

Migration as a Central European Challenge

- The protection of external borders, effective returns, the fight against organised crime and cooperation with third countries is a long-term priority for us and all V4 countries.
- The migration pressure on Balkan migratory route is a shared challenge and we highly value cooperation with the V4 countries in combating illegal transit migration and smuggling.
- We appreciate that the ongoing coordination at the regional level plays a key role in the fight against illegal migration and better protection of the Schengen area.
- Close coordination is also required when dealing with the specific issue of temporary protection – with more than 340,000 beneficiaries, we remain the country with the highest number of Ukrainian refugees per capita in the EU. The burden is on the whole region.
- But today, just a few weeks before the European election, it is a right time to speak about future.
- Migration is one of the key challenges for the **future of the EU**.
- The current European migration system is dysfunctional and unsustainable in the long term. It puts enormous pressure on Member States and contributes to the erosion of security, social cohesion and the polarisation of our societies.
- A comprehensive reform is therefore necessary **to reduce the migratory pressure on the EU and strengthen the protection of the EU external borders**.
- The Migration Pact represents an important initial (baby) step, but we must continue with the reforms after the European elections.

- And our steps must be bolder and more ambitious than before. And we will do this by complementing the Pact with **innovative measures outside the EU**.
- We want a **common European solution** that is in line with our values. We propose a humane solution to end the senseless deaths of people in the Mediterranean Sea. And at the same time, we seek to curb the profitable business of smugglers.
- We therefore propose to shift the focus of Member States' efforts from the reaction in the EU territory to an action helping refugees outside the EU. Today, most of our resources go to countering illegal migration and dealing with its consequences.
- The effort and money saved could help many more people in their places of origin along migration routes. And particularly the most vulnerable, such as children, who would otherwise receive no assistance. All these efforts will strengthen the prevention of illegal migration.
- We want to achieve this by concluding a completely **new type of partnerships with third countries**, especially our EU neighbours.
- These partnerships should encompass political, development, and economic cooperation. Hand in hand with this, we also need a clear commitment from third countries to prevent illegal migration to the EU and to take back illegal migrants.
- Our priority is to implement the following measures aimed at strengthening the integrity of the EU and the external borders as well as restoring the proper functioning of the Schengen:
 - 1. Instrumentalization:** Russia and Belarus continue to use migration as a hybrid weapon against the EU. That is why we must have the legal ability to close our external borders completely and suspend asylum procedures if the situation requires it.
 - 2. Migrant smuggling:** Organised crime is orchestrating illegal migration to Europe with huge profits. We therefore need tough

penalties for migrant smugglers harmonised across the Union and effective operational cooperation to secure external borders.

3. Returns: For a long time, we have failed to do the returns as effectively as we would like to. Rejected asylum seekers avoid returning to their country of origin and move freely within the EU. As a solution, we therefore propose to transfer migrants to a designated non-EU country to await their eventual return home.

4. Saving lives at sea: We must prevent unnecessary deaths at sea. Migrants saved in high waters should be transferred to a designated third country where their asylum claims should be dealt with under the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM). Following an assessment at ETM, migrants may then be returned home, locally integrated or resettled.

5. Safe third countries: The definition of a safe third country requires a review, so that this tool can be used to speed up the asylum procedure (inadmissibility) even in situations where the migrant has only passed through the country. Therefore, a direct connection to this country, as currently required, should be avoided.

- Thank you for your attention. I would like to wish Hungary and Poland a great success in their forthcoming EU presidencies.