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COVER NOTE

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

An open and secure Europe: making it happen

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
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An open and secure Europe: making it happen

INTRODUCTION

In the past five years, policies have been developed to promote a more open and secure Europe. In June 2014 the European Council will set the strategic guidelines for the further development of the area of freedom, security and justice.

Recognising that common European responses are needed to common challenges, the Council will be able to build upon the significant progress made since the Stockholm Programme set ambitious targets in 2009. Since then, a Common European Asylum System has finally been agreed, improving standards for those in need of protection. The Schengen area - one of the most popular achievements of the European project - has been strengthened. Channels for legal migration have been reinforced; there are now clearer conditions for entry and stay and a common set of rights for migrants exists. The common visa policy has undergone major modifications, which have simplified the entry of legitimate travellers into the European Union contributing to its economic growth. Visa requirements for several countries have been abolished.

In the area of security, legislation and practical cooperation now provide common tools to help protect European societies and economies from serious and organised crime. Increased cooperation on law enforcement has proved essential for responding to common threats such as trafficking in human beings, terrorism, cybercrime and corruption.

A framework for the EU's external migration and asylum policies has also been put in place, allowing the EU to engage in a comprehensive manner with countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, and to contribute to on-going UN- and state-led initiatives in the field of migration and development.

Whilst the achievements made since Stockholm are substantial, the work is by no means finished. Much remains to be done to ensure the full implementation and enforcement of existing instruments. Asylum legislation must be transposed coherently. The legal framework for a common migration policy is still to be completed and further efforts are needed in the area of integration. Security concerns need to be addressed with a clear necessity to step up law enforcement cooperation among Member States and EU agencies. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of legislation and policies must be made an integral part of the policy cycle.

The EU and its Member States will also be confronted with new challenges. Europe is part of a globalized and interconnected world where international mobility is expected to increase. More people will want to come to Europe – some temporarily, such as tourists, students and service providers, others on a more permanent basis to work or to seek protection. The EU will be faced with demographic changes, urbanisation, increasingly diverse societies and shortages on the labour market. It will be crucial to maximise the benefits Home Affairs policies can bring to fostering economic growth and attract people with the right skills, as well as legitimate travellers to Europe.

Europe will also face the consequences of instability in many parts of the world and in its immediate neighbourhood in particular. Events like the Arab Spring and the present crisis in Syria call for appropriate and coordinated responses to mixed migration influxes and additional efforts will be needed to avoid further tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea from happening again.

Technology is developing quickly, providing new opportunities for economic growth and fundamentally changing the way people connect and relate to each other. These changes also bring new security challenges. Cybercrime is of increasing concern, trafficking in human beings is becoming more and more sophisticated, cross-border organised crime is appearing in new forms and terrorism remains a threat to security. We must harness technological innovations and science as these can help to meet these risks. The EU will need to continue mobilising the tools essential for security preparedness and resilience, using notably its research and development programme, Horizon 2020.

In an ever increasingly interdependent world, Home Affairs issues need to be embedded in the EU's overall external policy, allowing for reinforced dialogue and cooperation with third countries. Consistency and coherence with the external policy will help in anticipating challenges, better reaching the EU's objectives, promoting its values and fulfilling its international human rights obligations.

This strategic reflection takes place at a time when Europe is gradually pulling out of an economic and social crisis that has left its traces, with still high unemployment and our societies more vulnerable and susceptible to xenophobia. It is under such circumstances that political leaders must take decisive action to ensure an open and secure Europe where fundamental rights are guaranteed, building on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which must be respected by EU institutions when adopting and implementing legislation as well as by Member States when they act within the scope of the EU law. Policies in the field of Home Affairs promote and protect European values, allowing citizens to go about their lives in safety and security, enjoying the richness of the diversity our societies provide.

In preparing this Communication, the Commission consulted a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties, in particular through the "Open and Safe Europe: What's next?" stakeholders conference that took place on 29 and 30 January 2014 and via a public consultation that attracted many contributions. Discussions on our future policies were also held in the European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the Management Boards of EU Agencies.

The debate on Home Affairs policies must be evidence-based. To this end, a selection of the statistical data relevant for this reflection is presented in the Commission staff working document attached to this Communication.

THE POLITICAL PRIORITIES

1. AN EFFECTIVE POLICY OF MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Demographic changes, in particular the shrinking of the working population in Europe, coupled with significant skill shortages in certain sectors (notably engineering, IT and health care) hinder the EU's productivity and thus its economic recovery. Increasing global competition for skills and talents affects labour markets in many Member States and will be a decisive factor for Europe's economic prosperity in the decade ahead.

During the past 15 years, the EU has followed a sector-by-sector approach to legal migration. This has resulted in a common legal framework, which regulates the admission of certain categories of persons, recognises rights and sanctions violations. It has also fostered a shared commitment of Member States on integration and return. It is time now to consolidate all this within a more coherent EU common migration policy that also takes into account the short- and long-term economic needs.

1.1. Maximising the benefits of migration and integration

Europe needs a well-managed migration policy that effectively contributes to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe must attract new talent and compete on the global stage. Synergies with other policy areas are important. The EU should ensure consistency, for example between migration and employment, education, development and trade policies and provide for the short-term movement of highly-skilled professionals supplying services. Attracting and retaining international students, as well as promoting education among legally-resident migrants will help secure supply of the skills needed for the EU labour market in the future.

To better identify economic sectors and occupations that face recruitment difficulties or skills shortages, a joint assessment of needs should be put in place via structural dialogues with Member States, businesses and trade unions on the demand for labour migration and trade related mobility. Recognising that different needs may exist in Member States, a platform of coordination at EU level would be useful to ensure that migration and mobility have a positive impact on the EU economy.

In parallel, measures maximising the potential of migrants already legally residing in the Member States should be strengthened as their employment rates are currently well below the average and many experience social exclusion to a higher degree. The existing job-matching mechanisms such as EURES and the EU Skills Panorama should be further improved and extended to third-country nationals. Pre-departure measures can be useful to assist migrants with information, training or recognition of qualifications – but they should not be seen as a condition for entry into the EU. Migrants' entrepreneurship should be facilitated by ensuring stability of permits and allowing easy access to information and networking opportunities.

Further work will be necessary on the portability of pension rights and social entitlements, for example to allow migrant workers to transfer their occupational pension rights across sectors and countries, including third countries, to the same extent as EU citizens.

To attract talents, the EU should further encourage and enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications and professional skills; this will also help in putting to good use the skills and qualifications of legally resident migrants. To this effect the EU could also open discussion with its international partners. As part of the attractiveness of the EU, students and researchers should benefit from easier and faster visa procedures.

The existing EU rules on admission of migrants and on their rights must be implemented in an effective and coherent way by all Member States. An evaluation of current legislation on legal migration would help to identify gaps, improve consistency and assess the impact of the existing framework. Further steps could be taken to codify and streamline the substantive conditions for admission, as well as of the rights of third-country nationals. This would be a step towards a 'single area of migration', with the aim of facilitating intra-EU mobility of third country nationals, including through mutual recognition of national permits.

Europe is a diverse society where integration remains a challenge. To enhance social cohesion and to reap the full benefits of migration, commitment to effective integration of migrants in the labour market and receiving societies should be strengthened. In these efforts more attention should be paid to gender balance and to address the important employment gap for migrant women. Fair treatment and non-discriminatory access to the labour market should be ensured. Vulnerable migrants, in particular women, young migrants and unaccompanied minors should receive targeted support and a ‘best interest of the child’ approach should be practically applied in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Building on previous work in the field of integration, successful policies could be identified and best practices disseminated. Further work will be necessary on capacity building and on engaging with local and regional authorities, which are at the forefront of integration policies.

1.2. A credible approach to irregular migration and return

Preventing and reducing irregular migration is an essential part of any well-managed migration system. Reducing irregular migration requires a combination of measures. Irregular migration is often linked to smuggling of people and trafficking in human beings and prompted by a demand from employers offering illegal labour opportunities. Cooperation with countries of origin and transit is of the essence and should be an integral part of the UE external actions, including development cooperation.

A thorough evaluation of the current rules on smuggling of people could be pursued and a new comprehensive EU strategy could make the utmost of the existing tools, addressing the demand side of irregular migration and dealing with the criminal networks involved. More preventive measures, including information campaigns in countries of origin and transit should be carried out in order to alert persons to the risks of irregular migration.

The Union will continue to give priority to voluntary return efforts and consideration should be given to European assisted voluntary return and reintegration measures that could be implemented in close cooperation with countries of origin, international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

In parallel, the EU needs to continue cooperating with third-countries to ensure the full application of existing readmission obligations in international agreements concluded with third countries that ensure effective return of third-country nationals without a legal right to stay in the EU. New readmission agreements with other important countries of origin may have to be considered while exploiting all existing possibilities in the EU external domain. The EU should continue enforcing the return policy based on common standards that ensure a credible and humane return, respecting fundamental rights and the dignity of each individual.

2. SCHENGEN, VISA AND EXTERNAL BORDERS

2.1. Schengen

The creation of the Schengen area, allowing people to travel without being subject to checks, is a core part of the European construction. Every year, European citizens make over 1.25 billion journeys for tourism, business or to visit friends and relatives all over Europe without obstacles at internal borders. As well as being popular with citizens, this free movement also brings huge benefits to the European economy. The Schengen area should be completed. The effective implementation of the recently agreed changes to the governance of Schengen is a key priority. It should help increase mutual trust among Schengen states, prevent abuses and

allow the Union to handle situations where a Member State is not fulfilling its obligations to control its section of the external borders.

Particular attention must be paid to the smooth operation of the Schengen Information System (SIS II) in order to safeguard security and the free movement of people. This task is a core responsibility for the EU agency for large scale systems (EU-LISA) established in 2012. In addition to delivering the effective operation of both current and future IT systems in the Home Affairs area, in the coming years EU-LISA should seek synergies between the relevant EU agencies as regards IT systems security and development.

2.2. Enhancing the implementation of the common visa policy

The goal of visa policy should be to facilitate travel opportunities for legitimate travellers and make the Schengen area a more attractive destination for third-country nationals, while maintaining a high level of security. It is in the EU's interest to be open to visitors, contributing to economic growth. It is time to complete the common visa policy by revising the Schengen Visa Code to ensure more convergence in how Schengen visas are processed by Member States and by completing the world wide roll-out of the Visa Information System (VIS). Moving towards a system based more on the assessment of individuals that on nationalities could be considered following an evaluation of the impact of such a policy.

We should continue to encourage local consular cooperation and exchange of information with the aim of ensuring more harmonised and swift issuance of visas. The establishment of Schengen Visa Centres should be encouraged, to increase and rationalise Member States' presence in third-countries for collecting and deciding on visa applications.

A smart visa policy should also entail regular reviews of the lists of countries for whose citizens' visas are required. To facilitate closer cooperation between the EU and partner countries and increase people-to-people contacts, visa facilitation agreements could be considered where liberalisation is not yet a realistic option. The current practice of concluding readmission agreements in parallel to any visa facilitation agreement has proven useful and should be continued in the future.

2.3. Integrated management of the external borders

Over the years, significant progress has been made towards an integrated management of the EU's external borders. Thanks to its revised mandate, the role of FRONTEX has been enhanced, allowing better support to Member States involved in joint operations and increased cooperation with third countries. Eurosur will reinforce cooperation between Member States and FRONTEX, contributing to the management of the external borders and helping to save lives, especially in the Mediterranean Sea. In line with the EU Maritime Security Strategy cooperation between maritime actors should also be pursued.

However, with the increasing numbers of people coming to the EU and a further increase expected, especially in the numbers using air travel, the EU needs to move towards modern and more efficient border management, using state-of-the art technology. Access to Europe should be facilitated for legitimate travellers, while enhancing border security. Implementation of the 'Smart Borders package' consisting of a European Entry/Exit System and the Registered Travellers Programme should therefore be a priority. New approaches to effective border management could be considered, taking account of the assessment of the feasibility of establishing a European System of Border Guards.

3. A COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM IN PRACTICE

In the coming years, and in a context of possible increases in the number of asylum seekers, the EU may face major challenges concerning international protection. Complex and mixed flows of migrants place pressure on the response capacities of Member States with regard to processing asylum claims, reception and responding to the needs of vulnerable groups as well as integration of those recognised as being in need of international protection.

3.1. Consolidation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

The legislation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is now agreed, providing better access to asylum for those in need of protection, higher quality of reception conditions and faster, more reliable asylum decisions. Effective transposition and coherent implementation now needs to happen, which will enable Member States to respond to the challenges in international protection.

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) will play an important role in this endeavour, helping to improve the quality of asylum assessments and harmonising practices across the EU, also by monitoring the quality of asylum decisions and pooling Member States' Country of Origin Information (COI).

New rules on the mutual recognition of asylum decisions across Member States and a framework for transfer of protection should be developed in line with the Treaty objective of creating a uniform status valid throughout the EU. This would reduce obstacles to movement within the EU and facilitate the transfer of protection-related benefits across internal borders.

3.2. Responsibility and Solidarity

Responsibility and solidarity must go hand in hand. This means on the one hand that Member States must comply fully with the rules of the Union *acquis*, and on the other, that Member States should support other Member States facing high temporary pressure on their asylum systems.

Relocation of the beneficiaries of international protection, which has been piloted in recent years from Malta, is one form of solidarity that should be enhanced. A new form that could be developed in the coming years is the joint processing of asylum applications. Pooling of reception places at times of emergency could also be explored to ensure that no countries are faced with overcrowding whilst others have spare capacity. Further ways of achieving a more even responsibility sharing between Member States should be part of the future reflection.

3.3. Prevention and Handling of crises

A mechanism for early warning, preparedness and crisis management is now anchored within the Dublin Regulation. The proper application of each of these phases will require a greater flow of information from Member States to the Commission and EASO on the current situation and on any deficiencies that could lead to a crisis. This means more data collection and risk analysis based on information supplied by the Member States, EU Delegations, EU Agencies, international organisations and other sources. Deficiencies in the asylum systems of Member States should be avoided through preventive measures, and contingency planning.

In order to enhance the preparedness of the Union to handle mass influxes, the existing framework on temporary protection should be evaluated, and if necessary, amended to make it a more practical and flexible instrument.

3.4. Addressing External Challenges and Legal Routes to Access Asylum in the EU

Promoting high standards of protection in countries of transit and origin and reducing the numbers of people who make hazardous journeys across the Sahara, the Mediterranean and other routes in the hope of reaching Europe should be stepped up as an integral part of the EU's external policies.

It is necessary to expand the scope of the existing Regional Protection Programmes (RPP), such as those in North Africa and the Horn of Africa and to assess the need to establish new ones. RPPs should put a stronger emphasis on reinforcing national authorities' capacity to address human displacements, including the capacity to receive international assistance and promoting positive impacts of refugees on local communities.

The EU should seek to ensure a more orderly arrival of persons with well-founded protection needs, reducing the scope for human smuggling and human tragedies.

With new funding available, and in close cooperation with the EU Development policy, the EU should increase its commitment to resettlement, which can offer long-term solutions to people identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as being in need of protection. The EU's resettlement record so far is relatively modest. Developing countries continue to host the vast bulk of the world's refugees. All 28 Member States should show more solidarity with host countries in the developing world by participating in resettlement activities and shouldering a greater share of the responsibility.

Protected Entry Procedures – enabling people to request protection without undertaking a potentially lethal journey to reach the EU border – could complement resettlement, starting with a coordinated approach to humanitarian visas and common guidelines. A feasibility study on possible joint processing of protection claims outside the EU, without prejudice to the existing right of access to asylum procedures in the EU, could be initiated.

4. FURTHER STRENGTHENING THE GLOBAL APPROACH TO MIGRATION AND MOBILITY (GAMM)

Steps taken to ensure freedom, security and justice in Europe are also influenced by events and developments outside the EU. Political change and instability, widening gaps in prosperity and climate change are drivers for both voluntary mobility on a larger scale and forced displacement resulting in pressure on EU's external borders. The EU has to engage more effectively with neighbouring countries, both East and South, and those further afield to address the root causes of irregular and forced migration. To this end, the EU should continue to assist countries of origin and transit to strengthen their capacity to prevent irregular migration and combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, improve border management, as well as asylum and reception capacities.

The EU must strengthen partnerships with third-countries in the field of migration and mobility, in order to take full advantage of the role that GAMM framework and instruments. Mobility Partnerships in particular can play an important role in addressing labour and skills shortages in Europe and to facilitate trade related mobility. Visa liberalisation dialogues and facilitation of the issuance of short-term visas can also contribute to spurring economic growth in the EU and promoting development in third countries.

Enhancing the impact of the GAMM in third countries therefore needs to be a priority. External relations concerns and priorities should be adequately reflected when defining

objectives and actions. Cooperation among the various stakeholders is essential. The capacities of the EEAS, including the EU Delegations, should be fully exploited to ensure the efficiency and coherence of EU action.

Under the EU migration and development agenda, attention should be given to maximising the development impacts of South-South migration, mainstreaming migration policy into national development and poverty reduction plans, strengthening Policy Coherence for Development, as well as promoting reintegration measures for returning migrants. Such cooperation to ensure well-managed migration can produce significant benefits for development in countries of origin.

The EU should step up its relations with countries of the neighbourhood through dialogues on migration, mobility and security and the establishment and implementation of Mobility Partnerships. Full implementation of such Partnerships with Morocco (signed in 2013) and Tunisia (signed in 2014) needs to be ensured. The EU should continue to invest in regional migration dialogue processes and bilateral relations with priority countries beyond the neighbourhood, also continuing its support for human rights, democracy and fundamental values and good governance.

5. A EUROPE THAT PROTECTS

In 2010 the EU adopted its first Internal Security Strategy (ISS) and an accompanying action plan. The strategy focuses on priority areas where common action at EU level would address the main security threats and brings added value to Member States' efforts. It recognises the need to strengthen security whilst fully respecting fundamental rights, including the right to privacy and protection of personal data. The five strategic objectives chosen were (1) the disruption of international criminal networks, (2) the prevention of terrorism and addressing radicalisation and recruitment, (3) raising levels of security for citizens and businesses in cyberspace, (4) strengthening security through border management and (5) increasing Europe's resilience to crises and disasters. These objectives remain valid. However, with challenges evolving, the Commission, Member States and the European Parliament should work together in developing an updated version of the ISS, reviewing the actions under each objective for 2015-2020. Promoting an approach based on prevention and law enforcement, the renewed ISS should also encourage greater synergies between Home Affairs and other policy areas related to internal security, such as transport, the internal market, the customs union, research and development, the digital market, civil protection and external relations. Research in the field of security has been funded within the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development. For the next Programme, Horizon 2020, an increased effort is foreseen. The EU will continue supporting the European security sector with a view to achieving strategic security priorities.

5.1. Disruption of international crime networks

Penetration of the EU's economy by organized criminal groups is a security risk. Serious crimes with a cross-border dimension, such as corruption, trafficking in human beings, drugs, firearms and other illicit goods, and sexual exploitation of children cause grave harm to victims and to society as a whole. A number of those threats are growing in scale. Organised crime is increasingly flexible and is developing its activities within and beyond Europe's borders. It continues to pose an important threat to the EU's internal security and can have destabilising effects on third countries.

The EU must continue to adapt and strengthen its response to those threats, coordinating its action within the EU and beyond. Operational cooperation between Member States'

authorities, focusing on priorities agreed at EU level within the Policy Cycle for Serious and Organised Crime is essential in this effort. Mutual trust should be strengthened, and the use of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) and other joint operations should be increased, supported by EU funds and agencies. The need for EU action to ensure that JITs practical cooperation is not hampered by divergent national rules on investigative techniques should be examined.

Information exchange between Member States' law enforcement authorities with relevant EU agencies and among EU agencies should be stepped up, making full use of existing EU instruments. Europol's role as hub for information exchange across the EU should be strengthened, in close cooperation with Member States, OLAF and FRONTEX. All Member States should set up Single Points of Contact, taking into account the relevant framework of customs cooperation. Information exchange systems could be made more interoperable, taking into account the developments under the broader framework of the Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administration.

To support practical cooperation, EU-level training of law enforcement personnel should be developed further. The European Law Enforcement Training Scheme should be fully implemented in the years to come, to benefit a high number of officials from of all ranks of law enforcement, border guards and customs officers.

At the same time, the EU needs to intensify efforts specifically targeted at the crimes that cause the most harm to victims and to society. Corruption undermines trust in democracy, damages the internal market, discourages foreign investment, deprives public authorities of tax revenues, and facilitates the activities of organised crime groups. To tackle corruption more effectively, Member States should follow the suggestions made in the EU Anti-Corruption Report, which publication should continue in the years to come. Anti-corruption measures should be better linked to EU policy areas and EU funding should support institutional and administrative capacity-building. Cooperation between EU institutions, Member States and international organisations should be further developed.

Organised criminal groups are driven by the vast gains generated by illicit trafficking, corruption, financial crime and other criminal activities. More work is needed to combat that incentive and to prevent criminal profits from infiltrating the legal economy. The Directive on the freezing and confiscation of proceeds of crime in the EU needs to be transposed and implemented by all Member States without delay. Asset Recovery Offices, law enforcement, judicial and administrative authorities, such as tax or licensing bodies, should step up cooperation to improve tracing of assets. Money laundering helps criminal groups hide the proceeds of their crimes. To prevent the misuse of the financial system, the proposal for a fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive must be adopted, transposed and implemented soon and the need for EU criminal anti-money laundering legislation must be examined.

Trafficking in human beings is a growing threat. The EU adopted an EU Strategy 2012-2016 aimed at eradicating this crime and a Directive which must now be fully transposed and implemented without delay. The implementation of the strategy must be completed, including aspects relating to human trafficking in third countries. A post-2016 Strategy should be established, covering among others prevention, assistance to victims, safe-return and reintegration, and the role of the internet. The need to criminalise the intentional use of services of human trafficking victims should be examined. To reach those objectives, the position of EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator should be prolonged.

Trafficking in illicit drugs remains an extremely profitable business for organised crime. In 2013, Europol and the EU's Drugs Agency (EMCDDA) jointly produced the first ever "Drug Markets Report", which pointed to a growth in new psychoactive substances. The

Commission proposed legislation to withdraw such substances quickly from the market if they are harmful to health, while respecting legitimate industrial and commercial uses. That legislation too should be adopted and implemented as part of the balanced approach reflected in the EU Drugs Strategy.

Sexual exploitation and abuse of children cause life-long damage to its victims. The EU Directive targeting on-line exploitation must be transposed and implemented as a matter of priority. The importance of protecting children against sexual crimes should be more mainstreamed into other EU policy areas, and the need for a comprehensive EU strategy examined.

Firearms-related violence continues to cause serious injuries and loss of human life throughout the EU and more must be done to address illicit trafficking in firearms. Reviewing existing EU legislation on the sale and intra-EU transfer of firearms would, if combined with stronger practical law enforcement efforts, reduce the risk of illegal use and trafficking of firearms.

Finally, the effectiveness of existing agreements and arrangements for the sharing of law enforcement information with third countries should remain under review and, if necessary, be developed further. The increasing use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data, both in third countries and among Member States, should be addressed in the context of a new regulatory framework at EU level, guaranteeing a high level of data protection for both the processing of PNR data within the EU and for the transfer of PNR data from the EU to third countries. The EU PNR instrument should be finally adopted and implemented. Also, the Data Retention Directive should be reviewed, in parallel with a revision of the e-Privacy Directive and taking into account the negotiations on the Data Protection Framework.

5.2. Prevention of terrorism and addressing radicalisation and recruitment

Over the past years several terrorist attacks have taken place, mostly by individuals or smaller groups but many with severe consequences. The threat from terrorism and violent extremism will pose a serious challenge to the EU in the coming years. There is a worrying trend with mostly young people going to other countries such as Syria to become foreign fighters. Whilst there, some link up with terrorist groups. On return, they could pose a serious security threat to the EU.

Our response must be to prevent terrorism, as set out in the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy, and address radicalisation leading to terrorism. We need to strengthen our response to violent extremism and terrorism in a comprehensive manner, taking into account both internal and external dimensions. The planned updated EU Strategy to Combat Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism will be vital to guide further work. As proposed by the Commission, the focus should be on helping people who want to leave environments of extremism, training of local actors, engaging with local communities, working more with the private sector to counter online radicalisation, and better integrating the internal actions with external efforts. Countering violent extremism should continue to be part of EU development and security assistance to third countries, including aspects of education, civil society, gender, governance and media.

To support these efforts the Radicalisation Awareness Network should be strengthened and developed into a knowledge hub collecting good practises and better coordinating work between practitioners.

The EU has a role in helping Member States to network law enforcement and improve training and exercises for Law Enforcement authorities responsible for handling terrorist attacks. ATLAS, an EU network of anti-terror intervention forces, conducted in 2013 the biggest EU exercise ever. This work should be taken forward with more exercises at operational, but also strategic, level. To have better trained and more interoperable forces should be a goal for the coming years.

The EU has already agreed on legislation to make it more difficult to access precursors to produce explosives. Now we must make sure it is being implemented in an effective way. There is also a need to enhance and further prioritise work on Chemicals, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear materials and Explosives.

Counter-Terrorism Coordination needs to take into account the new institutional structures put in place by the Lisbon Treaty, including to support the work of the High Representative/EEAS on EU external relations in particular in fostering better communication between the Union and third countries.

5.3. Raising levels of security for citizens and businesses in cyberspace

Our societies are more and more dependent on the internet. There is a need to build secure and trustworthy systems so that people and businesses can make full use of the potential of the internet. Ensuring that electronic payments can be made in a secure manner is essential. New challenges are however emerging, including the use of digital currencies and of online platforms facilitating many forms of serious and organised crimes. The number of cyber-attacks is likely to increase in the coming years, despite important measures taken to improve the capabilities to fight cybercrime and strengthen cyber security.

The operational capacity to fight cybercrime needs to be increased. The EU has set up a European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) within Europol. Within its first year in existence, the Centre has already demonstrated its value by supporting investigations undertaken by

Member States into a broad range of crimes, ranging from fraud to online child sexual abuse. The Commission will continue to support the development of EC3 as the focal point to fight cybercrime in Europe. One of the major tasks for the EU will be to assist Member States in developing their capabilities to fight cybercrime. Ideally all Member States should be equipped with a cybercrime centre.

At strategic level, the EU needs a more coordinated response. The first ever EU Cyber Security Strategy has been adopted with the aim of creating the safest online environment in the world. This vision now needs to be translated into action.

The Strategy also recognises the need for greater international cooperation, both at strategic and operational level. In this respect, the agreement reached with the US at the summit in 2010 to set up a working group on cyber-security and cybercrime has proved to be useful for achieving concrete results, in particular the Global Alliance to combat Sexual Abuse online, set up by the EU and the US. At present, the Alliance brings together 52 countries from all over the world, and can serve to inspire future initiatives. The EU should make sure that it continues to deliver results, as well as pushing for more countries to join.

The EU has already agreed on tougher legislation to fight cybercrime, which needs to be implemented swiftly. Effective action in this domain also requires stepping up cooperation with the private sector. There is also a need to clarify jurisdiction in cyber space. In this respect, the Council of Europe's Budapest Convention on Cybercrime will continue to play an important role for global cooperation and Member States that have not yet ratified the convention should do so.

5.4. Strengthening security through border management

A uniform and high standard of border security and management in full respect of fundamental rights is indispensable. Border management policies have a major role to play in counteracting cross-border crime and maintaining a high level of security.

The integrated border management strategy should be updated based on the experience gained from implementing the current policy instruments. The EU should consider how existing systems and platforms can be integrated and should aim for further cooperation at national level between border guards and other authorities working at the border in order to increase security.

In relation to the movement of goods, following the Commission's Communication of 2013, a strategy will be presented in 2014 on Customs Risk Management and Security of the Supply Chain. This initiative will allow for more effective risk management by: improving the availability and use of supply chain data; strengthening cooperation and coordination among customs authorities internationally and with other law enforcement and security agencies; reinforcing capacities at Member State and EU level for a more integrated and consistent EU response to supply chain risks.

5.5. Increasing Europe's resilience to crises and disasters

The EU has significantly enhanced its capacity to prevent, prepare and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Focus will now be on making sure that the systems put in place work. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre has assumed its role as a service provider and as a platform for the coordination of response to major disasters.

A key challenge will be to fully implement the new civil protection legislation, which maps out future work at EU level in this field. Modalities for the use of the solidarity clause, which provide the framework for responding to major crisis, remain to be agreed. Mainstreaming disaster management considerations in other policies and funds, as well as strengthening the input of science and innovation into disaster management will be pursued.

Operational challenges such as interoperability of equipment and communication systems need to be addressed and work on training and exercises will have to be intensified.

5.6. Building internal security in a global context

European internal security also means acting beyond EU borders and in cooperation with third country partners. Radicalisation, fight against trafficking of human beings and fight against drug trafficking for example require such cooperation.

The levels of instability in many third countries threaten democracy, the rule of law and human rights within the countries but could also have important impacts on the EU. Internal security concerns should be more systematically addressed as part of EU external policies, linked to EU assistance and cooperation programmes and other policy tools used for international cooperation. This should be done by providing assistance in law enforcement capacity-building, by offering training, or by sharing knowledge and best practice. The EU will reinforce its development cooperation with its partners, supporting their efforts to strengthen protection of human rights, the rule of law, governance aspects such as transparency, participation and accountability.

The EU should continue to work with partners at national and regional level towards constructing a shared agenda on security, looking at synergies and coherence with Member States and other donors. In order to reflect home affairs strategic priorities in the international agenda, cooperation with the EEAS should be further strengthened.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring freedom, security and justice is a key objective for the European Union. Since 1999, when the Amsterdam Treaty came into force and the Tampere Programme was adopted, much has been done to safeguard an open and secure Europe, anchored in the respect for fundamental rights and based on a determination to serve European citizens. Implementation of legislation and consolidation of these achievements as well as enhanced practical cooperation need to be priorities for future work. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of legislation and policies will allow adjusting our actions and the strategic use of EU funding will enable a better focus on EU priorities in line with EU Institutions' commitment to smart regulation. The citizens-oriented approach should remain a guiding principle for further work.

At the same time we need to focus attention on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. It must be clear to all that the European Parliament, the Member States, the Commission, the High representative/EEAS, EU Agencies, and many others will have to join forces more strongly to be able to respond in an effective manner to a changing environment. This Communication aims at identifying such challenges and presents measures that the Commission believes should be discussed with the European Parliament and the Council, and

should be taken into account when the European Council defines its strategic guidelines in accordance with Article 68.