

Visegrad Group Ministerial Meeting

16 October 2018, Bratislava

Joint Declaration of the Ministers of the Interior

As part of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4), the V4 Ministers of the Interior held a meeting in Bratislava on 16 October 2018 to discuss some of the up-to-date topics in the field of internal affairs. The discussion of the Ministers concentrated particularly on the issue of the proposal for a Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard and on the coordination of deployments in the Western Balkans.

With regard to these main areas of discussion, the Ministers agreed on the following:

Draft Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard

During the discussion on the new mandate of Frontex the Ministers stressed that although this mandate has to be enhanced, the Agency has to continue to act only supportively and not to replace the activity of the Member States' authorities. At the same time, the Ministers appreciated several elements of the current draft as strengthening the role of the Agency in the area of returns and extended possibilities in third countries. As problematic is considered the fact that despite its complexity the draft does not include impact assessments, which would provide a background of a need for Agency enforcement. The Ministers agreed that the possible negative impacts on the national forces resulting from the deployments to the future standing corps should be reduced to minimum. It has to be emphasised that the border protection should remain the Member States' competence. Against this background, the proposal concerning acquisition of executive powers by Frontex staff should be further clarified.

Coordination of deployments to the Western Balkan states

In connection to the Ministerial meeting of 26 June 2018 held in Budapest and the Special Meeting of Experts organized on 8 October 2018 in Bratislava, the Ministers agreed that in order to resolve current migration and security issues in Europe, the region of the Western Balkans represents a key partner.

After discussing current situation, the Ministers confirmed a need of strong involvement with all the counties along Western Balkan migratory route which V4 states already support with

personnel and technical equipment. This support is of crucial importance to maintain also in the future.

To this end, the Ministers agreed on a need to exchange information and share best practices in order to prevent possible overlaps and better focus overall support to the Western Balkan partners. In order to achieve this particular aim, the Ministers also decided to commonly approach the Western Balkans states to specify needs of additional support.

The Ministers stressed the importance of established Special Meeting of Experts to which a follow-up meeting should be organized.

The Ministers welcome the signature of a new agreement between Albania and the EU on the European Border and Coast Guard cooperation and also take a positive note on recent developments in concluding similar agreements with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They assure the Western Balkan partners that the scale of the V4 support will remain once the agreements are concluded.