



EUROPEAN UNION  
Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe

## **Weekly Media Report of developments related to the Council of Europe**

### **8 - 12 February 2016**

The Weekly Media Report gives an overview of recent news in international media. Please note that the Report does not constitute a formal communication, does not represent the official position of the Delegation and does not commit the European Union in any way.

Ce rapport donne un aperçu de nouvelles récentes dans les médias internationaux. Ce rapport n'est pas une communication formelle, ne représente pas la position officielle de la Délégation et n'engage en aucun cas l'Union Européenne.

### **Secretary General's statement on the EU's response to migration**

#### **[Europe's watchdog: Migrant crisis threatens Balkan stability](#)**

*11/02 – EUObserver / International*

The migrant crisis risks reigniting old tensions among the Western Balkan nations as EU-led policies fail to stem the flow of migrants, says Europe's human rights watchdog. Thorbjorn Jagland, who presides over the Council of Europe, said panic, the lack of a coordinated EU response, and national agendas have led Europe "to a very very dangerous point". "If they [Western Balkans] end up with the whole problem of refugees, you can foresee that this would be very dramatic in a region where there are already so many tensions from the past," he told reporters in Brussels on Thursday (11 February). He also cast doubt on EU plans to return asylum seekers to Greece from other capitals and possibly place them in detention centres. The Strasbourg-based body houses the European Court of Human Rights, which in 2011 banned EU states from transferring people to Greece under the strained so-called Dublin asylum rules.



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## Venice Commission

### [Human rights body reviews disputed legal changes in Poland](#)

*08/02 – AP – Daily Mail / UK*

An international human rights commission began two days of meetings with Polish officials Monday to determine whether recent legal changes to Poland's Constitutional Tribunal are in line with democratic standards. The Polish government requested the review by the Venice Commission, an advisory body of the human rights watchdog the Council of Europe, after legislation it put through last year sparked street protests and international criticism. The Council of Europe is not part of the European Union and the Venice Commission's judgment, expected in March, is not legally binding.

## Crimea

### [En Crimée, la situation est préoccupante pour les droits de l'Homme](#)

*08/02 – The Huffington Post / International*

Depuis l'annexion de la Crimée par la Fédération de Russie, la communauté internationale a pu constater la situation alarmante des droits de l'Homme dans la péninsule, et tout particulièrement vis-à-vis des Tatars de Crimée. Fin janvier, la délégation du Conseil de l'Europe sur les droits de l'Homme, dirigée par le diplomate suisse Gérard Stoudmann, a effectué une visite de sept jours dans la péninsule. Le Secrétaire Général du Conseil de l'Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, avait auparavant déclaré que "la mission, qui jouira d'une autonomie totale, ne s'intéressera pas aux questions liées au statut territorial de la Crimée.

## **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**

### [Gov't approves European convention on violence against women](#)

*09/02 – CTK – Prague Daily Monitor / Czech Republic*

The Czech government approved the Council of Europe (CE) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence on Monday, Human Rights Minister Jiri Dienstbier (Social Democrats, CSSD) has written on Twitter. The document defines various crimes connected with violence against women and domestic violence, such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and sterilisation, and demands their criminalisation. It also included measures to prevent such violence. The Czech Republic is one of the last EU member states not to ratify the Istanbul convention. It is the first international treaty dealing with violence against women in detail with the aim to achieve zero tolerance of these forms of discrimination and human rights violations.



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## Commissioner for Human Rights

### [Italy continues to drag feet on same-sex civil unions](#)

08/02 – EurActiv / International

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights criticised Italy for its continuing stance on same-sex relationships and cast doubt on new legislation currently being considered by Rome's lawmakers. While the debate rages on about the proposed Cirinnà law on civil unions, Nils Muižnieks told Italian media outlet ANSA that it "will not create new rights, it will simply eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation". In July of last year, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Italy for violating the rights of homosexual couples. Civil union would be the most appropriate means by which to officially recognise a same-sex relationship, said the Strasbourg judges. Then there is the issue of adopting stepchildren, which is still a grey area for the Cirinnà law.

## Cyprus

### [Fotiou speaks out on allegations of missing persons](#)

09/02 - InCyprus / Cyprus

Presidential Commissioner Fotis Fotiou has said that he has received pieces of information concerning additional cases of relocation of remains of missing persons in the north, though he was not able to confirm this as yet. Fotiou commenting to the Cyprus News Agency (CNA) said that a document distributed at the request of the Turkish to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, ahead of the body's session in March to discuss the issue of missing persons, asks the Cyprus government to demonstrate a 'proactive approach' and grant permission to the Committee of Missing Persons (CMP) for exhumations in military areas in the Republic. Fotiou said the claims contained in the document were "ludicrous" and a "provocation".

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