



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

Brussels, 8 January 2016

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Today, an eleventh video conference was held between the contact points (see Annex) nominated after the Western Balkans Route Leaders' Meeting held on 25 October. The objective was to follow up on the agreement reached at the meeting and set out in the [Leaders' Statement](#). Senior officials from the countries and agencies present at the meeting had a detailed discussion on recent trends concerning external borders and reception capacity:

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 on the call, including the following key points:

- Austria, Slovenia and Croatia informed about the outcome of a meeting held between the police authorities of the three countries aimed at intensifying cooperation and coordination of border management. Participants discussed the possibility of holding a video conference of national police authorities from all participating countries.
- Frontex informed the group on progress following the launch on 28 December 2015 of the "Poseidon Rapid Intervention" operation in Greece. 325 officers and 11 vessels have been deployed to the Greek islands. 180 of the officers currently deployed are supporting registration and identification. Frontex also informed about progress made as regards the agreement of an operational plan for management of the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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 agreed to provide at the Leaders Meeting. UNHCR is making good progress towards the target with 1,000 places having already been established and expects the remaining places to become available in the near future.

Leaders' Statement Points 8, 11 and 12 on registration of arrivals and return and readmission:

Participants discussed the need to step up efforts to ensure the registration of arrivals and availability of registration data in the Eurodac database. Greece informed about the registration process in the hotspots on the Greek islands. 65 Eurodac machines are currently deployed in the Greek islands.

Participants stressed the need to improve and accelerate return and readmission procedures for those persons who have completed the asylum application process and are deemed not to be in need of international protection.

Leaders' Statement Point 15 on tackling smuggling and trafficking:

Greece informed about preparations for the introduction of an identification document for refugees aimed at preventing the use of forged documents.

Europol gave an update on the stepping up of its cooperation with the countries along the Western Balkans route in the fight against smuggling and trafficking.

The group will reconvene on 14 January for the next weekly video conference, 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](#)

Annex: National Contact Points – Western Balkans Route

Country / Organisation	National Contact	Function
COMMISSION	Mr. Richard SZOSTAK	Diplomatic Adviser, Cabinet of the President
PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL	Mr. Alexander SOREL	Adviser, Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU
EUROPEAN COUNCIL	Mr. Hugo BRADY	Adviser, Cabinet of the President
ALBANIA	Mr. Sander LLESHI	Adviser for security in the Cabinet of Prime Minister
AUSTRIA	Mr. Raphael STERNFELD	International Affairs Adviser, Federal Chancellery
BULGARIA	Ms. Petya PARVANOVA	Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior
GERMANY	Mr. Uwe CORSEPIUS	European Policy Adviser, Federal Chancellery
Former YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	Ms. Anastasija ILIESKA	State Secretary, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Macedonia
GREECE	Ms. Eleni TAKOU	Chief policy Adviser of the Minister of Migration
CROATIA	Ms. Maja BOGDAN	Deputy Sherpa, Government of the Republic of Croatia
HUNGARY	Mr. Tibor LAKATOS	Police Colonel, Head of the Operation Centre of the Ministry of Interior
ROMANIA	Mr. Leonard ORBAN	EU Affairs Sherpa of the President
SERBIA	Mr. Aleksandar VULIN	Minister of Social Affairs, Government coordinator for Migration Issues
SLOVENIA	Mr. Igor MALLY	EU Affairs Sherpa, Government of the Republic of Slovenia
UNHCR	Ms. Sophie MAGENNIS	Head of Policy and Support Unit
FRONTEX	Mr. David REISENZEIN	Liaison Officer

Press contacts:

[Tove ERNST](#) (+32 2 298 67 64)

[Tim McPHIE](#) (+ 32 2 295 86 02)

[Markus LAMMERT](#) (+ 32 2 298 04 23)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)