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Managing Migration: Commission calls time on asylum reform stalling

The EU's comprehensive approach on migration is delivering on all fronts: deeper cooperation with partner countries; better-protected external borders; and more effective tools to manage migration inside the EU. With irregular arrivals down to pre-crisis levels, now is the time to address remaining weaknesses. Work needs to continue at operational level, both externally and internally, and Member States and the European Parliament should swiftly complete the EU's asylum reform and in particular adopt the 5 proposals where there is broad political agreement before next year's European Parliamentary elections.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The Union's comprehensive approach to migration management is delivering tangible results. After four years, it is now essential to consolidate this comprehensive approach by switching from reactive ad hoc responses to completing the reforms for a sustainable future proof migration and asylum system. This can and should be done before the European parliamentary elections in the interest of all Member States."*

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The EU external policies on migration are delivering. Through our partnerships, we have helped over 34,000 people to voluntarily return to their homes, with reintegration assistance, and we evacuated over 2,000 refugees from Libya for further resettlement. We will continue to work to protect stranded migrants, to put an end to the system of detention in Libya together with the United Nations and the African Union. We are strengthening cooperation along the Western Mediterranean, in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa to curtail smuggling, tackle the root causes of migration and provide legal pathways. Through partnerships, we are showing that managing migration in a humane way is possible, together."*

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Four years on, we are better equipped than ever to protect our external borders and address migratory challenges inside and outside the EU. The time has come to consolidate the remaining building blocks of a comprehensive migration, borders and asylum system for the long run. A constantly evolving geopolitical context shows us that we cannot wait to react, but that we have to be ready for the future already now."*

Time and again, the EU has proven able to meet new migration challenges as they have arisen. Today's report looks at how the EU is constantly working to manage migration in all its aspects – from external action to border management to internal measures.

External Dimension: Partnerships that deliver

Through an integrated, “whole of the route” approach, major progress has been achieved by the EU and its Member States in preventing irregular migration and fighting migrant smuggling. Along the Eastern Mediterranean Route, arrivals dropped by 97% after the EU-Turkey Statement and today remain 90% less than at the peak in 2015. Along the **Central Mediterranean route** (see [Factsheet](#)), irregular flows have been reduced by 80%. Nearly 34,000 persons received assistance to voluntarily return to their home countries from Libya and Niger, while over 2,000 people have been evacuated from Libya in view of further resettlement. To improve cooperation on **return and readmission**, 6 new arrangements have been agreed since 2016 (with Afghanistan, Guinea, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Côte d’Ivoire), bringing the total number to 23. In parallel, work to ensure **legal pathways** and **resettlement** is ongoing with more than 44,000 persons resettled under EU schemes since 2015. The **fight against smuggling** networks is progressing, with EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia having apprehended 151 suspected smugglers since 2015 and the Joint Investigation Team’s actions in Niger resulting in 221 arrests. To **address root causes**, innovative funding instruments have been put in place, with more than €4 billion mobilised under the EU Trust Fund for Africa, and 12 guarantee tools worth €800 million adopted under the External Investment Plan. Moving forward, the same integrated approach will be applied to the Western Mediterranean (see [Factsheet](#)) where flows have been increasing; work along the Central Mediterranean will be consolidated and efforts to conclude ongoing readmission negotiations and make better use of existing arrangements will be intensified.

Stronger border management

The **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** is at the core of the EU’s work to support Member States in protecting the external borders. In September, the Commission proposed to reinforce the European Border and Coast Guard further and equip the Agency with a **standing corps of 10,000 border guards** (see [Factsheet](#)) to ensure that Member States can rely on full EU operational support at all times. The Commission is calling on the European Parliament and Member States to adopt the reform before the European Parliament elections next year. In addition, the EU’s work on establishing new, **interoperable border and security information exchange systems** is starting to show results. A number of measures are currently being finalised, including the European Travel Authorisation and Information System (ETIAS), improvements to the Visa Information System (VIS) and to the Schengen Information System (SIS) and the establishment of an Entry-Exit System for non-EU citizens. In the light of the efforts made to improve external border management and the resulting reduction of arrivals, the Commission believes the time has come to lift the temporary controls at internal Schengen borders set in place by some Member States since 2015. New figures (see [Factsheet](#)) published today confirm that the Schengen area continues to garner strong public support and is seen by Europeans as one of the EU’s main achievements.

Internal measures: Completing the reform of the EU’s asylum rules

While compromise is still needed on some elements of the EU’s asylum reform, significant progress has been made overall, with 5 out of the Commission’s initial 7 proposals ready for adoption ([Qualification Regulation](#), [Reception](#)

[Conditions Directive](#), [European Asylum Agency Regulation](#), [Eurodac Regulation](#), [Union Resettlement Framework Regulation](#)). Although part of a broader reform, each individual proposal has a clear benefit on its own and swift adoption of each one would make a clear difference on the ground. Concerning the [Asylum Procedure Regulation](#), the Council should adopt its negotiating position by the end of the year and start negotiations with the European Parliament. A way forward must now also be found on the [Dublin Regulation](#), an indispensable element of a future-proof asylum system. The Commission is committed to working towards a compromise that ensures full solidarity and support for Member States under pressure while preventing secondary movements and abuse of the system. Building on the experience made with *ad hoc* solutions over the summer, temporary arrangements anticipating the core elements of a future Dublin Regulation could be set up as of now, to serve as a bridge until the new Dublin regulation enters into force.

Background

On 13 May 2015, the European Commission proposed a far-reaching strategy, through the [European Agenda on Migration](#), to tackle the immediate challenges of the ongoing crisis, as well as to equip the EU with the tools to better manage migration in the medium and long term, in the areas of irregular migration, borders, asylum and legal migration.

Today's Communication presents the developments since May 2015 and reports on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration and the Commission's political roadmap towards a comprehensive migration agreement [presented in December 2017](#).

For More Information

Communication: [Managing Migration in all its aspects](#)
– [Annex](#)

[Eurobarometer on Schengen](#)

MEMO: [The Global Compact on Migration – Questions and Answers](#)

Factsheets:

[Western Mediterranean Route](#)

[Central Mediterranean Route](#)

Reform of the Common European Asylum System:

[Banking Union: Council endorses](#)

package of measures to reduce risk

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The Council took today a significant step towards strengthening the banking union.

It endorsed the agreement achieved between the presidency and the Parliament on **key measures of a comprehensive legislative package aimed at reducing risks in the EU banking sector.**

Today we have taken a very important step towards completing the Banking Union. We are delivering measures to make European banks stronger, more stable, more resilient. The measures will create the conditions to take ambitious decisions on reforming the euro-area.

Hartwig Löger, minister for finance of Austria, which currently holds the Council presidency

The proposals are intended to implement reforms agreed at **international level** following the 2007-2008 financial crisis to strengthen the banking sector and address outstanding challenges to financial stability. Presented in November 2016, they include elements agreed by the **Basel Committee** on Banking Supervision and by the **Financial Stability Board** (FSB).

The agreed measures deliver on three of the key objectives set out by the Council roadmap on **completing the banking union** agreed in June 2016:

- enhancing the **framework for bank resolution**, in particular the necessary level and quality of the subordination of liabilities (MREL) to ensure an effective and orderly “bail-in” process.
- introducing the possibility for resolution authorities to suspend a bank’s payments and/or contractual obligations when it is under resolution – the so-called “**moratorium tool**” -, so as to help stabilise the bank’s situation.
- strengthening **bank capital requirements** to reduce incentives for excessive risk taking, by including a binding leverage ratio, a binding net stable funding ratio and setting risk sensitive rules for trading in securities and derivatives.

In addition, the banking package contains measures **to improve banks’ lending capacity and to facilitate a greater role for banks in the capital markets,**

such as:

- reducing the administrative burden for smaller and less complex banks, linked in particular to reporting and disclosure requirements;
- enhancing the capacity of banks to lend to SMEs and to fund infrastructure projects;
- reducing the costs of issuing/holding certain instruments, such as high quality securitisation instruments or covered bonds;

The banking package also contains a framework for the cooperation and information sharing among the various authorities involved in the **supervision and resolution of cross-border banking groups**. The agreed measures preserve the balance achieved by the Council position between the powers of home and host supervisors in order to facilitate cross-border flows of capital and liquidity, while ensuring an adequate level of protection for depositors, creditors and financial stability in all member states. The agreement also introduces amendments to improve cooperation between competent authorities on matters related to the **supervision of anti-money laundering activities**.

Risk sharing and banking union

This agreement paves the way to making further progress in the sharing of risk within the EU's banking union. The Euro-summit is due to review the progress achieved in reducing risk in the EU banking industry in December 2018, and to decide on specific steps to be taken in the framework of a broad reform of the Economic and Monetary Union.

In June 2016, the Council agreed in particular that in line with risk reduction measures, it may be decided to set up a **common backstop** to the EU's **single resolution fund** for failing banks ahead of the 2024 agreed start date.

Next steps

Work on remaining outstanding issues will continue both at technical and political level, in view of finalising negotiations on the banking package by the end of the year.

Parliament and Council will then be called on to adopt the proposed regulation at first reading.

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[Eurogroup Statement on the Draft](#)

Budgetary Plans for 2019

1. Business, taxation and competition, Transport and travel
04/12/2018 – 00:15
Council of the EU and European Council
2. 04/12/2018 – 00:15
Council of the EU and European Council
3. Business, taxation and competition, Transport and travel
04/12/2018 – 00:15
Council of the EU and European Council
4. Transport and travel, Business, taxation and competition
04/12/2018 – 00:10
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5. 04/12/2018 – 00:10
Council of the EU and European Council
6. Transport and travel, Business, taxation and competition
04/12/2018 – 00:10
Council of the EU and European Council
7. Justice and citizens' rights
03/12/2018 – 19:08
EUROJUST, Other bodies and agencies
8. Energy, environment and climate, Transport and travel, Business, taxation and competition
03/12/2018 – 19:00
Council of the EU and European Council

9. 03/12/2018 – 19:00

Council of the EU and European Council

10. Energy, environment and climate, Transport and travel, Business, taxation and competition

03/12/2018 – 19:00

Council of the EU and European Council

[Eurogroup Statement on the Draft Budgetary Plans for 2019](#)

[Luis Rego](#)

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The Eurogroup welcomes that all 19 Member States have submitted Draft Budgetary Plans (DBPs) for 2019. Greece is part of this exercise for the first time, following the end of the macro-economic adjustment programme. On 21 November, the Commission provided in-depth individual assessments and Opinions, together with an analysis of the budgetary situation in the euro area as a whole.

We note that Luxembourg, Latvia and Slovenia submitted DBPs on a no-policy-change basis. We invite them to submit the updates of their DBPs as soon as possible and look forward to the Commission assessment of those updates.

The euro area is entering its sixth year of growth, although growth has peaked and downside risks have increased. The strength of the domestic drivers is supportive of the continued activity growth and unemployment reduction. According to the Commission autumn forecast, the aggregate deficit in the euro area is expected to further decline from 1% in 2017 to 0.6% of GDP in 2018, although an increase to 0.8% of GDP is forecast in 2019. For the first time since the introduction of the euro, in 2019 no euro area Member State is expected to have a deficit above 3% of GDP. Aggregate debt in the euro area is set to be on a downward path, from 89% of GDP in 2017 to 87% of GDP in 2018 and 85% of GDP in 2019.

Current economic conditions call for the urgent need to rebuild fiscal buffers, notably in Member States that have not reached their Medium-Term Budgetary Objectives (MTO). The Eurogroup reiterates that a slow pace of debt reduction from high levels in a number of Member States remains a matter for

concern and should be decisively addressed. In this context, the fiscal expansion or limited structural fiscal adjustment expected in some Member States in 2019 is worrying, in particular when coupled with high medium term sustainability risks. The Eurogroup recalls in this context that the focus on sufficient debt reduction and the adjustment towards the MTO are an integral part of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). The Eurogroup also recalls that country-specific recommendations adopted by the Council on 13 July 2018 include detailed and quantified fiscal policy guidance, taking into account the need to strengthen the growth potential and sustainability concerns.

The Eurogroup underlines that Member States are in very different budgetary situations.

The Eurogroup recalls that in its opinion issued on 23 October 2018 the Commission identified a particularly serious non-compliance with the recommendation addressed to Italy by the Council on 13 July 2018 and requested a revised DBP. Italy submitted a revised DBP on 13 November, on which the Commission issued another opinion on 21 November, confirming the existence of a particularly serious non-compliance with the Council recommendation. We support the Commission assessment and recommend Italy to take the necessary measures to be compliant with the SGP. We also support the ongoing dialogue between the Commission and the Italian authorities.

The Eurogroup takes note that, according to the Commission assessment, five Member States' plans are deemed to be at risk of non-compliance with the SGP in 2019: Belgium, France, Portugal, Slovenia, under the preventive arm of the SGP and Spain, assessed under the assumption of a timely and durable correction of the excessive deficit. According to the Commission assessment, the DBPs of these Member States might result in a significant deviation from the adjustment path towards their respective MTOs. In addition, Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain are not expected to comply prima facie with the debt reduction benchmark in 2019. The Eurogroup invites all these Member States to consider in a timely manner the necessary additional measures to address the risks identified by the Commission and to ensure that their 2019 budget will be compliant with SGP provisions.

Based on the Commission assessment, three Member States' plans are deemed to be broadly compliant with the SGP in 2019: Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia, all under the preventive arm of the SGP. The Eurogroup invites these Member States to ensure compliance with SGP provisions within the national budgetary processes and welcomes their commitment to take any necessary measures.

The Eurogroup welcomes that ten Member States' plans are deemed to be compliant with the SGP in 2019: Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Netherlands, all under the preventive arm of the SGP. The Eurogroup also welcomes that some of the Member States that have outperformed their medium term objectives have plans to partly use their favourable budgetary situation in 2019 to boost investment and growth, while preserving the long-term sustainability of public finances.

We will continue to monitor euro area Member States' fiscal and economic

policies, as well as the budgetary situation of the euro area as a whole.

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