

UK statement on irregular migration

We share the EU's perspective that this issue will only ever be effectively managed through working in partnerships. This is why, for example, we offer the Greek Government bilateral support in tackling the humanitarian crisis caused by migrants trying to reach the Greek islands from the Turkish mainland. Since 2015 the UK's Border Force has maintained at least one of its cutters in the region; and over 16,000 migrants have been rescued. We recognise the added value of continued coordination, sharing lessons learned, and being strategically coherent. We will continue working with our European partners and others, and seek stronger multilateral partnerships with third country and international delivery partners, building on the dialogues we have already established together.

We also believe that the responsibility for responding to irregular migration lies beyond our security services. Managed migration is also a civilian and law enforcement matter. The UK continues to support the 'whole of route' approach. This includes not only strengthening key European borders, but also the shared challenge and our shared interest in deterring abuse of our asylum systems, preventing secondary movement, protecting the most vulnerable, building capacity upstream, increasing sustainable returns and reintegration, and working to address the drivers of migration. For example, we support projects that address the needs of refugees in host countries as well as projects that disrupt cross-border criminal gangs.

The UK will continue to be a leader in tackling organised crime groups involved in irregular migration. Our Organised Immigration Crime Taskforce was set up to exploit every opportunity at source, in transit countries and in Europe to identify and tackle organised crime groups. This Taskforce is now working in 17 countries, with presence and relationships across source, transit and destination countries. It has successfully disrupted organised crime groups involved in immigration crime by undermining the business model of these groups and building capacity of local law enforcement agencies. We continue to invest in building and sustaining increased capability over the coming years.

Finally, I would stress that the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants must be protected. The UK will continue to play our important role in the international community by offering refuge for those who most need it, and meeting our obligations to work with our European partners on this shared issue.