



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: European Council (15-16 October 2015)
- Draft conclusions

In accordance with Article 2(3)(a) of the Council's Rules of Procedure, delegations will find attached the draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission.

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I. MIGRATION

1. Tackling the migration and refugee crisis is a common obligation which requires a comprehensive strategy and a determined effort over time in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility. The orientations agreed by Heads of State or Government on 23 September focused on the most pressing issues. Their implementation is advancing rapidly, as evidenced by work undertaken within the Council and by the Commission report of 14 October. This will be kept under close review, including as concerns the financial pledges and possible further needs.
2. Today, the European Council set out the following further orientations:

Cooperating with third countries to stem the flows

- a) work speedily on adopting a joint Action Plan with Turkey as part of a comprehensive cooperation agenda based on mutual commitments and delivery. This should contribute to accelerating the fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap. The EU and its Member States stand ready to step up their political and financial engagement substantially;
- b) ensure effective follow up to the High-level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkans Route, with particular emphasis on the management of migratory flows and the fight against criminal networks;
- c) achieve concrete operational measures at the forthcoming Valletta Summit with African Heads of State or Government, focusing, in a fair and balanced manner, on effective return and readmission, dismantling of criminal networks and prevention of illegal migration, accompanied by real efforts to tackle root causes and to support the African socio-economic development together with a clear commitment concerning continued possibilities for legal migration;
- d) explore possibilities for developing safe and sustainable reception capacities in the affected regions and providing lasting prospects and adequate procedures for refugees and their families, including through access to education and jobs, until return to their country of origin is possible.

Strengthening the protection of the EU's external borders

- e) work towards the gradual establishment of an integrated management system for external borders;
- f) make full use of the existing Frontex mandate, including as regards the deployment of Rapid Border Intervention Teams;
- g) building on the Schengen acquis and in accordance with the Treaty, enhance the mandate of Frontex in the context of discussions over the development of a European Border and Coast Guard System, including as regards the deployment of Rapid Border Intervention Teams in cases where Schengen evaluations or risk analysis demonstrate the need for robust and prompt action, in cooperation with the Member State concerned;
- h) devise technical solutions to reinforce the control of the EU's external borders to meet both migration and security objectives, by making full use of technological developments in order not to hamper the fluidity of movements and to facilitate travel;
- i) the Commission to rapidly present a package of measures with a view to improving the management of our external borders.

Responding to the influx of refugees in Europe and ensuring returns

- j) press ahead with the establishment of further hotspots within the agreed timeframe to ensure identification, registration and fingerprinting of applicants for international protection and other migrants. Member States will support these efforts to the full, in the first place by meeting the calls for expertise from Frontex and EASO for the Migration Management Support Teams to work in hotspot areas and by the provision of necessary resources;
- k) further to the first successful relocations, proceed rapidly with the full implementation of the decisions on relocation as well as our commitments on resettlement;
- l) at the same time step up implementation by the Member States of the Return Directive and, before the end of the year, create a dedicated return office within Frontex in order to scale up support to Member States;

- m) enlarge the Frontex mandate on return to include the right to organise joint return operations on its own initiative, and enhance its role regarding the acquisition of travel documents for returnees;
 - n) promote the acceptance by third countries of an improved European return *laissez-passer* as the reference document for return purposes;
 - o) effectively implement all readmission commitments, whether undertaken through formal readmission agreements, the Cotonou Agreement or other arrangements;
 - p) further increase leverage in the fields of return and readmission, using where appropriate the "more-for-more" principle. In this regard, the Commission and the High Representative will propose, within six months, comprehensive and tailor-made incentives to be used vis-à-vis third countries.
3. The orientations set out above represent a further important step towards our comprehensive strategy, consistent with the right to seek asylum, fundamental rights and international obligations. There are however other important priority actions that require further work in the relevant fora. And there is a need for continuing reflection on the overall migration and asylum policy of the EU. The European Council will keep developments under review.
4. The European Council discussed political and military developments in Syria, including their impact on migration. It expressed its concern about the Russian attacks on the Syrian opposition and civilians and the potential for inadvertent incidents which could escalate the situation further. The EU is fully engaged in finding a political solution to the conflict and calls on all parties involved to work to that effect.
5. As regards Libya, the European Council welcomed the announcement made by the UN and called on all parties to swiftly endorse it. The EU recalls its offer of substantial political and financial support once the Government of National Accord is formed.

II. OTHER ITEMS

6. The European Council took stock of the discussions on the Presidents' report on completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union. Stressing the urgency of completing the Banking Union, it asked for work to be intensified on all aspects. The European Council will revert to these issues at its December meeting.
 7. The European Council was informed about the process ahead concerning the UK plans for an (in/out) referendum.
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