

Immigration liaison officers: Council Presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement

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The EU is strengthening the cooperation and coordination between liaison officers deployed to third countries by member states or the EU to deal with immigration-related issues.

Today, representatives of the Council Presidency and the European Parliament reached an informal agreement on a regulation to improve the functioning of the European network of immigration liaison officers. It will now be presented to EU ambassadors for confirmation on behalf of the Council.

Coordination between member states in cooperation with third countries is essential to make sure the EU's response to migration is as strong as possible. These new rules will allow us to make the most of the activities of our liaison officers on the ground, including in areas such as returns and fighting migrant smuggling.

Carmen Daniela Dan, Romanian minister of internal affairs

The informal agreement includes the following provisions:

- a steering board at EU level to strengthen the management of the network and the coordination of liaison officers, while maintaining the competence of the deploying authorities so as to ensure effectiveness and clear lines of communication
- a stronger role for liaison officers in combatting migrant smuggling
- liaison officers will collect information to assist third countries in preventing illegal migration flows and to support border management at the EU's external borders
- liaison officers may also assist member states in facilitating returns of illegally staying third country nationals
- funds will be made available in support of activities of immigration liaison officers that will be allocated in agreement with the steering board

Background

Immigration liaison officers are deployed to third countries by member states and the EU in order to establish and maintain contacts with the authorities of the host country on migration issues (prevention and combatting of illegal migration, facilitating return, managing legal migration). In 2004, the EU adopted a regulation creating a European network of immigration liaison officers to coordinate the efforts of officers within a third-country or region.

However, with almost 500 immigration liaison officers currently deployed by member states to more than 100 countries, gaps in coordination persist. Moreover, as part of the comprehensive EU response to migration the role of liaison officers in certain fields could be expanded. To respond to this, the European Commission presented a proposal for a regulation to strengthen the European network of immigration liaison officers on 17 May 2018.

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