

## [News story: UK and Germany work towards stronger defence relationship](#)

The pair and their teams met to discuss strengthening defence ties. The German Defence Minister and Gavin Williamson also took the opportunity to meet a group of German junior officers, who have been learning about UK defence at the Ministry of Defence.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The UK and Germany face the same intensifying threats to our way of life and we work closely together to protect our citizens from harm.

Germany is one of our closest allies and I look forward to even closer cooperation.

The visit follows on from increased cooperation between the two countries. February saw the successful Ministerial Equipment Capability Cooperation talks in Berlin and the latest annual UK-Germany Army Staff Talks, which took place in London.

Germany was formally recognised as a 'tier one' defence ally in November 2015's Strategic Defence and Security Review. The country has also recognised the UK as a key defence partners in its equivalent review.

Both nations have a strong history of working together in NATO and as part of the Counter-Daesh coalition, working together to tackle terrorist threats, build allies' capacity and boost Europe's security.

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## [Court of Justice of the European Union: appointment of nine judges](#)

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On 28 February 2018, the representatives of the governments of the member states appointed nine judges and three advocates-general to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Their term of office is six years, starting from 7 October 2018.

The appointments were made as part of the partial renewal of the composition of the Court of Justice, which takes place every three years.

Eight persons were reappointed as **judges**:

- Mr Alexander Arabadjiev (Bulgaria)
- Mr Jean-Claude Bonichot (France)
- Mr Thomas von Danwitz (Germany)
- Mr Carl Gustav Fernlund (Sweden)
- Mr Egils Levits (Latvia)
- Mr Constantinos Lycourgos (Cyprus)
- Mr Jiří Malenovský (Czech Republic)
- Ms Alexandra (Sacha) Prechal (Netherlands)

Ms Lucia Serena Rossi (Italy) was newly appointed as judge.

Mr Yves Bot (France), Mr Giovanni Pitruzzella (Italy) and Mr Maciej Szpunar (Poland) were appointed as **advocates-general**. The appointment of Mr Bot and Mr Szpunar was a renewal of their term of office.

In total, the term of office of 14 judges and five advocates-general will expire on 6 October 2018. Five judges and two advocates-general still have to be appointed in 2018.

The Court of Justice is composed of one judge from each member state and eleven advocates-general. The judges and advocates-general are appointed for a term of office of six years, which is renewable. Every three years a partial replacement of judges and advocates-general takes place.

The judges and advocates-general are appointed by common accord of the governments of the member states after consultation of a panel responsible for giving an opinion on prospective candidates' suitability to perform the duties concerned. They are chosen from among individuals whose independence is beyond doubt and who possess the qualifications required for appointment, in their respective countries, to the highest judicial offices, or who are of recognised competence.

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## [27th Management Board takes stock of](#)

# implementation of recently signed Operational Plans

***On 27 and 28 February 2018, the 27th meeting of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) took place in Valletta, Malta to take stock of the implementation of the Agency's operational support in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Italy. The meeting also discussed management and administrative issues.***

The Management Board meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Wolfgang Taucher, also focused its discussions on the latest asylum trends in the EU+ as well as the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

Members of the Management Board, which represents all of the Member States in the EU+, as well as the European Commission and UNHCR, discussed the implementation of the new Operational Plans that were signed between EASO, Greece, and Italy, respectively, as well as the updated Special Support Plan (SSP) that was signed with Cyprus, in December 2017. These Plans provide a mandate for EASO's operational support activities for the asylum authorities in the three countries throughout 2018.

The Operational Plan signed with Greece sustains EASO's existing activities, including supporting the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, Dublin processing and capacity-building through training and workshops. In parallel, the Operational Plan signed with Italy has added a new dimension to EASO's activities in the country by mandating the Agency to have an enhanced role in supporting with the handling of registration of applications for international protection, including through the preparation of files in the National Asylum procedure. This measure aims at relieving some of the pressures on the Italian Asylum System. Similarly, the extension of the SSP with Cyprus provides for EASO to support backlog management and in the field of reception and open accommodation.

The Management Board also discussed the asylum trends for 2017, which were released by EASO in January on a [newly enhanced interactive portal](#). Amongst numerous findings, EASO revealed that the EU+ received 43% fewer asylum applications in 2017 than 2016. Syria remained the most common country of origin of applicants, with more than 98,000 applications. Together with Iraqi, Afghan and Nigerian nationals, these four main countries of origin constituted one in three applications throughout the EU+ in 2017. During the meeting, the Management Board also discussed the latest asylum findings from January 2018, which will be published in the coming days.

The meeting also held an exchange on the state of play regarding the functioning of the Dublin system as well as ongoing preparations for the future transition of EASO into the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA). Once the EUAA Regulation is adopted, the Agency will see its mandate and responsibilities significantly enhanced, while the Management Board will also take on new roles.

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## Lyell Centre closure

The BGS's Edinburgh office at The Lyell Centre has been closed today (28 February) and staff sent home due to severe weather and poor travelling conditions.

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## EU announces €24 million to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine

The funding comes as the European Commission and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are organising a high-level conference in Brussels to raise awareness about the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

On the occasion, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"Four years of conflict have put a tremendous strain on the civilian population in eastern Ukraine. We cannot overlook that there's a humanitarian crisis at the European Union's doorstep. Supporting all those in need, wherever they are, is a priority for the EU. Our new aid package will provide essential assistance such as food, healthcare and education for children."*

The new EU funding will help address the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations along the contact line including in the non-government controlled areas. It will help those who fled the conflict areas to neighbouring countries. The EU, together with its Member States, is the biggest donor of humanitarian aid, early recovery and development assistance to Ukraine. With today's announcement, the EU has now provided over €677 million since the beginning of the conflict in 2014.

### **Background**

Humanitarian needs in particular in the non-government controlled areas are on the rise, notably due to restrictions of humanitarian organisations' work in these areas, and the suspension of payment of social benefits, including pensions. The provision of essential services, such as water and electricity, is constantly hampered on both sides of the contact line by indiscriminate shelling.

Today's conference will discuss ways to strengthen crisis response notably

through better linking of humanitarian assistance, early recovery and more medium – and long-term reform to improve social cohesion and economic development.

EU funding ensures the provision of food, water and healthcare, including psychosocial activities, essential household items, emergency housing repairs, protection, and education to children.

The EU has repeatedly expressed concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine and constantly called for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The EU urges all parties to the conflict to re-establish full access of all international humanitarian organisations to the non-government controlled areas and to allow smooth and speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law in order.

### **For More Information**

[Factsheet 'Ukraine'](#)

[Opening speech and press statement by Commissioner Stylianides at the conference](#)

[Photos of the conference](#)