

Studies and Briefings of the European Parliament's Members' Research Service and its Policy Departments (Think Tank)

European Council Conclusions: A Rolling Check-List of Commitments to Date (seventh edition)

Study , 21 March 2016

Authors Susanna Tenhunen | Suzana Elena Anghel | Izabela Cristina Bacian | Stanislas de Finance | Ralf Drachenberg

The European Council's role - to 'provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development' and to define its 'general political directions and priorities' - has developed rapidly over the past six years. Since June 2014, the European Council Oversight Unit within the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), the European Parliament's in-house research service and think tank, has been monitoring and analysing the European Council's delivery of the various commitments made in the conclusions of its meetings. This overview, presented in the form of a regularly updated Rolling Check-List of Commitments to Date, is designed to review the degree of progress in realising the goals which the European Council has set itself since January 2010 and to assist the Parliament in exercising its important oversight role in this field.

Publication in [EN](#)

Outlook for the European Council of 17-18 March 2016

Briefing, 10 March 2016

Authors Ralf Drachenberg and Stanislas de Finance

The European Council of 17-18 March 2016 will discuss further steps to address the migration crisis, focusing on the follow-up to the 7 March meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government with Turkey and on reforming the EU's existing framework for a common asylum policy. EU leaders will also discuss the priorities for the 2016 European Semester and endorse the 2016 Annual Growth Survey.

Publication in [EN](#)

Outcome of informal European Council of 7 March 2016 and the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government with Turkey

Briefing, 9 March 2016

Author Ralf Drachenberg

The informal European Council of 7 March 2016 focused on migration, assessing the state of implementation of previously agreed measures. EU leaders stressed the need to fully apply the Schengen Borders Code, thereby ending the 'wave-through' policy for migrants, providing humanitarian assistance to Greece and moving forward in the EU's cooperation with Turkey. The latter point was also the main focus of the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government with Turkish Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu. Leaders agreed to accelerate the implementation of the EU-Turkey Action Plan and welcomed additional proposals made by Turkey. In particular, the lifting of visa requirements should be brought forward to June 2016 and disbursement of the €3-billion Refugee Facility for Syrians should be speeded up.

Publication in [EN](#)

Outcome of the meeting of Heads of State or Government with Turkey on 29 November 2015

Briefing, 3 March 2015

Author Ralf Drachenberg

EU Heads of State or Government met on 29 November 2015 with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to discuss the ongoing migration crisis and the renewal of relations between the EU and Turkey. The main outcome of the meeting was a joint statement. Concerning migration, Turkey and the EU decided to 'activate' the Joint Action Plan. The EU committed three billion euro for the refugee facility for Turkey. Turkey committed to implement readmission agreements and immediately increasing its cooperation with the EU on migrants who are not in need of international protection. Regarding the wider dimension of EU-Turkey relations, Leaders discussed counter-terrorism, energy, trade, and Turkey's accession process. The main agreements in this context were the acceleration of the visa liberalization dialogue and the opening of new chapters in the accession.

Publication in [EN](#)

EU Cooperation with Third Countries in the Field of Migration

Study, 15 October 2015

Author Odysseus

EU external cooperation in migration and asylum has increased considerably in terms of instruments of cooperation with third partner countries and of funds committed. With the current refugee crisis, it is poised to increase even further. This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the LIBE Committee, reflects on the imbalances of EU external action as well as on the lack of evidence on the impact and efficiency of EU funding regarding the objectives of the migration policy, which are sometimes conflicting with the development goals. The study brings forward recommendations for rationalization and coordination of action, more balance between the different components of the GAMM, more transparency for a better evaluation and scrutiny, and a reinforced partnership approach with third countries.

Publication in [EN](#)

EU Readmission Agreements: Facilitating the return of irregular migrants

Briefing, 24-04-2015

Authors Marc Lilienkamp | Susan Saliba

EU Readmission Agreements (EURAs) are based on reciprocal obligations and are concluded between the European Union and non-EU countries to facilitate the return of people residing irregularly in a country to their country of origin or to a country of transit. They operate alongside but take precedence over bilateral readmission agreements between individual EU Member States and non-EU countries. They are negotiated in a broader context where partner countries are usually granted visa facilitation and other incentives such as financial support for implementing the agreement or special trade conditions in

exchange for readmitting people residing without authorisation in the EU. As such, they are crucial to the EU's return policy, as defined in the Return Directive (Directive 2008/115/EC). The legal basis for concluding EURAs is Article 79(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). They are negotiated with the partner country on the basis of a negotiating mandate granted by the Council to the Commission. They are then concluded after the European Parliament has given its consent. Once they come into force, their effectiveness can vary significantly from country to country. In the past, the European Parliament (EP) has raised concerns that EURAs do not provide sufficient human-rights safeguards to ensure the protection of returnees at all times. The EURA with Albania (signed in 2005) was the first to reflect the EP's concerns about this insufficient reference to human rights.

Publication in [EN](#)

Revision of the EU visa policy: Initial Appraisal of a European Commission Impact Assessment

Briefing, 18 November 2014

Author Alexia Maniaki-Griva

This note seeks to provide an initial analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the European Commission's Impact Assessment (IA) accompanying the proposal on the Union Code on Visas. The Visa Code established by Regulation 810/2009 is an essential element of the common visa policy the development of which was a pre-requisite to the creation of a common area without internal borders. The Visa Code sets out harmonised procedures and conditions for issuing short-stay visas, so called Schengen visas (authorizing their holder to stay in the Schengen area for up to 90 days in any 180 days period). The Code, which was a recast and consolidation of all relevant legislation on the issuing of short stay 'Schengen' visas, entered into force in April 2010 with the overarching objectives of facilitating legitimate travel and tackling irregular immigration. In the Commission's IA, the problems to be addressed are explained in a very clear manner, as is the presentation of the options. Uncertainties are recognised and considerable effort has been made to substantiate the IA with concrete evidence, even though this has proved difficult for well explained reasons. Member States' concerns regarding security issues linked with the mandatory MEVs with long validity or the new 'touring' authorization, could have been better explained, however. Also, the fact that the proposal under consideration provides for a reduced time limit for examining applications seems surprising given the suggestion in the IA that this would not be an effective solution. Finally, putting aside the fact that the IA itself does not consider the creation of two separate legal instruments, it is not clear why the IA was not presented with both proposals jointly as a package, given that it covers the visa issue as a whole. This note, prepared by the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament, analyses whether the principal criteria laid down in the Commission's own Impact Assessment Guidelines, as well as additional factors identified by the Parliament in its Impact Assessment Handbook, appear to be met by the IA. It does not attempt to deal with the substance of the proposal. It is drafted for informational and background purposes to assist the relevant parliamentary committee(s) and Members more widely in their work.

Publication in [DE](#), [EN](#), [FR](#)

Migrants in the Mediterranean: Protecting Human Rights

Study 29 October 2015

Authors Samuel Cogolati; Nele Verlinden and Pierre Schmitt, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, Institute for International Law, KU Leuven, Belgium

In reaction to recurrent tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, the European Union (EU) has adopted a series of measures seeking to improve the protection of migrants trying to reach the borders of the EU by sea and to share responsibility among countries involved by increasing cooperation with transit countries. This study focuses on the existing and planned EU policies and actions to protect the human rights of migrants before entering the EU by sea or after they have left the territory of the EU. The picture that emerges from the evaluation of EU policies and actions is a mixed one. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that instruments of sea borders surveillance and instruments of cooperation with third countries have now generally included human rights safeguards. On the other hand, implementation, monitoring and control remain problematic. Furthermore, the primary aim of existing EU policies and actions still seems to be the protection of the external borders against so-called 'illegal' immigration and the return of illegally staying migrants, rather than the development of effective strategies to protect human rights of migrants and the saving of lives on the Mediterranean. The study therefore offers specific recommendations to ensure a coherent human rights-based EU approach to improve the protection of the rights of migrants aiming to reach the EU.

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