



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, 25 June 2024

Dear colleagues,

When people look back, 2024 will be seen as a landmark year for EU migration and asylum policy with the **adoption and entry into force of the Pact on Migration and Asylum**.

Working hand in hand on the internal and external dimension of migration, we have achieved historic results. The **two-track approach** that we started to apply, with a legislative and operational track including the implementation of comprehensive agreements with our neighbours as well as countries of origin and transit, has created the necessary political conditions to find agreement on the Pact. This will be seen as the moment when, after years of often divisive discussions, we succeeded in finding the difficult balance between our intersecting needs and challenges and agree on an **ambitious but fair way forward**. Our work together on migration and asylum will require constant effort and vigilance, but we can take satisfaction in having reached this agreement, and the foundations it sets for future action.

Our common task is now to **make this agreement a reality**. We have just 24 months to prepare before the Pact enters into application in June 2026, and we must not underestimate the work ahead. Every Member State needs to engage in rigorous preparations reviewing and adapting current legislation; putting in place systems for legal counselling and monitoring; developing IT systems, infrastructure and reception facilities particularly for the border procedure; amending administrative practices and coordination between authorities at national level; integrating EU Agencies' work within national systems, as well as building and strengthening capacity, through recruitment and training of personnel.

The **Common Implementation Plan for the Pact** adopted by the Commission on 12 June breaks down the new obligations into **ten building blocks** and itemises the work to be done in each case – by the Commission, by Member States, and by EU agencies. It is designed to provide a maximum of support to Member States in this major undertaking. That is why the Commission has brought it forward three months earlier than legally required in order to give national authorities the longest time possible to draw up their **National Implementation Plans**, which are due by mid-December this year.

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*The **spirit of the Pact is one of solidarity** to ensure that no Member State is left alone to face migratory pressure. By the same token, no administration will be left alone with the challenges of preparing for Europe's new coordinated approach to managing migration. The Commission will help coordinate these efforts and will be there to support Member States every step of the way. **EU support can take many forms** – from legal guidance to help ensure compliance with the legal texts, to very practical and financial support. The Commission is already engaging Member State-by-Member State to underpin planning for the work ahead with joint gap and needs analysis.*

*As we agreed in February, to supplement funding from national budgets, Member States will be able to draw on existing as well as newly available resources from the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund** and the **Border Management and Visa Instrument**, as well as other available EU resources, such as cohesion policy funds as well as technical assistance support. The **mid-term review of the national programmes** under these regulations will be the occasion to allocate more than **EUR 1.6 billion** for both funds, and the **revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework** resulted in an increase of **EUR 2 billion** for migration and border management over the years 2025-2027 to support with the implementation of the Pact, and with refugees from Ukraine, for whom temporary protection is now extended till March 2026.*

*Although substantive, these additional resources will not cover all the expected needs. **Priorities for this support** will therefore be focused on the most urgent and resource intensive needs such as **building capacity for carrying out the border procedure, providing legal counselling, and strengthening Member States' asylum and reception systems**, as well as their **capacity to support refugees from Ukraine**. For the coming years, the next Multiannual Financial Framework will be a key moment to ensure coherent and effective use of EU funding for common priorities, including support to Member States in addressing the identified gaps and needs in the area of asylum and border management.*

*The Pact is undoubtedly a major breakthrough. But alone, it will not guarantee our success. So far this year the number of illegal border crossings into the EU on the Central Mediterranean route are down by 60%, and on the Western Balkans route by 72%. Since May, there have been no new boat arrivals to Cyprus. All this shows that **constant, targeted, Team Europe engagement brings results**. At the same time, the significantly increased arrivals on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route, as well as the Eastern Mediterranean route, show we must never drop our guard, and we must remain vigilant in the summer months ahead.*

*The **external dimension of our work on migration** is a key factor for the success of the Pact as a whole – since only with well-functioning partnerships will we achieve cooperation on preventing departures and fighting smuggling, as well as smooth return and readmission of those with no right to stay. It is clear that the EU will only succeed in stemming irregular migration towards the EU if we **are able to implement comprehensive and smart policies with our neighbours and beyond**, particularly with the partners chosen for us by geography, as migrants transit those states closest to the EU to reach our borders.*

*The comprehensive partnerships can only work if **migration is standing alongside a range of shared interests** that include security, economic development, energy and trade. These partnerships are of mutual interest: they must be built on a consideration of needs and interests of our partners, and the understanding that key European interests must be respected, acting in the **mutual interest**.*

*It is just under a year since we signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a strategic and comprehensive partnership with **Tunisia**. Addressing root causes of migration and investing in Tunisia's economy and green transition is a priority. The **Tunisia Investment Forum**, held on 12-13 June, was an opportunity to bring together the public sector with business, investment and banking sectors highlighting Tunisia's partnership with the EU. On that occasion, and as a key deliverable of our partnership, the EU and Tunisia signed a **Memorandum of Understanding on Energy** to develop the potential for investment in renewable energy and ensure strategic energy supply between Tunisia and the EU.*

*As regards our cooperation on migration management, we have seen a slowing in the pace of irregular arrivals from Tunisia, with strong **investment in training and capacity building**, and the Tunisian authorities playing their part in continued anti-smuggling operations. Support for **protection of refugees and migrants** is equally a key priority, and while conditions in the country remain challenging, we continue to be clear on the imperative of respect for fundamental rights. We are working with several North African countries to make sure that returns are conducted in a dignified manner and in 2023, the **EU supported more than 13 000 voluntary returns** to countries of origin, nearly tripling the 2020 figure of 4 492 returns.*

*While cooperation with **Libya** remains challenging, renewed engagement with the Libyan authorities – including my recent meeting with the Prime Minister Dbeibeh – has also helped to strengthen search and rescue, and interception capacities in the Central Mediterranean. We need to build on this and ensure real improvements in the protection of refugees and migrants in Libya, while working on strengthening the control of the land border to the south of the country. We are working on alternatives to detention for women and children, and since my meeting with Prime Minister Dbeibah we have managed to ensure that UNHCR gets access to detention centres.*

*In February, I travelled to **Mauritania** with the Spanish Prime Minister and in March to **Egypt** with the leaders of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. In each case we have demonstrated Team Europe's determination to deepen partnerships of mutual interest in which migration stands alongside a range of shared interests that includes security, economic development, energy and trade.*

*These comprehensive partnerships are built on a **consideration of the needs and interests of our partners** – and the understanding that key European interests must be respected, as set out in the Joint Declaration that Commissioner Johansson signed with Mauritania in March. In Mauritania, investments in a **green hydrogen economy** are underway way under Global Gateway in a Team Europe approach with France, Germany and Spain.*

Commissioner Várhelyi continues regular engagement with Egypt on the whole range of our comprehensive partnership. The **Egypt-EU Investment Conference**, which I will be opening on 29 June alongside President Al-Sisi, is a key deliverable of the strategic and comprehensive partnership, and where the Memorandum of Understanding related to the macro-financial assistance of EUR 1 billion will be signed.

In every case, the partnership must be tailor-made. My visit to **Lebanon** with the Cypriot President in May underlined our determination to continue supporting a country that is hosting a number of refugees roughly equivalent to a third of its population, and my own engagement has been reinforced by recent visits to the region by Vice-President Schinas and Commissioner Várhelyi. In the April European Council conclusions, we made clear that we would seek new ways to use our resources to support those who choose to return home to Syria, and to contribute to the creation of better conditions for returns there. This includes exploring how to work on a more structured approach to voluntary returns to Syria, and the Commission is in discussions with **UNHCR** on this. At the same time, there needs to be strengthened support from the international community for humanitarian assistance and early recovery programmes in Syria.

Meanwhile, we continue to recognise the huge contribution of **Türkiye**, and recently pledged EUR 1 billion to support with Syrian refugees and vulnerable communities in the country in 2024, as well as border and migration management. The Commission's constant engagement with the Union's neighbours has also underlined the importance of cooperation on migration in the **Western Balkans**, where Commissioner Johansson has just signed a new generation **Frontex status agreement with Serbia**.

At the **G7 Leaders' meeting in Italy** on 13-14 June, G7 leaders affirmed a collective commitment to address migration as a global phenomenon, in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Leaders converged around a **three-pronged approach** reflecting the objectives of the work we are undertaking at EU level, namely focusing efforts on addressing root causes of irregular migration; enhancing border management and enforcement measures to tackle migrant smuggling and promoting safe and legal pathways.

We need to continue efforts in the areas we have identified together as priorities, tackling the challenges of migration while seizing the opportunities it presents. At the G7, we agreed to launch a **Coalition to Prevent and Counter the Smuggling of Migrants** to promote enhanced cooperation on investigative capacities and information exchange, engaging with relevant authorities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. This Coalition will work through ongoing partnerships and mechanisms including the **EU's Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling**.

Our collective efforts against migrant smugglers must be taken forward with determination. **People smuggling** must be recognised as a major area for organised crime, with the same groups often responsible for trafficking in human beings or the smuggling of drugs or weapons. We must deter the criminals through effective efforts to **disrupt, pursue and prosecute the perpetrators** and using a "follow the money" approach to identify, investigate, and disrupt organised crime, tackling their illegal profits, including through enhanced cooperation on asset confiscation. At EU level, the proposed

regulation to improve the work of law enforcement against smugglers, and the proposed directive to update our approach to prosecutions and sentencing, can make a real difference. It is crucial that we advance with those discussions once when the new European Parliament is in place.

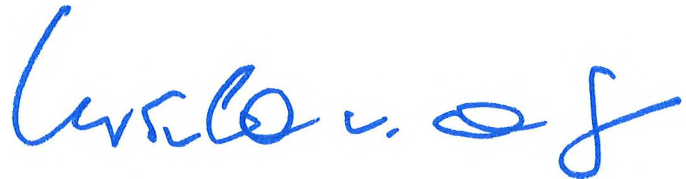
Progress in **promoting safe and legal pathways** is central to preventing irregular migration. It is also necessary for the future of our labour market and the growth of our economies in the face of Europe's many skills' gaps and demographic changes. The newly agreed Council position on the EU Talent Pool is an important step towards the finalisation of the negotiations with the European Parliament on this innovative tool for addressing labour market needs. Legal migration is also an essential part of the mix of migration policies, providing an incentive for cooperation in other areas such as irregular migration and readmission. The commitment of the EU to legal pathways for protection is clear, with more than 60,000 pledges for 2024-2025. In the future, with the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan, the EU will be able to continue showing sustained commitment to helping global resettlement needs.

Agreement on the Pact is not the end of reflection on the tools at our disposal. Many Member States are looking at innovative strategies to prevent irregular migration by tackling asylum applications further from the EU external border. There are ongoing reflections on ideas which will certainly deserve our attention when our next institutional cycle is under way. Building on experience with the **emergency transit mechanisms** or the **1:1**, we can work upstream on migratory routes and explore ways of developing these models further. Drawing on the **route-based approach** being developed by UNHCR and IOM, we can seek to support the setting up of functioning national asylum systems in partner countries while strengthening our cooperation on returns to countries of origin accompanied by reintegration measures for returnees. As foreseen in the **Asylum Procedure Regulation**, the Commission will consider how to better work in synergy with future designated **safe third countries**. The Commission will continue to support these reflections, always heeding international law, and conscious of the need to work in ways that are also acceptable to our partners and that enable durable solutions to be found for the migrants themselves.

Nowadays the situations we are facing are diverse and need specific responses. Hostile actors who push people across the EU's external borders, for political purposes and with the aim of destabilising the Union or a Member State, should be recognised as a threat to our security. When I was in Lappeenranta in April, it was clear that Russia's actions at the border with Finland, or those of Belarus at the border with Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, are **hybrid attacks aimed at undermining the security of our external borders**, as well as that of the border regions and our citizens. Member States need to be able to counter these types of activities effectively and guarantee the stability and security of our Union. We will therefore need to continue reflecting on strengthening the EU's legal framework to provide for an appropriate response not only from a migration but also from a security perspective in line with the Treaties.

Our common work in recent years has been transformative. We have laid the foundations to give us a robust and sustainable migration and asylum system in the future. We have shown that we have the flexibility and resourcefulness to put in place the operational steps needed to respond to ever-changing migration challenges. This must continue to be one of our core priorities in the next institutional cycle, maintaining our strong and responsive approach into the future.

Yours sincerely,



Ursula von der Leyen