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COVER NOTE

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL**

European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Delivering on migration is and will continue to be a political priority. Citizens expect a migration and asylum policy that is fair and firm, one that effectively manages migration and remains true to European values.

Building on steady progress during the last years, the European Union is now opening a new chapter. The Commission and the Member States have been working closely together to **reduce illegal migration and improve migration management**. The combination of the reforms brought by the Pact on Migration and Asylum (the Pact) balancing solidarity and responsibility, an assertive migration diplomacy, and effective operational cooperation within and outside the Union is showing results, notably with a gradual reduction in illegal arrivals since 2023 [1].

An EU approach to managing migration is indispensable to deliver on citizens' expectations – one where the EU shows that it is able to **prevent illegal migration** and break the business of criminal smuggling networks, **protect people** fleeing war and persecution, and **encourage talent** to come to the EU to boost the competitiveness of our economy.

Most migrants arriving and staying in the Union illegally are not eligible for any form of protection and have no right to stay [2]. Moreover, only about a fourth of those who have no right to stay actually leave the Union [3]. There can be **no tolerance for misusing a system** designed to provide protection to those in genuine need. This dysfunctional situation has created loopholes for enduring illegal residence in the Union – with wide-ranging implications for education, housing and local services – thereby undermining public trust in Europe's capacity to manage migration and shape its migration policy based on European interests. It also impacts Europe's capacity to attract the additional workforce that our economies and labour markets urgently need. In addition, since 2021, the weaponisation of migration by Belarus and Russia has further complicated the Union's migration and security landscape, creating new forms of hybrid threats using migration for political purposes.

90% of people entering the EU illegally do so using services provided by criminal groups and **smuggling networks** [4] that put peoples' lives at risk in the desert and on the seas, strip people of their dignity in the pursuit of profit and violate fundamental rights. Migrant smuggling fuels a criminal system that creates social tension and insecurity along migratory routes. While seeking a better life in the European Union may be legitimate, those not entitled to protection must do so lawfully by using the appropriate legal channels. Every smuggling trip avoided is potentially a life saved.

The EU remains committed to being a space that **protects people fleeing war and persecution**. Granting protection to those who need it, is an obligation under Union and international law. Europe itself provides protection for large numbers of refugees, and internationally, Union diplomacy and financial support help protect asylum seekers and refugees hosted in third countries.

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[1] Illegal border crossings into the EU show a steady decrease, with overall figures having declined by 26% in 2025, following a 38% decrease in 2024 on all main routes to the Union. International protection applications follow a similar decreasing trend (-21%).

[2] Based on Eurostat data, the recognition rate for 2024 stood at 51.4%, whereas it dropped to just above 33% the first half of 2025, rising to 42.8% in quarter three of 2025.

[3] Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), based on Eurostat data for the period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/NL/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0795.

[4] https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas/migrant-smuggling

The EU's **support to Ukrainians** is the most recent telling example of a long-lasting tradition that developed gradually over time. European citizens opened their homes to refugees fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine (⁵), which triggered the largest displacement in Europe since the Second World War, with more than four million displaced persons staying in the Union. Providing temporary protection to Ukrainians remains a priority for the Union and the Member States, just as is supporting them to return home to help rebuild their country when the situation allows based on a coordinated and gradual approach. Furthermore, between 2015 and 2024, some 3.9 million asylum seekers received a protection status in the EU, in addition to temporary protection beneficiaries. In 2024 alone, some 438 000 asylum seekers received protection (⁶).

However, abuses of the Member States' asylum systems undermine their **capacity to provide protection** and **adequate reception to those in need**, as well as to offer **integration** programmes to migrants entitled to stay in the Union. Furthermore, those abuses equally undermine the Schengen area because unauthorised secondary movements undercut the very idea of free movement without internal borders. The Pact overhauls the European migration and asylum system, providing for more control over illegal migration, simplifying the rules and procedures on asylum, strengthening resilience and preparedness, and introducing instruments dedicated to managing possible future crises.

Preventing illegal migration, protecting people fleeing war and persecution and encouraging talent mobility is in the mutual interest of the EU and its partners. While the Union continues to work on improving its migration management systems, the key to its success lies in **good cooperation with partner countries outside the EU**. In the end, no country can address the challenges of this global phenomenon on its own and all partners should play their role in a whole-of-route approach. While continuing to be grounded in a solid internal framework, going forward the European migration policy should increase its focus on cooperation with partner countries. The Commission, in cooperation with Member States, in a Team Europe approach, will redouble its efforts in that direction.

The Union remains an **attractive destination for tourists, students, researchers and workers**, with more than 90% of non-EU nationals arriving to the EU in a legal and controlled manned. This has contributed to our economies, our societies and shaped our cultures. In 2024, 1.7 million people came to the EU legally to work and study (⁷). The recent digitalisation of the EU's border management and visa policies are improving the experience of travellers by reducing waiting times and streamlining procedures, while maintaining the highest security standards.

The EU is an open, globally connected continent, with an ageing and shrinking working population and today is facing labour and skills shortages in many sectors. To keep growing economically, foster competitiveness and promote open strategic autonomy, the Union must become a global magnet for **attracting and retaining talent**. For this purpose, the Union and its Member States should address the bottlenecks that slow down our systems, including related to visa processing and recognition of qualifications, and upscale strategic cooperation with partners to facilitate talent's access to the Union and Member States, promoting the arrival of students, researchers and workers at all skills levels, as well as maximising the human potential of all who are already here.

(⁵) Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine - monthly statistics - Statistics Explained - Eurostat
(⁶) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/migration-2025#international-protection; top 3 countries of origin are Syria, Afghanistan and Venezuela.
(⁷) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_%E2%80%93_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work

A longer-term perspective should also take account of ongoing **technological developments**, which are opening new, still untapped opportunities for more effective and safe migration processes. The Strategy aims to harvest the potential of digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in migration and asylum to provide Member States with modern, secure and efficient tools to improve the quality, consistency and timeliness of decision making, and to enhance security, while improving services for people.

This Strategy was developed in accordance with the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation ([8]) and builds upon the **national strategies** submitted by the Member States ([9]) in line with that Regulation ([10]) and takes into account the views expressed by the European Parliament ([11]), the Member States, and various stakeholders, including the expertise of the EU Agencies. It aims to deliver a vision for a European migration and asylum policy that strengthens the EU's cohesion, seeks innovative ways forward, and asserts the EU's regional and global role over the next five years. The actions under this Strategy are rooted in the respect of fundamental rights in accordance with the Charter and in full respect of our international obligations.

To achieve the main objectives of this Strategy – preventing illegal migration, protecting those in need and attracting talent to the EU – the Union should pursue the following five priorities:

Stepping up Migration Diplomacy	Strong EU borders to enhance control and security	A fair, firm and adaptable asylum and migration system
More effective return and readmission	**Labour and talent mobility to boost competitiveness**	

2. STEPPING UP MIGRATION DIPLOMACY

Building on the tangible results of recent years, the Union's focus over the coming five years needs to be on continuing to prevent people from putting their lives at risk in dangerous journeys, to **sustain the reduction in illegal arrivals** to the EU, and to reduce the pressure on the asylum and migration systems by supporting the implementation of the reforms introduced by the Pact and promoting globally the respect of migrants and refugees' fundamental rights.

The ongoing work to equip the Union with a modern, fair and efficient migration management and asylum system must go hand-in-hand with an effective **migration diplomacy that promotes the interests of the Union and stays true to European values**. It needs to be rooted in the principle that managing migration is a joint responsibility, with

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([8]) Article 8 of the Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013; ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1351/oj.
([9]) 25 Member States submitted their national strategies to the Commission; Denmark is not bound by the obligation to submit a national strategy, while Hungary informed that it will not submit one.
([10]) Article 7 of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation.
([11]) Hearing of the LIBE committee of 4 December 2025.

all actors along the migratory routes having their role to play. Over the next five years, this principle will guide the Union's action in strengthening the existing comprehensive partnerships and launching new ones with key countries of origin and transit of migration, as well as with the main host countries of refugees, building trust with our partners, and promoting the role of the EU as a central actor in the global debate and efforts to manage migration. The Union continues to shape its relations with third countries on migration-related matters **promoting its values and interests** and cooperating with partners in managing the pressures related to migration in a mutually beneficial manner, as it is in our common interest to work together to respond to this shared challenge.

Migration diplomacy should be **comprehensive**, contributing to better preventing and controlling irregular departures, dismantling migrant smuggling networks and addressing root causes of migration, providing protection close to the place of origin, and offering resettlement and other complementary pathways to people in need of protection. It should also ensure the swift and effective return and readmission of own nationals with no right to stay in the Union, and, on the other hand, help attract workers, students and researchers with the skills and talent that would support European competitiveness, while also contributing to the economic development of the countries of origin.

These **principles are already reflected in the partnerships** the EU has been establishing with third countries in the past years, notably with Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania and Tunisia. These are also integral to the Pact for the Mediterranean ([12]), which promotes a partnership-based and whole-of-the-route approach to migration, as part of an overall comprehensive strategy that strengthens our relations with our Southern neighbourhood partners. The Union should continue to promote this approach as it offers further stability, real opportunities, and ensures cooperation on effective and rights-based migration governance between the EU and partners along the different routes.

It is important that the EU and its Member States pursue an assertive migration diplomacy by reinforcing the **links with other policies and using leverages and incentives**, in line with the calls of the European Council ([13]) over the last years. The toolbox at the Union's disposal includes visa policy, by means of the mechanism of Article 25a of the Visa Code and the Visa Suspension Mechanism, as well as trade, through the recently agreed revision of the Generalised Scheme of Preference Regulation, which will give the possibility to temporarily withdraw trade preference in case of a lack of cooperation on readmission. This toolbox should also extend to external financing, as proposed by the Commission in the Global Europe Regulation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034. It should be combined with EU Member States' bilateral tools, leverages and incentives to be mobilised in support of joint EU actions. The Commission and the High Representative will explore possible new incentives and leverages in other policy areas as well, to promote the EU interest and create new opportunities for international cooperation.

The Union will continue to actively engage in relevant multilateral fora to build reliable partnerships and **improve global migration governance.** This includes the International Migration Review Forum of the United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration expected in May 2026, and continuing support to the implementation of the Global Compact for Refugees. It will also engage with the **Council of Europe** on addressing current challenges posed by illegal migration and migrant smuggling ([14]). The Commission will contribute to the ongoing reflection of the Council of Europe in the

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([12]) Joint Communication to the European Parliament the Council the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The Pact for the Mediterranean – One Sea, One Pact, One Future, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0026.
([13]) European Council, 20 March 2025, Conclusions, paragraph 25, EUCO 1/25.
([14]) Migration challenges: Council of Europe ministers call for political declaration on rights - Portal

context of the initiative launched during the informal Ministerial Conference of 10 December 2025 on the application of the European Convention of Human Rights fully taking into account both the objectives of protecting rights and ensuring security.

To tackle the **root causes** that lie behind illegal migration, the Union and its Member States will continue working on addressing global poverty, promoting economic development, and boosting peace and security, notably by continuing to support the United Nations system, engaging actively in current reforms, where appropriate, and aiming to provide needed support in the face of unprecedented resource gaps, in line with EU interests.

Whole-of-route approach and deepening cooperation with the EU neighbourhood

The Commission will continue to promote a **whole-of-route approach** to address the multi-faceted challenges of mixed migration movements of economic migrants and people seeking protection, and support third countries in reinforcing their migration, border management, asylum and returns systems, including to build their capacities to provide adequate reception and protection solutions for asylum seekers and refugees, focusing primarily on countries close to migrants' places of origin. Actions will be tailor-made to each context and may range from efforts to counter migrant smuggling and human trafficking, border management, registration, providing protection and strengthening service provision systems that include host communities, as well as managing legal pathways and ensuring swift, safe and dignified return and readmission and sustainable reintegration.

Continuous close cooperation with international organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other relevant international governmental organisations, will be key to support the whole-of-route approach to match the needs of the EU's increased international engagement. The Commission aims to support innovative ways to promote safe spaces for protection of asylum seekers and refugees closer to their countries of origin, to help prevent dangerous journeys that lead to loss of life along the routes, and to support voluntary return and reintegration programmes from third countries to countries of origin. The whole-of-route approach could include the possible setting up or strengthening of existing [15] **multi-purpose centres** along the main migratory routes, in agreement with the third country concerned and in cooperation with international organisations.

EU candidate countries and potential candidates should also play a role in migration management. The establishment of efficient asylum and migration management systems, and the alignment of migration, visa and border management policies with those of the EU are a necessary precondition for accession to the Union. The EU should especially maintain deep cooperation and support **enlargement partners** with a focus on strengthening border management, fighting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, supporting alignment with the EU *acquis* on migration, asylum and visa policies and enhancing readmission and returns. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and Europol will continue to support and cooperate with partners. The EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans has already contributed to a significant decrease of illegal border crossings along the Western Balkans route and cooperation should continue under this framework.

Preventing dangerous journeys and saving lives

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[15] For example, within the framework of the Migration Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (MPRR-SSA) https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/projects/migrant-protection-return-and-reintegration-programme-sub-saharan-africa-mprr-ssa_en.

Migrant smuggling is a heinous, often transnational, crime that exploits people, endangering their lives and dignity, for the economic benefit of criminal networks, or that is used by state actors aiming at undermining the security of the Union. It undermines our migration management system and challenges the protection of our external borders. The EU and its Member States, not criminal organisations, must be the ones deciding who comes to the Union and under which circumstances.

To disrupt the business model of smugglers, prevent irregular departures and the loss of lives, the EU needs to continue its efforts to strengthen the capacities of our partners to **control and manage borders upon entry and exit**, and to deploy their search and rescue capacity, to minimise incidents and protect people against severe risks. The earlier the intervention along the route, the higher the chances to prevent incidents and deaths. Recent EU initiatives have translated into a more effective prevention of dangerous journeys.

To respond efficiently, the EU also needs to work on strengthening international cooperation, making the **Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling** a robust, long-term cooperation framework that brings together stakeholders to prevent migrant smuggling, respond to it, and create safe alternatives to illegal immigration.

Building on the first two years of the implementation of the Global Alliance, the 2nd International Conference of the Global Alliance on 10 December 2025 paved the way for the establishment of a **structured cooperation** to match the Union's higher ambitions. Partners who endorsed the Joint Declaration ([16]) committed to a set of shared principles, commitment and responsibility to strengthen international cooperation in tackling migrant smuggling collectively and globally in a 'whole of route' approach, and in the spirit of shared responsibility. Annual Senior Officials' meetings will drive the follow-up work to implement the priorities and foster enhanced coherence and joint planning, while Ministerial Conferences will ensure sustained political leadership. This will step up coordination and increase the impact of various regional and thematic initiatives (e.g. Budapest, Khartoum, Niamey, Prague and Rabat processes, Eurofront and El Pacto with Latin America and the Caribbean), as well as the G7 and the work carried out by the UNODC and the Council of Europe), with the aim of further streamlining actions and fostering synergies.

Smuggling networks abuse digital platforms, crypto assets and other technologies to promote their illicit activities, fuel their operations and hide illegal gains. One of the priorities of the Global Alliance will be to counter '**digital smuggling**', stepping up the engagement with digital platforms and tech providers. At the same time, we need to leverage technology to our advantage, by equipping law enforcement authorities with new tools and technologies, including AI-driven analytic capacities, to process and connect vast datasets, to allow law enforcement to stay always one step ahead of smugglers. To this end, Europol, recently reinforced with its Centre Against Migrant Smuggling ([17]), will enhance its operational activity in the fight against the online footprint of migrant smugglers. The Commission will also deepen its strategic partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to tackle the online dimension of migrant smuggling and disrupt illicit financial flows through a "follow the money" approach. This requires the use of financial intelligence and secure information-sharing to identify criminal actors at every level. In addition, state of the art digital identification and trust services can facilitate the application of new measures to combat fraud and identity theft, as well as to support the digitalisation and automation of border controls.

([16]) https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/54b4208d-d928-4177-aac3-c70c4f6b2745_en?filename=Global%20Alliance%20Joint%20Declaration_final.pdf
([17]) IP_25_2229_EN.pdf

The use of **commercial means of transport**, mainly by air, is now an established *modus operandi* of migrant smuggling networks, which are bringing migrants to third countries close to or bordering the EU, where migrants then attempt to enter the EU illegally. Building on the successful results achieved with a toolbox [18] addressing these activities, the EU will engage with key stakeholders on the follow-up to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Working Paper [19], with the aim of developing common approaches and exploring joint actions that could be endorsed by key partner countries and aviation stakeholders, including in the context of ICAO.

As part of the efforts to equip countries along the migratory routes with the necessary tools to manage migration and fight migrant smuggling, the EU will support partners in building the necessary capacity to **strengthen the judicial and law enforcement responses**, and establish solid channels of cooperation, including through joint investigation teams. These efforts will aim to ensure more effective detection, investigation, and prosecution of smuggling networks. Ultimately, this should lead to a higher number of successful prosecutions and meaningful sanctions, making migrant smuggling a riskier, more complex, and less profitable criminal activity. The EU should be able to rely on a network of partners engaged in countering migrant smuggling along the routes, to get real-time intelligence and information on migratory flows, helping the countries along the routes to be prepared. The Commission, acting in coordination with Member States, will cooperate with Interpol, Europol, Eurojust, Frontex and key international organisations, also relying on the support of the European Network of Immigration Liaison Officers.

A serious challenge posed by migrant smuggling is that the criminals who organise and conduct those activities often reside outside the EU and are therefore outside the reach of the jurisdiction of the Member States. In parallel to the proposal being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council to reinforce the EU law framework on preventing the facilitation of illegal migration [20], the EU is developing a **new sanctions regime** targeting migrant smugglers and traffickers, particularly high-value criminal actors, with the aim of freezing their assets, depriving them of profits and restricting their ability to enter the EU, in full complementarity with criminal justice measures.

The EU **strategic and comprehensive partnerships** with Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, and the migration partnership with Mauritania, as well as an increased engagement with key partners, including Lebanon, Morocco, Senegal and Türkiye, have contributed to a significant decrease in the number of illegal crossings observed on the Eastern and Central Mediterranean and Atlantic routes [21]. The Commission is also developing its support to Libya on search and rescue capacity and actions related to protection, humanitarian returns and evacuations, in line with international law and the respect of human rights. The Commission, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, will continue engaging with third countries to strengthen search and rescue efforts, combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking, protect displaced persons, and improve cooperation on return and

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[18] Toolbox addressing the use of commercial means of transport to facilitate irregular migration to the EU, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/toolbox-addressing-use-commercial-means-transport-facilitate-irregular-migration-eu_en

[19] https://www.icao.int/sites/default/files/Meetings/a42/Documents/WP/wp_449_en.pdf

[20] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the Union, and replacing Council Directive 2002/90/EC and Council Framework Decision 2002/946 JHA; EUR-Lex - 52023PC0755 - EN - EUR-Lex.

[21] Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), based on Frontex data, between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, arrivals along the Central Mediterranean, Atlantic route and Eastern Mediterranean route decreased by 40%, 25% and 11% respectively compared to the previous reporting period.

readmission from the EU and from other third countries, ensuring full respect of fundamental rights and international obligations.

The rising number of migrants smuggled across the **English Channel** from France to the United Kingdom calls for a robust response to tackle illegal migration and fight organised crime, while doing our utmost to prevent further loss of life at sea. Following up on the joint statement of the EU-UK Leaders' Summit in May 2025, and in the context of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, the EU is increasing cooperation with the United Kingdom. In this context, the pilot project agreed by France and the United Kingdom, and supported by the Commission, is useful to deter these dangerous journeys and address this challenging situation at the EU's external border.

Supporting partner countries in strengthening their asylum and protection systems

At the end of June 2025, more than 117 million people worldwide were **forcibly displaced** ([22]). This figure has nearly doubled in the past decade, reflecting nearly a decade of year-on-year increases. Two-thirds of those who are forced to leave stay in neighbouring areas, often hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Remaining in the region where effective protection is granted benefits displaced persons and refugees as it diminishes the risks of dangerous journeys and related human suffering and helps States in managing the challenges of migration in line with international obligations.

Building on the results achieved under NDICI-Global Europe, the Commission will continue to support programmes to strengthen national asylum systems, reception and protection frameworks and migration management in third countries. Support will be provided for legal and institutional reforms and capacity building for refugee status determination, registration and documentation systems in several partner countries. This work will be further linked to regional dialogues and partnerships with key origin and transit countries. In addition, the Commission will continue to provide protection services and durable solutions to forcibly displaced people.

Promoting pathways to protection

Opening legal pathways to protect people in need of protection is a tangible demonstration that the EU is assuming its global responsibilities. At the same time, legal pathways serve the objective of managing arrivals in an orderly and secure manner, taking smugglers and dangerous journeys out of the equation. It is also a strategic tool that can strengthen EU cooperation with partner countries, as part of a holistic, comprehensive and whole-of-route approach to migration management. These pathways help alleviate the pressure on those partners, fostering capacity to improve their reception and international protection conditions, and complement our policies aiming to prevent dangerous onward movements from the countries of origin. It should therefore be embedded within the broader cooperation framework with partner countries. Therefore, the EU should step up its ambitions on **resettlement and humanitarian admission**, as an integral part of its migration diplomacy toolbox.

Overstretched capacities of national reception systems, as well as other significant political and financial factors, have resulted in a reduction of the places the EU Member States are able to offer for the period 2026 - 2027 in the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan ([23]). However, a more effective management of migration with the

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([22]) UNHCR - Refugee Data Finder - Key Indicators, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics
([23]) Council Decision (EU) 2025/702 of 17 March 2025 authorising the European Commission to take part, on behalf of the Union, in the negotiations for an international instrument setting up an International Claims Commission for Ukraine; ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2025/702/oj.

implementation of the Pact should create the conditions for more **ambitious resettlement and humanitarian admission plans** over the next years.

Supporting returns from third countries

Since 2016, the EU has significantly increased its support to **sustainable voluntary returns from transit countries** to the migrants' countries of origin. This has helped third countries reduce pressure on their systems and reduce the number of illegal arrivals to the EU. It has also offered an opportunity for migrants stranded without a perspective of protection and no means to return by themselves, shielding them from the abuses of smugglers. The financial support provided under the current Multiannual Financial Framework NDICI-Global Europe instrument amounts so far (2021-2025) to over EUR 1 billion, to support return from third countries and reintegration, as well as to build third countries' ownership and capacities to manage reintegration through national referral mechanisms, in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as in Asia. One of the key programmes for supporting the return and reintegration of third country nationals is the Migrant Protection Return and Reintegration Programme (MPRR). It contributes to the protection of vulnerable and stranded migrants, including through assisted voluntary return from North Africa and the Sahel, and their sustainable reintegration in Sub-Saharan Africa. The MPRR has supported the return of over 127 500 individuals and the reintegration of over 106 600 between December 2022 and November 2025. Overall, within the framework of the current NDICI-Global Europe, the MPRR in both North of Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa has so far received over EUR 650 million, out of the total of EUR 1 billion allocated to return and reintegration under the NDICI-Global Europe between 2021 and 2025 ([24]). Supporting voluntary returns towards Sub-Saharan Africa and other key countries of origin, as well as efforts to develop national reintegration systems, will remain important components of the EU migration diplomacy.

The Commission will **further promote assisted voluntary return and reintegration from third countries** in the context of its strategic cooperation with third countries, working in cooperation with the Member States and the third countries concerned, and with the support of the Frontex EU reintegration programme and international actors such as IOM. Actions to reinforce voluntary returns from third countries go hand in hand with the efforts to reinforce return and readmission of third country nationals illegally staying in the EU (see section 5).

3. STRONG EU BORDERS TO ENHANCE CONTROL AND SECURITY

Maintaining the **integrity of the Union's external borders and of the Schengen area** as an area without internal border controls is a key element of an integrated and comprehensive approach to migration management.

To achieve this, the Union needs to maintain strong external borders that can guarantee security and order, ensure **effective control over who enters ([25]) and stays** in the Union legally, while preventing illegal entries and stays. Together with a robust legal framework that prevents abuses and unauthorised secondary movements within the EU as introduced by the Pact, the effective protection of the EU's external borders should also improve the

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([24]) Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (MPRR-SSA) - International Partnerships, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/projects/migrant-protection-return-and-reintegration-programme-sub-saharan-africa-mprr-ssa_en

([25]) The underlying rule, set by the Schengen Border Code (Art. 5(3)) remains that external borders should be crossed only at border crossing points, otherwise facing the risk of penalties.

situation at the EU's internal borders, facilitate the functioning of the Schengen area, and reinforce mutual trust between Member States.

At the same time, new challenges are constantly emerging at the borders, affecting the security and territorial integrity of the Union and its Member States. Since 2021, the hybrid threats linked to the **instrumentalisation of migrants and the weaponisation of migration** by Russia and Belarus have further intensified in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Union cannot allow hostile actors to abuse its values and principles, including the right to asylum, and undermine its democracies. As part of its response, including diplomatic outreach and legislative work, in 2024, the Commission issued a Communication ([26]) in support of EU Member States countering hybrid threats from the weaponisation of migration and to strengthen security at the EU's external borders and provided funding to enhance their border surveillance capabilities. Over the next five years, the Union must continue to be fully prepared to tackle emerging challenges or threats.

The Union plans to further develop a robust and effective **European Integrated Border Management (EIBM)**, presenting the second EIBM Strategy in 2028, supported by state-of-the-art information technologies and infrastructures, with Frontex and eu-LISA as its operational arms. The revision of the Frontex Regulation planned for 2026, will explore how to further strengthen the Agency's mandate in the area of border protection and how to reinforce its standing corps, allowing it to expand its presence and strengthening its operational support to the Member States and third countries.

A more effective control of access to the EU territory and the Schengen area

With the gradual roll-out of the **Entry/Exit System (EES)** started in October 2025, the EU is putting into operation the most advanced digital border management system in the world. The EES is transforming border control by improving the ability to monitor entries into and exits from the EU, as well as who overstays the allowed period, and improving the flow of information between systems and authorities, ensuring a more efficient and effective response to evolving migration and security challenges.

As a next step, the Union is focused on launching the new migration management database (Eurodac) by mid-2026, as well as the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) by end-2026. The full roll-out of **interoperability** of all systems, including the Visa Information System (VIS), is planned for the coming years.

To deliver on this digital transformation, **eu-LISA**, the EU's Agency for the management of large-scale IT systems, will remain central. The MFF proposal foresees a significant increase of its resources to give the Agency the necessary means to develop and put into operation all the components of the large-scale IT systems under its remit.

Moreover, as of mid-2026, Member States will start, as part of the implementation of the Pact, with the **screening of third-country nationals arriving to the EU without fulfilling the conditions for entry** into the Schengen area. This will make sure that people arriving illegally at EU external borders undergo identity, security, health and vulnerability checks and will be channelled towards the appropriate procedure. In this regard, the major overhaul of **Eurodac** in mid-2026, the EU's central biometric database, will provide the authorities with a migration management IT-system to comprehensively and digitally oversee, manage and control asylum and migration in the EU. The **new mandatory asylum and return border procedures** will strengthen control over our borders,

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([26]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on countering hybrid threats from the weaponisation of migration and strengthening security at the EU's external borders; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0570.

reinforcing our ability to prevent illegal entry, and making our asylum and return systems more effective. Applicants who are unlikely to obtain protection in the EU, who have been identified as posing a risk to the EU's internal security, or who mislead authorities, will not be allowed to enter the Union and will be processed at the border swiftly. National independent monitoring mechanisms will monitor the respect of fundamental rights, including the rights of the child, during the screening and the asylum border procedure.

Leveraging technology for the Union's border management and protection

In the next five years, the Union will continue building its **intelligence-driven capacities** to protect its external borders and ensure comprehensive situational awareness and appropriate reaction capacity. To that end, EUROSUR already provides state-of-the-art surveillance and enhances the Union's ability to monitor and control the common Schengen external borders through near real-time exchange of information related to illegal migration and cross-border crime. Further enhancements in the functioning of EUROSUR as well as the use of modern technologies in border surveillance, including tactical use of drones and counter-drone capabilities, will be key. The Commission will assess how Frontex could support Member States in purchasing such equipment and provide the necessary training. In addition, the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE), which enables structured and secure information sharing among EU maritime authorities, will continue playing a role in increasing awareness of maritime activities and supporting responses to illegal migration.

New initiatives will further drive the **digitalisation of the EU's border management** and facilitate the entry of *bona fide* travellers. The digitalisation of visa procedures, agreed in June 2023 and to be implemented by 2030, will make it easier for travellers to apply for a Schengen visa and for national authorities to process applications more swiftly. At the same time, the proposed digitalisation of travel documents ([27]), once adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, including by leveraging the EU Digital Identity Wallet, will further confirm the EU's position as a global leader in secure, efficient, and traveller-friendly border management. The Commission will also propose updated EU rules on the uniform format for residence permits for third country nationals to address security gaps and other challenges ([28]).

The deployment of **new technologies**, including trustworthy and human-centric Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, should be prioritised both at Union and national levels, to anticipate developments, and to reinforce the preparedness and resilience of EU external borders. This includes models to assist the identification of assets or vessels that demonstrate irregularities requiring further verifications or investigations (such as connected to distress or irregular activities). This will help to support counter-smuggling activities or search and rescue; to improve recognition of objects like vehicles or vessels; to swiftly analyse large, heterogeneous data and to carry out biometric recognition used for secure and reliable controls and travel facilitation as well as fighting identity theft. Many of these tools are being developed and will continue to be developed with the support of the Commission's

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([27]) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an application for the electronic submission of travel data ("EU Digital Travel application") and amending Regulations (EU) 2016/399 and (EU) 2018/1726 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC) No 2252/2004, as regards the use of digital travel credentials; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52024PC0670.

([28]) Challenges affecting Member States include sudden increases in migratory flows (leading to a high number of cards having to be issued in a short time, as well as high costs), fluctuations in global supply chains for production of the blank cards, and shortages of certain components needed for production. These challenges became prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic and after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

research and development programmes (^{29}), striving to develop them based on European solutions.

The Commission will **harness AI** to analyse data and identify trends at the external borders, helping authorities share information through more advanced tools and anticipate and respond to developments and risks, in line with the EU AI Act (^{30}). Together with Frontex, eu-LISA and the Member States, the Commission will develop, test and, where appropriate, support the deployment of AI-supported tools for risk analysis, situational awareness and identity management at the external borders. Under the research and innovation component of EIBM of the Frontex Regulation (^{31}), Frontex will use its research and innovation tasks to plan and implement pilot projects, test and validate technology solutions in operational settings, and share the results, guidance and related training with national authorities. The EU will also develop an independent European capacity for automated identity recognition systems, for the purpose of migration and border management, building on the existing large-scale IT systems in this area. Any AI components of such systems will be developed and deployed in line with the relevant EU rules, while aiming to reduce strategic dependencies on non-EU providers.

4. A FIRM, FAIR AND ADAPTABLE ASYLUM AND MIGRATION SYSTEM

The **Pact on Migration and Asylum** is a key reform establishing a solid legal foundation for a fair and more efficient way of managing migration. It brings a comprehensive approach that aims to strengthen EU policy on asylum, migration and border management. It sets out fast and efficient procedures for asylum, with strong safeguards for applicants, and enhances processes inside the Union and at its external borders. With the Pact, the EU is putting in place an effective system of solidarity and responsibility to collectively manage migration, where no Member State is left alone under pressure. A system that is fair and well managed, that safeguards against abuse, protects children, vulnerable persons and individuals' fundamental rights and allows the Union to meet the challenges in the area of migration and asylum.

The next five years will therefore require a continued focus on the **implementation and operationalisation** of the Pact. Its implementation in Member States is now well underway and given the scale of reforms, the coming years will be pivotal in consolidating the new asylum and migration management systems across the Union, also taking into account the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. The Pact is also the **necessary foundation on which we can build further**. The Commission will look at measures to introduce innovative aspects, strengthen operational coordination, and fully leverage the opportunities provided by the new legal framework to make asylum procedures more efficient and sustainable. This work will be grounded in the need for Union policies to remain agile and adaptable and anticipate where improvements and complementary initiatives are necessary.

A **'whole-of-government' approach** and a coordinated effort across various government departments and agencies will be necessary, both at Union and Member States' level. This should ensure cross-agency collaboration, fostering mutually supportive and consistent

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(^{29}) Study on strengthening EU-funded security research and innovation – 20 years of EU-Funded Civil Security Research and Innovation – Final report; https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2837/0004501.

(^{30}) Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (Text with EEA relevance), ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj.

(^{31}) In line, in particular, with articles 10(1)(x) and 66 of the Frontex Regulation.

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implementation of the policies across all sectors and levels of government, including regional and local ones.

The **judicial system** needs to be adequately resourced and trained on the reforms for the good functioning of the overall migration and asylum system. Seamless coordination between the administrative processing of asylum applications and the judicial system will be especially important. By appropriately integrating administrative structures, systems for judicial oversight, and communication channels, the administrative and judicial entities can expedite processes and minimise bottlenecks.

Preparedness and contingency planning are crucial to manage migration more effectively by better anticipating emerging situations. The Commission has been strengthening its capacity to produce projections and scenarios on future arrivals and applications for international protection and is developing a foresight capacity that can support operational and policy decisions, as well as the Member States' preparedness, contingency and resilience [32].

A modern asylum system should also rely on the support of **technological developments**. By the end of the five-year period covered by this Strategy, Member States should be able to carry out their asylum procedures using digitalised case management systems, and new AI tools should be able to provide the necessary support to speed procedures, in line with the requirements of the EU AI Act.

Implementing the Pact and ensuring that rules are fit for purpose

The **implementation of the Pact** is a manifold process that involves multiple actors to translate the large set of legislative acts into operational reality. It will remain a strategic priority over the next five years. This process entails addressing any further legislative adaptations, the resourcing of necessary reforms and ensuring full practical operationalisation on the ground across all ten building blocks outlined in the Common Implementation Plan [33].

The Commission set up a robust support structure, composed of 27 country teams, to assist Member States and ensuring coherence across the EU [34]. An additional EUR 3 billion [35] were made available to support Member States in the necessary reforms for the implementation of the Pact. Tailored engagement will continue when the Pact starts to fully apply, beyond June 2026. Throughout this process, the Pact needs to be dynamic and adaptable to new and emerging challenges.

To that end, in December 2025, the European Parliament and the Council agreed on two new measures to complete and complement the Pact, amending the 'safe third country' concept and establishing a Union list of safe countries of origin [36]. The review scheduled

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[32] This will be based on the Commission's Joint Research Centre global foresight study to be published in 2026.

[33] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum; EUR-Lex - 52024DC0251 - EN - EUR-Lex.

[34] In addition, the Commission supports ten Member States through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) on the implementation of the Pact. Member States are also benefiting from peer learning and good practice exchanges set up in the context of the TSI; TSI 2025 Flagship - Supporting Member States with the implementation of the new Pact of Migration and Asylum - European Commission.

[35] This amount is being allocated on the top of the financial resources initially planned to be allocated to Member States under the Home Affairs financial instruments for the period 2021 – 2027.

[36] Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level and Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348

for 2027 of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation ([37]) and the Asylum Procedure Regulation ([38]) will be the opportunity for a first evaluation of how the new rules are working in practice, and whether further adjustments are needed. The EUAA's new monitoring mechanism, to be launched in 2026, will also help identify discrepancies and challenges in the application of the asylum and reception rules and inform this review.

Solidarity, alongside responsibility, is one of the main elements of the Pact. The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation provides effective support to Member States under migratory pressure. In November 2025, the Commission launched the first annual migration management cycle, providing a comprehensive picture of the asylum, migration and reception situation in the EU, and identifying the Member States under migratory pressure, at risk of migratory pressure or facing a significant migratory situation ([39]). The Council established the first **Solidarity Pool** for 2026 ([40]). The Commission, in particular through the work of the EU Solidarity Coordinator, will support Member States in implementing the Solidarity Pool. The Commission is to launch the migration management cycle each year to provide effective support to the Member States facing pressure, while the Council is to establish the annual solidarity pool for every following year.

Establishing effective and stable responsibility-sharing across the Union and reducing unauthorised secondary movements within its territory will remain a priority. Unauthorised secondary movements undermine the good functioning of the Pact as a whole and have an important impact on the Schengen area. It is therefore paramount to improve the *status quo* and counter unauthorised secondary movements. The legislative instruments of the Pact include several strong measures for this purpose, notably the obligation to screen all migrants arriving illegally and to register all applicants for international protection in the renewed Eurodac system, the mandatory border procedures for asylum and return, stronger rules to counter absconding, enhanced possibilities to reduce material reception conditions, such as when an applicant has absconded from the Member State responsible for them, or in other cases of non-cooperation. Effective transfers are of paramount importance for the well-functioning and credibility of the Common European Asylum System, and for limiting unauthorised secondary movements between Member States. The Pact creates a faster and more predictable system for transferring persons to the responsible Member State. To that end, in 2026 the EUAA will explore how to best support these reforms. In addition, the Commission plans to further explore, as needed, the potential impact of different reception policies across the EU on migrants' movements, both towards and within the EU.

Modernising asylum procedures through digitalisation and the use of AI

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as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0186; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0259.

([37]) Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401351

([38]) Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU.

([39]) Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2323 of 11 November 2025 pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council; ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2025/2323/oj.

([40]) Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 19 December 2025 on the establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026, OJ L, 2025/2642, 23.12.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2025/2642/oj.

One of the main improvements brought by the Pact is the increased effectiveness of procedures. In an area where many different actors across administrative structures and the judiciary are involved, new technological solutions can help overcome bottlenecks, reduce the administrative burden and facilitate cooperation and information exchange among national authorities, with EU Agencies and among Member States.

Equipping migration authorities with integrated case management systems and smart digital tools will therefore be a priority. The Commission plans to explore, starting in 2026, the feasibility of a dedicated **proposal for digitalisation in the area of asylum**, also in light of such proposal being prepared in the area of return. An expert group to consult Member States on the best way forward regarding the development of digital asylum case management systems, integrating screening, asylum, reception and transfer procedures [41] will be set up for that purpose. On this basis, the Commission plans to identify the next steps in supporting Member States' efforts in this area. Starting in 2026, efforts will also focus on transforming DubliNet, the system for information exchange under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, into a more effective and technically advanced tool to support Member States in carrying out the procedures under that Regulation.

In addition, new technologies offer novel and still unexplored opportunities to reduce administrative burden, simplify processes, and have high-quality asylum decisions. **AI** could offer national authorities the tools for achieving these opportunities. For instance, in the area of interpretation, translation and transcription, or the collection and analysis of country-of-origin information, as well as in relation to case management and workflow optimisation, or pre-checking whether applications have been filled in completely. These activities could use the results of EU-funded European research and innovation on migration [42]. To make progress in this area, in line with the existing regulatory requirements, the Commission will set up in 2026 a **Forum for AI on Migration** to explore how to best utilise AI tools in asylum, migration and border management, to identify the possible uses of AI and prepare an operational plan for the concrete roll-out of such new tools. This work will also rely on the guidelines that the Commission plans to present in 2026 on the classification of high-risk AI systems [43].

Providing support to displaced people from Ukraine

Providing **temporary protection to people fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine** remains a priority for the Union and the Member States. Ukraine's future and the EU's future are intertwined through our common security, economic ties but also the ties between people that are being built during this time. The EU remains committed to continue supporting Ukraine on its path towards accession to the EU.

To move forward in a **longer-term perspective**, while taking into account the high volatility of the situation, there is a need to design a path towards continuing legal residence and facilitate the inclusion of the Ukrainian people in host societies, while supporting those who wish to return home when conditions allow. This transition needs to be gradual and predictable, to support Ukraine's recovery. The Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons

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[41] The Commission has already launched an external study on digitalisation and on the operational integration of asylum, reception, Dublin and return case management systems, to assess the current situation in the Member States and the added value of Union action in this field.

[42] EU-funded research and innovation on migration: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/social-sciences-and-humanities/migration-and-mobility_en.

[43] Article 6 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1689; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj/eng

from Ukraine (^{44}) adopted in September 2025 provides the basis for next steps. The operationalisation of the Recommendation is taken forward in various fora with Members States, the Ukrainian authorities and international organisations (^{45}).

As the support to displaced persons from Ukraine is the first case where the **Temporary Protection Directive** of 2001 was activated, the EU will need to draw the lessons learned from more than four years of temporary protection to inform possible future responses.

5.   MORE EFFECTIVE RETURN AND READMISSION

Fast, effective and dignified return and readmission of illegally staying third-country nationals is **indispensable to the integrity of our migration and asylum systems**. Currently, only about a fourth of the migrants ordered to leave the Union actually do so, although there are differences between Member States. It is urgent to increase the effectiveness of returns to deter against illegal migration and to safeguard the well-functioning and integrity of the migration and asylum system.

Over the next five years, the EU must be fully invested in building a **comprehensive common European system for return**. Some Member States have already made significant progress in increasing the efficiency of their return procedures. The proposed Return Regulation (^{46}), once adopted, will provide a new legal framework with swifter, simpler and more effective return procedures across the Union that respect fundamental rights and international obligations, notably the principle of *non-refoulement*.

For returns to work, **third countries need to fully play their role** and honour the international obligation to readmit their own nationals. The EU should develop and use all leverages and incentives at its disposal, including readmission instruments, financing tools, visa and trade policy to foster stronger cooperation on readmission as part of its migration diplomacy outreach to third countries. At the same time, Member States need to follow up thoroughly and timely on return orders by requesting, when necessary, that the third countries confirm the nationality of the person to be returned and provide them with travel documents.

Building a common European system for return

The Pact introduces several novelties and improvements in asylum and migration management. On return, the new legal framework, introduced by the Pact, will close the **loopholes between asylum and return**, making sure that return decisions and negative asylum decisions are issued close together. This will significantly increase the speed of returns, by reducing opportunities to abscond and thus avoiding long periods of uncertainty for both the returnees and national authorities.

Furthermore, with the **mandatory return border procedure** (^{47}), rejected applicants for international protection will return much more rapidly, directly from the external borders and within the 12-week deadline established by the new rules. The Commission will put a

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(^{44}) Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5129/oj.
(^{45}) Including with the support of the Special Envoy for Ukrainians in the EU, who has been also engaging with Member States and with Ukraine.
(^{46}) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0101.
(^{47}) Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a return border procedure and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1148; ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1349/oj.

strong focus on ensuring the effective implementation of the new border procedures, working closely with Member States, Frontex and partner countries to that end. It will also pay particular attention to readmission cooperation in the context of the mandatory border procedure when preparing future reports under Article 25a of the Visa Code.

Building on these improvements, the priority for the next five years is to fully develop a **common European system for return,** in line with the Commission proposal of March 2025 for a Regulation establishing Common European System for Returns ([48]). The proposed Regulation gives a more tangible European dimension to return with a European return order, laying the ground for the mutual recognition of return decisions, so that EU rules cannot be circumvented by moving illegally from one Member State to another. The proposed Regulation promotes simplification and effectiveness by streamlining internal processes, clarifying rights and obligations of returnees, such as the obligation to cooperate in the return procedure, reducing the risk of absconding and unauthorised secondary movements, and closing the loopholes between return procedures within the EU and readmission activities towards third countries. The return of individuals posing a security threat will also be sped up. The proposed Regulation also sets out the rules and safeguards to establishing 'return hubs' outside the Union, which could offer new solutions for the return of persons who are obliged to leave the EU. An expeditious conclusion of the negotiations on the Return Regulation is important to make a common European system for return a reality in the coming years.

The Commission will also present a legislative proposal on **return digitalisation** in 2026, with a view to developing digital case management systems in this area. This will further contribute to reducing the administrative workload of national authorities, simplifying and automating processes. The proposal also aims to consider the possibility to entrust EU Agencies, such as Frontex and eu-LISA, with enhanced responsibilities as regards digital case management systems.

In parallel to the reinforcement of the new legal framework, measures are needed to **improve return processes at operational level**.

The **Return Coordinator**, supported by the High-Level Network for Returns, will explore new ideas and develop practices related to specific challenges such as the return of third-country nationals processed in the return border procedure, those who pose a security threat, or the return of unaccompanied minors, in accordance with EU law and the child's best interests. To this end, joint work with Member States' authorities will continue to optimise the use of available resources and to use all existing tools to accelerate returns. The Commission, together with Member States, will continue developing practical initiatives with and in third countries for this purpose.

The forthcoming revision of the **Frontex Regulation** in 2026, will also explore the opportunity of strengthening the agency's operational role in return both within and outside the EU. Reflections are ongoing on the possibility to support returns from a third country to another third country, subject to clear conditions and legal safeguards, reinforcing voluntary return and reintegration, as well as options for improving the Agency's governance in this area to support the EU strategic priorities.

([48]) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC; EUR-Lex - 52025PC0101 - EN - EUR-Lex.

The Commission, together with Frontex, is also taking steps to enhance and streamline data collection on return, with a view to improving the **situational picture** on return, allowing for better planning of resources and tools.

Improving readmission by third countries

Cooperation on readmission by migrants' countries of origin is necessary for successful returns and for efficient migration management, and it is another key component of the common European system for return. Readmission of one's own nationals is an obligation under customary international law on which EU readmission agreements and arrangements and partnership agreements (e.g. Partnership and Cooperation Agreements) with third countries, as well as multilateral legal frameworks (e.g. Samoa agreement with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries) are built.

In this respect, improved cooperation on readmission remains a key priority of the EU's migration diplomacy. The Commission, in close cooperation with Member States, regularly monitors readmission cooperation in the framework of the existing bilateral and multilateral readmission instruments and through the annual assessment on readmission cooperation under Article 25a of the Visa Code ([49]). The Union needs to use and reinforce its toolbox to promote cooperation in this area, in line with EU Leaders' repeated calls for the use of all policy tools and instruments to enhance return and readmission. The effective implementation of the 24 existing **EU agreements and arrangements** on readmission with third countries ([50]), and the full respect for and enforcement of the obligations enshrined in EU international agreements must remain a priority.

To maximise Union cooperation with third countries and ensure an effective strategic approach to negotiations, the Commission will work with Member States to further strengthen information exchange in this area. Such exchanges should include a reflection on how to best pursue the pending negotiating mandates for readmission agreements. Ongoing readmission negotiations need to be completed swiftly and, where there is added value at EU level, new negotiations should be launched. The Samoa Agreement also provides a clear framework for the implementation of readmission obligations, recalling the obligation of all parties to readmit their own nationals: its implementation will be monitored and supported by specific engagement, as necessary. Where appropriate, the Commission will pursue arrangements with international partners to establish standard operating procedures for the readmission of own nationals and remove obstacles that hamper cooperation with those partners.

To achieve concrete progress on readmission cooperation as part of migration diplomacy, the Commission, the High Representative and the Member States need to mobilise the **necessary incentives and leverages** by using all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools.

Addressing challenging contexts

([49]) Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code); https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/810/oj/eng.

([50]) The EU has concluded readmission agreements with Hong Kong, Macao, Sri Lanka, Albania, Russia, Ukraine, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova, Pakistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Cape Verde, Belarus, and readmission arrangements with Afghanistan, Gambia, Guinea, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Ivory Coast. Obligations to readmit own nationals are also part of other international instruments, including Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) and the Samoa Agreement with 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Some situations involving specific third countries deserve increased attention. In this regard, **Syria** still faces significant political, security, humanitarian and developmental challenges. The EU supports a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political transition, as well as socio-economic recovery to prevent the resurgence of violence. The Commission is working with the UNHCR to support voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration of returnees. In addition, the Commission issued guidance for "go and see" visits for Syrian beneficiaries of international protection in the EU that may wish to go back to Syria. Frontex has also resumed support for Syrian return operations and reintegration of Syrians.

The Commission is also working to ensure EU-level coordination as regards the situation of Afghans living in the EU. To that end, the Commission is engaging at technical level with **Afghanistan**'s *de facto* authorities on the possible return and readmission of Afghan nationals illegally staying in the EU, particularly those who committed crimes or are posing security risks, in compliance with EU law and international obligations, including full respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*. The Commission is working closely with the Member States and is relying also on Frontex's support on voluntary return through the EU Reintegration Programme.

6. LABOUR AND TALENT MOBILITY TO BOOST COMPETITIVENESS

Over the next years, skills gaps and labour shortages, also driven by demographic dynamics, are likely to accentuate growing needs for our **labour market** in many key sectors and, to different degrees, across the Union ([51]). Demand in key areas essential to the EU economy and citizens' well-being, spanning from cutting edge fields such as AI to the care for our youngest and eldest, will continue to grow. The recently adopted EU Talent Pool has already identified 42 occupations in which the EU is facing labour and skills shortages that constrain the European economic potential, and where labour and talent mobility can offer an important contribution.

The Union of Skills ([52]) addresses the need to attract and retain talent from third countries, complementing the measures to activate and upskill the domestic workforce, including third-country nationals already residing in the Union. Labour and talent mobility are part of the EU's economic model, strengthening its **competitiveness**, addressing demographic and skills' challenges ([53]), and fostering innovation.

In the next five years, the EU should aim to become the most attractive place in the global race for talent, bringing skilled workforce ranging from innovators driving technological progress to workers providing essential care services. For this, we need to **upscale our cooperation with partner countries**, using labour and talent mobility as a tool for both migration diplomacy and comprehensive diplomatic and economic relations with partners, and launching new and innovative initiatives at Union level, in cooperation with Member States, to attract workers who are trained and prepared for our job market.

At the same time, attracting labour and talent needs to be complemented by the **capacity to retain it**. To achieve this, the Union needs a socio-economic environment that can

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([51]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Harnessing talent in Europe's regions, EUR-Lex - 52023DC0032 - EN - EUR-Lex.

([52]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions The Union of Skills; EUR-Lex - 52025DC0090 - EN - EUR-Lex.

([53]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action, EUR-Lex - 52023DC0577 - EN - EUR-Lex.

facilitate not only the integration of foreign workers in the job market, but that can enable them to integrate and contribute to our societies.

Labour and talent mobility as a tool of migration diplomacy

Labour and talent attraction and mobility, as well as educational, vocational and training pathways, need to become a strategic element of our comprehensive relations with partner countries. Scaling up the existing **Talent Partnerships** with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and launching new ones, is just a first step.

Beyond Talent Partnerships, the EU must bring together the priorities of competitiveness within the context of our **comprehensive cooperation with partner countries**, following the path set by the Pact for the Mediterranean. In this respect, the Commission will pilot, as of 2026, a European Legal Gateway Office in India in the Information and Communication Technology sector. This will be a one-stop-shop that will provide support for candidates from India for labour mobility to the EU. On the basis of the lessons learnt from this pilot project, the Commission plans to expand the European Legal Gateway Office concept to other sectors and other partner countries, including Talent Partnership countries, in complementarity to the EU Talent Pool, and taking into account the EU's strategic interests. Further cooperation on talent mobility should also be promoted in the context of the Global Gateway strategy.

The Union and the partner countries have a common interest in promoting labour mobility. However, preparing third-country workers to enter the European labour market and their integration into our societies is a complex endeavour that requires investments and efforts on both sides. To boost the skill-base that could come to work and live in the Union, and looking at cost and risk sharing models with the private sector, the Commission will support **training and pre-departure activities** for job-seekers from third countries, ensuring they have the right technical, professional, linguistic, and cultural skills required, including as part of the upcoming European Strategy for vocational education and training.

The Commission will also involve **EU industry and social partners** more closely in the design and implementation of initiatives towards third countries, as they know best the skills they need and being the main beneficiaries of talent mobility policies. The Commission intends to use existing fora such as the Labour Migration Platform, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees, and the Industrial Forum and the European Research Area Forum to boost industry and employers' engagement on talent attraction.

The **EU Talent Pool** ([54]), the first EU-level tool to enable the matching between EU employers with interested non-EU job seekers in specific sectors, will be key to address labour and skills shortages, as well as to improve the cooperation with partner countries in the long-term. The Commission is prioritising the development of the IT platform to have the Talent Pool in place and operational in 2027. To fulfil its potential, early engagement and participation of Member States will be essential.

A legal framework fit for labour and talent mobility

The 'Choose Europe' initiative ([55]) promotes the EU as a destination for highly skilled professionals. It highlights how the EU offers an ideal environment for global talent to advance research and innovation.

([54]) Choose Europe: advance your research career in the EU https://commission.europa.eu/topics/research-and-innovation/choose-europe_en

At the same time, the **legal framework for labour and talent mobility** to the EU remains fragmented, with a complex interaction between the EU and national legal frameworks ([56]), being difficult to navigate for the global talent.

This is not in line with the EU's ambition. **Simplification and acceleration** of the processes to attract third-country nationals with strong innovation potential, such as researchers, students, skilled workers, start-up founders or innovative entrepreneurs, as well as workers required for shortage occupations in sectors such as care, healthcare, tourism or construction will need to be explored. The Visa Strategy ([57]), adopted together with this Strategy, has identified new ways to make the existing framework on talent attraction work better, including through funding and the Commission Recommendation on attracting talent for innovation ([58]), and look into possibilities for simplification and better implementation of the legal framework.

Furthermore, one of the main obstacles to attracting talent is the bottleneck linked to the **recognition and validation of qualifications and skills of third country nationals**. The 2023 Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals ([59]) aimed to facilitate national recognition processes. In practice, however, these processes remain often lengthy and burdensome and fragmented across the EU and are thus not compatible with a dynamic economic environment and the need to rapidly fill labour shortages that European businesses are facing. To address this obstacle, as part of the 2026 Fair Labour Mobility Package, the Commission will launch a Skills Portability initiative, which will include possible new rules on the recognition and validation of qualifications and skills, making the procedures swifter, while keeping the quality standards expected in the European market.

To harness the potential of **skills intelligence**, in addition to accurate and timely information on skills and labour market situation in the EU and its Member States, and building on the experience of the European Skills Intelligence Observatory, updated information is needed on the situation of the labour market in partner countries, including on their skills and the qualifications frameworks, to allow comparison with EU skills and qualifications. For this purpose, the Commission plans to further deepen its cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) on the mapping and comparison of skills and qualifications in Talent Partnerships countries and beyond.

Fighting illegal employment, abuse and exploitation

While Europe needs to attract talent, it also needs to step up its fight against illegal employment and abuse of third-country workers in the EU. Illegal employment and unauthorised work, often also associated with labour exploitation, are among the **main drivers of illegal migration** and need to be tackled more effectively, particularly in the sectors more exposed to those risks. The openness of the Union in attracting and retaining talent should go together with zero tolerance for illegal employment and exploitation of migrant workers.

([56]) EU rules cover entry and residence conditions for certain categories of workers (highly qualified workers, seasonal workers, and intra-corporate transferees), students and researchers, the right to family reunification, and 'long-term residence'. EU law also lays down a single procedure – and a single permit – for non-EU workers admitted under Member States' national schemes. Currently, EU rules do not cover other categories of labour migrants, nor the self-employed.

([57]) COM(2026) 43.

([58]) C(2026) 462.

([59]) Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2611 of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, C/2023/7700, OJ L, 2023/2611, 24.11.2023, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2023/2611/oj.

The Commission will present in 2026 the state of implementation of the **Employers Sanctions Directive** ([60]) and, if needed, propose amendments to increase its effectiveness.

As highlighted in the Quality Jobs Roadmap ([61]), exploitation, breaches of safety and health rules and inadequate housing affect third-country workers. Controls and inspections need to be intensified to detect and sanction exploitative employers and protect the rights of third-country workers. As part of the **revision of the mandate of the European Labour Authority (ELA)** in 2026, the Commission will review how the Authority could better address the challenges related to abuses of working conditions of third-country nationals.

In parallel, better **enforcement work**, also with the support of a reinforced mandate of ELA, should help ensure that the provisions of EU law to protect the rights of migrant workers, including the Seasonal Workers Directive ([62]), the Employers Sanctions Directive ([63]) and the revised Single Permit Directive ([64]), are correctly transposed and effectively applied by Member States.

Improving integration of third-country nationals

Integration is both a right and a duty. It is in the Union's interest to ensure that migrants coming to the EU can swiftly and actively contribute to our – and now their – societies, whether they fled conflict, arrived as workers, joined their close family or arrived through other legal pathways. Consequently, integration is an area where a **whole-of-government approach** is very important at national level. This is vital for social cohesion, but also for competitiveness, and Europe's economic dynamism, making full use of all skills and talents. It is essential that migrants learn the language of the host Member State, understand the culture and administrative systems, work, pay taxes, and fully participate in our societies grounded in European values. Diaspora communities and migrant-led organisations are important actors in supporting the integration process, which requires strong and willing engagement from the side of the migrants, as well as from the side of the host societies. In that regard, the migrants need to be provided with a genuine opportunity to integrate. Building on the comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach established in the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion and on its mid-term review ([65]), integration should be promoted across all levels of governance and society.

([60]) Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/52/oj/eng

([61]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Quality Jobs Roadmap, COM/2025/944 final.

([62]) Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers.

([63]) Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals, OJ L 168, 30.6.2009, pp. 24–32.

([64]) Directive (EU) 2024/1233 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State (recast), PE/93/2023/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1233, 30.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1233/oj

([65]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0758 and Commission Staff Working Document, Mid-term review of the Commission Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025SC0162.

The Commission will continue to foster a **holistic approach to connect efforts across EU policies,** in particular on regional development, for instance with the EU Agenda for Cities ([66]), Urban Agenda Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees ([67]) and the upcoming update of the Rural Action Plan ([68]). When it comes to employment and integration in the labour market, third-country nationals continue to help driving growth in the EU. Their full potential in the EU labour market remains untapped. Consequently, it is crucial to further bring employment services, economic and social partners, and other labour market actors on board. To do so, a continued dialogue and cooperation with them will underpin any substantive effort to more closely align migration and labour market policies and to strengthen labour market inclusion of migrants.

This mainstreaming of actions to support the integration and inclusion of third-country nationals should be further embedded in a wider and longer-term approach, one that also contributes to adequately manage national education, health and housing systems, with the support. **Union funding** should support the implementation of the whole-of-government approach in Member States when it comes to integration, offering funding opportunities to local and regional authorities, civil society organisations and migrant-led organisations. Overall, this longer-term approach on integration of third country nationals should build on exchanges taking place in the various integration-related networks ([69]) and work continues in the context of relevant strategies ([70]).

7. STRATEGIC USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND ENHANCING OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

The Commission's proposal for the **Multiannual Financial Framework** (MFF) 2028–2034 provides for an important increase in the resources dedicated to migration and asylum and to international cooperation, while strengthening the Union's leverage opportunity as regards migration cooperation.

The MFF proposal aims at providing the **necessary financial resources** also to support the priorities set out in this Strategy. Overall, an amount of at least EUR 81 billion is proposed to be dedicated to Home Affairs policies, to support migration and asylum management, enhance internal security, reinforce borders and the visa policy.

To effectively **control and manage the external borders** and to guarantee security, the proposal for the Union support for the Schengen area, for the European integrated border management and for the common policy on visa sets the financial envelope at EUR 15.4 billion. The Border Management and Visa Policy Instrument (BMVI) for the programming period 2021-2027 is currently providing a total of EUR 5.97 billion to support European integrated border management in the Member States ([71]). The significant increase in resources would make it possible to support priorities set out in this Strategy, including the digitalisation of the border management, the integration of new technological solutions, as well as equipment and infrastructure.

([66]) https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/communications/2025/eu-agenda-for-cities-2025_en

([67]) https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/

([68]) https://rural-vision.europa.eu/action-plan_en

([69]) European Integration Network, Expert Group on the views of migrants in the field of migration, asylum and integration, European Migration Forum.

([70]) The Gender Equality 2020-2025 and the LGBTIQ+ equality 2026-2030 strategies and the 2026-2030 anti-racism strategy.

([71]) This amount includes allocations to Member States as initially agreed, transfers by Member States from other Funds and top- ups from the BMVI Thematic Facility to Member States.

As regards the Union support for **asylum, migration and integration**, the Commission proposed an amount of around EUR 12 billion, against the around EUR 7.84 billion currently available to Member States for the programming period 2021-2027 ([72]) for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, and almost EUR 3 billion for the European Regional Development Fund for the integration of marginalised communities, including people with a migrant background. This budget aims to foster solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility among Member States, and support, in particular, faster processing of applications for international protection including at the external borders, more effective returns, as well as talent attraction and early integration of third-country nationals. As part of the National and Regional Partnership Plans, the European Social Fund will contribute to support the social inclusion and socio-economic integration of third-country nationals.

For the next MFF, support for Member States will be implemented through a **performance-based approach** under the National and Regional Partnership Plans. When drawing up their National and Regional Partnership Plans, Member States should ensure that funding will address identified policy challenges, including in the area of asylum and migration management, return and labour mobility.

Furthermore, the MFF proposal for 2028-2034 increases coherence, consistency and complementarity between the internal and external policy dimensions. The proposal for **Global Europe Regulation** ([73]), with a proposed envelope of EUR 200 billion, has been designed to match a more strategic, values-driven and impactful approach to enlargement and international partnerships, in alignment with the EU's strategic interests, including its migration objectives. This more strategic approach to the use of funds should also be reflected in the programming modalities and in the implementation of this instrument in order to enhance coherence and effectiveness. Furthermore, the Commission's proposal enhances the strategic approach to the provision of funding to incentivise enhanced cooperation on migration and readmission.

The relevant **EU Agencies**, notably Frontex, EUAA, eu-LISA, Europol, Eurojust, and FRA, provide assistance to Member States. Such assistance includes operational and judicial support, guidance, training or operational management of large-scale IT systems. This strand of work is complemented by direct operational support to Member States to further develop and strengthen their national capacities. While Agencies are already providing key support to Member States in managing migration, the next five years will provide an opportunity to reinforce the tools at the Agencies' disposal and the support that they provide to Member States when requested, most notably in view of the operationalisation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

With regard to **Frontex**, the Commission plans to present in 2026, based on an impact assessment and following consultations with Member States and other stakeholders, a revision of its founding regulation. In preparing the proposal, the Commission will explore how to best complement the resources of Member States not only in terms of quantity, but also quality of tasks, thereby contributing to stronger common borders in line with an integrated border management approach. The proposal could also strengthen the rules related to Frontex's tasks, deployments, cooperation with third countries and the Agency's structure and governance.

The **EUAA** will continue to play an important role in supporting Member States in the implementation of the Pact, including through fostering convergence of asylum practices,

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([72]) This amount includes allocations to Member States as initially agreed, transfers by Member States from other Funds and top- ups from the AMIF Thematic Facility to Member States.
([73]) Proposal for a of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Global Europe; EUR-Lex - 52025PC0551 - EN - EUR-Lex.

and providing operational and technical support. The operationalisation of the monitoring mechanism in the course of 2026 will also be an important step forward to support the operational and technical application of the asylum rules by Member States. To ensure that the Agency is well equipped to deliver on its tasks, following the evaluation of the EUAA mandate, the Commission will consider the possible need to amend the Agency's founding regulation, including in support of external policies.

To deliver on this digital transformation, **eu-LISA**, the EU's Agency for the management of large-scale IT systems, will remain central. The MFF proposal therefore foresees a significant increase of its resources to give the Agency the necessary means to develop and put into operation all the components of the large-scale IT systems under its remit.

The revision of **Europol's** mandate in 2026, based on an evaluation and impact assessment as well as on consultations with Member States and relevant stakeholders, will also consider how to strengthen the Agency's operational, analytical and technological support capacities to enable effective operational cooperation both internally and with partner countries. With the adoption of the amended Europol Regulation establishing the European Centre against Migrant Smuggling, Europol will play an even stronger role in identifying and disrupting criminal networks behind migrant smuggling.

Eurojust is building its capacity to cooperate with jurisdictions around the world to better combat the organised crime groups involved in migrant smuggling and other crimes. The agreements on judicial cooperation in criminal matters signed in 2025 with both Lebanon and Egypt set a good example to emulate with other partner countries.

Furthermore, to make the most out of the comprehensive approach to migration diplomacy, the **operational support that the EU Agencies** can offer to partner countries, in accordance with their current or future mandates, should be used more strategically. To offer a comprehensive package of support to partner countries, and ensure cohesive Union engagement, EU Agencies, in close cooperation with the Commission, should better coordinate their outreach to partner countries as well as related agreements and working arrangements. Promoting and enhancing operational cooperation of EU Agencies with the competent national authorities should be embedded into the operational actions and in engagements under the EU's migration diplomacy.

8. CONCLUSION

This first European Strategy on Asylum and Migration Management reaffirms the Union's determination to build and put in place a migration framework that is effective, right-based, fair, and adaptable, and meets citizens' expectations of a well-managed and future-proof policy. It promotes a resilient and assertive European Union on the world stage and remains adaptable to the developments that take place in our continent and beyond. It serves as a compass for EU action, with clear objectives and priority of action, making strategic use of available resources and the operational support.

A migration and asylum policy that is fair and firm and true to European values is a shared responsibility, delivering on this Strategy will require political commitment and close cooperation among the European Parliament and the Council, Member States, EU Agencies, international partners and other relevant stakeholders. The Commission counts on the support of all actors to bring forward the objectives of this Strategy, working together to prevent illegal migration and the loss of life on dangerous journeys, to protect people fleeing war and persecution, and encourage talent to come to the EU to boost the competitiveness of our economies.