

EU Ministers take important steps in the fight against cross-border criminal activities

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The EU Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs have at the informal Council meeting in Copenhagen arrived at important conclusions concerning the fight against international crime and a better management of flows of immigrants and refugees. There is broad support concerning exchange of passenger information as a shield against terrorism and other serious crime and for further strengthening the cooperation in providing for criminals to serve sentences in their home country. There was consensus not to continue discussions on forced relocation of asylum seekers and refugees within the EU. The focus should now be on finding other tools to help the EU countries who face severe asylum and migration pressures.

More than 50 of the EU Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, representatives from the Schengen associated states, the candidate countries, Croatia, the Commissioner for Home Affairs, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and a number of EU agencies attended the informal Council meeting on 26 and 27 January 2012 in Copenhagen. At the meeting they discussed a number of concrete initiatives aimed at solving EU's challenges with terrorism, organized crime and asylum and migration pressure. It was the first informal Council Meeting during the Danish Presidency.

"I am very satisfied with the informal Council Meeting, which we have held here in Copenhagen during the last two days. We have taken important steps in the direction of improving the EU's efforts against organized crime and terrorism and in the direction of increasing our opportunities for a better management of the flows of refugees and immigrants", says the Danish Minister for Justice and President of the Council of Justice and Home Affairs Morten Bødskov.

On the agenda was amongst other things the development of a new system for exchanging passenger information (Passenger Name Record, PNR). The proposal suggests that airline companies are required to pass on information to the authorities of the Member States to contribute to the fight against cross border criminal activities.

"The Member States agreed that a system for the exchange of passenger information is an important shield against cross border crime and terrorism. It is positive that there was strong support for the EU to contribute financially so that the system can be developed in the Member States in a fast and efficient manner", says Minister for Justice Morten Bødskov.

The agenda also included discussions on a stronger European contribution in the fight against insider dealing and market manipulation as well as a strengthening of the cooperation on transfers of convicts for serving of sentences in their home countries.

"It is well known that Europe is facing a large number of great challenges. At the Council Meeting I have experienced a great willingness from the Member States to work together and find solutions. This makes me truly optimistic on behalf of the EU cooperation. The EU is a place for great thoughts – but also a place for concrete and practical cooperation. At the meeting in

Copenhagen we have discussed practical solutions to how the countries can send sentenced foreigners home to serve a sentences in their home countries. It would be an important contribution to the rehabilitation process when the convicts can serve sentences in the EU country to which they have the strongest affiliation”, says Morten Bødskov.

Furthermore, the ministers discussed the pressure from illegal immigrants and asylum seekers on Europe that has been one of the largest challenges in the EU in the last few years. The European Council has therefore encouraged that the EU shows genuine and practical solidarity with the countries who are particularly experiences a growing pressure. At the informal meeting there was an important discussion of how solidarity is to be understood in practice.

“We will do our best to help those countries who are under pressure and thereby also help them handling the challenges due to illegal immigrants and asylum seekers in the EU. There was consensus not to continue discussions on forced relocation of asylum seekers and refugees between the Member States. Instead we will in the best possible manner help the most affected countries with handling the challenges locally. This can happen by supporting the development of better warning systems so we will be able to quickly take action in the affected areas and thereby solve the challenges before they develop”, says Minister for Justice Morten Bødskov.

You can find additional information about the informal Council Meeting in Copenhagen by reading the discussion papers, which have formed the bases for the discussions.

Solidarity

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Criminal sanctions and the proposal for a directive on insider dealing

Transfer of sentenced persons and social rehabilitation

Additional information

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