

Courtesy Translation

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To the
Home Affairs Ministers
of the EU and the Schengen Contracting States

Dear Vice-President,
dear Commissioner,
dear Secretary-General,
dear President,
dear Colleagues,

Border-free travel within the Schengen area is one of the greatest achievements to be maintained. I therefore expressly support the efforts and measures intended to restore an area without internal border controls in the long run. However, this requires effective protection of the external borders, full application of instruments under asylum law (such as the Dublin III Regulation and Eurodac) and efforts to counter irregular secondary migration.

Thanks to numerous European and national measures, we have been able to reduce the number of irregular migrants arriving at our borders below the levels of 2015 and 2016. At the same time, we can see that the Federal Republic of Germany is still strongly affected by the irregular secondary migration of persons mainly coming from the south-eastern and southern Schengen borders. In Germany, we still register between 13,000 and 14,000 asylum applicants per month. Given the observations of the border authorities, the German-Austrian land border continues to be the hot spot for irregular secondary migration to the federal territory, which is why this area continues to be in the focus of border police measures. Given the apprehensions at the external borders and along the transit routes, we currently do not expect irregular secondary migration to effectively decrease anytime soon. Entering the federal territory illegally is a punishable offence. The persistently large number of these crimes and smuggling activities represents a threat to public security and order, also in the context of possible related and subsequent crime. This applies also in view of the fact that a significant number of third-country nationals come from crisis and conflict regions whose geographic location suggests that they have travelled via the Eastern Mediterranean route. Furthermore, the general security situation remains tense, as past terrorist attacks in Germany and elsewhere in Europe have shown. Germany is part of the common European threat area and continues to be a target of international terrorism. The fact that the countries of the Schengen area continue to be attacked shows that the perpetrators take advantage of the freedom in the area without border controls to our detriment. For these reasons, the migration routes from these crisis and conflict regions are of particular importance.

Having considered the situation carefully and following the previous letters about the current internal border controls, I have come to the conclusion that internal border controls at the German-Austrian land border are still necessary. On the basis of Art. 25 to 27 of Regulation 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code), I have therefore ordered the temporary reintroduction of internal border controls for a six-month period starting on 12 May 2018 for reasons of migration and security policy.

Please rest assured that the measures taken by the border police are flexible and adjusted to the given situation and that possible negative impacts on cross-border travel will be limited to the minimum necessary for security and will occur only temporarily at selected locations also in the future. Furthermore, we will not take measures to direct cross-border traffic only via a small number of border crossing points. As before, we will continue our close and trusting cross-border cooperation and coordination with our Austrian partners and domestic traffic and police authorities.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Horst Seehofer