

**NO. 0040**

**CZECH PRESIDENCY AGREES TO KEEP ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION  
HIGH ON EU AGENDA**

The Czech Presidency of the EU Council agreed to put a common document on the way forward on illegal immigration, presented by Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Greece, up for discussion amongst all member states during an informal meeting of the Home Affairs Council of Ministers. Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, is currently attending this meeting in Prague.

The document in question - which was agreed upon and signed by the four member states on Tuesday during a meeting of the Quadro Group in Rome - seeks to keep illegal immigration high on the European Union's agenda through the speedy implementation of certain measures listed in the Pact for Immigration and Asylum – including the drawing up of readmission agreements with countries of transit for illegal migrants, the establishment of better mechanisms for the repatriation for such migrants, the strengthening of Frontex border patrols and the creation of the burden-sharing mechanisms mentioned in the Pact.

Intervening during this morning's debate, Minister Mifsud Bonnici illustrated the main points in the document, stressing on their importance in tackling the illegal immigration problems that Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Greece are currently facing. He said that though the elements mentioned in the Quadro document were already included in the Pact, the document was in fact a condensation of the points that were of the highest priority for these four countries.

“This is a problem of the Union as a whole and is not limited to the Mediterranean EU states. Malta will relentlessly pursue the implementation of what had been agreed to in the Pact for Immigration and Asylum in the shortest time possible,” the Minister said.

In a comment to the press, the French Minister of the Interior, Overseas France and Territorial Communities, Michèle Alliot-Marie expressed France's openness for the Quadro group's document. The text also attracted a positive reaction from Spain and was generally well-received by most EU member states.

Wrapping up the discussion about illegal immigration, the Czech Presidency agreed to draft a set of concrete measures based on the Quadro document. These measures would then be discussed during the next Home Affairs Council meeting to be held next month in Brussels.

**Additional notes for editors:**

- Among other items being discussed during the informal Council meeting are the modern technologies that are used for security purposes and the security of such technologies. In a scenario of differing legal systems and differing levels of security in the Member States, such discussions are bound to be of interest to all and Member States are discussing the Presidency's recommendation to set up a group of experts to reflect on the establishment of a strategy concerning IT and security in the area of justice and home affairs. In relation to technology, the Ministers are also discussing the use of technology for the purposes of border control and for dealing with immigration and asylum.
- The Czech presidency is following up the efforts started by the French presidency relating to the protection of children and is giving this subject considerable importance. Ministers are also discussing the efforts that can be made in promoting the search for missing children, combating illegal content on the internet and establishing simulation exercises for developing early warning systems in the case of kidnapping. In addition, Ministers are discussing improving strategies for countering drug use.
- Also on the agenda is the discussion on the delays in the entry into operation of the Schengen Information System II (SIS II) and the difficulties that are being reported by the Commission in these preparations.
- This informal council of Ministers responsible for Home Affairs will be followed by an informal council of Justice Ministers tomorrow in Prague.

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