

Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference

Warsaw, 28 June 2022.

**JOINT DECLARATION
of the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum**

The Ministers of the Interior and the representatives of the Member States of the Salzburg Forum, in the presence of the Czech Republic exceptionally in the observing role as the incoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, held an online ministerial conference on 28 June 2022 during the Polish Presidency.

In addition to the Member States of the Salzburg Forum, the conference was attended by the Ministers and representatives of the Western Balkans countries, the Minister and representatives of Moldova, EU Agencies (Frontex, EUAA, Europol) and representatives of the management of the Joint Coordination Platform.

The Ministers noted that the Salzburg Forum continues to play a special role in strengthening the regional and expressed their commitment to further cooperation within the Forum, promoting strategic and operational cooperation both within the EU and with third countries.

The participating Ministers and representatives agreed on the main items on the agenda as follows:

**CHALLENGES FOR THE SALZBURG FORUM STATES RELATED TO WAR IN
UKRAINE**

The Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum noted that the unprovoked Russian military aggression against Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022 has resulted in massive destructions and displacement of Ukrainian people fleeing the war. The Ministers acknowledged that this had led to the most serious humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II.

The Ministers reaffirmed that Salzburg Forum countries moral obligation was not only to receive Ukrainian refugees but also to grant them temporary protection and take care of their needs for as long as it is necessary. They stated that European countries must build their preparedness for further possible escalation of the conflict– in terms of short as well as long-term solutions.

The Ministers highlighted that the majority of Salzburg Forum countries are either front-line Member States or the destination countries for a large bulk of the Ukrainians

seeking shelter. Thus, Salzburg Forum countries share the greatest effort to host and provide protection and all possible needed support to refugees and displaced persons from Ukraine, in line with the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 activating the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC.

The Ministers stated that Russia`s aggression against Ukraine might also have other long-term consequences on other aspects of global scale having direct effect on security and migration in the states in the European neighbourhood. Therefore, they confirmed that the protection of the EU external borders and, addressing the root causes of illegal migration along all migratory routes remain of great importance.

HYBRID THREATS AND INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EVENTS AT THE EU EXTERNAL BORDER WITH BELARUS

The Ministers agreed that instrumentalisation of migration is being used by third countries or non-state actors that have few other strategic advantages, and therefore use people by pushing them to cross borders in order to destabilize or put pressure on the target country. Recently, the unprecedented events at the EU external border with Belarus resulted from the attempted instrumentalisation of migration by the Lukashenka regime. As part of these attempts, Poland and the Baltic States became the target of a meticulously planned and consistently applied hybrid attack that use migration to destabilize European countries and break the unity. The Ministers made it clear that any Salzburg Forum country would not be a victim of instrumentalisation of migration and hybrid threats.

The Ministers underlined that the problem of instrumentalisation needs to be solved mainly at the level of European Union law, which would ensure the possibility of effective and rapid action, however Member states may in particular in situations of instrumentalisation of migration or other hybrid threats take the necessary measures to preserve national security, law and order. The currently negotiated proposals (amendment of the Schengen Borders Code, draft EU regulation on the instrumentalisation of migration, Council Decision on temporary emergency measures in favor of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) are important steps in the right direction, but are insufficient on their own and therefore should be complemented by additional measures at the external border such as mandatory asylum and return procedures taking into account the experiences of the latest situation and the needs of the Member States to react to acts of violence at the external borders, including attempts at illegal, mass border crossings.

In order to strengthen the external borders, the Ministers agreed that all types of physical and mobile infrastructure should be funded by adequate EU financial support.

Furthermore, third country cooperation should be strengthened to avoid instrumentalisation crises including by developing a “migration diplomacy toolbox” and by implementing safe third country concepts in the future Asylum Procedures Regulation and in practice.

The Ministers declared that, in the face of other crises and military aggression in the immediate neighborhood the citizens must be given a full and unshakable sense of security.

INTENSIFICATION/COORDINATION OF READMISSION ACTIVITIES

The Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum and the Ministers and representatives of the Group of Friends of the Western Balkans and Moldova reviewed the current situation of illegal migration in the region and shared their experience on the latest developments.

A massive increase in illegal migration movements over the Balkan region towards destination countries in the European Union and a dramatic increase in asylum applications in some Salzburg Forum countries, notably the Republic of Austria with an expected number of 30.000 asylum applications from January to June 2022, has been observed by the Ministers. The Ministers have noted that it is due to and the intensification of hybrid migration-related threats that irregular migration flows towards Europe have increased significantly. Thus, effectively tackling illegal migratory flows in the European Union, in particular the return of illegal migrants without the right of residence to their country of origin or to a safe third country is a major challenge and huge priority for Salzburg Forum States.

The Ministers underlined that the EU and its Member States need to have and make use of all appropriate tools to fight irregular primary and secondary movements to the EU and hybrid threats. It is also important to use all available relevant incentives and leverages to ensure efficient return, readmission and reintegration

The Ministers agreed that the European Commission and the European External Action Service should intensify their efforts to motivate the countries of origin and transit of irregular migrants to accept their own nationals and thus take responsibility for irregular migration flows.

Finally, the achievements of the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) in the first half of 2022 were acknowledged. The Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum and the Ministers and representatives of the Group of Friends of the Western Balkans and Moldova encourage the JCP to continue and further strengthen its coordination efforts and to promote tailor made activities in the countries covering all the elements of its mandate. In this context returns directly from the Western Balkans region supported by the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) will represent a special focus.

Overview of the Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers took note of the results of expert-level meetings held over the past six months.

The incoming Romanian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the incoming Romanian Presidency and expressed their commitment to work together effectively on issues of common interest in the framework of the Salzburg Forum in the future.