase, but many details remain hidden from public view.”

Vigalia Blu, 16 May

Italy: [Riconoscimento facciale: come funziona e perché i piani del governo per introdurlo sono problematici](#)

Facial recognition: how it works and why government plans to introduce it are problematic, on plan to equip CCTV cameras with facial recognition.

France: [Plus de 50 opérations de surveillance aérienne par drones autorisées depuis un mois par les préfets](#)

Over 50 aerial surveillance operations authorised by préfets in the last month under new decree, as associations protest at the Conseil d'État.

The Guardian, 15 May

[EU lawyers say plan to scan private messages for child abuse may be unlawful](#)

Under proposed ‘chat controls’ regulation, any encrypted service provider could be forced to screen for ‘identifiers’