

Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of V4 Countries

on migration

19 July 2017, Budapest

The Prime Ministers of Visegrad countries met in Budapest on 19th July 2017 and adopted the following statement on migration.

The migratory pressure on Europe represents an unresolved challenge for a long time which requires determined common action by Member States and the European Union. We stand united in our resolve to address the migration crisis; we reiterate our determination to continue actively contributing to a common European solution, based on functional and effective measures addressing the root causes of the current migratory pressure.

While the illegal flow on the Western Balkan route - thanks to our common efforts - was stemmed we are confronted with the situation that despite all efforts the pressure on the Central Mediterranean route even increases; therefore the pressure on Europe persists. We have to face that two years after the first emergency meeting of the European Heads of States and Governments were convened to address the crisis, we still need to search for a consensus-based European strategy on to how to effectively deal with the situation.

The Visegrad countries believe that the EU has to review the principles and the proposed modalities on which the current European migration policy is built upon. We need to identify the elements which brought results and those which lead to dividing Member States without easing the pressure on the whole EU and especially on the frontline Member States. The measures agreed in the context of the external dimension of the European migration policy proved to be effective and therefore we should further work in this direction. We believe that the precondition of any efficient strategy related to mixed migratory flows is to distinguish between genuine asylum seekers and economic migrants. The necessary assessments have to be completed outside the territory of the EU in administrative centres protected and supplied with the assistance and contribution of the EU and its Member States.

We need to address the root causes by a combination of policies available to us. We believe that the migration crisis must be primarily dealt with at its roots instead of at its endpoints in Europe. In that sense, further improvement of the rates of effective returns and readmissions must be achieved and strict conditionality must be applied.

We need to be able to fully protect the external borders of the European Union. At the same time, we need to remove internal border controls. We need to make sure that no one can avoid being properly identified and registered before entering the territory of the EU. After having completed such a system providing full control and security to Member States they should then be able to take decision on relocation strictly on a voluntary basis. Sequencing is crucial.

We need to recognize at the same time that mandatory and automatic relocation has not contributed to the migratory pressure on Europe. The relocation scheme did not provide the answer we were looking for, it even generates additional pull factor. Almost two years after the adoption of the debated decision, which is still challenged at the European Court of Justice and is going to expire in September 2017, the overall rate of implementation by Member States as a whole is only 13%.

The Visegrad countries are of the view that the general EU strategy has to be reviewed and has to be built on consensus based actions.

We need a sustainable European solution with the long-term objective of a proactive involvement of the EU and its Member States in the most affected Third Countries of origin and transit including improving their living conditions. At the same time we refuse any unfounded allegation that rejecting mandatory relocation could be regarded as a lack of solidarity. In this context, the Visegrad countries are ready to continue playing a constructive role in finding effective short and long term solutions acceptable to the whole EU and exercise solidarity with those in need. We confirm our readiness to take an active part in this common endeavour and to contribute significantly to make it a success. The unprecedented efforts to protect our external borders for the benefit of our own security but also serving the security of Member States in the Western and Northern part of Europe are only one example.

The Visegrad Countries recognize the outstanding efforts of Italy to deal with the growing pressure. We reiterate our readiness to support the efforts of Italy to stem the migratory pressure with a meaningful contribution on the basis of

the needs specified by the Italian Government. To this end, we have approached our Italian counterpart with a specific offer.