



Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos after his meeting with German Minister of the Interior de Maizère

Berlin, 21 February 2017

I am very pleased to be once again here in Berlin, hosted by my friend Minister Thomas de Maizère. We were both recently at the Munich Security Conference, and this morning also at the European Police Congress.

This morning our discussions focused on the internal and external dimensions of migration, security and border management. We agreed that in the coming months we need to find more common ground for the reform of Dublin based on the principles of solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing among Member States.

The Dublin reform is part of our wider effort to develop an effective and comprehensive asylum system. And I hope that we will find an agreement swiftly on the reform, which will improve our procedures, guarantee refugee rights and avoid abuses.

We need to protect those who need protection, prevent irregular migration and return those who have no right to stay.

With Thomas, we are on the same line on all these issues. It is exactly in this context that I also welcome the joint letter [on borders and security] that we received today from France and Germany. This is in line with what the Commission has proposed.*

In this context, I have also informed the Minister of the Commission's intention to put forward next week an Action Plan on Return and a Recommendation to Member States on the efficient implementation of return procedures.

Moreover, we cannot manage migration efficiently without a coordinated approach for our relations with third countries of origin and transit but there is still a lot of work to be done in the area of readmission.

I welcome Germany's involvement and strong support of the EU's external approach. Engaging with Libya and other countries in the region to address the situation in the Southern Mediterranean is of utmost importance. Cooperation with partners in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Morocco is necessary, not only to reduce pressure on Libya's borders, but also to prevent a possible shift of routes.

At the same time, we are reinforcing controls at our external borders. Thanks to the European Border and Coast Guard, a pool of 1,500 border guards can now be deployed in just five days.

Last week, an agreement was reached in the European Parliament to have systematic checks of everybody crossing our external borders.

We also want to tackle existing information gaps which can pose real security threats in border management or elsewhere. The recent improvements that we proposed under the Schengen Information System will for example make sure that all return decisions and all alerts on irregular stays are properly encoded now.

We also need to conclude as soon as possible the negotiations on the Entry/Exit system and ETIAS.

These are initiatives that will first of all strengthen our border management, at a time when our borders are nearby conflict zones. They are therefore crucial initiatives for our security, but also to help us detect and combat irregular migration.

In June we will come forth with further initiatives to strengthen the Schengen Information System, and its interoperability with other databases.

We are here in a city and a country that is at the very forefront of our fight against terrorism as well as of the global effort to manage migration and refugee flows better. It is leading by example on both fronts, and I want to thank Thomas for that.

When voices of nationalism and xenophobia are increasingly louder these days, Germany continues to defend and uphold a truly European approach. An approach which is true to the values of our Union, and to our legal, moral and political obligations.

Know that the European Union stands by your side and is your ally and partner, just as you are ours.

Thank you.

*updated to reflect additions made during delivery

SPEECH/17/321

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