The Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection, Mr. Nicolas A. Ioannidis, participated in the work of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Union (EU) (Home Affairs), which took place on 14 October 2025 in Luxembourg.

During the Council's work, an exchange of views took place on the draft Regulation on a common return system for illegally staying third-country nationals on EU territory. The proposed legislation, which is currently being discussed among Member States at expert level, includes, among other things, common procedures for issuing return decisions, clear rules on forced returns, tighter timelines and stricter obligations for returnees to cooperate with national authorities.

- Mr. Ioannidis underlined the importance of a comprehensive Regulation on returns, **which will complement the new European Pact** on Migration and Asylum, and promote the effective implementation of returns of third-country nationals.
- He highlighted that the aim is to strike a balance between the need for a stricter legal framework and the required flexibility for member states that have developed effective national return schemes, such as Cyprus. He added that the upcoming Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU will give priority to the implementation of the Pact and the adoption of the Regulation on returns.
- On returns to Syria, the Deputy Minister **said that although conditions in Syria remain partly unstable, there has been a relative improvement that could facilitate both voluntary and forced returns.** He pointed out that to date, contact with the Syrian authorities on migration issues is limited.
- Regarding the forced returns of those Syrian nationals who do not have the right to stay, Mr. Ioannides **said that the Republic of Cyprus supports such returns,** especially for persons who pose a serious threat to public order or national security or are convicted criminals, under the strict condition of compliance with international and EU law and the existence of appropriate guarantees. It stressed that the main prerequisites for the effective implementation of returns are linked to the real conditions on the ground – security, infrastructure, basic services and livelihoods – as well as to the need to build reliable channels of communication with the Syrian authorities.

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- Deputy Ministry of Immigration and International Protection | Υφυπουργείο Μετανάστευσης, και Διεθνούς Προστασίας (14 October, 2025), Ο Υφυπουργός Μετανάστευσης και Διεθνούς Προστασίας συμμετείχε στο Συμβούλιο Δικαιοσύνης και Εσωτερικών Υποθέσεων της ΕΕ [The Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection participated in the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the EU], https://www.gov.cy/metanastefsi/o-yfypourgos-metanastefsis-kai-diethnous-prostasias-symmeteiche-sto-symvoulio-dikaiosynis-kai-esoterikon-ypotheseon-tis-ee/

Date of development
14.10.2025
Country
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Practice

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