European Commission presents plan to prevent and respond to mass irregular arrivals at EU external borders

The European Commission presented a comprehensive 5-point plan to prevent, anticipate and respond to sudden mass irregular arrivals at the EU's external borders, following the migration pressures experienced in Ceuta during the summer of 2026.

Building on the European Strategy on Asylum and Migration adopted earlier in the year, the initiative aims to strengthen the EU's resilience and preparedness for future migration-related emergencies.

The plan focuses on five areas:

1. "***Increasing cooperation with partner countries to prevent illegal migration***

    - *Stronger cooperation with partner countries, including on monitoring, early warning and information exchange is key to reducing illegal migration. Priority areas include:*
    - *Addressing the root causes of illegal migration with partner countries, creating meaningful opportunities for people in their home countries, with a new Mediterranean Youth Skills and Jobs initiative and work on new Gateway Offices to promote legal and safe mobility to the EU;*
    - *A strong crisis management dimension in new and existing partnerships, with efficient early warning mechanisms and protocols; Closer cooperation between Frontex, Europol and Eurojust and partner countries, to improve the exchange of information, risk and threat analyses, and intelligence on migration trends and routes;*
    - *Developing European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) Coordination Centres with partner countries to strengthen pre-frontier intelligence exchange and risk assessment.*

2. ***Strengthening EU external borders***

    While the protection of the EU's external borders is primarily a Member State responsibility, the EU will step up its support to deter and respond to

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future emergencies or crises, including with:

- *Work on a new European Emergency Response Framework to protect the security of EU borders at all times, especially in scenarios when mass movements are engineered and weaponised, as announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union speech;*
- *A Commission proposal to strengthen Frontex, including with a reinforced Standing Corps from which personnel and equipment can be immediately deployed, a stronger role in returns, closer cooperation with partner countries, and a strong capacity to monitor the external border and pre-frontier areas.*
- *Targeted support to Member States for reinforcing sensitive segments of the EU external borders.*
- *Provision of support through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, upon request from Member States.*

3. ***Improving monitoring, situational awareness and early warning systems***

To avert future crises and improve monitoring and situational awareness, the plan sets out the following key actions:

- *A Commission proposal to reinforce Frontex's mandate to enable it to conduct social media monitoring for better situational awareness and operational support in the context of external borders management;*
- *Member States to provide timely and relevant information to the European BorderSurveillance System (EUROSUR) and immediately report developments with an impact on the EU's external borders;*
- *Agile responses to emerging migration trends, evolving patterns, and rapid spread of mis- and disinformation through the Global Alliance Rapid Response Initiatives (GARRI);*
- *Develop a framework for making full use of the tools available under the Digital Services Act to respond to crises and incidents, with new protocols to ensure structured and immediate cooperation and information sharing with very large online platforms, search engines and national authorities;*
- *New digital partnerships with partner countries to detect and respond to online content fuelling illegal migration.*

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4. ***Dismantling migrant smuggling and trafficking networks***

   Effectively tackling illegal migration requires dismantling the smuggling and trafficking networks behind it. Efforts will be stepped up in the following areas:

   - *The Council should swiftly adopt the proposed sanctions regime which will allow the EU to impose asset freezes and travel bans targeting migrant smugglers;*
   - *Parliament should agree as a matter of urgency its negotiating position on the revised Facilitation Directive, which would modernise the EU anti-smuggling framework, followed by swift inter-institutional negotiations; the co-legislators should step up interinstitutional negotiations on the new mandate for Europol;*
   - *Reinforced cooperation with online platforms, including within the EU Internet Forum, as well as financial institutions and digital payment service providers, to ensure they can detect online smuggling activities and support Member States in identifying, tracing and detecting illicit financial flows;*
   - *Further strengthening Europol' s European Centre Against Migrant Smuggling.*

5. ***Reinforcing returns***

Effective migration management depends on a common EU system for swift returns and on partner countries' capacity to manage returns themselves. Reinforcing this requires:

- *Enhancing cooperation with third countries on readmission, using all available tools, instruments and policies to foster better cooperation, including trade, development cooperation and visa policy;*
- *Stepping up the role of Frontex on returns of third country nationals with no right to stay in the EU;*
- *Member States also need to implement the new Return Regulation and the return border procedure and make wider use of the Frontex support which is already available for return, readmission and reintegration;*
- *Increasing the effectiveness of return and reducing administrative burden through the digitalisation of procedures.*"

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- European Commission (5 October, 2026), [Staying the course on migration reform], https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/staying-course-migration-reform-2026-10-02_en

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