



Brussels, 23 June 2025

Dear colleagues,

*Since our last discussion on migration in March, we have kept up the momentum in our efforts to address common challenges. The meaningful actions under way are what can convince European citizens of our strong commitment to a migration policy that delivers results, as well as protecting our security and our values.*

*The adoption of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** in June 2024 has reshaped the EU's asylum, migration and border management policy and its implementation is currently amongst our top priorities. With the entry into application of the Pact in June 2026, we are now halfway through the transition period. Sustained political engagement and intensified efforts at all levels are crucial at this stage for the timely and successful implementation of the Pact.*

*As reported by the European Commission on 11 June, considerable **progress has already been made at national and EU level**. However, much work still lies ahead for the new rules to be applied fully in one year's time. There are currently certain challenges related to reception conditions and the transfer of asylum seekers, which will also need to be addressed for the effective implementation of the new rules. Proper reception conditions and an adequate capacity for the border procedure are important to determine Member States' preparedness. Furthermore, key areas to focus on are the operationalisation of the upgraded Eurodac, the implementation of screening and the mandatory border procedure, as well as the new mandatory solidarity mechanism and fundamental rights safeguards. The Commission and relevant EU agencies are working very closely with your authorities, providing support specific to your needs. The additional EUR 3 billion under the Home Affairs funds, coupled with around EUR 1.6 billion from the mid-term review of national programmes help to further support these efforts.*

*In the meantime, the Commission continued to deliver on the legislative framework, proposing to make use of certain novelties in the Pact. In April, the Commission proposed to establish an **EU list of safe countries of origin**, consisting at first of Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Bangladesh, Colombia, India and Kosovo\*, and generally considering EU candidate countries as safe except in specific circumstances. The list would allow Member States to process asylum applications that are likely to be unfounded in a faster and more efficient manner using an accelerated or border procedure.*

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

*Following a **review of the safe third country concept**, the Commission proposed to simplify its use by making optional the connection between the applicant and the third country, and by considering that transit could be sufficient criterion. This concept could also be applied where there is an agreement or an arrangement with a third country ensuring the examination of requests for effective protection. These claims could then be declared inadmissible, reducing the pressure on asylum systems.*

*With a view to **accelerate the implementation of certain aspects of the Pact**, the Commission also proposed to frontload two key elements from the Pact: first, the possibility to apply the accelerated or border procedure in relation to applicants coming from third countries with a recognition rate of 20% or lower, and second, the possibility to designate safe countries of origin and safe third countries with exceptions, giving Member States more flexibility by excluding specific regions or clearly identifiable categories of individuals.*

*It is now crucial that the **European Parliament and the Council accelerate and intensify their work** on these files. The same applies for the **proposed common European system for return**, which is a key component of the entire architecture since it allows for accelerated returns by creating a seamless link between the different stages of the migration process.*

*To manage migration effectively and ensure the sustainable implementation of the Pact, our legislative and operational frameworks need to be complemented by increasing efforts to **enhance partnerships and global cooperation on migration**. We continue to work on the external dimension of migration policy as part of comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries, following a whole-of-route approach. This comprehensive approach, covering various areas of common interest, will also be embedded in the upcoming **Pact for the Mediterranean**. Our focus remains on preventing illegal migration to the EU and in this respect, we should continue our work on designing and operationalising innovative solutions, fighting migrant smuggling, reinforcing cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration, while at the same time ensuring protection, and enhancing skills and talent mobility.*

*In the first half of 2025, we see an overall decrease of 21% in illegal border crossings into the EU, compared to the same period in 2024. However, the actual count remains significant, with over 69 000 illegal border crossings reported till mid-June. While there are decreases on most migratory routes, ranging from 56% on the Western Balkan route, 28% on the Eastern Mediterranean route and 28% on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route combined, the situation is different in the Central Mediterranean. With departures from Libya accounting for 93% of illegal border crossings, we see an increase of 7% on the Central Mediterranean route and a 173% increase of arrivals to Greece from Eastern Libya.*

*With the political and security situation in **Libya** being extremely critical, political engagement by the EU and Member States is crucial considering the geopolitical consequences of developments in Libya for the EU. As regards migration, we need to maintain close cooperation and continue providing financial and operational support to the Libyan authorities, particularly as regards search and rescue operations. However, given the situation and observing a possible use of migration for political ends, we also need to be able to engage with the various actors on the ground. I have asked **Commissioner Brunner** to visit Libya soon and to meet with authorities in the West and East of the country. It is necessary to work with them, in a Team Europe approach, to be able to insist on strengthening border management and the fight against migrant smuggling, managing work visas and onward movements to the EU, as well as ensuring protection and voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin.*

*The implementation of all pillars of the Memorandum of Understanding with **Tunisia** continues and an open dialogue with the authorities remains essential, in a Team Europe approach. EU support continues in the areas of border management, countering migrant smuggling, protection and assisted voluntary returns. In 2025, IOM has so far facilitated the voluntary return from Tunisia to countries of origin of almost 2 600 migrants. Assisted voluntary returns from North African countries to countries of origin have also intensified significantly through EU-funded operations with (over 28 600 in 2024, and around 10 900 returns in the first four months of 2025).*

*Work is also progressing on the migration and mobility pillar of the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership with **Egypt**. We are in discussion with Egypt to identify concrete migration-related actions to allocate EUR 200 million earmarked for migration until 2027 and we are providing support on protection. The agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on EUR 4 billion of macro-financial assistance to Egypt, in addition to the EUR 1 billion loan disbursed in December 2024, is an important step in taking the partnership forward and we will certainly intensify implementation work.*

*In the **Eastern Mediterranean**, the number of registered arrivals dropped by nearly a third compared to a year ago. Whereas it remains essential that the EU-Türkiye Statement and the EU-Türkiye readmission agreement towards all Member States are fully and effectively implemented, engagement with **Türkiye** on all matters regarding migration continues. Support to Türkiye's efforts to strengthen border management at the Eastern and Southeastern borders, amounting to EUR 220 million, is being taken forward. The EU-Türkiye High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security, which is scheduled for 2 July, will be an opportunity to further strengthen our cooperation.*

*As the situation in the Middle East becomes increasingly precarious, our support to Jordan and Lebanon continues. We assist Jordan with hosting refugees, as well as working on durable and sustainable solutions, including safe voluntary and dignified returns to Syria, which need to be made sustainable, in coordination with UNHCR. With **Jordan**, we are also implementing the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, and a first part of the EUR 500 million of macro-financial assistance is expected to be disbursed*

*this summer. There is new momentum for stepping up the EU's cooperation with **Lebanon**. Of the EUR 500 million set aside last year to provide Lebanon with essential assistance for economic stability and access to basic services for vulnerable host communities and refugees, EUR 70 million aims to support border management, the fight against organised crime and migrant smuggling. Partners hosting millions of displaced people themselves, also look at us to offer some resettlement opportunities, which the EU should continue pursuing as part of its comprehensive offer.*

*Continuing to support the recovery and urgent humanitarian needs of Syrians within the country and in host communities across the region remains crucial. The EU is working closely with UNHCR to support internally displaced people and Syrian refugees to return to their homes. With almost half a million people having returned to **Syria** as of May, and more expected to make the journey, the Syrian authorities urgently need support with basic infrastructure, health and education, as well as demining. The EU's decision to lift economic sanctions and efforts aimed at ensuring an inclusive political transition, will help support the country's socio-economic recovery and future reconstruction, which are key factors in stabilising the country and creating the conditions for sustainable returns as assessed by UNHCR. Commission services are also preparing guidance for an EU coordinated approach to allow beneficiaries of international protection to benefit from temporary "go-and-see" visits to Syria, with the aim of facilitating sustainable returns to the country.*

*Cooperation also continues with the third countries on the **Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes**. **Morocco** remains a key partner in work to combat migrant smuggling. As well as ongoing and new financial support, a Talent Partnership with Morocco is under way to develop mutually beneficial labour mobility. The implementation of our comprehensive partnership with **Mauritania**, the main country of departure on the Atlantic route but whose cooperation has led to a significant decrease, continues, and EUR 210 million of support has been operationalised in record time. With **Senegal**, we plan to start discussions on a strategic and comprehensive partnership. For now, EUR 30 million of support to Senegal is dedicated to preventing illegal migration and supporting sea rescue. In fact, departures from Senegal in the first three months of this year have decreased by 71% compared to the same period in 2024, though readmission levels remain a serious concern. **Frontex** is working to develop closer relations to support Mauritania and Senegal, and to ensure that operational cooperation on the ground is ensured to the largest extent possible.*

*Far too many people continue risking their lives to reach European shores. The IOM estimates that, in just the first quarter of this year alone, over 785 people lost their lives at sea in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, and a further 250 were reported dead or missing in the Channel. The EU must therefore step up its efforts to curb illegal migration and fight migrant smuggling.*

*In November 2023, I launched the **Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling**. It has strengthened the international engagement to tackle migrant smuggling across prevention, response, and alternatives to illegal migration. Last week, Leaders at the G7 summit agreed to take forward work along four areas, namely, a “follow the money approach”, prevention and strengthening of external borders, collaboration with social media platforms and engaging with transport operators. Now is the time to step up this work to further structure our actions and pool resources, including with our partners in the G7 and the UN.*

*Migrant smuggling networks, like all organised crime groups, are known to quickly adapt and take advantage of technological developments to boost their criminal business, for example by exploiting digital platforms or using crypto assets to hide dirty money. Artificial intelligence could significantly transform law enforcement, in particular with advanced criminal analytics that reveal trends in vast amounts of data. We need to stay ahead of the curve: we have launched the first community of experts on digital migrant smuggling, set up within Europol. We also work closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – a key partner of the Global Alliance – and have developed a new action on countering digital smuggling and illicit financial flows as part of a ‘follow the money’ approach.*

*I will be hosting a **second Global Alliance conference on 10 December** in Brussels, and I would be pleased if you would participate in this event. It will be the opportunity for us to agree on shared priorities and deliverables together with partner countries. As we work to prevent the smuggling of migrants and remain committed to countering all forms of abuse and exploitation of migrants, it is important that we also continue to support policies for labour mobility. This is ultimately in our European interest: on the one hand, it helps to plug labour shortages in the EU, and on the other, it remains a powerful lever with partner countries to help boost migration cooperation more broadly.*

*Work is under way to roll out the Union of Skills’ strand on **attracting, developing and retaining talent**. On 5 May, I took part in the Paris conference launching the ‘Choose Europe for Science’ initiative, which will mobilise financing and other measures to help attract the world’s best scientists and researchers to Europe. The Visa Strategy later this year will include steps to support the arrival of top students, researchers and trained professionals. The EU Talent Pool will also be a vital new tool to help international recruitment: concluding the ongoing interinstitutional negotiations will allow the online platform to be launched as quickly as possible.*

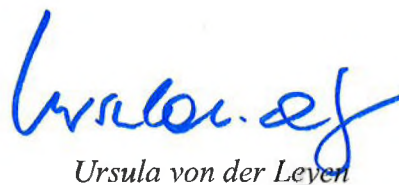
*Talent Partnerships are being rolled out, with a roundtable earlier this month with Tunisia. A **pilot Legal Gateway Office** with India, which will be a one-stop shop to provide information and assistance for labour mobility to the EU, will be launched soon. The focus would be on attracting skilled researchers, professionals and students starting with the ICT sector. Proactive engagement with industry is being taken to align the labour mobility projects with the market needs, facilitating smoother processes and maximising the benefits for all involved.*

*Finally, let me turn to our support to **Ukraine**. The way Member States have welcomed the Ukrainian people remains a testament to the Union's strength. Nevertheless, several Member States continue to face a major strain, with some disproportionately affected. Both displaced Ukrainians and Member States need more predictability and stability. On 4 June, the Commission set out a common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU. This includes a proposal to prolong temporary protection for an additional year, agreed in Council last week, as well as recommendations for a well-coordinated transition out of temporary protection and help to those who wish to go back home, which the Council is expected to endorse soon. While reaffirming the EU's unwavering support to Ukraine, we are taking a gradual, flexible and coordinated approach to moving from temporary protection, once the circumstances allow.*

*European citizens expect us to deliver concrete results when it comes to migration. It is therefore necessary that we take forward the implementation of our legal framework as a matter of priority, that we strengthen operational capacities and that we further strengthen our cooperation with partners. The Annex to this letter provides a more detailed overview of ongoing actions.*

*Looking forward to our discussions this week.*

*Yours sincerely,*



Ursula von der Leyen