Next meetings
- 16 December 2019 (click here for the draft agenda)
- 09 January 2020
- 13 January 2020

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Words by the Chair

The Finnish Council Presidency came just in time with the new mandate of the EP and of the LIBE Committee. The Finnish presidency has shown good will from the beginning, which must be appreciated. It was shown when we engaged in our institutional work regarding the appointment of the EPPO.

The Finnish presidency has stood with the EP in every plenary in Strasbourg. Finish ministers have engaged in dialogues and exchanges of views with the political groups within the LIBE Committee and my assessment is that it has been fruitful. It is coming to an end and there is so much yet to be achieved because of the protracted blockage that the Council has imposed in so many files which are of the essence within the area of civil liberties, justice and home affairs; first and foremost, the asylum package.

I will finally make a point of appreciation as to the frank and transparent way in which they have related to us, even when there has not been agreement on the way the EP is to be heard in Council in the framework of Article 7.1 (also see p.2).

Juan Fernando López Aguilar

Appointment of the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS)

The LIBE Committee chose Mr Wojciech WIEWIÓROWSKI as its preferred candidate to fulfil the functions of EDPS following a hearing on 25 November and a vote on 26 November. Both LIBE meetings were held in Strasbourg. The CoP endorsed the result on the preference on 28 November (more on p 2).

High-Level Conference on the Rights of the Child

The European Parliament organised on 20 November, the International Day of the Child, a high-level conference to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The meeting was opened by her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians, EP President David Sassoli and UNICEF Ambassador David Bisbal. LIBE and the DROI sub-committee were in charge of the two following panels on the EU and the rights of the child, seen respectively from an internal and an external perspective (More on p. 3).

Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Libya

On 21 November, LIBE organised, jointly with the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Delegation for Relations with the Maghreb Countries, an exchange of views on the precarious situation of migrants and refugees in Libya (more on p 4).

Exchange of Views - Children of Foreign Fighters

On 7 November 2019, LIBE held a joint exchange of views with the Human Rights and Security and Defense Subcommittees which addressed the issue of children of foreign fighters as well as their possible return and repatriation to the EU (more on p 3).
On 22 November, the Council, in a Coreper meeting, proceeded to a secret ballot to express their preference and the name of Mr WIEWIÓROWSKI was also ranked first. This wide convergence between the two appointing authorities allowed them to reach a “common accord” to appoint Mr WIEWIÓROWSKI as the EDPS for the period 2019-2024.

In accordance with Article 53 of Regulation (EU) no 2018/1725, the European Parliament and the Council shall appoint the EDPS by common accord for a term of five years on the basis of a list drawn up by the Commission following a public call for candidates. The list of candidates drawn up by the Commission shall be public and shall consist of at least three candidates. The Commission provided the appointing authorities with a list of three candidates (Mr Yann PADOVA, Mr Endre SZABÓ and Mr Wojciech WIEWIÓROWSKI) on 30 October.

As foreseen by the Regulation, the LIBE Committee held a hearing on 25 November to hear the candidates and a vote took place on 26 November to express the Committee’s preference. Ahead of the hearing, the candidates were asked to provide answers to 3 written questions and during the hearing, they were asked to take part in a round of Q&As with the LIBE Members. The results of the vote of the LIBE Committee, ranking Mr WIEWIÓROWSKI as the Parliament’s preferred candidate were endorsed by the CoP on 28 November. Given the common accord found with the Council on this candidate, Mr WIEWIÓROWSKI was appointed by Decision (EU) 2019/2071 as the new EDPS on 5 December.

During the Committee meeting of 21 November, LIBE Members had the opportunity to hear from the Council Presidency, represented by H.E. Ambassador Marja RISLAKKI, on the follow-up in the Council to the Parliament’s reasoned proposal pursuant to Article 7(1) TEU as regards the situation of the rule of law in Hungary. The Ambassador mentioned that on 16 September a hearing in the framework of the Article 7(1) TEU procedure on Hungary was organised in the General Affairs Council and that the Coreper has agreed to organise a second hearing on 10 December 2019 with a thematic approach. During the exchange of views, several Members underlined that the Parliament, having exercised its right of initiative under the concerned Treaty provision, is to be heard in Council, and its prerogatives are to be fully respected.

The Finnish Presidency considers that the Council should be closely informed about the views of the Parliament regarding this procedure. In the following debate, Several Members expressed their concerns related to the developments in Hungary since the adoption of the EP resolution in September 2018 and noted the long period of time taken by the Council to organise a first hearing, almost one year after. They also acknowledged the efforts made by the Presidency in advancing Rule of Law issues in the Council. Following questions on the next steps, the Ambassador pointed out that preserving the rule of law within the EU is a priority for their Presidency and mentioned the recently adopted Presidency Conclusions on the Rule of Law Dialogue. An exchange of views with the Presidency and the Commission representatives is planned for 16 December in order to obtain further information on the Rule of Law Dialogue in general, on the state of play of the Article 7(1) TEU procedures in the Council, and on the rule of law situation in Poland.

EDPS news

On 6 November 2019 the European Data Protection Supervisor has issued his Opinion on the Proposals regarding European Production and Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters (https://edps.europa.eu/data-protection/our-work/publications/opinions/electronic-evidence-criminal-matters_en ). The EDPS calls for clearer definitions of data categories and on the need to ensure that all necessary safeguards are in place. This includes providing for the increased involvement of the judicial authorities in the enforcing Member State in the process of gathering cross-border electronic evidence. The EP rapporteur for these proposals is Ms Birgit SIPPEL (S&D) who has presented her draft reports on 11 November 2019.

The EDPS has also published his Guidelines on the concepts of controller; processor and joint controllership under Regulation (EU)2018/1725. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide practical advice and instructions to EU institutions as regards these concepts. Lastly, on 19 November 2019 the EDPS has published the results of the EDPS inspection on Europol’s compliance with Article 4 of the TFTP Agreement.

Draft Budget 2020

On 18 November 2019, the Council and the Parliament reached a political agreement regarding the Draft Budget 2020. The Council dropped its requests to place (as in 2019) 400 million euros of the AMIF budget in reserve, given the lack of progress on the Dublin recast. As a result, in 2020, procedures to mobilize funds for the reception, relocation and resettlement of migrants including disembarkation of migrants at sea, will be simpler than in 2019 (especially important in 2020 as no financial agreement is reached yet for the next MFF as of 2021). The Council and the Parliament also agreed on increasing resources available for EUROPOL (+13 million euros), EUROJUST (+1.7 million euros) and the new EPPO (+5 staff) as well as for the Right, Equality and Citizenship program (+1.2 million euros). Neither a creation of a dedicated budget line for search and rescue operations at sea nor an increase in the budget of Frontex were agreed (- 8.7 million euros cut instead for Frontex). The 24 million euros proposed by the Commission in reserve for EASO pending the adoption of its revised mandate in 2020 was deleted and the budget of the agency reduced accordingly, however, with a joint statement that if the legal basis is adopted in 2020 adequate funds shall be available. As a reminder, the request of the LIBE Committee to split the AMIF’s budget lines from two to four was rejected in Plenary and was not included in the EP negotiating position.

Discharge of 2018 budget

On 1 and 15 October 2019 the Court of Auditors successively released their annual reports on the discharge of the 2018 budget of the Commission and all EU agencies and other Union bodies. The court “delivered clean opinions” regarding the annual accounts of all JHA agencies but with an emphasis on the matter regarding Frontex annual accounts due to weaknesses pointed out in its internal control procedures (60 million euros reimbursed without proper ex-ante or ex-post controls). The Court of Auditors provided “clean opinions” on the payments underlying the accounts of all JHA agencies except for EASO for which a qualified opinion was issued due to irregular payments for an amount of 50 million euros as part of a public procurement procedure. Finally, the Court concluded that that public procurement remains the main error-prone area for all EU decentralised agencies, including those in the JHA area. The Court did not find major flaws in the Commission’s clearance procedures for the AMIF and ISF. However only 18 transactions were audited for the whole of DG-HOME and the one AMIF transaction audited turned out to contain 9.4% error. Ms Metsola is the LIBE rapporteur for the discharge of the 2018 budget and the adoption of the 11 LIBE opinions is planned on 13 January 2020.
High-level conference on the rights of the Child

The high-level conference organised on 20 November by the EP to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the rights of the Child attracted close to 1,000 participants, also thanks to the high level profile of participants. The thematic panels were chaired by the LIBE First Vice-Chair Maite PAGAZAURTUNDÚA and DROI Chair Maria Arena respectively. LIBE had focused the first session on the situation of the rights of the child in the EU, stressing achievements in the last 30 years but also gaps in terms of access to rights for all children living on the EU territory, whatever their social, economic, nationality or residence status. Speakers included Commissioner Vêra Jourová (holding then her former portfolio on Justice, Consumers and Gender equality), FRA Director Michael O’Flaherty, Vice-Chair of the UN Committee on the rights of the child, as well as Maria and Bereket, children respectively from Uganda and Ethiopia. Ms KEMPÁ, Chair of the DEVE Committee, closed the session, while the EP Coordinator on Children’s rights, Vice-President Ewa Kopacz, closed the whole conference. Discussions could eventually feed into a resolution adopted on the same subject by the European Parliament on 26 November.

Corruption and organised crime hearing

On 3 December 2019, the LIBE committee organized a public hearing entitled “Towards a common EU Strategy to fight corruption and organised crime - strengthening instruments and enhancing cooperation between relevant actors”. Corruption, organised crime and money laundering pose serious threats to the EU’s economy. Over the last ten years several important legislative instruments to improve the fight against corruption and organised crime have been adopted at EU level among which the updated EU legislation on public procurement, Directive on money laundering, European Public Prosecutor’s Office Regulation and the Directive on the protection of the financial interests of the EU. However, there is still no comprehensive anti-corruption strategy at EU level.

The goal of this LIBE hearing was to bring together institutional representatives, including the European Commission, Europol, Eurojust and the European Chief Prosecutor, as well as national prosecutors and academics, in order to discuss the necessity to develop such a comprehensive strategy and approach to fight corruption and organised crime in the EU. The strategy would further improve cross-border cooperation, tackle existing gaps in the fight against organised crime and corruption, implement better supervision and develop comprehensive policy to prevent future loopholes.

Joint exchange of views on the children of foreign fighters

On 7 November 2019, LIBE held a joint exchange of views with the Human Rights and Security and Defense Subcommittees. Invited speakers included Marie-Dominique Parent from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Christiane Hoehn, principal advisor to the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Paul Van Tighelt, Director at the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (OCAM) Belgium and Jacqueline Hale, Head of EU Advocacy at Save the Children.

All speakers underlined the seriousness of the situation and highlighted the need to take action, bringing different perspectives to the conversation while stressing the need and urgency for a coordinated approach across the EU Member States.

On 26 November 2019, the plenary adopted a Motion for Resolution on Children rights in occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which also addresses this issue.

Media freedom hearing

On 6 November a hearing on “Media Freedom, Freedom of Expression and Combating hate speech online and offline” was organised by the LIBE committee. The first panel was dedicated to media freedom, freedom of expression and the protection of investigative journalists with following speakers: Mr Patrick PENNINGKXXX, Head of the Information and Society Department at the Council of Europe; Ms Julie MAJERCZAK, Head of the Brussels Office of Reporters without borders, as well as two investigative journalists, Mr Péter ERDELYI and Mr Dan TAPALAGA, working respectively in Hungary and Romania.

The speakers underlined the major challenges faced by journalists in Europe today and the threats to media pluralism, through the control of media outlets, intimidation and disinformation campaigns, the increasing use of Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation (SLAPP) and the worrying trend of cyberbullying as new form of intimidation. The second panel focused on combatting hate speech (online and offline) and disinformation. In this panel several speakers exchanged with the Members, respectively Ms Maia MAZURKIEWICZ, Alliance4Europe, Mr Diego NARANGO, European Digital Rights (EDRi), Mr Daniel MILO, GLOBSEC Policy Institute and Ms Katrin HUGENDUBEL, ILGA-Europe, on aspects such as the propaganda diffused on the internet for example in Poland against specific groups, the lack of harmonized definition of hate speech in the EU and the fact that the current policy approach was focusing on symptoms but not on the roots of the problems.

The speakers also put forward examples of disinformation such as the case of Slovakia and stressed the need for a more effective removal of manipulative content by online platforms and warned against a significant rise in hate speech directed at individuals and communities. In the exchange Members also mentioned the importance of ensuring the proper legal framework for addressing all forms of hate speech and hate crime in the EU.
Exchange of views on the situation of migrants and refugees in Libya

On 21 November, LIBE held an exchange of views on the situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, organised jointly with the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) and the Delegation for Relations with the Maghreb Countries (DMAG). A first panel, with Mr Popowksi, Deputy Director-General of DG NEAR, and Ms Grau, Head of Division “Migration and Human Security” of the EEAS, focused on the situation of migrants in Libya against the backdrop of the general situation in the country. The second panel consisted of representatives of UNHCR, IOM, Médecins sans Frontières and the International Rescue Committee and recounted the alarming situation of migrants in detention centres in Libya and of migrants returned by the Libyan coastguard, and discussed possible solutions for their precarious situation.

During the debate, Members emphasized that Libya is a failed state and not a safe country to return people intercepted by the Libyan coastguard and called the EU co-responsible for the precarious human rights situation in which many refugees and migrants are trapped. Several Members called for increasing resettlement efforts, among others by creating humanitarian corridors.

Debate with the Greek Minister for Citizens’ protection

LIBE held an exchange of views with the Greek Minister for Citizen’s Protection, Mr Chrisochoids, on 6 November. The Minister acknowledged the dire situation on Greek islands and stressed that EU support, notably in terms of redistribution of asylum seekers, was unsatisfactory. Despite the EU-Turkey Statement, a 120% increase of arrivals was registered since August. The Greek asylum system cannot handle such numbers efficiently (62,000 applications are pending), resulting in overcrowding of the island facilities and inadequate services, including medical ones, as transfers to the mainland are quickly compensated by new arrivals. Greece plans to move 20,000 persons to the mainland by the end of 2019. A new asylum law was also adopted to speed up the asylum procedure. A letter was sent to Member States’ governments on relocation of unaccompanied minors from Greece but no positive reactions were received, save one. Members recognised Greek efforts but expressed disappointment on the situation in the hotspots, while stressing the need for solidarity from Member States. Some Members had questions regarding the effects of the new asylum law on asylum seekers’ rights as well as if Turkey is a safe country. Members were also worried about the situation of unaccompanied minors. The Minister promised to come back on the application of the new asylum legal framework and to show results on the situation in the islands.

Delegation to the Global Refugee Forum

LIBE, along with DEVE and the DROI sub-Committee, is sending an ad hoc delegation to the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva, from 15 to 18 December, which will be part of the EU delegation. According to the Global Compact adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018, a GRF would be convened periodically, in order to allow Member States, the EU, and other stakeholders, to announce concrete pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the Global Compact and to consider ways in which burden- and responsibility-sharing can be enhanced. In view of the preparation of the joint LIBE-DEVE-DROI delegation, an exchange with Mr Daniel Endres, UNHCR Director of the Global Refugee Forum, took place on 12 November.

Report on the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration

The presentation of the report on 11 November was an opportunity for LIBE to discuss the achievements of the European Agenda on Migration. Its overall positive result is mainly reflected in a decrease of irregular arrivals to pre-2015 levels. Members had different views on the effects of measures, like the EU-Turkey statement or the operational support of the Libyan Coast Guard. In particular, the dramatic situation in Greece made Members call for action. The increase in numbers of resettlement was equally welcomed as the enhanced mandate of Frontex. However, there was agreement that more action would be needed, in particular to reform the CEAS and enhance legal migration, for a sustainable EU policy on asylum and migration.

Commissioner KING presented the main findings of the 20th Security Union Progress Report and highlighted key priorities for the future. The Commissioner identified a series of areas where initial steps have been taken but further legislative effort is required, ranging from combating terrorism and preventing radicalisation to enhancing cybersecurity, countering disinformation and improving information sharing tools.

In their questions, Members highlighted the complexity of the new security environment, the importance of cooperation with third countries and a global response as well as the need to take into account the implications of relevant case law when drafting new legislation.
3 questions to Paulo Rangel, rapporteur of the Visa Information System

1) Why did you want to become rapporteur on the Visa Information System and have there been any developments in this file since you took up this position?

The Visa Information System is a crucial element for the information system landscape in Europe and, not least, for our migration and visa policy. I believe with VIS we will better the experience for those that visit us, but also for third country national living in Europe, as now long stay visas should also be stored in the system, securing a true borderless Schengen Area, also for resident from abroad. On the other hand, we will also be able to conduct further security checks, profiling and enhancing the role of the interoperability package approved last term. To be short: this will bring more security too. One last, but very important, reason for the choice of this file: we introduce new features that would allow to better protect children and fight trafficking.

2) Why is this file so important for the Parliament?

Last term, under the rapporteurship of my dear colleague Carlos Coelho, Parliament conducted a thorough assessment of this proposal, managed to get a balanced position and – above all – imposed a pace that was not of urgency. This is a very complex proposal, with far reaching implications for millions of people. But it is also an existing system with which we do not want to mess. So, besides all of what I told you above, Parliament also wants to deliver a system that actually works, that respects people’s fundamental rights and which does not undermine the achievement we already reached.

3) What are the main challenges at this stage?

More than half of this new Parliament is new: which is a tremendous sign of vitality of our democracies. All the rapporteurs in this file are new too, the proposal is very technical and we all want it approved as soon as possible. This means that we have a lot of work to catch up and little time. So, the biggest challenge is to deliver in time the best piece of legislation.

LIBE delegation to Malta 2-4 December

For the third time since the murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia on 16 October 2019, the European Parliament decided to send a delegation to visit Malta from 2 to 4 December to take stock of recent developments in the investigation and with regard to the rule of law.

Led by the Chair of the LIBE Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group, Sophie INT VELD, the delegation included also Roberta METSOLA, Birgit SIPPEL, Lars Patrick BERG, Assita KANKO, Stelios KOULLOGLOU and Sven GIEGOLD. The aim was to reaffirm that Malta is fully part of the EU and as such, preserving integrity in the country is of utmost importance for the Union as a whole, the foundation of which relies on mutual trust. The delegation enquired about the status of investigations on the murder, stressing again that justice needed to be served for the family of the victim but also for the country as whole. Further, the need for investigations on alleged corruption cases was recalled. The status of institutional reforms, notably following recommendations of the Venice Commission, was also in the focus. The delegation insisted that short-term political change cannot in itself restore trust in the authorities.

MEPs met with the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and other government members, the President of the Republic, the leader of the opposition and the Speaker of the House, the police, the Attorney General, the Ombudsman, representatives of civil society, advocates and journalists, as well as members of the family of Daphne Caruana Galizia. More information is to be found in the press release concluding the mission. The delegation’s report is due to be presented to the LIBE Committee on 16 December 2019.

Constituent meeting of the LIBE Committee’s Working Group on Schengen Scrutiny

Tanja Fajon (S&D) was elected Chair of the group during the first meeting of the group which took place on 26 November. Members also held an exchange of views on priority areas to be addressed in the upcoming meetings.

The working group has a general mandate for scrutiny of the functioning of the Schengen area including the absence of internal border controls and their temporary reintroduction. Its mandate also includes scrutiny of the results of the Schengen evaluation mechanism and follow-up of the implementation of the action plans, of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency’s vulnerability assessment and its results, of the implementation of the multiannual policy cycle for European integrated border management, of the implementation and use of large-scale information systems in the field of justice and home affairs according to their legal basis, and of the implementation of the border management and visa related funds (IBM Fund, Internal Security Fund).
LIBE’s upcoming own-initiative and implementation reports

Since the start of the new Parliament mandate, LIBE Coordinators have decided to draw-up the following own-initiative reports, for which they received authorisation from the EP governing bodies:

**Own Initiative Reports**
- Public Access to Documents (Rule 122(7)) – Annual report for the years 2016-2018: Rapporteur - Bogdan (EPP)
- Legislative own-initiative report on the Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights: Rapporteur Šimečka (Renew)
- Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union - Annual Report - Rapporteur: Daly (GUE/NGL)
- Annual report on the functioning of the Schengen Area - Group S&D
- New Avenues for Legal Labour Migration: Rapporteur - Moraes (S&D)
- Digital Services Act from a JHA perspective - Group tbc
- Artificial Intelligence and its Use in Law Enforcement - Responsible group: S&D

**Implementation reports**
- Report on the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation: Rapporteur - Keller (Renew)
- The implementation of the European arrest warrant and the surrender procedures between Member States: Rapporteur - Zraléjos (EPP)
- Report on the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies: Combating negative attitudes towards people with Romani background in Europe: Rapporteur - Franz (Greens/EFA)
- Implementation report on the Return Directive: Rapporteur - Strik (Greens/EFA)

Documents adopted in LIBE and LIBE related resolutions in Plenary

- **RECOMMENDATION on the conclusion of the Protocol between the European Union, the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein regarding the criteria and mechanisms for establishing the State responsible for examining a request for asylum lodged in a Member State or in Switzerland regarding access to Eurodac for law enforcement purposes**
- **REPORT on the proposal for a regulation of the European Border and Coast Guard**

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**JHA Agencies**

**EMCDDA’s and Europol’s "EU Drug Markets report 2019"**

On 26 November, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and Europol released their joint " EU Drug Markets report 2019", providing a detailed analysis of this important evolving policy-relevant field. EMCDDA Director Alexis GOOSDEEL and Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle presented their report to stakeholders in Brussels. They highlighted key issues which will shape policy in the next years. Both Directors underlined that the evolving drug market requires action and need to be considered as priority. A presentation at LIBE are envisaged for January or February 2020.

**FRONTEX**

The new Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard entered into force on 4 December 2019. The political agreement was reached between the co-legislators at the end of the previous legislature.

The new Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard gives the Agency Frontex a new and larger mandate. One of the main features of the new mandate is the Standing corps of 10 000 border guards. The Agency has launched a recruitment campaign aiming to recruit in a first step 700 border guards to the Agency's staff to form part of the corps.

**EASO**

The 9th EASO Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting took place in Brussels on 12th November. The meeting focused on the initial steps of the asylum procedure in view of national legislative trends towards introducing changes in the initial steps of the asylum procedure to obtain as much information as possible from applicants at an early stage, looking also at access to procedural safeguards and EASO’s role in those initial steps with view to more faster and more efficient procedures. According to latest EASO data, more than half a million (515 825) asylum applications have been lodged in the EU+ during the first nine months of 2019.

**European Data Protection Board (EDPB) - Adopted Documents**

During its November Plenary Session, the EDPB adopted several documents:

- EDPB Report on the Third Annual Joint Review of the EU-US Privacy Shield, further to the annual review of the Privacy Shield. It will be presented at the LIBE Committee of 9 January 2020.
- Guidelines on the Territorial Scope of the GDPR and data protection by design and by default.
- Contribution to the consultation on a draft second additional protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime
- Response letter to LIBE on EU Information Systems.

All this information is available at the EDPB website.

**LIBE delegation to the EMCDDA**

On 30 and 31 October 2019 a delegation of the LIBE Committee visited the EMCDDA’s headquarters in Lisbon (Portugal). The purpose of the mission was to gain in-depth, up-to-date knowledge of the latest trends and emerging challenges in the drugs situation in Europe and of the work of the EMCDDA in this area. International drug-related issues, new psychoactive substances, cooperation of the EMCDDA with EU institutions, national authorities and other stakeholders and the financial outlook for the Centre under the next MFF 2021-2027 were also discussed.
After some months of expectation, the Commission is now fully installed to undertake a new mandate. The College of Commissioners was confirmed by a vote in the European Parliament Plenary on 27 November with 461 votes in favour, 157 against and 89 abstentions. Formally appointed by EU heads of state or government thereafter, it finally took office on 1 November for five years. During her opening statement to the Parliament, European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen reiterated many of the commitments she made in Parliament’s plenary chamber in July, and by the Commissioners-designate during the hearings process. The actual Commission’s Work Programme is much awaited, as well as more specific legislative plans like a New Pact on Asylum and Migration. The LIBE Committee will mainly relate to Vice-President Věra Jourová for Values and Transparency, Vice-President Margaritis Schinas for Promoting our European Way of Life, and Commissioners Ylva Johansson for Home Affairs and Didier Reynders for Justice.

New Commissioners invited to LIBE

Ylva Johansson, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs participated in a "structured dialogue" with the LIBE Committee on 9 December. The discussion with Commissioner Johansson mainly focused on the announced 0 Pact on Asylum and Migration and the approach of the new Commission to the integrity of the Schengen Area and to internal security. Vice-Presidents Věra Jourová and Margaritis Schinas as well as Commissioner Didier Reynders have also been invited. Mr Schinas and Mr Reynders were to participate in the LIBE meeting of 16 December.

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COUNCIL

In the meeting of the JHA Council on 2-3 December 2019, Ministers discussed the future of the EU migration and asylum policy and welcomed the Commission's intention to present a new pact on migration and asylum, with a need for a comprehensive approach to migration. Ministers also discussed the future of EU internal security, with a view to providing guidance for future developments in the area of internal security during the next legislative cycle (2019-2024). The topics suggested by the Presidency include a proactive approach to new technologies, effective information management, multidisciplinary cross-border cooperation and comprehensive approach to security.

The Council adopted several sets of conclusions: on victims' rights, on alternative measures to detention, on widening the scope of PNR data, on Prüm data exchange with UK and on Eurodac cooperation with private parties. On PNR, conclusions recommend that the Commission carry out a study that would explore, by means of an impact assessment, the need for and feasibility of the collection, storage and processing of PNR data from cross-border forms of transport other than air traffic. In conclusions on Eurodac cooperation with private parties, the Council acknowledges the urgent operational need for Europol to request and receive data directly from private parties and calls on the Commission to take into account these conclusions in the framework of its review of the implementation of the Europol regulation.

The General Affairs Council on 10 December had on its agenda Article 7 procedures. It held a hearing on Hungary, which focused on the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and academic freedom. The Council also took stock of the situation as regards the rule of law in Poland. The European Council on 12 December adopted conclusions focusing mainly on climate change and MFF and the Special European Council (Art. 50) adopted conclusions on Brexit.

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