Words by the Chair

I would like to pay tribute to the victims, their families and friends following the terrible events that took place in London on the 3 June. This kind of violent terrorism is designed to divide us and disrupt our democratic societies. In response we will further strengthen our united efforts to tackle the root causes of terrorism. The LIBE Committee will play a key role in its legislative and advisory capacities in this process.

The LIBE, EMPL and PETI committee held an important joint hearing on the situation of EU citizens in the UK on 11 May. During the comprehensive discussion about the rights of EU citizens, both in the UK and in other EU Member States, participants heard testimony from affected EU citizens, legal experts, as well as the European Parliament’s chief Brexit negotiator, Guy Verhofstadt.

The hearing took place in response to the anxiety and difficulties faced by EU citizens living in the UK and Britons living in other EU states due to the uncertainty over their post-Brexit rights. Members underscored their commitment for the fair treatment of EU citizens and Parliament’s Brexit negotiator said that the European Parliament would block any deal that failed to protect citizens’ rights on both sides.

It was agreed to have a follow-up session in September 2017 when negotiations will have started (see also p.4).

Claude MORAES

Comprehensive assessment of EU security policy

The Commission is currently preparing a comprehensive assessment of the EU security policy, which it intends to finalise by June 2017. It will cover three thematic priorities of the European Agenda on Security (EAS) adopted in 2015: tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation, disrupting organised crime and fighting cybercrime.

The assessment will include key measures adopted in these areas since 2002 (policy and legal instruments as well as practical cooperation tools).

The goal of this exercise is to contribute to ensuring that EU policies in these areas are fit for purpose and remain at the core of the Commission’s political priorities. Commissioner King requested the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee to facilitate an exchange of views with representatives of national parliaments and civil society to provide input to this valuable assessment.

Members of 12 national parliaments and multiple civil society representatives gathered on 11 May. During a lively two-hour debate, LIBE Members, national parliamentarians and panellists discussed key elements and feedback on the EU security policy.

Speakers included Koen Metsu, Chair of the Home Affairs Committee of the Belgian Federal Parliament, Stefano Dambruoso, Quaestor and Member of the Justice Committee of the Italian Chamber of deputies, Róisín Pillay, Director Europe Programme of the International Commission of Jurists, Calum Anthony Steele, General Secretary of the Scottish Police Federation (EuroCop) and Berber Biala-Hettinga, Executive Officer on Legal Affairs and Human Rights in the EU at Amnesty International.

The debate focussed on the following questions:

• What are the EU measures to tackle terrorism and prevent radicalization, disrupt organised crime and fight cybercrime which have been effective and added value, to what extent and for what reasons?

• Are there EU measures which have not met their objectives or proved to be ineffective and/or inefficient, and for what reasons (for example lack of implementation or failure in their design)?

• To what extent have fundamental rights been safeguarded or affected, positively or negatively, by EU measures?

• To what extent are instruments developed and their objectives still relevant and adapted to current needs and emerging trends? In what areas would further action at EU level be beneficial and what kind of action should be considered? Are there areas where synergies between EU measures and/or EU actors should be further explored at EU level?

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**Latest migration related news**

**European Court of Auditors report on “The EU response to the refugee crisis: the hotspots approach”**


The report covers the time between May 2015 and summer 2016 and examined whether the hotspots were efficient in terms of the timeliness of their setup, capacity and needs. The report found insufficient capacity both in Italy and Greece, and made relevant recommendations, notably with regard to the protection of unaccompanied minors.

The different financing instruments need to be streamlined and preparation and cooperation of European and national institutions and experts need to be improved for a better functioning of the hotspots. Although it was admitted that hotspots were usually overcrowded, they were considered as a good tool for registering and fingerprinting refugees and migrants. A follow-up report would be undertaken within the next years.

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**Joint debate on the Western Balkan Route**

On 27 April, LIBE, together with the EP delegations with Serbia and FYROM, held an exchange of views with high-ranking Commission and European External Action Services (EEAS) officials on the situation along the Western Balkan Route.

Mr Verwey, Commission coordinator for the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, confirmed that arrivals across the Eastern Mediterranean continued, but on a significantly smaller scale than before the statement. Ms Ferran (DG NEAR) explained the working of the funding Facility for Turkey which amounts to 3 billion Euros available from Member States and EU-funds. For about 50% of the money projects already started. They aim at improving the living conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey by supporting schooling, health care, and the provision of social benefits in the form of individual cash transfers through an electronic card.

Mr De Brouwer (DG ECHO) provided information about the support for applicants for international protection in Greece from the Emergency Fund. This includes shelter and housing, winterisation, and cash cards financed through contributions to international organisations active on the Aegean islands and the mainland. Ms Eichhorst (EEAS) highlighted the overall difficult political and economic situation in the Western Balkan countries and set out the holistic approach of the EEAS to support the refugees in these countries.

Members highlighted in particular the need for relocation from Greece to other Member States and a better working of return procedures.

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**Follow up to the New York Declaration - Global compact on refugees**

On 8 May, Ellen Hansen, UNHCR Senior Policy Advisor and Dian Balde, Deputy Director of the CRRF team, presented to the LIBE Committee the current state of play of the Global Compact on Refugees which was set out at the New York Declaration. Ms Hansen recalled that the Annex to this declaration sets out a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), with specific actions needed to ease pressure on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions and support conditions in countries of origin for safe return.

The UNHCR representative detailed the practical aspects of the global compact on refugees developed in 3 phases: 1) the application of the CRRF to specific countries such as Ethiopia, Honduras or Tanzania; 2) a series of informal thematic discussions to identify the actions essential to the type of refugee response envisaged in the NY Declaration and 3) stocktaking in late 2017 (including at the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges on 12-13 December) to assess the progress made and identify lessons learned. Based on this work, the High Commissioner for Refugees will propose a ‘global compact on refugees’ in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018, to be considered by the Assembly at its 73rd session.

LIBE Chair Mr Moraes concluded the debate reiterating the engagement of the LIBE Committee to this process and asking the LIBE Members to be closely involved. Mr Moraes detailed that the 2nd exchange of views on the global compact on refugees will take place after the summer break with the specific countries participating in the Framework and that an invitation to Filipo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees, will be addressed. Prior to that a separate debate on the Global Compact on Migrants is scheduled to take place on 22 June.

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**Opinion on the “Joint way forward on migration issues with Afghanistan”**

On 8 May, the Legal Service presented its opinion on the agreement between the EU and Afghanistan which had been requested by LIBE. The agreement aims at “stepping up cooperation on addressing and preventing irregular migration and on return of irregular migrants”. The Legal Service set out that the agreement was not legally binding, as clearly stated in the document. It is therefore not identical to a readmission agreement but rather a political commitment.

Consequently, the procedures for the conclusion of international agreements of Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union do not apply which set out a formal involvement of the Parliament. The Parliament remains, however, entitled to use its budgetary and supervisory powers in case of disagreement with the approach. The Chair recalled that the LIBE Asylum Contact Group would examine the possibilities for further action.
High-level conference on migration management

Managing migration and ensuring a stable and prosperous environment at the borders of the EU will top the agenda at a high-level conference on 21 June from 14:30 to 19:30 in Brussels. The European Parliament will host the conference on migration management ahead of the EU summit to launch a platform for regular dialogue between all actors involved.

The conference will address responsibility-sharing among Member States, ensuring a stable and secure environment at the external borders and in the EU, and tackling the root causes of migration through cooperation with third countries. The purpose of the conference is to find viable solutions and deliver on the expectations of citizens.

The conference takes place at the initiative of European Parliament President Antonio Tajani and is co-organised by the relevant parliamentary committees, including the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

Speakers include:

- Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
- Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
- Donald Tusk, President of the European Council (tbc)
- Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
- Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank
- Markku Markkula, President of the European Committee of the Regions
- Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship
- Julian King, Commissioner for Security Union
- Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
- Louise Arbour, United Nations Special Representative for International Migration
- William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organisation for Migration
- Claude Moraes, Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee
- Linda McAvan, Chair of the Committee on Development

Interested parties can register for the conference here.

Absence of new anti-corruption report

During the LIBE meeting of 4 May, the Members held an exchange of views with Olivier Onidi, Deputy Director-General for Security in DG HOME, on the European Commission decision not to publish a new anti-corruption report after the publication of the first one in 2014. Mr Onidi explained that the main reason to discontinue the publication of the EU anticorruption report was the inclusion of the fight against corruption in the European Semester.

He pointed out that the Commission has favoured the analysis of each Member State economic policies, including anti-corruption measures, and the possibility to address individual recommendations to the Member States. The Members took the floor to express their disappointment and to insist on the usefulness and symbolic value of the EU anti-corruption report. They asked the Commission to provide the necessary elements to the Parliament and the LIBE Committee so that they are in a position to exercise the political scrutiny on the anti-corruption measures.

Study on EU policy on counter-terrorism

On 4 May, a study on the European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism was presented to Members of the LIBE Committee. The study, commissioned by the EP’s Policy Department for Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs, identifies (counter-) terrorism trends, threats and policies in the EU, focussing particularly on seven themes, including database access and interoperability, measures on border security, criminal justice and prevention of radicalisation.

It also analyses the coherence and effectiveness of the counter-terrorism policy (architecture), and issues of cooperation, oversight and implementation, in seven focus Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Spain. Moreover, this study addresses future scenarios and formulates concrete policy options and recommendations. A hearing on the current challenges of fighting terrorism and serious crime was organised on 30 May and addressed the evolving threats and links between serious and organized crime and terrorism.
LIBE events

Brexit: MEPs want EU and UK to take care of citizens’ rights first

On 11 May the Committees of Civil Liberties, Employment and Petitions organised a joint public hearing to analyse the situation of EU citizens living in the United Kingdom and British citizens residing in the EU-27. These citizens - about four million in total - are a key factor in the Brexit negotiations, the outcome of which will have a direct impact on their daily lives.

Guy Verhofstad, European Parliament’s Chief Brexit negotiator, presented the approach taken in the negotiation guidelines for the withdrawal agreement as far as citizens were concerned. The panel of speakers included: Anne-Laure Donskoy, founding member of the 3million, Jan Doerfel, British barrister, Charlie Jeffery, Professor at the University of Edinburgh, Julia Onslow-Cole, Legal Markets Leader and Head of Global Immigration, in Price Waterhouse Coopers in London, Jonathan Portes, Professor of Economics and Public Policy in the Department of Political Economy in the King's College of London. Leona Banshow and Anne Wilkinson, presented the petitions they had submitted to the Committee on Petitions and the experts round finished with the interventions by Samia Badani from the organisation “New Europeans” and Jane Golding from “British in Europe”.

Most Members underlined the “moral duty” to end the uncertainty created for both EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals in the EU since the June 2016 referendum and advocated for the EU and the UK government to negotiate a deal on the situation and rights of citizens as a matter of urgency.

Upcoming hearings:
- ICM on rule of law (22/06) - Statelessness (28/06)

LIBE missions to Greece (Athens and hotspots) and Europol

Greece. - From 22 to 25 May, a delegation of ten Members of the LIBE committee, accompanied by a DEVE Member, visited reception camps around Athens (Schisto and Skaramagas), a hotspot and a pre-removal centre in Kos, a hotspot in Lesvos, the open reception facility of Kara Tepe as well as shelters for unaccompanied minors and apartments for families and vulnerable persons. The delegation, led by Peter Niedermüller (S&D), was also meant to visit the Helleniko camp. However, this part of the delegation programme had to be cancelled, as the Greek authorities had invoked security reasons in the context of the imminent dismantling of the camp.

The Greek Minister of Immigration, Mr Mouzalas, accompanied the delegation during the hotspots visits in Kos and Lesvos. The delegation had the opportunity to hold extensive exchanges with the Minister, allowing the Members to get a better grasp of the everyday management challenges faced by the Greek authorities, notably in the aftermath of the EU-Turkey Statement, and to note differences in the situation on the mainland and on the islands. Direct contact with several other actors, including EU agencies, international organisations, NGOs, asylum-seekers but also national administrations such as asylum services or the police, allowed to further deepen this understanding. The presentation of the report of the delegation visit to the LIBE committee is foreseen for 22 June.

EUROPOL. - On 23 May, a LIBE delegation composed of Mr Axel VOSS (EPP) visited the premises of Europol in The Hague. The delegation’s objective was to focus on Europol’s role in the fight against migrant smuggling and the fight against terrorism while understanding better its working methods and interoperability of databases and IT tools. The delegation visited the operational centre and talked with multiple staff members and the director, Rob Wainwright. The security topics covered during the visit are a part of the three main security priorities of the European Agenda on Security adopted in 2015: terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and cybercrime.

Upcoming missions:
- Romania (24-26 June) - Washington (17-21 July)
Three questions to… Sergei Stanishev

In this new version of “A chat with…“, we will continue to ask LIBE MEPs about their job in the LIBE Committee. This time we are with Sergei Stanishev (S&D, Bulgaria) who is the LIBE second Vice-president since January this year.

In your opinion, what are the main challenges that the Union is facing in the field of Justice and Civil Liberties?

Without a doubt, the EU currently finds itself on a crossroad and the LIBE Committee is truly in the eye of the storm when it comes to dealing with hot topics such as migration, security, data protection and citizens’ rights, especially in the context of Brexit. Sadly, these issues are often being used by populists as subject of their own political goals, spreading hatred and animosity and dividing our societies. Rather than embracing the tactics of populism ourselves, the EU must deliver where populists have always failed – finding solutions. LIBE Committee must, therefore, remain focused on building a common EU approach to the migration crisis and enhancing citizens’ security, while guaranteeing their rights, including ensuring interoperable security systems and creating a safe digital environment.

It is only by finding answers to the issues that the EU citizens care about that we can give a new impetus to the European project and LIBE has great responsibilities in this aspect.

What is the part as your work as Vice-president that you enjoy the most? Is there something that you like less about being a Vice-president?

I am honoured to be Vice-president of the LIBE Committee – this would be a recognition for every Member. Since there is increased public interest in many of the issues, which fall under the competences of the Committee, our work is subject to great visibility.

Being part of the LIBE presidency, thus, comes with its responsibilities, as it is vital to communicate our efforts and achievements correctly to counter misconceptions that are being spread.

You are also the vice-chair of the Delegation to the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, and a member of the EURONEST Committee. How do you share your time between the three, and what interactions do you see in your work?

Both countries from the Eastern Partnership, FYR Macedonia and the Western Balkans on the one hand, and the EU on the other, face similar challenges - management of the migration crisis, guaranteeing security, safeguarding the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights. Finding the right answers is, therefore, in our common interest, so that we can complement our efforts and resources.

Being part of three committees reflects my belief that instead of outsourcing the EU problems to our neighbourhood, we should focus on sustainable cooperation with our immediate partners to achieve progress on issues of common interest.
Council of the EU: signature of the Istanbul Convention on behalf of the EU

On 11 May, the Council of the European Union approved the signature of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) on behalf of the European Union.

The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive international treaty on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Convention was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011 and entered into force in August 2014.

The European Parliament adopted on 24 November 2016 its resolution on the EU ratification of this instrument calling on Member States which have not yet done so to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

They also ask all Member States “to ensure proper enforcement of the Convention and adequate financial and human resources to prevent and combat violence against women”.

The Co-rapporteurs on the Istanbul Convention are Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP) and Christine Revault d'Allonnes-Bonnefoy (S&D).

CoE: Public service broadcasting under threat in Europe

On 2 May Nils Mužnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights published his latest Human Rights Comment: Public service broadcasting under threat in Europe.

According to the Commissioner “well-funded and strong public service media are a good indicator that a democracy is healthy – this is the result of a study published last year by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).”

The report notably found that countries that have popular, well-funded public service broadcasters encounter less right-wing extremism and corruption and have more press freedom.

Justice and Home Affairs Council of 18 May

On 18 May, the Home Affairs ministers of the Member States met in Brussels chaired by Carmelo Abela, Maltese Minister for Home Affairs and National Security.

The ministers discussed informally the effective application of the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the context of the reform of the Common European Asylum System. The Council adopted conclusions on setting the EU’s priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime during the 2018-2021 policy cycle.

These conclusions identify ten EU crime priorities: cybercrime, drugs, facilitating illegal immigration, organised property crime, trafficking in human beings, excise and missing trader intra community fraud, firearms, environmental crime, criminal finances and money laundering, and document fraud.

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