



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 09.11.2021
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion on the Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration {COM(2021) 120}.

This strategy is an important deliverable of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It contributes to the comprehensive and balanced approach of the Pact. Return, readmission and sustainable reintegration are essential elements of this comprehensive approach and of a credible migration policy. In particular, the strategy supports the development of a common EU system for returns that combines stronger EU structures with more effective cooperation with third countries on return, readmission and reintegration. The Commission considers that the implementation of the strategy will improve the overall effectiveness of the return system, facilitating cooperation by both the returnees and the third countries concerned. The success of the strategy will depend on the joint action of all stakeholders, in particular the Member States.

A common EU return system needs clear rules and procedures, which are both effective and guarantee the respect of fundamental rights. It must build on solid legal ground, providing for fair and effective procedures, closely interlinked with those related to asylum, including at the external borders of the EU. The main building block to achieve an effective system is the 2018 proposal to recast the Return Directive, which would bring key improvements by better preventing and reducing absconding and unauthorised movements, boosting voluntary returns and making procedures swifter. The Commission welcomes the support by the Senát for recasting the Return Directive.

Moreover, the Commission appreciates the support expressed by the Senát on the extended mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The Agency is building up its capacity to become the EU operational arm on return, including in areas such as voluntary return and reintegration. The establishment of a dedicated return division and the appointment of a Deputy Executive Director responsible for return will further reinforce the Agency's capacity. For the fulfilment of its mandate, Frontex looks to Member States for continued support and contributions.

*Mr Miloš VYSTRČIL
President of the Senát
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The Return Coordinator will play an important role in the common EU return system. To support the overall coherence of this system, s/he will steer a high-level network of Member States' representatives and will work closely with the Frontex Deputy Executive Director responsible for return. S/he will promote coordination and coherence of Member States' practices on returns, ensure that these are aligned with readmission processes, and promote the implementation of solidarity measures in the area of returns, acting as a facilitator in the context of return sponsorship. The Coordinator will help gather information and identify the bottlenecks in cooperation with third countries, to build a seamless link between the internal and external phases of readmission. The Coordinator's work, supported by the high level network, will feed into the Commission's stepped up engagement with partner countries.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issue raised by the Senát and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Ylva Johansson
Member of the Commission*