The European Commission briefed ministers on the state of play in the Schengen area on the basis of the so-called Schengen Barometer.

Minister Poklukar praised Slovenia's efforts to work in the trilateral format with Italy and Croatia on solutions to curb illegal migration, including through trilateral patrols on the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina ? and enhanced cooperation with the Western Balkans, especially in the fight against organised smuggling organisations. Then, there was an exchange of views on the implementation of the priorities of the 2024-2025 Schengen cycle. During this part of the discussion, the ministers focused on increasing the effectiveness of returns of persons who do not have the right to stay in the European Union. Minister Poklukar stressed that return is one of the fundamental aspects of a comprehensive and credible migration policy and represents an important element of European integrated border management.

He added that it is important that a unified approach is taken with regard to third countries. The Minister conveyed that Slovenia supports the amendment of Frontex's mandate so that it can help third countries, including partners in the Western Balkans, to carry out returns to their countries of origin in the future. He stated "We believe that an overhaul of legislation at EU level is key to bridging national gaps. The new legal framework should include measures to prevent flight from return and to prevent repeated applications for international protection. In addition to the rights, the obligations of the foreigner must also be defined and the consequences should be foreseen if he does not cooperate".

The situation of the external dimension of migration was also presented, with a focus on the situation in Syria. The interior ministers also exchanged views on the current geopolitical situation and its implications for the internal security of the European Union. Minister Poklukar emphasised the importance of a unified approach, coordination and regular discussion at the European Union level. He expressed that from Slovenia's point of view, it is essential that the highest possible quality information on the development of the security situation is obtained. He remarked that assistance must be provided to bring about the normalisation of the situation, which would also reduce the possibility of prisoners returning to terrorist or extremist structures.

He further highlighted as important in that respect: coordinated action by Member States, the exchange of data between Member States within Europol and Interpol, and the fight against disinformation and the management of radicalisation and extremism. Regarding the situation in Ukraine, he expressed

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Document generated on 25-11-2026
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that Slovenia does not yet perceive a direct impact of the war on the criminality in Slovenia.

Source(s)

- Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration | Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve in javno upravo (5 March, 2025), Minister Poklukar na zasedanju notranjih ministrov Evropske unije v Bruslju [Minister Poklukar at the meeting of EU Interior Ministers in Brussels], https://www.gov.si/novice/2025-03-05-minister-poklukar-na-zasedanju-notranjih-ministrov-evropske-unije-v-bruslju/

Date of development
05.03.2025
Country
Slovenia
Thematic area(s)
General asylum and migration development, Return
Development type
Practice

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