



## **Ministerial Summit on Migration:**

### **Working Together on Reducing Illegal Migration Effectively**

**Zugspitze, Germany, 18 July 2025**

#### **JOINT DECLARATION**

On the occasion of the Ministerial Summit on 18 July 2025, the participating ministers responsible for migration reiterate their common commitment to work together on reducing illegal migration effectively: Mr. Gerhard Karner, Austria; Mr. Vít Rakušan, the Czech Republic; Mr. Kaare Dybvad Bek, Denmark; Mr. Bruno Retailleau, France; Mr. Alexander Dobrindt, Germany; and Mr. Tomasz Siemoniak, Poland; in the presence of Mr. Magnus Brunner, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration.

*Recognising* that the European Union serves as an area of freedom, justice and security not only for Union citizens, but also for third-country nationals in need of protection;

*Underlining* that irregular migration in the European Union remains a complex phenomenon which does not follow a standard pattern and involves routes and methods that frequently change;

*Reaffirming* that effective migration management is a constant challenge, particularly as irregular migration often involves people who in fact are not in need of protection, and that it is driven by organised crime networks of migrant smugglers;

*Recalling* the recent European Council conclusions which invite Member States to intensify work on all strands and building upon the Commission's proposals on returns, the safe third country concept and safe countries of origin;

*Aware* of the large number of migrants who have entered Europe illegally in the past ten years creating considerable pressure on our national systems of asylum, reception and integration, including challenges to internal security, and contributing to a growing polarisation in our societies;

*Determined* to counter this trend reliably and sustainably;

We have *agreed* on the following shared understanding of priorities and key actions, as part of a holistic approach to the Union's migration policy:



## **1. Making migration reform fit for the future**

With reference to the conclusions of the European Council from 25 June 2025, we stand with the ongoing migration and asylum reform which will equip EU Member States with a stronger legal framework for managing the various aspects of migration, including by enhancing the security of the EU's external borders and creating more efficient asylum procedures. It will also strengthen the balance between responsibility and solidarity among the Member States.

We call on the European Commission to provide sufficient funding in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework to ensure the full implementation of the ongoing migration and asylum reform.

We must work together for simple, efficient and rapid operational solutions, avoiding bureaucratic overload and additional administrative costs and ensuring that the functioning of the new legislation translates into concrete progress. At the same time, we see the need to continue developing this common European regulatory framework and to strengthen it wherever necessary, including taking into account developments regarding situations of instrumentalisation of migration. The review of the safe third country concept and the list of safe countries of origin are examples of measures that the EU is currently taking to enhance migration management.

Together, we will further develop specific concepts and present them to the European Commission; an initial proposal could be to abolish the suspensive effect of the appeals, for example when an asylum application has been rejected as inadmissible because the applicant has already been granted international protection by another Member State as well as in other cases.

## **2. Stepping up action against migrant smuggling and human trafficking**

We must take strong and coordinated action in order to fight migrant smuggling and human trafficking. To this end, the SIENA system for sharing information must be used by default in all Member States in order to provide a Europe-wide situation report as the basis for joint action. We also call on the European Commission to more actively pursue international agreements on the exchange of personal data between Europol and relevant third countries, especially Türkiye and the countries of North Africa, and to promote the operational cooperation of Member States' law enforcement agencies with those countries.

Furthermore, we will significantly increase our focus on financial investigations and on tracking illegal cash flows. Only an all-encompassing and long-term approach which



includes prevention, response and alternatives to irregular migration, as proposed by the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, can lead to success.

### **3. Going strong on returns**

Effective returns are essential for maintaining trust in a balanced European migration policy. We advocate for a new EU Return Regulation that will ensure effective returns by enhancing the Member States' means of action across the EU. A more harmonised legal framework which does not create unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles is needed. This includes allowing for return hubs to be established in third countries in line with EU and international law and improving Frontex' mandate to assist Member States with returns to these hubs in third countries. Frontex should in the future also be mandated to conduct returns from third countries such as the Western Balkans.

Returns to Afghanistan and Syria must be possible. Furthermore, as repeatedly concluded by the European Council, all suitable policy measures and instruments, such as those related to visa, trade and development aid, should be used as a leverage to increase the number of returns and to improve overall cooperation on migration management. The targeted and coherent application of trade and visa leverages remains particularly important in this regard, and we call for improving of their European legal framework.

Existing readmission agreements and arrangements must be fully applied, and new ones must be concluded as quickly as possible.

We will carefully analyse the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on asylum and migration issues, and we will utilise our options for action to take Member States' interests into account while respecting judicial independence and the guarantees provided by the European Convention on Human Rights.

### **4. Safeguarding the European Union's external borders**

In order to ensure a well-functioning Schengen area with free movement of people, goods and services, the external borders require effective protection. In that respect, the forthcoming implementation of the Entry-Exit System will enhance our capabilities to curb security threats and illegal immigration.

We strongly condemn the instrumentalisation of migration and the weaponisation of migrants for political purposes. We emphasise the importance of effective measures to protect the external borders and our asylum systems, including potential legal developments, with full respect for European and international law while noting that the



countries bordering Russia and Belarus have no practical way to solve migration problems through diplomatic outreach.

We call on the European Commission to provide sufficient funding in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework to protect the external borders, including funding for stationary and mobile infrastructure and for full registration in the digital systems, including the Entry-Exit System and Eurodac, of all migrants who enter or attempt to enter the EU, to be carried out at the external borders.

We acknowledge that the illegal crossings of the Channel between France and the United Kingdom are a European challenge and recall the Common Understanding on a renewed agenda for EU/UK cooperation.

#### **5. Building up strategic partnerships with third countries**

In order to reduce flows of irregular migration, we must start beyond the EU's external borders and work constructively with countries of origin and transit, using a comprehensive approach that covers multiple policy areas. This also includes combating the root causes of irregular or forced migration, including providing adequate support to allow for a dignified life in migrants' countries of origin and places of first refuge.

We will significantly broaden our strategic partnerships with third countries along the main migration routes. Through new ways in line with EU and international law and mutually beneficial solutions, we aim to work together to establish practicable systems for asylum, admission, returns and readmission. We thank the European Commission for its proposals for legislative amendments on the safe third country concept and seek to advance their adoption in order to allow for the full implementation of this concept with due respect to the Member States' constitutional frameworks.

We will actively assist partner countries in building the necessary institutional and technical capacities to manage migration and asylum processes effectively and increase law enforcement efforts. We will strive to second more Member State officers to participate in EU delegations and UN or OSCE police missions. We will also actively promote asylum system capacity-building in the countries of origin and transit by providing targeted advice and, where possible, equipment aid. For these partnerships to succeed, they must build upon a holistic view of migration dynamics, be sustainable and based on mutual trust, shared responsibility, and tangible benefits for all sides.



Our cooperation and common understanding of the migration situation provide the basis for advancing migration policy from the heart of Europe. We want to seize the opportunity to further reduce illegal migration and counteract the overburdening of our societies and the polarisation that comes with it. We share the conviction that Europe must act with determination and unity to reduce illegal migration effectively. To that end, we aim to restore trust by ensuring that those who have no right to stay leave the EU swiftly, that orderly procedures prevail, and that illegal entries are consistently reduced.

Only through a common approach based on clarity, solidarity and mutual responsibility can we ease burdens, protect our societies and preserve the integrity of our migration systems. We are committed to bringing the priorities and proposals outlined in this Joint Declaration into the relevant EU institutions and fora, with the goal of anchoring them in upcoming European decisions and initiatives.

