

COOPERATION FRAMEWORK BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, THE EU AGENCIES AND ROMANIA

Since March 2023, the Commission, Romania and the EU Agencies have been working in the implementation of a Pilot Project building on good practices in the area of asylum, returns, border management and international cooperation. In line with the Commission's statement issued last December when the Council agreed on the full application of the provisions of the Schengen acquis in the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania, this Pilot Project has proven effective and deserves to be turned into a more structural arrangement.

Building upon the fruitful and solid collaboration and best practices established through the pilot project with Romania, this **Cooperation Framework on border and migration management** aims to continue the implementation of and consolidate identified tools and best practices, based on the applicable Union and national legislation and with the support of the relevant EU Agencies¹.

It will be implemented with the necessary support by the Commission and the relevant EU Agencies. In addition, substantial financial support from the Union for the protection of the Romanian external borders will continue to be provided to strengthen border control further.

The Framework takes into account that the Schengen acquis will be fully applicable in Romania by, in a first phase, lifting the controls at the internal air and sea borders as from 31 March 2024, in line with Council Decision (EU) 2024/210 of 30 December 2023. Against this background, it includes actions to further reinforce cooperation between Member States and to boost border and migration management activities. The Framework builds on the important contributions by Romania to the well-functioning of the Schengen area over the last years.

In view of establishing a sustainable operating environment, the Framework anticipates the upcoming requirement for Member States to formulate national implementing plans once the Pact on Migration and Asylum is formally adopted.

All activities under this framework are to be conducted in full respect of EU law, including fundamental rights.

I. National governance of migration management

In view of the preparation for the implementation of the *Pact on Migration and Asylum*, Romania will proceed to:

- Set up an **internal coordination mechanism** between relevant national authorities dedicated to the implementation of the Pact.
- Conduct comprehensive **needs assessments** to map the capacities of the national authorities involved in the migration management process.
- Initiate preparations for developing a national implementation plan for the Pact including the development of workflows, content, and necessary implementing acts.

II. Border Management

To ensure a constant level of preparedness at the external borders, and building on the solid cooperation established between Romania and Frontex in the context of the pilot project and *going forward*, Romania will:

¹ Frontex, EUAA, Europol, FRA

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- Continue to implement a **strategic approach** to apprehensions and border controls with the aim to address irregular migration and to prevent secondary movements.
- Work on the deployment of document advisers for relevant external flights at airports in Romania.
- With the support of the EU agencies, reinforce its capabilities for the identification of undocumented migrants (including through the deployment of document advisers)

III. Asylum & Reception

Following up on the good practices established as part of the pilot project, and looking ahead in view of the preparations for the implementation of the Pact, Romania will:

- Continue to make best use of the EUAA as necessary and based on the Operational Plan signed in December 2023 to ensure effective implementation of Dublin transfers and support of the reception system.
- Monitor the implementation of the good practices related to asylum procedure workflows identified in the framework of the pilot project.
- **Further strengthen the national reception capacity** and the Dublin unit in view of the preparations of a national implementation plan for the Pact.
- Consider options to improve the mechanisms for limiting absconding.

IV. Return System

Building up on the efforts towards more efficient return process and on the well-established cooperation with Frontex, Romania will:

- Continue using the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services and Reintegration assistance Tool and deployment of return specialists.
- Continue hosting a Return Specialist for operational and administrative support in pre-return related activities to facilitate returns of third country nationals.
- Maintain participation in EU return /readmission meetings, including **High Level Network on Returns**, to enhance awareness of best practices from other Member States and facilitate exchange of knowledge and expertise.
- Actively participate in implementing actions from the Return Roadmap and Targeted Return Operations Plan, developed by the EU Return Coordinator.
- Implement measures on returns under Recommendation C(2023)8139 and the EU Presidency document on “making the return systems more effective” (st15925/23) endorsed at the JHA Council on 5th December 2023.
- Participate in the Frontex Return Mobility Programme, and in the establishment of Operational Country Working Groups on Western Balkans Return Mechanism.

V. Enhanced police cooperation in the Schengen area (Regional approach)

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In line with the ongoing efforts at EU level led by the Schengen Coordinator to strengthen police cooperation in a coordinated manner to prevent cross-border crime and secondary movements, Romania will:

- Step-up **police cooperation** with Member States facing related challenges, notably through regional initiatives with those in the Western Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean routes, to effectively combat cross-border crime and prevent secondary movements based on a whole-of-route approach. In this context, further implement Commission Recommendation C(2023)8139 of November 2023, in close cooperation with the Schengen Coordinator.
- Continue the efforts on investigations to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks and effective **secondary security checks**, using the support of **Europol** as appropriate.
- Continue work on the **Operational Task Force** to counter migrant smuggling set up during the Pilot Project.
- Review and increase Romania's engagement in **EMPACT** and its various operational action plans dedicated to tackling the Union's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime, with a particular focus on anti-smuggling, counter- terrorism and organised crime in compliance line with Commission Recommendation C(2023)8139.