

## North Macedonia: HR/VP Josep Borrell met with Foreign Minister 0



High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell met with the Foreign Minister of North Macedonia in Brussels on Monday.

He congratulated him on his appointment in the new government led by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev. Josep Borrell stated that the EU expects the new government to continue to deliver on the country's EU commitments, to sustain and accelerate the implementation of EU-related reforms. This concerns in particular rule of law, the fight against organised crime and corruption, as well as further strengthening of good neighbourly relations.

He also welcomed North Macedonia's contributions to EU's Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and the fact that North Macedonia's level of alignment with EU foreign policy positions has increased in recent years.

The High Representative stressed that the EU remains committed to supporting North Macedonia in its response to coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. The European Commission will also come forward in October with a very substantial Economic and Investment Plan to support the Western Balkans' long-term recovery and bring the region closer to the EU.

---

## EASO publishes 'Country Guidance: Syria'

Photo: © iStock/omersukrugoksu

Over the last seven years, Syria has consistently been the top country of

origin of applicants for international protection in EU Member States and associated countries. Today, EASO published the 'Country Guidance: Syria', a tool for decision-makers and policy-makers in the EU and beyond, which aims to ensure that similar cases are treated and decided on in a similar manner.

The 'Country Guidance: Syria' represents the joint assessment of Member States of the situation in the country in view of the common international and EU legal framework. It provides an in-depth country-specific analysis, addressing all elements in the examination of international protection needs. It focuses on the main actors of persecution or serious harm in Syria, the refugee status or subsidiary protection needs of some of the relevant profiles of applicants, the ability and willingness of the actors in the country to provide protection, and the possibility of internal protection alternative, assessed in relation to Damascus City. Exclusion from international protection is also addressed.

The common analysis builds on the EASO COI reports concerning Syria and on available general EASO guidance on qualification for international protection. It is drafted by national experts, with the support of EASO and with valuable input from the European Commission and UNHCR. The final text is agreed by senior policy officials from EU+ countries and the guidance note, accompanied by the common analysis, is endorsed by the EASO Management Board.

✖ The 'Country Guidance: Syria' is available in a user-friendly electronic book format, as well as in pdf. It can be accessed at <https://easo.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria>.

For more information about EASO's role in fostering Member States' efforts towards convergence in the assessment of international protection needs and the work on country guidance, visit <https://easo.europa.eu/country-guidance>.

---

## **Article – Commission changes: MEPs to assess McGuinness and Dombrovskis**



The [economic and monetary affairs committee](#) will hold a hearing on 2 October at 9.00 CET with Mairéad McGuinness (Ireland) to evaluate whether she is suitable to serve as a commissioner in charge of financial services, financial stability and the Capital Markets Union.

Valdis Dombrovskis (Latvia), who is the executive Vice-President of the Commission, is proposed to assume responsibility for trade and is invited to a hearing on the same day at 13.00. The meeting will be organised by the [international trade committee](#), with the participation of the [foreign affairs committee](#), the economic and monetary affairs committee, the [development committee](#) and the [budgets committee](#). As Dombrovskis is already a member of the Commission, he will only face questions on his suitability for the new portfolio.

After the evaluations are completed, Parliament will vote in plenary on 7 October.

The reshuffle at the Commission comes after the [resignation of trade commissioner Phil Hogan](#) at the end of August.

McGuinness has served as an MEP since 2004 and has been Parliament Vice-President since 2014. Valdis Dombrovskis, a former prime minister of Latvia, has been a Commission Vice-President since 2014.

## The procedure in Parliament

Whenever a member of the European Commission needs to be replaced or there is significant reassignment of portfolios, Parliament invites the candidates for the new jobs to hearings so that MEPs can evaluate them.

The procedure is similar to the one for the [election of the Commission](#) at the start of each term. First, the [legal affairs committee](#) examines a candidate's declaration of financial interests to confirm the absence of conflict of interests. This is a precondition for holding a hearing with the candidate.

The hearing is then organised by the committees dealing with the portfolio of each candidate. Before it starts, the candidate needs to answer some questions in writing. The hearing lasts three hours and is streamed live. After the hearing the responsible committee or committees prepare an evaluation letter.

The Conference of Committee Chairs, which includes all chairs of parliamentary committees, will then assess the outcome of the two hearings and forward its conclusions to the leaders of the political groups and the President of Parliament in the Conference of Presidents. The latter are responsible for the final evaluation and decision to close the hearings or request further action. Parliament can then proceed to the plenary vote.

Procedurally, the Parliament has a consultative role on individual candidates for commissioners, while it can approve or dismiss the European Commission as a whole. An agreement between Parliament and Commission requires the Commission president to consider the opinion of Parliament on individual candidates and changes in the composition of the Commission.

As always, when Parliament votes on individual candidates, votes are held by secret ballot. A simple majority of votes cast is required to establish Parliament's position.

Follow the [hearings live on our website](#).

---

## [ESMA updates Q&A on data reporting under EMIR](#)

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, has today updated its [Questions and Answers](#) document on practical questions regarding data reporting issues, under the European Markets Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR).

The updated Trade Repository (TR) Q&A 1(c) clarifies that the counterparties should use the underlying to determine the asset class of total return swaps when reporting under EMIR.

A new TR Q&A clarifies that the reporting of the field *reference entity* for credit derivatives can be made with a country code only in the case where the reference entity is a supranational, a sovereign or a municipality.



Another new TR Q&A indicates how the fields *execution timestamp*, *effective date*, *maturity date* and *settlement date* should be reported for Forward Rate Agreement derivatives (FRAs).

The purpose of this Q&A document is to promote common supervisory approaches and practices in the application of EMIR. It provides responses to questions posed by the general public, market participants and competent authorities in relation to the practical application of the Regulation. This document aims to ensure that the supervisory activities of the competent authorities under the Regulation are converging along the lines of the responses adopted by ESMA. It should also help investors and other market participants by providing clarity on reporting requirements.

ESMA will periodically review these Q&A and update them where required.

---

## [Article – New Migration Pact proposal gets mixed reactions from MEPs](#)



Members of Parliament's [civil liberties, justice and home affairs committee](#) discussed the [new plan for an Asylum and Migration Pact](#) a day after it has been presented by the Commission. on 24 September. The aim of the proposal, presented is to change and improve current procedures by ensuring shared

responsibility and solidarity. However, [committee members voiced mixed reactions](#), wondering if it will bring about real change.

During the debate with Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, MEPs requested more concrete information about how the pact would be applied on the ground and enforced. Some considered the initiative to be a positive step to help EU countries where most of the asylum seekers first arrive, while others described it as the only way forward from the current situation.

However, MEPs also questioned whether the new rules will prevent another humanitarian disaster such as the [recent fire in the Moria refugee camp](#) and wondered whether the new screening and border procedures would respect fundamental rights. Several MEPs regretted that the principle of the [current Dublin regulation](#) – requiring the country of first entry to handle asylum claims – remains in the new regulation proposal, because they were worried this will maintain the burden on countries where most of the asylum seekers first arrive.

The Commission's proposal avoids compulsory relocation quotas, which proved so controversial in the previous proposal. EU countries can choose to take in (relocate) asylum applicants or commit to returning irregular migrants (sponsor returns) from another EU country. MEPs were concerned that this flexibility could lead to a situation where many EU countries choose to sponsor returns instead of taking in applicants and raised questions about the enforcement mechanisms and the effective cooperation with third countries. Some MEPs demanded the mandatory relocation of refugees, while others wanted a firmer stance on irregular arrivals.