



Commission makes progress on a European Agenda on Migration

Brussels, 04 March 2015

The European Commission today launched its work on a comprehensive European Agenda on Migration. The College of Commissioners held a first orientation debate on key actions to step up the EU's efforts to implement the existing tools and cooperation in managing migration flows from third countries.

For the first time, managing migration better is an explicit priority of the European Commission, as presented in the political guidelines of President Juncker, [A new start for Europe](#). Migration is a cross-cutting issue, involving different policy areas different actors, both inside and outside the EU. The new structure and working methods of the European Commission are a first step at addressing the challenges and opportunities of migration in a truly comprehensive way.

First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** said: *"Managing migration well is a challenge for Europe as a whole. It is now time for a fresh approach in the way we work together: we must make better and more coherent use of all our tools, agree common priorities and pool more resources at EU and national levels to achieve real solidarity and a better sharing of responsibility between Member States. In May we will present a new migration agenda with an improved governance to strengthen our asylum system, set a sound course on legal migration, act more vigorously against irregular migration and ensure more secure borders."*

High Representative Vice-President **Federica Mogherini** said: *"We need to be effective, as Europeans, on the immediate response and at the same time to address the root causes, starting from the crises spreading at our borders, most of all in Libya. That's why we are increasing our work with origin and transit countries to provide protection in conflict regions, facilitate resettlement and tackle trafficking routes."*

Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner **Dimitris Avramopoulos** said: *"Migration is about people – behind each face arriving at our borders, there is an individual: a businessperson travelling to work, a student coming to study, a victim of people-traffickers, a parent trying to get their children to safety. When presenting a comprehensive European Agenda on Migration we have to think about all dimensions of migration – this is not about quick fixes; this is about creating a more secure, prosperous and attractive European Union."*

Towards a truly comprehensive European approach on migration

Today's Orientation Debate has set out the four main areas where actions are envisaged in the European Agenda on Migration to implement the political guidelines of President Juncker. All are mutually linked and equally important.

A strong Common Asylum System

The European Union has one of the most advanced legislative frameworks globally to offer protection to those in need. Now is the time to fully and coherently implement the recently adopted [Common European Asylum System](#). The Commission will take all efforts that existing divergences in national asylum policy practices disappear. Deepening the cooperation with third countries will also be essential to address the root causes of migration, as well as mainstreaming migration into the design of development strategies. Finally, the Commission is committed to making progress in the increased use of relocation and resettlement efforts by the European Union, in close dialogue with Member States and third countries which host important numbers of refugees.

A new European policy on legal migration

Whilst addressing existing unemployment, Europe will have to attract the right talent to be more competitive at a global level. This is a long-term effort which we have to start preparing now. That is why the European Commission will launch a review of the EU [Blue Card](#) Directive. This is a challenging and long term process and can only work in discussion with Member States, including on a more horizontal approach to legal migration policy.

Fighting irregular migration and human trafficking more robustly

People migrate irregularly for a variety of reasons. In 2014, there were about 278.000 irregular border crossings according to Frontex – twice as many as in 2011. Many of these migrants make use of smugglers – or are taken advantage of by human traffickers. Building further on existing legislation on irregular migration and the fight against human trafficking, the Commission wants to enhance its actions in this area. The Commission is working towards a comprehensive set of actions against human smuggling, and wants to further develop concrete tools targeting priority countries and routes, in close collaboration with third countries, also through existing [readmission agreements](#) and cooperation frameworks (e.g. the [Rabat](#), [Khartoum](#) or [Budapest](#) processes).

Securing Europe's external borders

An area without internal borders, and a solid asylum and migration policy can only be sustained if Europe manages its external borders, in full respect of fundamental rights. Border management is a shared competence between the EU and the Member States, and the enforcement of the surveillance of EU's external borders is of vital interest to all. The preparation of the European Agenda on Migration will be an opportunity to discuss whether and to what extent [EU's Border Agency Frontex](#) needs a budget increase, and more operational assets and human resources to better address the evolving challenge at the EU's external borders. We need to pool more resources amongst Member States if we truly want to reinforce the work of Frontex and put European Border Guard Teams into action.

For more information

[Towards a Comprehensive European Migration Policy: 20 years of EU action](#)

[Questions and Answers: Smuggling of Migrants in Europe and the EU response](#)

[Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs Website](#)

[Website of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans](#)

[Website of High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini](#)

[Website of Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos](#)

Annex: Towards a European Agenda on Migration: The Facts



Towards a European Agenda on Migration: The Facts



A strong Common Asylum System

- The European Union hosts a total of **1 million** recognized refugees representing **7.6%** of total refugees worldwide, and around **0.2%** of the EU's population.
- Asylum flows to the EU have shown an increased trend to reach over **435,000** applications in **2013** and around **600,000** in **2014**
- In **2014**, **90%** of Asylum applications in the EU were lodged in only **10** Member States.



A new European policy on legal migration

- By **2060** there will be only **two** persons aged **15-64** for every person over **65**, compared to **four** today.
New immigrants represented **15%** of entries into strongly growing occupations, such as science, technology and engineering, as well as the health and education professions.
- According to the World Bank, remittances to developing countries are estimated to have reached **\$404 billion** in **2013** and are expected to rise to **\$516 billion** in **2016**.



Fighting irregular migration and human trafficking more robustly

- In **2014**, Frontex estimates the number of detections of illegal border-crossing at about **278,000**. This is twice as many as in **2011 (141,000)** during the initial stages of the Arab Spring.
- In **2013**, the number of return decisions issued by the EU Member States was **425,875**, while the number of persons returned in practice was **166,975**, i.e. less than **40%**.
- UNOCD statistics estimating that smugglers operating at the European and US borders alone amass yearly profits of more than **\$6.7 billion**. The annual profits obtained by a single organization involved in smuggling are reported to be up to over **€12 million**
- Member States in 2010-2012 have registered **30,146 victims** of trafficking and the real number of undetected victims is certainly much higher



Securing Europe's external borders

- It has been estimated that since **2000**, about **25,000 migrants** have lost their lives trying to reach the EU, most of them in the Mediterranean.



A comprehensive approach

For the first time, managing migration better is an explicit priority of the European Commission, as presented in the political guidelines of President Juncker. Migration is a cross-cutting issue, involving different policy areas different actors, both inside and outside the EU. The new structure and working methods of the European Commission are a first step at addressing the challenges and opportunities of migration in a truly comprehensive way.

Find out more

[#MigrationEU](#)

ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs

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