



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2016) 1854 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council – EU Action Plan on return {COM(2015) 453 final}.

The Commission welcomes the Senat's support for the Action Plan and the priority actions it suggests with a view to enhancing the return and readmission of irregular migrants from EU Member States to their home countries or to transit countries.

With regards to the recommendation for increasing the effectiveness of returns, the Commission is closely cooperating with Member States to identify and address legal and practical shortcomings at all stages of the return procedure so as to ensure the enforcement of return decisions. As agreed by the February European Council, the comprehensive and tailor-made packages of incentives that are currently being developed for specific countries to ensure effective returns and readmission require the full support of the EU and the Member States. In parallel, the Commission has put forward a draft Regulation on a European Border and Coast Guard in December 2015 aiming at significantly widening the powers of Frontex in the area of return. The new agency will be empowered to provide support to Member States in all areas related to return – voluntary and forced - and to enhance operational cooperation with third countries. The Commission's proposal should be adopted as a matter of urgency.

Concerning the recommendation to support third countries with the reception of migrants, the Commission would like to inform the Senat of the further development and implementation of so-called Regional Development and Protection Programmes in the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The primary aim of such programmes is to improve the capacity of third countries to provide international protection to those in need. These programmes can also provide support to the voluntary return of third country nationals from countries of transit to their home countries.

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Furthermore, the implementation of projects supported by the EU Trust Fund for Africa aiming, inter alia, at improving migration management and creating favourable conditions for the return and reintegration of migrants in their home countries, has started with projects targeting irregular migration.

The Commission continues to encourage all interested Member States to participate in these programmes.

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

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Dimitris Avramopoulos
Member of the Commission*