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Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

The Stockholm Programme – an open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens

Beyond Stockholm: implications for migrants and asylum seekers in Council of Europe member states

Background document

prepared by the secretariat

This document provides:

A - A summary of the Stockholm Programme;

B - Extracts from the Stockholm Programme (2010/C 115/01)¹ with respect to the migration and asylum issues;

as background information for the hearing on “*Beyond Stockholm: implications for migrants and asylum seekers in Council of Europe member states*” which will take place in Brussels on 16 March 2011.

Cross references are made to the relevant norms, institutions and work undertaken by the Council of Europe in these fields. These references are by no means exhaustive.

SUMMARY OF THE STOCKHOLM PROGRAMME²

The Stockholm Programme provides a roadmap for European Union (EU) work in the area of justice, freedom and security for the period 2010-14.

SUMMARY

The Stockholm Programme sets out the European Union's (EU) priorities for the **area of justice, freedom and security** for the period 2010-14. Building on the achievements of its predecessors the Tampere and [Hague](#) programmes, it aims to meet future challenges and further strengthen the area of justice, freedom and security with actions focusing on the interests and needs of citizens.

In order to provide a secure Europe where the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens are respected, the Stockholm Programme focuses on the following priorities:

¹ See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:115:0001:0038:EN:PDF> ; Official Journal C115 of 4.5.2010.

² This summary can be found under the following link on the EU website on “Summaries of EU legislation”:
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/human_rights/fundamental_rights_within_european_union/jl0036_en.htm

Europe of rights

European citizenship must be transformed from an abstract idea into a concrete reality. It must confer on EU nationals the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. EU citizens must be able to exercise these rights within as well as outside the EU, while knowing that their privacy is respected, especially in terms of protection of personal data.

The Europe of rights must be an area in which:

- citizens and their family members may exercise in full the right to free movement;
- diversity is respected and the most vulnerable groups of people (children, minorities such as Roma, victims of violence, etc.) are protected, while racism and xenophobia are tackled;
- the rights of suspected and accused persons are protected in criminal proceedings;
- EU citizenship promotes citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU through transparent decision-making, access to documents and good administration, as well as guarantees citizens the right to consular protection outside the EU.

Europe of justice

A European area of justice must be realised throughout the EU. Access to justice for citizens must be facilitated, so that their rights are better enforced within the EU. At the same time, cooperation between judicial authorities and the mutual recognition of court decisions within the EU must be further developed in both civil and criminal cases. To this end, EU countries should make use of e-Justice (information and communication technologies in the field of justice), adopt common minimum rules to approximate criminal and civil law standards, and strengthen mutual trust. The EU must also aim to achieve coherence with the international legal order in order to create a secure legal environment for interacting with non EU-countries.

Europe that protects

The Stockholm Programme recommends the development of an internal security strategy for the EU, with a view to improving the protection of citizens and the fight against organised crime and terrorism. Within the spirit of solidarity, the strategy will aim to enhance police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, as well as cooperation in border management, civil protection and disaster management. The internal security strategy will consist of a pro-active, horizontal and cross-cutting approach with clearly divided tasks for the EU and its countries. It will focus on the fight against cross-border crime, such as:

- trafficking in human beings;
- sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography;
- cyber crime;
- economic crime, corruption, counterfeiting and piracy;
- drugs.

In the fight against cross-border crime, internal security is necessarily linked to external security. Therefore, account must be taken of the EU external security strategy and cooperation strengthened with non-EU countries.

Access to Europe

The EU must further develop its integrated border management and visa policies to make legal access to Europe efficient for non-EU nationals, while ensuring the security of its own citizens. Strong border controls are necessary to counter illegal immigration and cross-border crime. At the same time, access must be guaranteed to those in need of international protection and to vulnerable groups of people, such as unaccompanied minors. Consequently, the role of Frontex (the European external borders agency) must be reinforced so that it can respond more effectively to existing and future challenges. The second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II) and the Visa Information System (VIS) are also essential for reinforcing the system of external border controls and must therefore be made fully operational. Work must also continue on the development of the common visa policy and on intensifying regional consular cooperation.

Europe of solidarity

On the basis of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, the EU must develop a comprehensive and flexible migration policy. This policy should centre on solidarity and responsibility, and address the needs of both EU countries and migrants. It should take into consideration the labour-market needs of EU countries, while minimising brain-drain from non-EU countries. Vigorous integration policies that guarantee the rights of migrants must also be put in place. Furthermore, a common migration policy must include an effective and sustainable return policy, while work needs to continue on preventing, controlling and combating illegal immigration. There is also a need to strengthen dialogue and partnerships with non-EU countries (both transit and origin), in particular through the further development of the Global Approach to Migration.

Efforts must be made to set up the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by 2012. In this regard, the development of the European Asylum Support Office is essential. By providing a common asylum procedure for EU countries and a uniform status for those who have been granted international protection, the CEAS would create an area of protection and solidarity within the EU.

Europe in a globalised world

The external dimension of EU policy must also be taken into consideration in the area of justice, freedom and security. This will assist in addressing the related challenges the EU is facing today, as well as strengthen opportunities for cooperating with non-EU countries. EU action in this field is to adhere to the following principles:

- maintaining a single external relations policy for the EU;
- working in partnership with non-EU countries (including candidate, neighbouring and EEA/Schengen countries, the United States of America and the Russian Federation);
- promoting European and international standards and values, as well as ratification of United Nations, Council of Europe and the Hague Conference of Private International Law Conventions;
- exchanging information on bi- and multilateral activities;
- acting in the spirit of solidarity, coherence and complementarity;
- using all available instruments and resources effectively;
- informing on, monitoring and evaluating actions in the external dimension of justice and home affairs;
- using a proactive approach to external relations.

The Stockholm Programme is implemented through an [action plan](#).

RELEVANT EXTRACTS OF THE STOCKHOLM PROGRAMME

1. TOWARDS A CITIZENS' EUROPE IN THE AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

(...)

1.1. *Political priority*

(...)

A Europe of responsibility, solidarity and partnership in migration and asylum matters: The development of a forward-looking and comprehensive Union migration policy, based on solidarity and responsibility, remains a key policy objective for the Union. Effective implementation of all relevant legal instruments needs to be undertaken and full use should be made of relevant Agencies and Offices operating in this field. Well-managed migration can be beneficial to all stakeholders. The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum provides a clear basis for further development in this field. Europe will need a flexible policy which is responsive to the priorities and needs of Member States and enables migrants to take full advantage of their potential. The objective of establishing a common asylum system in 2012 remains and people in need of international protection must be ensured access to legally safe and efficient asylum procedures. Moreover, in order to maintain credible and sustainable immigration and asylum systems in the Union, it is necessary to prevent, control and

combat illegal immigration as the Union faces increasing pressure from illegal migration flows, and particularly the Member States at its external borders, including at its Southern borders in line with the conclusions of the European Council of October 2009. (...)

A clarification of what the Council of Europe standards are would be useful. It is vast, but a short outline for the Committee members, for the Members of European Parliament as well as for the European Commission could be prepared by the Secretariat.

2. PROMOTING CITIZENS' RIGHTS: A EUROPE OF RIGHTS

(...)

2.3. Living together in an area that respects diversity and protects the most vulnerable

Since diversity enriches the Union, the Union and its Member States must provide a safe environment where differences are respected and the most vulnerable protected. Measures to tackle discrimination, racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and homophobia must be vigorously pursued.

2.3.1. Racism and xenophobia

The European Council invites the Commission to:

- report during the period of the Stockholm Programme on the transposition of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law by 28 November 2013, and, if appropriate, to make proposals for amending it,
- make full use of the existing instruments, in particular the financing programmes to combat racism and xenophobia.

The Member States should implement that Framework Decision as soon as possible and at the latest by 28 November 2010.

- Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
- Numerous Resolutions adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), some addressing specifically racism towards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Reports by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

2.3.2. Rights of the child

The rights of the child, namely the principle of the best interest of the child being the child's right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination and respect for the children's right to express their opinion and be genuinely heard in all matters concerning them according to their age and level of development as proclaimed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, concern all Union policies. They must be systematically and strategically taken into account with a view to ensuring an integrated approach. The Commission Communication of 2006 entitled 'Towards an EU Strategy on the rights of the child' reflect important considerations in this regard. An ambitious Union strategy on the rights of the child should be developed.

The European Council calls upon the Commission to:

- identify measures, to which the Union can bring added value, in order to protect and promote the rights of the child. Children in particularly vulnerable situations should receive special attention, notably children that are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as children that are victims of trafficking and unaccompanied minors in the context of Union migration policy.

As regards parental child abduction, apart from effectively implementing existing legal instruments in this area, the possibility to use family mediation at international level should be explored, while taking account of good practices in the Member States. The Union should continue to develop criminal child abduction alert mechanisms, by promoting cooperation between national authorities and interoperability of systems.

- Several Council of Europe **Conventions** are relevant, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights ([ETS No. 005](#)), but also *inter alia* the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([CETS No. 201](#)), the European Social Charter ([ETS No. 035](#)) and the Revised European Social Charter ([ETS No. 163](#)), the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights ([CETS No. 160](#)), etc.

- A number of **PACE Resolutions** and **Recommendations** are relevant.

The work of our Committee on “Unaccompanied children in Europe: issues of arrival, stay and return” (Rapporteur: Ms Reps) and on “Undocumented migrant children in an irregular situation : a real cause for concern” (Rapporteur: Mr Agramunt) should be put at the forefront.

- **Committee of Ministers:** see *inter alia* Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2008\)4](#) on strengthening the integration of children of migrants and of immigrant background; Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)9](#) on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors; Recommendation [Rec\(2000\)11](#) on action against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

[full list available under http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/keyLegalTexts/CMRec_en.asp]

- Work of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

2.3.3. Vulnerable groups

All forms of discrimination remain unacceptable. The Union and the Member States must make a concerted effort to fully integrate vulnerable groups, in particular the Roma community, into society by promoting their inclusion in the education system and labour market and by taking action to prevent violence against them. For this purpose, Member States should ensure that the existing legislation is properly applied to tackle potential discrimination. The Union will offer practical support and promote best practice to help Member States achieve this. Civil society will have a special role to play.

- The work of the Council of Europe on **Roma** could be put at the forefront.

See in general http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravellers/Default_en.asp

- **PACE:** [Resolution 1740 \(2010\)](#) on the situation of Roma in Europe; [Resolution 1768 \(2010\)](#) on Roma asylum seekers in Europe. The on-going work of our Committee on “The situation of Roma in Europe: movement and migration” (Rapporteur Ms Groth) will also have to be taken into account.

- **Committee of Ministers:** several relevant recommendations, including [Recommendation No. R \(2000\) 4](#) on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe.

- The Council of Europe **Commissioner for Human Rights** has done a lot in this respect (see http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/activities/themes/Roma/RomaRights_en.asp), including a study on [recent migration of Roma in Europe](#) (10.2010).

Vulnerable groups in particularly exposed situations, such as women who are the victims of violence or of genital mutilation or persons who are harmed in a Member State of which they are not nationals or residents, are in need of greater protection, including legal protection. Appropriate financial support will be provided, through the available financing programmes.

PACE: see in particular [Resolution 1765 \(2010\)](#) on Gender-related claims for asylum; [Resolution 1697 \(2009\)](#) on Migrant Women: at particular risk from domestic violence.

The on-going work of our Committee on “Protecting migrant women in the labour market” (Rapporteur: Ms Frahm) and on “Smuggling and trafficking for labour exploitation purposes” will also have to be taken into account.

The need for additional proposals as regards vulnerable adults should be assessed in the light of the experience acquired from the application of the 2000 Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults by the Member States which are parties or which will become parties in the future. The Member States are encouraged to join the Convention as soon as possible. (...)

3. MAKING PEOPLE'S LIFE EASIER: A EUROPE OF LAW AND JUSTICE

(...)

3.2. Strengthening mutual trust

3.2.6. Detention

The European Council considers that efforts should be undertaken to strengthen mutual trust and render more efficient the principle of mutual recognition in the area of detention. Efforts to promote the exchange of best practices should be pursued and implementation of the European Prison Rules, approved by the Council of Europe, should be supported. Issues such as alternatives to imprisonment, pilot projects on detention and best practices in prison management could also be addressed. The Commission is invited to reflect on this issue further within the possibilities offered by the Lisbon Treaty.

- The level of protection of criminals should also be applied to those held in detention as asylum seekers and irregular migrants.
- PACE [Resolution 1707 \(2010\)](#) on Detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ([CETS No. 126](#))

(...)

4. A EUROPE THAT PROTECTS

(...)

4.4. Protection against serious and organised crime

(...)

4.4.2. Trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings and smuggling of persons are very serious crimes involving violations of human rights and human dignity that the Union cannot condone. The European Council finds it necessary to strengthen and enhance the prevention and combating of trafficking and smuggling. This calls for a coordinated and coherent policy response which goes beyond the area of freedom, security and justice and, while taking account of new forms of exploitation, includes external relations, development cooperation, social affairs and employment, education and health, gender equality and non-discrimination. It should also benefit from a broad dialogue between all stakeholders, including civil society, and be guided by an improved understanding and research of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of persons at Union and at international level.

In this context, cooperation and coordination with third countries is of crucial importance. The Action-Oriented Paper on the fight against trafficking in human beings, adopted by the Council on 30 November 2009 should be used to its fullest extent.

It is necessary that the Union develops a consolidated Union policy against trafficking in human beings aiming at further strengthening the commitment of, and efforts made, by the Union and the Member States to prevent and combat such trafficking. This includes building up and strengthening partnerships with third countries, improving coordination and cooperation within the Union and with the mechanisms of the Union external dimension as an integral part of such a policy. Progress should also be monitored and COSI regularly informed of coordination and cooperation against trafficking. The fight against human trafficking must mobilise all means of action, bringing together prevention, law enforcement, and victim protection, and be tailored to combating trafficking into, within and out of the Union.

The European Council therefore invites the Council to consider establishing an EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (EU ATC) and, if it decides so, to determine the modalities therefore in such a way that all competences of the Union can be used in the most optimal way in order to reach a well coordinated and consolidated Union policy against trafficking in human beings.

The European Council calls for:

- the adoption of new legislation on combating trafficking and protecting victims,
- the Commission to examine whether ad hoc cooperation agreements with specific third countries to be identified by the Council could be a way to enhance fight against trafficking and to make proposals to that end. In particular, such agreements could involve full use of all leverage available to the Union, including use of financing programmes, cooperation for the exchange of information, judicial cooperation and migration tools,
- Europol, with the support of the Member States, to step up support for information gathering and strategic analysis, to be carried out in cooperation with the countries of origin and of transit,
- Eurojust to step up its efforts to coordinate investigations conducted by Member States' authorities into trafficking in human beings,
- the Commission:
 - to propose further measures to protect and assist victims through an array of measures including the development of compensation schemes, safe return and assistance with reintegration into society in their country of origin if they return voluntarily and those relating to their stay; the Union should establish partnerships with the main countries of origin,
 - to propose cooperative measures to mobilise consular services in the countries of origin with a view to preventing the fraudulent issuing of visas. Information campaigns aimed at potential victims, especially women and children, could be conducted in the countries of origin in cooperation with the authorities there,
 - to propose measures to make border checks more efficient in order to prevent human trafficking, in particular the trafficking of children.

- Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([CETS No. 197](#)) + role of its monitoring mechanism **GRETA**
 - **PACE** : see [list of relevant adopted texts](#) + the on-going work of our Committee on "Smuggling and Trafficking for labour exploitation purposes" will be highly relevant.

4.4.3. Sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

Protecting children against the danger of sexual abuse is an important element in the strategy of children's rights.

The European Council invites:

- the Council and the European Parliament to adopt new legislation on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography,
- the Commission to accompany this legislation, once adopted, by measures supported under the Safer Internet Programme 2009-2013,
- The Commission to examine how Member States' competent authorities could exchange information on best practices,
- the Commission to explore how the Union could promote partnerships with the private sector on this subject and expand such public-private partnerships to the financial sector in order to disrupt the money transfers related to websites with child abuse content,
- the Commission to build on the child alert mechanism and explore the creation of an Union-wide child abduction Network in order to promote cooperation between the competent authorities of the Member States, with a view to ensuring interoperability,
- the Commission, in order to prevent child abuse, to explore ways to enhance cooperation between Member States' competent authorities in response to the movement of child sex offenders known to be an ongoing threat.

- **Convention** on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([CETS No. 201](#))
 - **PACE** Campaign on prevention of child abuse "1 in 5"
 (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/1in5/PACE/About_en.asp) + see *inter alia* [Recommendation 1934 \(2010\)](#) on Child abuse in institutions: ensuring full protection of the victims and [Resolution 1733 \(2010\)](#) on Reinforcing measures against sex offenders

5. ACCESS TO EUROPE IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

5.1. Integrated management of the external borders

The Union must continue to facilitate legal access to the territory of its Member States while in parallel taking measures to counteract illegal immigration and cross-border crime and maintaining a high level of security. The strengthening of border controls should not prevent access to protection systems by those persons entitled to benefit from them, and especially people and groups that are in vulnerable situations. In this regard, priority will be given to those in need of international protection and to the reception of unaccompanied minors. It is essential that the activities of Frontex and of the EASO are coordinated when it comes to the reception of migrants at the Union's external borders. The European Council calls for the further development of integrated border management, including the reinforcement of the role of Frontex in order to increase its capacity to respond more effectively to changing migration flows.

The European Council therefore:

- requests the Commission to put forward proposals no later than early 2010 to clarify the mandate and enhance the role of Frontex, taking account of the results of the evaluation of the Agency and the role and responsibilities of the Member States in the area of border control. Elements of these proposals could contain preparation of clear common operational procedures containing clear rules of engagement for joint operations at sea, with due regard to ensuring protection for those in need who travel in mixed flows, in accordance with international law as well as increased operational cooperation between Frontex and countries of origin and of transit and examination of the possibility of regular chartering financed by Frontex. In order to promote the proper enforcement of the applicable statutory framework for Frontex operations, the Commission should consider including a mechanism for reporting and recording incidents that can be satisfactorily followed up by the relevant authorities,
- invites Frontex itself to consider, within its mandate, establishing regional and/or specialised offices to take account of the diversity of situations, particularly the land border to the East and the sea border to the South. Creating such offices should in no account undermine the unity of the Frontex agency. Before creating such offices, Frontex should report to the Council on its intentions,
- invites the Commission to initiate a debate on the long-term development of Frontex. This debate should include, as was envisaged in the Hague programme, the feasibility of the creation of a European system of border guards,
- invites the EASO to develop methods to better identify those in need of international protection in mixed flows, and to cooperate with Frontex wherever possible,
- considers that the evaluation of the Schengen area will continue to be of key importance and that it therefore should be improved by strengthening the role of Frontex in this field,
- invites the Council and the Commission to support enhanced capacity building in third countries so that they can control efficiently their external borders.

The European Council looks forward to the continued phased development of the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur) in the Southern and Eastern borders, with a view to putting in place a system using modern technologies and supporting Member States, promoting interoperability and uniform border surveillance standards and to ensuring that the necessary cooperation is established between the Member States and with Frontex to share necessary surveillance data without delay. This development should take into account the work in other relevant areas of the Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union as well as being able in the medium term to allow for cooperation with third countries. The European Council invites the Commission to make the necessary proposals to achieve these objectives.

The European Council takes note of the ongoing studies of Member States and Frontex in the field of automated border control and encourages them to continue their work in order to establish best practice with a view to improving border controls at the external borders.

The European Council also invites Member States and the Commission to explore how the different types of checks carried out at the external border can be better coordinated, integrated and rationalised with a view to the twin objective of facilitating access and improving security. Moreover, the potential of enhanced information exchange and closer cooperation between border guard authorities and other law enforcement authorities working inside the territory should be explored, in order to increase efficiency for all the parties involved and fight cross-border crime more effectively.

The European Council considers that technology can play a key role in improving and reinforcing the system of external border controls. The entry into operation of the Second generation Schengen Information System II (SIS II) and the roll-out of the Visa Information system (VIS) therefore remains a key objective and the European Council calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that they now become fully operational in keeping with the timetables to be established for that purpose. Before creating new systems, an evaluation of these and other existing systems should be made and the difficulties encountered when they were set up should be taken into account. The setting up of an administration for large-scale IT systems could play a central role in the possible development of IT systems in the future.

The European Council is of the opinion that an electronic system for recording entry to and exit from Member States could complement the existing systems, in order to allow Member States to share data effectively while guaranteeing data protection rules. The introduction of the system at land borders deserves special attention and the implications to infrastructure and border lines should be analysed before implementation.

The possibilities of new and interoperable technologies hold great potential for rendering border management more efficient as well as more secure but should not lead to discrimination or unequal treatment of passengers. This includes, *inter alia*, the use of gates for automated border control.

The European Council invites the Commission to:

- present proposals for an entry/exit system alongside a fast track registered traveller programme with a view to such a system becoming operational as soon as possible,
- to prepare a study on the possibility and usefulness of developing a European system of travel authorisation and, where appropriate, to make the necessary proposals,
- to continue to examine the issue of automated border controls and other issues connected to rendering border management more efficient.

- The role of **FRONTEX** may be a matter that the Committee will need to look at closer, in particular in relation to issues such as interception and rescue at sea are concerned, training of border guards, or indeed preparation of teams which will need to identify persons in need of international protection.

- See **PACE Resolution 1637 (2008)** Europe's boat people: mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe; **Recommendation 1645** (2004) on access to assistance and protection for asylum seekers at European seaports and coastal areas and **Resolution 1521** (2006) on mass arrival of irregular migrants on Europe's southern shores.

- Our Committee's on-going work on "The interception and rescue at sea of asylum-seekers, refugees and irregular migrants" (Rapporteur: Mr Diaz-Tejera) will be highly relevant.

5.2. Visa policy

The European Council believes that the entry into force of the Visa Code and the gradual roll-out of the VIS will create important new opportunities for further developing the common visa policy. That policy must also be part of a broader vision that takes account of relevant internal and external policy concerns. The European Council therefore encourages the Commission and Member States to take advantage of these developments in order to intensify regional consular cooperation by means of regional consular cooperation programmes which could include, in particular, the establishment of common visa application centres, where necessary, on a voluntary basis.

The European Council also invites:

- the Commission and Council to continue to explore the possibilities created by the conclusion of visa facilitation agreements with third countries in appropriate cases,
- the Commission to keep the list of third countries whose nationals are or are not subject to a visa requirement under regular review in accordance with appropriate criteria relating for example to illegal immigration, public policy and security, which take account of the Union's internal and foreign policy objectives,
- the Commission to strengthen its efforts to ensure the principle of visa reciprocity and prevent the (re)introduction of visa requirements by third countries towards any Member State and to identify measures which could be used prior to imposing the visa reciprocity mechanism towards those third countries.

The European Council, with a view to creating the possibility of moving to a new stage in the development of the common visa policy, while taking account of Member States competences in this area, invites the Commission to present a study on the possibility of establishing a common European issuing mechanism for short term visas. The study could also examine to what degree an assessment of individual risk could supplement the presumption of risk associated with the applicant's nationality.

6. A EUROPE OF RESPONSIBILITY, SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIP IN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM MATTERS

The European Council recognises both the opportunities and challenges posed by increased mobility of persons, and underlines that well-managed migration can be beneficial to all stakeholders. The European Council equally recognises that, in the context of the important demographic challenges that will face the Union in the future with an increased demand for labour, flexible migration policies will make an important contribution to the Union's economic development and performance in the longer term. The European Council is of the opinion that the long-term consequences of migration, for example on the labour markets and the social situation of migrants, have to be taken into account and that the interconnection between migration and integration remains crucial, inter alia, with regard to the fundamental values of the Union. Furthermore, the European Council recalls that the establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by 2012 remains a key policy objective for the Union.

See PACE [Resolution 1767 \(2010\)](#) on the Demographic future of Europe and migration + forthcoming report on a related issue prepared by Ms Memecan. See also [Resolution 1502 \(2006\)](#) on Demographic challenges for Social cohesion.

The European Council calls for the development of a comprehensive and sustainable Union migration and asylum policy framework, which in a spirit of solidarity can adequately and proactively manage fluctuations in migration flows and address situations such as the present one at the Southern external borders. Serious efforts are needed to build and strengthen dialogue and partnership between the Union and third countries, regions and organisations in order to achieve an enhanced and evidence-based response to these situations, taking into account that illegal immigrants enter the Union also via other borders or through misuse of visa. An important objective is to avoid the recurrence of tragedies at sea. When tragic situations unfortunately happen, ways should be explored to better record and, where possible, identify migrants trying to reach the Union.

The European Council recognises the need to find practical solutions which increase coherence between migration policies and other policy areas such as foreign and development policy and trade, employment, health and education policy at the European level. In particular, the European Council invites the Commission to explore procedures that to a greater extent link the development of migration policy to the development of the post-Lisbon Strategy. The European Council recognises the need to make financial resources within the Union increasingly flexible and coherent, both in terms of scope and of applicability, to support policy development in the field of asylum and migration.

The European Council reaffirms the principles set out in the Global Approach to Migration as well as the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. The European Council also recalls its conclusions of the June and October 2009 on this subject. It underlines the need to implement all measures in a comprehensive manner and evaluate them as decided. It recalls the five basic commitments set out in the Pact:

- to organise legal migration to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capacities determined by each Member State, and to encourage integration,

See the Committee's work on reception and detention facilities, with reports for example on Europe's boat-people and also on detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers:
 PACE [Resolution 1637 \(2008\)](#) Europe's boat people: mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe PACE [Resolution 1707 \(2010\)](#) on Detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe

- to control illegal immigration by ensuring that illegal immigrants return to their countries of origin or to a country of transit,

On returns see the Committee of Ministers [20 Guidelines on forced returns](#) and the recent report on voluntary returns. Also in this context it needs to be noted that some people cannot return thus further thought will need to be given to issues such as regularisation and guaranteeing certain fundamental rights for those who are not returned for whatever reason.
 See PACE [Resolution 1742 \(2010\)](#) on Voluntary return programmes: an effective, humane and cost-effective mechanism for returning irregular migrants; [Resolution 1741 \(2010\)](#) on Readmission agreements: a mechanism for returning irregular migrants ; [Resolution 1568 \(2007\)](#), on Regularisations programmes for irregular migrants

- to make border controls more effective,
- to construct a Europe of asylum

PACE [Resolution 1695 \(2009\)](#) & [Recommendation 1889 \(2009\)](#) on Improving the quality and consistency of asylum decisions in the Council of Europe member states

- to create a comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and of transit in order to encourage the synergy between migration and development.

6.1. A dynamic and comprehensive migration policy

6.1.1. Consolidating, developing and implementing the Global Approach to Migration

The European Council has consistently underlined the need for Union migration policy to be an integral part of Union foreign policy and recognises that the Global Approach to Migration has proven its relevance as the strategic framework for this purpose. Based on the original principles of solidarity, balance and true partnership with countries of origin and of transit outside the Union and in line with what already has been accomplished, the European Council calls for the further development and consolidation of this integrated approach. The implementation of the Global Approach to Migration needs to be accelerated by the strategic use of all its existing instruments and improved by increased coordination. A balance between the three areas (promoting mobility and legal migration, optimising the link between migration and development, and preventing and combating illegal immigration) should be maintained. The principal focus should remain on cooperation with the most relevant countries in Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Dialogue and cooperation should be further developed also with other countries and regions such as those in Asia and Latin America on the basis of the identification of common interests and challenges.

To this end, the European Council emphasises the following priorities:

- strategic, evidence-based and systematic use of all available instruments of the Global Approach to Migration — migration profiles, migration missions, cooperation platforms on migration and development and Mobility partnerships — for long-term cooperation on all dimensions of this policy in close partnership with selected third countries along priority migratory routes,
- continued and expanded use of the Mobility partnership instrument as the main strategic, comprehensive and long-term cooperation framework for migration management with third countries, adding value to existing bilateral frameworks. Success in implementing these partnerships requires improved coordination and substantial capacity-building efforts in countries of origin, of transit and of destination. The European Council calls for further development of the Mobility partnership instrument, while respecting their voluntary nature. Partnerships should be flexible and responsive to the needs of both the Union and the partner countries, and should include cooperation on all areas of the Global Approach to Migration,
- more efficient use of the Union's existing cooperation instruments to increase the capacity of partner countries, with a view to ensuring well-functioning infrastructures and sufficient administrative capacity to handle all aspects of migration, including improving their capacity to offer adequate protection and increasing the benefits and opportunities created by mobility.

The successful implementation of the Global Approach to Migration should be underpinned by regular evaluations, increased commitment and capacity as well as improved flexibility of the financial instruments of both the Union and the Member States available in this field.

6.1.2. Migration and development

The Council of Europe and also the Committee has done a large amount of work on the issue of co-development which is of relevance in this discussion.

The European Council underlines the need to take further steps to maximise the positive and minimise the negative effects of migration on development in line with the Global Approach on Migration. Effective policies can provide the framework needed to enable countries of destination and of origin and migrants themselves to work in partnership to enhance the effects of international migration on development.

Efforts to promote concerted mobility and migration with countries of origin should be closely linked with efforts to promote the development of opportunities for decent and productive work and improved livelihood options in third countries in order to minimise the brain drain.

To that end, the European Council invites the Commission to submit proposals before 2012 on:

- how to further ensure efficient, secure and low-cost remittance transfers, and enhance the development impact of remittance transfers, as well as to evaluate the feasibility of creating a common Union portal on remittances to inform migrants about transfer costs and encourage competition among remittance service providers,
- how diaspora groups may be further involved in the Union development initiatives, and how Member States may support diaspora groups in their efforts to enhance development in their countries of origin,

PACE [Resolution 1696 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1890 \(2009\)](#) on Engaging European diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses

- ways to further explore the concept of circular migration and study ways to facilitate orderly circulation of migrants, either taking place within, or outside, the framework of specific projects or programmes including a wide-ranging study on how relevant policy areas may contribute to and affect the preconditions for increased temporary and circular mobility.

Circular migration may also be an interesting subject for the Committee bearing in mind that amongst the 47 member states there are countries of origin, transit and destination, thus it is an issue of interest to all member states.

The European Council recognises the need for increased policy coherence at European level in order to promote the positive development effects of migration within the scope of the Union's activities in the external dimension and to align international migration more closely to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The European Council calls on the Council to ensure that it acts in a coordinated and coherent manner in this field.

The connection between climate change, migration and development needs to be further explored, and the European Council therefore invites the Commission to present an analysis of the effects of climate change on international migration, including its potential effects on immigration to the Union.

PACE [Resolution 1655 \(2009\)](#) on Environmentally induced migration and displacement: a 21st century challenge is of direct relevance.

6.1.3. A concerted policy in keeping with national labour-market requirements

The European Council recognises that labour immigration can contribute to increased competitiveness and economic vitality. In this sense, the European Council is of the opinion that the Union should encourage the creation of flexible admission systems that are responsive to the priorities, needs, numbers and volumes determined by each Member State and enable migrants to take full advantage of their skills and competence. In order to facilitate better labour matching, coherent immigration policies as well as better integration assessments of the skills in demand on the European labour markets are carried out. These systems must have due regard for Member States' competences, especially for managing their labour markets, and the principle of Union preference.

The European Council invites:

- the Commission and Council to continue to implement the Policy Plan on Legal Migration,
- the Commission to consider how existing information sources and networks can be used more effectively to ensure the availability of the comparable data on migration issues with a view to better informing policy choices, which also takes account of recent developments,
- the Commission and the Council to evaluate existing policies that should, *inter alia*, improve skills recognition and labour matching between the Union and third countries and the capacity to analyze labour market needs, the transparency of European on-line employment and recruitment information, training, information dissemination, and skills matching in the country of origin,
- the Commission to assess the impact and effectiveness of measures adopted in this area with a view to determining whether there is a need for consolidating existing legislation, including regarding categories of workers currently not covered by Union legislation.

6.1.4. Proactive policies for migrants and their rights

The Union must ensure fair treatment of third country nationals who reside legally on the territory of its Member States. A more vigorous integration policy should aim at granting them rights and obligations comparable to those of citizens of the Union. This should remain an objective of a common immigration policy and should be implemented as soon as possible, and no later than 2014.

The European Council therefore invites the Commission to submit proposals for:

- consolidation of all legislation in the area of immigration, starting with legal migration, which would be based on an evaluation of the existing *acquis* and include amendments needed to simplify and/or, where necessary, extend the existing provisions and improve their implementation and coherence,
- evaluation and, where necessary, review of Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, taking into account the importance of integration measures.

There are many human rights issues relating to family reunification and as such it may be an area where the Committee needs to be more involved, in particular in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights and the right to family life under Article 8 and the right to marry under Article 12.

6.1.5. Integration

The successful integration of legally residing third-country nationals remains the key to maximising the benefits of immigration. European cooperation can contribute to more effective integration policies in the Member States by providing incentives and support for the action of Member States. The objective of granting comparable rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all is at the core of European cooperation in integration, taking into account the necessity of balancing migrants' rights and duties.

Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual interaction, requiring not only efforts by national, regional and local authorities but also a greater commitment by the host community and immigrants.

Member States' integration policies should be supported through the further development of structures and tools for knowledge exchange and coordination with other relevant policy areas, such as employment, education and social inclusion. Access to employment is central to successful integration.

The European Council also invites the Commission to support Member States' efforts:

- through the development of a coordination mechanism involving the Commission and the Member States using a common reference framework, which should improve structures and tools for European knowledge exchange,
- to incorporate integration issues in a comprehensive way in all relevant policy areas,
- towards the identification of joint practices and European modules to support the integration process, including essential elements such as introductory courses and language classes, a strong commitment by the host community and the active participation of immigrants in all aspects of collective life,
- towards the development of core indicators in a limited number of relevant policy areas (for example employment, education and social inclusion) for monitoring the results of integration policies, in order to increase the comparability of national experiences and reinforce the European learning process,
- for improved consultation with and involvement of civil society, taking into account integration needs in various policy areas and making use of the European Integration Forum and the European website on Integration,
- to enhance democratic values and social cohesion in relation to immigration and integration of immigrants and to promote intercultural dialogue and contacts at all levels.

A great deal of work has been done by the Council of Europe, including the Assembly. Some examples include the "[White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue](#)" or PACE [Resolution 1437 \(2005\)](#) on Migration and Integration: a challenge and an opportunity for Europe. A report will be adopted on 18 March by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue to be debated in April.

6.1.6. Effective policies to combat illegal immigration

The European Council is convinced that effective action against illegal immigration remains essential when developing a common immigration policy. The fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of persons, integrated border management and cooperation with countries of origin and of transit, supported by police and judicial cooperation, in particular, must remain a key priority for this purpose. Our aim must be to prevent the human tragedies which result from the activities of traffickers.

An effective and sustainable return policy is an essential element of a well-managed migration system within the Union. The Union and the Member States should intensify the efforts to return illegally residing third-country nationals. Necessary financial means should be allocated for this purpose. Such a policy must be implemented with full respect for the principle of '*non-refoulement*' and for the fundamental rights and freedoms and the dignity of the individual returnees. Voluntary return should be preferred, while acknowledging the inevitable need for efficient means to enforce returns where necessary. EN C 115/30 Official Journal of the European Union 4.5.2010

PACE [Resolution 1741 \(2010\)](#) & [Recommendation 1925 \(2010\)](#) on Readmission agreements: a mechanism for returning irregular migrants

PACE [Resolution 1742 \(2010\)](#) and [Recommendation 1926 \(2010\)](#) on voluntary return programmes : an effective, humane and cost-effective mechanism for returning irregular migrants

In order to create a comprehensive approach on return and readmission, it is necessary to step up cooperation with countries of origin and of transit within the framework of the Global Approach to Migration and in line with the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, while recognising that all States are required to readmit their own nationals who are illegally staying on the territory of another State.

It is important to ensure that the implementation of the newly adopted instruments in the area of return and sanctions against employers, as well as the readmission agreements in force, is closely monitored in order to ensure their effective application.

The European Council believes that the focus should be placed on:

- encouraging of voluntary return, including through the development of incentive systems, training, reintegration and subsidies, and by using the possibilities offered by existing financial instruments,
- Member States:
 - to put into full effect the Union provisions pursuant to which a return decision issued by one Member State is applicable throughout the Union and the effective application of the principle of mutual recognition of return decisions by recording entry bans in SIS and facilitating exchange of information,
 - to improve the exchange of information on developments at national level in the area of regularisation, with a view to ensuring consistency with the principles of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum,

The report of the Committee on regularisation programmes for irregular migrants is of importance in this matter; see PACE [Resolution 1568 \(2007\)](#).

- assistance by the Commission, Frontex and Member States on a voluntary basis, to Member States which face specific and disproportionate pressures, in order to ensure the effectiveness of their return policies towards certain third countries,
- more effective action against illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings and smuggling of persons by developing information on migration routes as well as aggregate and comprehensive information which improves our understanding of and response to migratory flows, promoting cooperation on surveillance and border controls, facilitating readmission by promoting support measures for return and reintegration, capacity building in third countries,

The work on trafficking of the Council of Europe is of direct relevance (including by GRETA) as is the work mentioned earlier on readmission agreements.

- the conclusion of effective and operational readmission agreements, on a case-by-case basis at Union or bilateral level,
- ensuring that the objective of the Union's efforts on readmission should add value and increase the efficiency of return policies, including existing bilateral agreements and practices,
- the presentation by the Commission of an evaluation, also of ongoing negotiations, during 2010 of the EC/EU readmission agreements and propose a mechanism to monitor their implementation. The Council should define a renewed, coherent strategy on readmission on that basis, taking into account the overall relations with the country concerned, including a common approach towards third countries that do not cooperate in readmitting their own nationals,
- increased practical cooperation between Member States, for instance by regular chartering of joint return flights, financed by Frontex and the verification of the nationality of third-country nationals eligible for return, and the procurement from third countries of travel documents,
- increased targeted training and equipment support,
- a coordinated approach by Member States by developing the network of liaison officers in countries of origin and of transit.

It is probably time that the Committee looks at the whole issue of returns in a new report, combining past work on boat people, detention, forced returns, voluntary returns and also readmission agreements.

6.1.7. Unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors arriving in the Member States from third countries represent a particularly vulnerable group which requires special attention and dedicated responses, especially in the case of minors at risk. This is a challenge for Member States and raises issues of common concern. Areas identified as requiring particular attention are the exchange of information and best practice, minor's smuggling, cooperation with countries of origin, the question of age assessment, identification and family tracing, and the need to pay particular attention to unaccompanied minors in the context of the fight against trafficking in human beings. A comprehensive response at Union level should combine prevention, protection and assisted return measures while taking into account the best interests of the child.

The European Council therefore welcomes the Commission's initiative to:

- develop an action plan, to be adopted by the Council, on unaccompanied minors which underpins and supplements the relevant legislative and financial instruments and combines measures directed at prevention, protection and assisted return. The action plan should underline the need for cooperation with countries of origin, including cooperation to facilitate the return of minors, as well as to prevent further departures. The action plan should also examine practical measures to facilitate the return of the high number of unaccompanied minors that do not require international protection, while recognising that best interests for many may be the reunion with their families and development in their own social and cultural environment.

The Committee's recent report on Unaccompanied minors in Europe: issues of arrival, stay and return (Rapporteur: Ms Reps) is of direct relevance.

6.2. Asylum: a common area of protection and solidarity

The European Council remains committed to the objective of establishing a common area of protection and solidarity based on a common asylum procedure and a uniform status for those granted international protection. While CEAS should be based on high protection standards, due regard should also be given to fair and effective procedures capable of preventing abuse. It is crucial that individuals, regardless of the Member State in which their application for asylum is lodged, are offered an equivalent level of treatment as regards reception conditions, and the same level as regards procedural arrangements and status determination. The objective should be that similar cases should be treated alike and result in the same outcome.

The Committee has spoken out strongly on this issue in a report on Improving the quality and consistency of asylum decisions in the Council of Europe member states; see [PACE Resolution 1695 \(2009\)](#) & [Recommendation 1889 \(2009\)](#).

The particular situation of women in the asylum process is important to look at, and in this respect the report on Gender based persecution is highly relevant, see [Resolution 1765 \(2010\)](#) on Gender-related claims for asylum.

6.2.1. A common area of protection

There are still significant differences between national provisions and their application. In order to achieve a higher degree of harmonisation, the establishment of CEAS, should remain a key policy objective for the Union. Common rules, as well as a better and more coherent application of them, should prevent or reduce secondary movements within the Union, and increase mutual trust between Member States.

The development of a Common Policy on Asylum should be based on a full and inclusive application of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and other relevant international treaties. Such a policy is necessary in order to maintain the long-term sustainability of the asylum system and to promote solidarity within the Union. Subject to a report from the Commission on the legal and practical consequences, the Union should seek accession to the Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The EASO will be an important tool in the development and implementation of the CEAS and should contribute to strengthening all forms of practical cooperation between the Member States. Therefore the Member States should play an active role in the work of the EASO. It should further develop a common educational platform for national asylum officials, building in particular on the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC). Enhancing the convergence and ongoing quality with a view to reducing disparities of asylum decisions will be another important task.

The Dublin System remains a cornerstone in building the CEAS, as it clearly allocates responsibility for the examination of asylum application.

Problems in the Dublin System have been highlighted in various reports of the Assembly, notably in the recent report on Rule 39 indications by the European Court of Human Rights (see [PACE Resolution 1788 \(2011\)](#)) and a recent hearing on the issue of Dublin returns (see the [proceedings](#)) which is being followed up with a report on "Asylum seekers and refugees: sharing responsibilities in Europe" (see the [mandate](#)). The issue has however become all the more urgent since the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece.

The European Council accordingly invites:

- the Council and the European Parliament to intensify the efforts to establish a common asylum procedure and a uniform status in accordance with Article 78 TFEU for those who are granted asylum or subsidiary protection by 2012 at the latest,
- the Commission to consider, once the second phase of the CEAS has been fully implemented and on the basis of an evaluation of the effect of that legislation and of the EASO, the possibilities for creating a framework for the transfer of protection of beneficiaries of international protection when exercising their acquired residence rights under Union law,
- the Commission to undertake a feasibility study on the Eurodac system as a supporting tool for the entire CEAS, while fully respecting data protection rules,
- the Commission to consider, if necessary, in order to achieve the CEAS, proposing new legislative instruments on the basis of an evaluation,
- invites the Commission to finalise its study on the feasibility and legal and practical implications to establish joint processing of asylum applications.

6.2.2. Sharing of responsibilities and solidarity between the Member States

Effective solidarity with the Member States facing particular pressures should be promoted.

This should be achieved through a broad and balanced approach. Mechanisms for the voluntary and coordinated sharing of responsibility between the Member States should therefore be further analyzed and developed. In particular as one of the keys to a credible and sustainable CEAS is for Member States to build sufficient capacity in the national asylum systems, the European Council urges the Member States to support each other in building sufficient capacity in their national asylum systems. The EASO should have a central role in coordinating these capacity- building measures.

The European Council therefore invites the Commission to examine the possibilities for:

- developing the above mentioned mechanism for sharing responsibility between the Member States while assuring that asylum systems are not abused, and the principles of the CEAS are not undermined,
- creating instruments and coordinating mechanisms which will enable Member States to support each other in building capacity, building on Member States own efforts to increase their capacity with regard to their national asylum systems,
- using, in a more effective way, existing Union financial systems aiming at reinforcing internal solidarity,
- the EASO to evaluate and develop procedures that will facilitate the secondment of officials in order to help those Member States facing particular pressures of asylum seekers.

As mentioned earlier a report on "Asylum seekers and refugees: sharing responsibilities in Europe" (see the [mandate](#)).

6.2.3. The external dimension of asylum

The Union should act in partnership and cooperate with third countries hosting large refugee populations. A common Union approach can be more strategic and thereby contribute more efficiently to solving protracted refugee situations. Any development in this area needs to be pursued in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, if appropriate, other relevant actors. The EASO should be fully involved in the external dimension of the CEAS. In its dealings with third countries, the Union has the responsibility to actively convey the importance of acceding to, and implementing of, the 1951 Geneva Convention and its Protocol.

Promoting solidarity within the Union is crucial but not sufficient to achieve a credible and sustainable common policy on asylum. It is therefore important to further develop instruments to express solidarity with third countries in order to promote and help building capacity to handle migratory flows and protracted refugee situations in these countries.

The European Council invites:

- the Council and the Commission to enhance capacity building in third countries, in particular, their capacity to provide effective protection, and to further develop and expand the idea of Regional Protection Programmes, on the basis of the forthcoming evaluations. Such efforts should be incorporated into the Global Approach to Migration, and should be reflected in national poverty reduction strategies and not only be targeting refugees and internally displaced persons but also local populations,
- the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission to encourage the voluntary participation of Member States in the joint Union resettlement scheme and increase the total number of resettled refugees, taking into consideration the specific situation in each Member State,
- the Commission to report annually to the Council and the European Parliament on the resettlement efforts made within the Union, to carry out a mid-term evaluation during 2012 of the progress made, and to evaluate the joint Union resettlement programme in 2014 with a view to identifying necessary improvements,
- the Council and the Commission to find ways to strengthen Union support for the UNHCR,
- the Commission to explore, in that context and where appropriate, new approaches concerning access to asylum procedures targeting main countries of transit, such as protection programmes for particular groups or certain procedures for examination of applications for asylum, in which Member States could participate on a voluntary basis.

7. EUROPE IN A GLOBALISED WORLD — THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The European Council emphasises the importance of the external dimension of the Union's policy in the area of freedom, security and justice and underlines the need for the increased integration of these policies into the general policies of the Union. The external dimension is crucial to the successful implementation of the objectives of this programme and should in particular be fully coherent with all other aspects of Union foreign policy.

The Union must continue to ensure effective implementation, and to conduct evaluations also in this area. All action should be based on transparency and accountability, in particular, with regard to the financial instruments.

As reiterated by the 2008 European Security Strategy report, internal and external security are inseparable. Addressing threats, even far away from our continent, is essential to protecting Europe and its citizens.

The European Council invites the Council and the Commission to ensure that coherence and complementarity are guaranteed between the political and the operational level of activities in the area of freedom, security and justice. Priorities in external relations should inform and guide the prioritisation of the work of relevant Union agencies (Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, CEPOL, EMCDDA and EASO).

Member States' Liaison officers should be encouraged to further strengthen their cooperation, sharing of information and best practices.

The European Council underscores the need for complementarity between the Union and Member States' action. To that end, increased commitment from the Union and the Member States is required.