
FIRST MEETING OF MIGRATION FORUM BRINGS TOGETHER CIVIL SOCIETY AND EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

The first meeting of the European Migration Forum was held on 26-27 January 2015 on the theme ‘Safe routes, safe futures. How to manage the mixed flows of migrants across the Mediterranean?’ The CCBE was represented by Noemi Alarcon, a member of the CCBE Migration working group.

The European Migration Forum is a platform established by the European Commission in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee in which civil society organisations and the European institutions meet to discuss immigration, asylum and migrant integration. The objective of the Forum is to give representatives of civil society a voice on issues related to migration, asylum and migrant integration, and to allow the European institutions to promote a comprehensive approach to migration.

MEPs raised concerns about interception of phone calls between lawyers and their clients by intelligence services across Europe during the plenary session on 13 January.

The issue came up following the recent admission by the Minister of the Interior of the Netherlands that the Dutch Intelligence and Security Agency (AIVD) had been spying for years on Amsterdam-based law-firm Prakken d’Oliveira. According to data collected by the CCBE, communications between lawyers and their clients have been monitored recently by police or intelligence services in similar cases in France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Latvia.

MEPs from across the political spectrum took turns in denouncing this unacceptable form of espionage and called for action to be taken by the EU, through investigations, sanctions and the adoption of legislation.

Read more: [Members of the European Parliament denounce surveillance of lawyer-client communications](#)

The European Parliament and the Member States agreed in January on the final text of the Fourth Directive on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing, updating a 2005 instrument. A number of changes have been introduced: the inclusion of tax advice under activities within the scope of reporting; the extension of the definition of ‘criminal activity’ to cover tax crimes; increased protection for professional secrecy and for the role of the self-regulatory professional body with regard to first instance reporting, and the introduction of central registers of beneficiary owners of corporate and other legal entities, including trusts, to be made accessible to obliged entities under the Directive and to members of the public who can show a «legitimate public interest», such as investigative journalists, NGOs and other concerned citizens.

A CCBE delegation met with the Belarusian Bar on 27 January 2015 in Minsk. The meeting, following a first meeting in June 2012, focused on possible cooperation between the CCBE and the Belarusian Bar, which is not a member of the CCBE. The parties agreed to organise a joint seminar in September 2015 in Minsk that would bring together European experts and Belarusian lawyers to discuss issues of common interest such as mediation, legal aid and professional secrecy.

In its Annual Report published on 29 January, the European Court of Human Rights reports on case-law developments and provides statistical data for 2014, as well as a table of violations by country. The report highlights that new working methods, implemented after the adoption of Protocol No. 14 which amends the control system of the Convention, have led to a 30% decline in the number of pending cases. However, the Court reiterates its concern about the volume of repetitive cases, which make up more than half of all pending cases.

Read more: [Annual Report 2014 of the European Court of Human Rights](#)

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