

Amendments to the Contribution of the Cyprus delegation to COSAC

1. Security and the fight against illegal migration

1.2 COSAC considers that greater efforts must be made to protect the EU's external borders, with the goal of preventing irregular entry into the EU, tackling human trafficking and smuggling and preventing loss of life at sea. It also underlines the necessity to significantly step up the effective return of irregular migrants in line with fundamental principles of international and EU law. ***In line with the October European Council Conclusions, COSAC holds that ~~E~~existing readmission agreements and new agreements concluded, should be better fully implemented and new agreements, in a non-discriminatory way towards all EU Member States, while creating and applying the necessary leverage consisting by using all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools. Additional efforts are needed to fully implement the EU-Turkey Statement vis-à-vis all EU member states.***

1.3 COSAC welcomes the Commission's proposals on the Return Directive, the Asylum Agency and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, ensuring the most efficient use of resources and with due respect for the responsibility of the Member States. ***At the same time COSAC invites all concerned parties to take forward the discussions with a view to reaching an agreement on the reform of the Dublin Regulation that will ensure a fairer approach with more effective burden-sharing.***

3. Western Balkans / South Eastern Europe

3.1. Together with the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, COSAC reconfirms its unequivocal support and strengthened engagement for developing a concrete EU perspective with measurable results for the Western Balkan / South Eastern European partners relating to their individual performance and based on shared values and principles, such as democracy, rule of law, good governance, ***media freedom, freedom of expression and independence of the media***, respect for human rights, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, along with the fight against corruption and organised crime.

3.3. While acknowledging the progress made by the Western Balkan / South Eastern European partners, COSAC reiterates that more efforts are needed to ***accelerate domestic reform processes strengthen democratic institutions***

and public administration reform and achieve irreversible and sustainable results. COSAC underlines that continued steady efforts are also needed to tackle outstanding bilateral disputes in the region, including border disputes, ***increasing in this way stability and prosperity in the region.*** COSAC welcomes positive developments in the region, especially the historic agreement between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece in the long-standing name dispute.