

Mr Margaritis Schinas  
Vice-President of the European Commission

Ms Ylva Johansson  
Commissioner for Home Affairs  
European Commission

Prague, Tallinn, Budapest, Riga,  
Warsaw, Bratislava, Ljubljana  
4 June 2020

Dear Vice-President Schinas,

Dear Commissioner Johansson,

We, the Ministers of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, approach you at this critical juncture for the future of the EU migration and asylum policy. Since the beginning of the year, the European Union has been severely tested with two major challenges – the COVID-19 pandemic and significant migration pressures at the EU's external borders in the South. This has, above all, served as a powerful reminder of the genuine need for strengthening and developing more practical cooperation at the EU level.

Uncontrolled migration represents one of the most serious threats to the cohesion and future of the European Union. We need to rebuild mutual trust and become a credible force in the eyes of our citizens who expect us to act decisively in tackling illegal migration. The European Union needs a truly comprehensive and crisis-resilient migration and asylum system based on a balance between responsibility and solidarity to meet migration challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To achieve these objectives, we believe that we need a fresh start based on the following principles and measures that should form the bedrock of a new Pact on Migration and Asylum.

It must be our primary objective to take all necessary measures in order to improve the protection of the EU's external borders. We should have a full awareness of and a clear say in who enters the European Union. Therefore, the priority should be given to the full and swift implementation of the new EBCGA regulation, the development and implementation of ambitious mandatory border procedures assuming its widest possible use and scope as well as the fully functioning interoperability of the large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice.

Today, the EU external border surveillance is essentially unregulated and differences persist. Therefore, we believe that a set of common minimum standards for border surveillance has to be developed and enforced to prevent all illegal border crossings.

Similarly, it remains crucial to take all steps to boost the ability of the European Union to accelerate returns of all persons without the legal right to stay in the European Union, preferably directly from the point of entry at the EU's external borders. A truly functioning and quick return system is a necessity for creating an effective and sustainable migration policy. We need to develop comprehensive relations with third countries based on conditionality in various areas such as visa, development and trade policies. It is vitally important to strive for the full implementation of existing as well as new readmission and other practical agreements. In line with their mandates, relevant EU institutions and agencies, especially Frontex, must invest a lot more effort in this regard.

We prioritize a significant strengthening of cooperation with third countries in general, with migration becoming one of the pillars of our external relations. Our key objective in this regard should be to prevent illegal migration and address its root causes. Concurrently, by applying strict conditionality, the European Commission, EU Member States and agencies should proactively encourage better border protection, efficient fight against smugglers and human traffickers as well as effective implementation of returns, including returns of migrants from third countries, and capacity building in the

field of asylum (whole-of-route approach). The European Union must act as a strong and united player who is able to enforce its priorities.

The reform of the EU asylum policy shall be based on a consensus between all Member States. To achieve that, whilst building upon strong responsibility, we need to adopt safe country concepts, ensure the implementation of the adopted acquis and revise the Dublin Regulation in order to strengthen the fight against secondary movements. Furthermore, we should develop clear rules of responsibility and reduce opportunities for the abuse of the asylum system (including in the case of visa-free countries and safe countries of origin). The system has to be capable of reacting swiftly in severe crisis situations and provide Member States with flexible tools that enable them to act in a proactive way. It must not be limited to the Common European Asylum System but should also address situations of disproportionate migration pressures in a comprehensive way.

We strongly emphasize the importance of intensifying the fight against migrant smugglers and human traffickers, beyond and within EU borders, by allocating sufficient financial resources, strengthening the capacity of Europol and Frontex in this respect and enhancing their cooperation.

We support further strengthening of solidarity with the front-line Member States with extended financial, technical, operational and expert support provided by the EU, its agencies and Member States.

However, we must reiterate our strong objection to mandatory relocation of asylum seekers and migrants in any shape or form. We are convinced that by introducing mandatory relocation, we would risk creating a powerful pull factor as well as incentives for migrant smugglers and traffickers, thus putting human lives at risk. Such an approach would go against the very logic of our asylum and migration policy that we should strive to dissuade illegal migration rather than encourage it. Solidarity should be understood in much wider terms - the catalogue of possible measures must be adjusted to the preferences and possibilities of Member States.

Please, be reassured that all our countries remain committed to working tirelessly to reach a meaningful consensus. We are looking forward to the Pact on Migration and

Asylum with sincere expectation and stand ready to work with you and all colleagues on its development and practical implementation in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Jan HAMÁČEK



Mart HELME



Sándor PINTÉR



Sandis ĢIRĢENS



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