



Declaration by the Chair of the meeting of ministers
responsible for internal security and migration
in the framework of the Berlin Process, 17 September 2024

1. The ministers responsible for internal security and migration, representatives of the European Union and representatives of other international and regional organisations came together in Berlin on 17 September 2024 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Berlin Process and to build on its successful history by continuing talks regarding the Western Balkan region. The participants recognise the need of continuous dialogue and profound cooperation given their shared z on numerous issues, such as the fight against irregular migration. This year's meeting focused on the following issues: combating irregular migration, combating migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and combating organised crime.
2. All participants have already made great efforts in and beyond these areas and especially acknowledge the progress made by Western Balkan partners in this regard.
3. The participants underscore that close interlinking among the Western Balkan partners and coordination among the authorities are crucial for the effective combating of irregular migration and organised crime. Regional cooperation around the issue of Integrated Border Management is of particular importance to tackle irregular migration, for example by stepping up information sharing on migration flow data. The participants therefore expressly welcome the establishment of practice-oriented exchange formats to strengthen regional cooperation, such as the exchange formats at the "Cooperation on Security and Migration Flows through the Western Balkans" conference in Tirana in May 2024.



4. The participants note that many initiatives and measures in the area of ensuring internal security have been and are being carried out in close partnership with the Western Balkan partners. The participants agree that better overview and coordination is needed to improve the effectiveness of measures and to generate synergy effects. In this context, the participants draw particular attention to the work carried out within the framework of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) and call for this platform to be used to improve coordination with the support of the European Commission.
5. Independent of this process, the participants already agree on the following specific measures to improve the situation in the areas of irregular migration, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and organised crime:

Combating irregular migration

6. While all participants face challenges in the field of return, it is agreed, that greater support for the Western Balkan partners in this field is an important element in the fight against irregular migration. The participants and the European Commission will therefore examine how to build on existing programmes, increase coordination and further enhance such support. This includes specific measures be it bilaterally or at EU level such as training in how to carry out returns, support in connecting the Western Balkan partners with the most important countries of origin and increased support from Frontex. Existing instruments, like the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP), should be increasingly utilized in this context.
7. Regarding the reform of the Common European Asylum System, the participating EU Member States and the European Commission underscore that quick and comprehensive implementation is the key to managing and organising migration on the whole and to curbing irregular migration. They recognise that the reform



also has an impact on the Western Balkan partners and they pledge their support in this regard. In the participants' view, establishing a connection to Eurodac as early as possible as part of the Western Balkan partners' EU accession process, would be desirable. In particular, technical systems that may already be established in the Western Balkans in the meantime should be designed in such a way that they are compatible with the Eurodac system.

8. To support more targeted awareness-raising and prevention work in the countries of origin, the participants are examining how they can further support the Western Balkan partners through migration data, for example on the origin of asylum applicants, on whether the applicant poses a threat to security, or on the type of entry ban imposed.
9. Existing data-sharing initiatives such as the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe PRÜM-like Agreement (PCC SEE PRÜM-like Agreement) should be taken into account and could serve as a leading example in such efforts.
10. The participants agree that the most accurate possible situation report is necessary for effective management of migration policy measures. In the interest of making the recording of migration figures more precise, they therefore support the exchange of information and best practices on the collection of migration figures, and increased alignment of data collection.
11. The participants welcome the Western Balkan partners' progress to date on harmonising their visa policies with the EU Visa policy, in particular regarding the list of visa-free and visa required third countries. Swift harmonisation of visa policy with the EU visa policy is a relevant factor in limiting irregular migration into the European Union.



12. The participants take note of the labour migration needs of Western Balkan partners through shortages in the employment market. In this context the participants agree to develop pre-emptive measures to avoid abuse, such as preventing secondary migration.

Combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

13. The participants highlight that trafficking in human beings is a specific and pernicious type of crime, which routinely traffics vulnerable people and links to other crime types such as forced prostitution. The participants agree on working closely together to upskill and share best-practices in this area in order to break the business model of traffickers and at the same time to protect, support and empower the victims with a specific focus on women and children.
14. The participants agree that particularly close international cooperation, for instance in the margins of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, is essential for effectively combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. The participants are therefore in favour of the greatest possible degree of analogous implementation of individual instruments of the EU's internal borders acquis in the Western Balkan partners. This includes, for example, establishing or expanding joint centres for police and customs cooperation, joint patrols and bilateral agreements on border procedures and close cooperation with Member States and the EU Agencies within the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats.
15. The participants underscore the importance of concluding and operationalising Status Agreements and Frontex working arrangements to the full extent possible in order to support the Western Balkan partners' efforts to prevent migrant smugglers and traffickers from using their territory as transit zones.



16. The participants agree that capacity building, for example in the area of border management, is a proven means to support the Western Balkans region. To improve effectiveness and avoid creating duplicate structures, the participants will better coordinate measures in this area with each other. In doing so, they will also take new cooperation formats into consideration and will examine, for example, the possibility of using senior experts – that is, ministerial or police staff who are no longer in active service – to provide support to the Western Balkan partners for a fixed period in an advisory role.

Combating organised crime

17. The participants note that greater international cooperation, on both political and operational level, is indispensable as a response to the transnational networks of organised crime. The participants agree that the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) as an integrated approach to EU internal security is the right approach to ensure this strong cooperation on operational level and commit themselves to extensive participation in EMPACT.
18. The participants acknowledge the linkages between gender-based violence and organised crime and instability. In particular, that various forms of organised crime involve serious forms of gender-based violence and abuse against women and girls. The participants commit to intensify and prioritise sustained improvements to rule of law and support to victim-survivors to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The participants agree on an exchange of best practices in this area and to convening greater coordination and prioritisation of support to accelerate transformative and systemic change on this agenda.
19. The participants agree that developing and expanding good and stable relations is essential in order to attain the most up-to-date, highest quality and most useful



information possible in police information-sharing. Therefore, the participants will examine, firstly, the established direct contacts to law enforcement authorities in the Western Balkan and, secondly, ways to automated data-sharing, for example through the PCC-SEE PRÜM-like Agreement.

20. The participants agree that promising approaches for the effective and comprehensive combating of organised crime include not only close cooperation among law enforcement authorities but also cooperation with administrative authorities such as immigration authorities, weapons licensing authorities and offices for business registration as part of an administrative approach. The participants therefore agree on an exchange of best practices in this area. In this context, they call for the broadest possible participation in the EU-level Operational Action 9.1 within the EMPACT priority “High-risk criminal networks”, which aims to increase the operationalisation of the administrative approach within the framework of international and internal expert meetings as well as to consider the legal possibilities and limitations of applying this approach.
21. The participants commit to fighting corruption and organised crime, enhancing financial integrity, and strengthening cooperation in combating financial crime. They acknowledge the need to prioritize halting illicit financial flows (IFFs) taking into account applicable EU standards, rules, and mechanisms and to explore possibilities for further cooperation.
22. In particular the participants acknowledge the importance of applying systematically the ‘follow-the-money’ approach to deprive criminal groups of their ill-gotten gains and agree to bolster the powers and ability of law enforcement authorities to identify, freeze, manage and confiscate criminal property in line with the revised Financial Action Task Force standards of November 2023



requiring measures to improve confiscation and provisional freeze and seize measures to reinforce international cooperation on asset recovery and to cooperate closely with the Economic and Financial Crimes Centre (EFECC) at Europol.

23. The participants recognise the great importance of large-scale transnational operations in order to take decisive actions against major international drug trafficking networks. They welcome recent successes, such as the major blow to an Albanian drug trafficking network, due to close cooperation between Italian and Albanian law enforcement authorities with the involvement of Europol, and the arrest of prominent drug dealers active in Europe and Brazil, achieved under the aegis of the EUROPOL operational task force Balkan Cartel. The participants will continue and intensify their close cooperation and, in particular, the work of the task force.
24. The participants underline their commitment to combat the trafficking and proliferation of weapons and emphasize that, among other things, the establishment of reliable internal systems to manage and register weapons is an important step in this regard.
25. The participants highlight the need to reinforce the intelligence-led approach to disrupt criminal networks as a whole and agree to ensure an effective response to the threat posed by the most threatening criminal networks identified in Europol's report 'Decoding the EU's most threatening criminal networks' through policy, strategic, tactical, and operational measures.
26. The participants agree that the security and resilience of European ports is crucial in the fight against drug trafficking and therefore the fight against organised crime. They welcome the EU Ports Alliance initiated by the EU Commission to



strengthen the resilience of logistics hubs. The participants consequently agree to exchange best practices and invite the EU Commission to participate in this exchange.

27. The participants agree to build on today's good and constructive talks and to exchange information at the beginning of the next meeting on the progress made with regard to the measures agreed here in order to further advance the operationalization of the Berlin Process in a coordinated manner.