



Progress following Western Balkans Route Leaders' Meeting: Thirteenth Contact Points Video Conference

Brussels, 22 January 2016

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Leaders' Statement Points 1 and 9 on exchange of information and effective cooperation:

Participants reiterated their commitments to a swift and steady exchange of information between the contact points which should be used as an early warning mechanism to ensure a collective cross-border approach and avoid unilateral actions which may trigger chain reactions.

Leaders' Statement Point 13 on border management:

A broad discussion on the different border management points allowed for an exchange of information between the countries and organisations during the call, including the following key points:

- Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed about the improvement of exchange of information and coordination of actions related to border management as well as the strengthening of Frontex support at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- The Commission informed about the outcome of a video conference held between the national police authorities from all participating countries. A follow-up video conference is expected to take place in the course of next week.
- Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed about the practices currently being carried out at their internal borders.
- The Dutch Presidency informed about a political level meeting which is foreseen to take place in the margins of the Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council on 25 February between Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to discuss the recent measures taken on the Western Balkans route.

Leaders' Statement Points 5 and 6 relating to support and shelter to refugees:

The UNHCR provided an update on progress towards the delivery of the 20,000 reception places which will be provided in private accommodation via a voucher scheme with partners in Greece. This is part of the total of 50,000 additional reception places which Greece committed to provide at the Leaders Meeting. The UNHCR is making good progress towards the target. 1,000 places have already been established. A partnership agreement on 12.150 additional reception places to be established gradually in the course of 2016 through the provision of 150 hotel vouchers per day and the rental of 2,400 apartments is expected to be concluded in the coming days.

The group will reconvene again for the next weekly video conference on 28 January, and will continue their bilateral contacts in the meantime to ensure full communication, coordination and cooperation to address the migration flows and to ensure humane treatment of those seeking asylum in Europe.

Background

On Wednesday 21 October, European Commission President Juncker called for a Leaders' Meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkans route to address the emergency situation unfolding along this route.

At the meeting, all 12 leaders – including the President of the Commission – agreed to nominate contact points within 24 hours to allow daily exchanges and coordination to achieve the gradual,

controlled and orderly movement of persons along the Western Balkans route and to monitor the implementation of the 17-point plan agreed on 21 October.

Attending the Leaders' Meeting were the Heads of State or Government of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. The President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Council, the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU, the future Dutch Presidency of the Council of the EU and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were in attendance. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) were also represented.

On 15 December, the European Commission published a [Progress Report](#) on measures taken to tackle the refugee and migration crisis along the Western Balkans Route. The Report assessed progress on the measures in the [Leaders Statement](#) adopted after the [Western Balkans Route Leaders Meeting](#) on the 25 October.

For more information

[Web Page on the Leaders' Meeting on the Western Balkans Route](#)

[Leaders' Statement](#)

[Press Release on First Progress after the Leaders' Meeting](#)

[All press materials on the EU Migration Agenda](#)

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