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**NOTE**

From:	Presidency
To:	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA) / High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (HLWG)
No. prev. doc.:	12516/15 JAI 699 ASIM 99 RELEX 761 POLGEN 143
Subject:	Trio of Presidencies' (NL, SK, MT) paper on the strategic coordination of the work of the Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration

1. Following the tasking of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of December 2014 to COREPER to review the mandates and working methods of the Council preparatory bodies in order to coordinate better the work on internal and external dimensions of migration, the previous Trio of Presidencies (IT-LV-LU) undertook extensive work on this dossier, which resulted in the document on strategic coordination of the work of the Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration (doc. 12516/15, endorsed by the JHA Council on 8-9 October 2015).
2. The latter document tasked the current Trio of Presidencies (NL-SK-MT) to prepare, under its responsibility, a concise strategic coordination paper with the aim to mainstream various geographical and thematic priorities in order to improve efficiency and coherence in the work of the Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration and to serve as operational guidelines for the work of these bodies.

3. Therefore, building upon the work by the preceding Trio of Presidencies on this matter and the input provided in this context by the Member States, EU institutions and agencies<sup>1</sup>, NL-SK-MT have elaborated the first Trio paper on Strategic coordination that aims to promote greater coherence between the internal and external aspects of migration in the JHA Council preparatory bodies, while also taking into account the ongoing work related to asylum and migration issues in other geographical and thematic Council preparatory bodies.
4. This Trio of Presidencies proposes to coordinate strategically the geographical, thematic and organizational priorities as follows (following the mandate, set in paragraph 2 of doc. 12516/15):

#### 4.1. Geographical priorities

- a) With regard to migration, the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes are two geographical areas that will require utmost attention. Intensive cooperation with third countries along these routes is of paramount importance. Awareness should also be maintained on the developments regarding possible future pressures at the Eastern land borders.
- b) Secondly, the strategic coordination between SCIFA and HLWG, but also a number of other Council geographical preparatory bodies, will particularly be required to ensure the necessary follow-up to the High-level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean - Western Balkans Route, the Valletta Summit and the intensified cooperation with Turkey.
- c) Lastly, we should endeavour to strengthen the reception facilities and communities in the region of first asylum. As agreed by the JHA Council in October 2015, the EU shall look into developing safe and sustainable reception capacities and providing lasting prospects and adequate procedures for refugees and their families in regions in third-countries affected by migratory pressure, until return to their country of origin is possible. This was confirmed by the European Council in October 2015, where it was agreed to step up cooperation with third countries to stem the flows.

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<sup>1</sup> The Associated countries have also contributed to this exercise.

## 4.2. Thematic priorities

The overall strategic thematic priority for this Trio of Presidencies will be the implementation of the European Agenda for Migration and the examination of measures for its implementation, as proposed by the Commission. The Trio of Presidencies, therefore, proposes to apply the strategic coordination between SCIFA, HLWG and other Council preparatory bodies in particular to the following thematic priorities:

a) Asylum and international protection:

- Negotiations on a common European list of safe countries of origin,
- Resettlement and humanitarian admission policy.

b) Border management:

- Cooperation with third countries in border management.

c) Return and readmission:

- Follow-up to the EU Action Plan on Return and to the Council Conclusions of 8 October 2015,
- Strengthening Frontex' role on return,
- Developing high-level dialogues on return and tailor-made packages.

d) Visa:

- Visa policy,
- Link between visa facilitation agreements and return and readmission agreements.

- e) External dimension:
  - Implementation of the Valletta Action Plan,
  - Implementation of the EU-Turkey Action Plan,
  - Follow up to the High-level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean - Western Balkans Route.
- f) Fight against human smuggling:
  - Follow-up to the EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling.

The Chairs of Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration will be responsible for mainstreaming the identified strategic priorities in the work of these bodies.

Coordination meetings of Chairs presiding over JHA, but also geographical and thematic, Council preparatory bodies should assist this process.

#### 4.3. Organizational priorities:

- a) Regarding modalities and working methods of the Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration, this Trio of Presidencies will foremost aim to implement the detailed measures provided in the document on the Set-up of the Council preparatory bodies in the JHA area (follow-up to the Trio proposals on the organisation of the Council preparatory bodies, doc.15301/15)<sup>2</sup>. The latter document provides that although the current set-up and mandates of the JHA Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration remained unchanged, some important organisational changes have to be introduced, especially as regards cooperation between SCIFA and HLWG.

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<sup>2</sup> To be endorsed by the Council on 15 January, 2016.

- b) Regarding practical organisation of meetings, this Trio of Presidencies will look into ways to restructure information flows, so that by means of advanced contributions and targeted interventions by agencies, it would be possible to allow for more strategic discussions during actual meetings. Information points on the agenda at the request of Member States, European institutions and agencies should be kept to a minimum.
- c) Chairs of the Council preparatory bodies will be tasked to streamline various reporting commitments under different initiatives so that administrative time and energy in the Member States and EU institutions could be focused on the most important reporting tasks. Existing reporting commitments related to the activities pertaining to the implementation of the European Agenda for Migration should form the core of any such exercise and therefore should replace, to the extent possible, previous reporting commitments.

#### 4.4. Synchronisation of the priorities with the MFF Funds

In the forthcoming mid-term review process of the relevant MFF funds, the Trio of Presidencies will look for better synergies between the above mentioned priorities and those of the MFF funds.

- 5. Strategic cooperation of the Council preparatory bodies in the area of migration should not be limited to abovementioned geographical, thematic and organisational priorities, but rather retain the flexibility that is necessary to adapt to ever changing circumstances. SCIFA and HLWG would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of measures outlined above, in line with their respective mandates, while also taking into account the ongoing work related to migration in other Council preparatory bodies.
- 6. The above mentioned Strategic coordination priorities will steer the work of this Trio of Presidencies throughout the next 18 months (1 January 2016 to 30 June 2017), subject to amendments by the Presidency as required.

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