

Managing Migration: Commission calls time on asylum reform stalling

The EU's comprehensive approach on migration is delivering on all fronts: deeper cooperation with partner countries; better-protected external borders; and more effective tools to manage migration inside the EU. With irregular arrivals down to pre-crisis levels, now is the time to address remaining weaknesses. Work needs to continue at operational level, both externally and internally, and Member States and the European Parliament should swiftly complete the EU's asylum reform and in particular adopt the 5 proposals where there is broad political agreement before next year's European Parliamentary elections.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The Union's comprehensive approach to migration management is delivering tangible results. After four years, it is now essential to consolidate this comprehensive approach by switching from reactive ad hoc responses to completing the reforms for a sustainable future proof migration and asylum system. This can and should be done before the European parliamentary elections in the interest of all Member States."*

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The EU external policies on migration are delivering. Through our partnerships, we have helped over 34,000 people to voluntarily return to their homes, with reintegration assistance, and we evacuated over 2,000 refugees from Libya for further resettlement. We will continue to work to protect stranded migrants, to put an end to the system of detention in Libya together with the United Nations and the African Union. We are strengthening cooperation along the Western Mediterranean, in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa to curtail smuggling, tackle the root causes of migration and provide legal pathways. Through partnerships, we are showing that managing migration in a humane way is possible, together."*

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Four years on, we are better equipped than ever to protect our external borders and address migratory challenges inside and outside the EU. The time has come to consolidate the remaining building blocks of a comprehensive migration, borders and asylum system for the long run. A constantly evolving geopolitical context shows us that we cannot wait to react, but that we have to be ready for the future already now."*

Time and again, the EU has proven able to meet new migration challenges as they have arisen. Today's report looks at how the EU is constantly working to manage migration in all its aspects – from external action to border management to internal measures.

External Dimension: Partnerships that deliver

Through an integrated, "whole of the route" approach, major progress has been

achieved by the EU and its Member States in preventing irregular migration and fighting migrant smuggling. Along the Eastern Mediterranean Route, arrivals dropped by 97% after the EU-Turkey Statement and today remain 90% less than at the peak in 2015. Along the **Central Mediterranean route** (see [Factsheet](#)), irregular flows have been reduced by 80%. Nearly 34,000 persons received assistance to voluntarily return to their home countries from Libya and Niger, while over 2,000 people have been evacuated from Libya in view of further resettlement. To improve cooperation on **return and readmission**, 6 new arrangements have been agreed since 2016 (with Afghanistan, Guinea, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire), bringing the total number to 23. In parallel, work to ensure **legal pathways** and **resettlement** is ongoing with more than 44,000 persons resettled under EU schemes since 2015. The **fight against smuggling** networks is progressing, with EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia having apprehended 151 suspected smugglers since 2015 and the Joint Investigation Team's actions in Niger resulting in 221 arrests. To **address root causes**, innovative funding instruments have been put in place, with more than €4 billion mobilised under the EU Trust Fund for Africa, and 12 guarantee tools worth €800 million adopted under the External Investment Plan. Moving forward, the same integrated approach will be applied to the Western Mediterranean (see [Factsheet](#)) where flows have been increasing; work along the Central Mediterranean will be consolidated and efforts to conclude ongoing readmission negotiations and make better use of existing arrangements will be intensified.

Stronger border management

The **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** is at the core of the EU's work to support Member States in protecting the external borders. In September, the Commission proposed to reinforce the European Border and Coast Guard further and equip the Agency with a **standing corps of 10,000 border guards** (see [Factsheet](#)) to ensure that Member States can rely on full EU operational support at all times. The Commission is calling on the European Parliament and Member States to adopt the reform before the European Parliament elections next year. In addition, the EU's work on establishing new, **interoperable border and security information exchange systems** is starting to show results. A number of measures are currently being finalised, including the European Travel Authorisation and Information System (ETIAS), improvements to the Visa Information System (VIS) and to the Schengen Information System (SIS) and the establishment of an Entry-Exit System for non-EU citizens. In the light of the efforts made to improve external border management and the resulting reduction of arrivals, the Commission believes the time has come to lift the temporary controls at internal Schengen borders set in place by some Member States since 2015. New figures (see [Factsheet](#)) published today confirm that the Schengen area continues to garner strong public support and is seen by Europeans as one of the EU's main achievements.

Internal measures: Completing the reform of the EU's asylum rules

While compromise is still needed on some elements of the EU's asylum reform, significant progress has been made overall, with 5 out of the Commission's initial 7 proposals ready for adoption ([Qualification Regulation](#), [Reception Conditions Directive](#), [European Asylum Agency Regulation](#), [Eurodac Regulation](#),

[Union Resettlement Framework Regulation](#)). Although part of a broader reform, each individual proposal has a clear benefit on its own and swift adoption of each one would make a clear difference on the ground. Concerning the [Asylum Procedure Regulation](#), the Council should adopt its negotiating position by the end of the year and start negotiations with the European Parliament. A way forward must now also be found on the [Dublin Regulation](#), an indispensable element of a future-proof asylum system. The Commission is committed to working towards a compromise that ensures full solidarity and support for Member States under pressure while preventing secondary movements and abuse of the system. Building on the experience made with *ad hoc* solutions over the summer, temporary arrangements anticipating the core elements of a future Dublin Regulation could be set up as of now, to serve as a bridge until the new Dublin regulation enters into force.

Background

On 13 May 2015, the European Commission proposed a far-reaching strategy, through the [European Agenda on Migration](#), to tackle the immediate challenges of the ongoing crisis, as well as to equip the EU with the tools to better manage migration in the medium and long term, in the areas of irregular migration, borders, asylum and legal migration.

Today's Communication presents the developments since May 2015 and reports on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration and the Commission's political roadmap towards a comprehensive migration agreement [presented in December 2017](#).

For More Information

Communication: [Managing Migration in all its aspects](#)
– [Annex](#)

[Eurobarometer on Schengen](#)

MEMO: [The Global Compact on Migration – Questions and Answers](#)

Factsheets:

[Western Mediterranean Route](#)

[Central Mediterranean Route](#)

Reform of the Common European Asylum System: