

Brussels, 16 June 2026

Dear colleagues,

This month marks an important moment for migration management in the European Union. After years of negotiations, followed by two years of intense preparation and joint implementation efforts, the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** became fully applicable as of 12 June. Today we have in place a **predictable, coherent and dignified system for migration management** and border protection across all Member States. Its sound implementation, grounded in the principles of fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity, is key.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum complements the essential work we have undertaken with partners to take forward a **comprehensive approach to migration management**, underscoring the role of **migration diplomacy** in building partnerships and coordinating responses to shared migration challenges. Since the beginning of the year, illegal border crossings have fallen by 40%, with almost all routes recording significant reductions. This shows that our approach, built on mutually beneficial and close partnerships with countries along the routes, and a fair and firm management of migration, can deliver.

Since we met in March, we have been advancing on the operational rollout of the first annual **Solidarity Pool**, considering the needs and capacities of both benefitting and contributing Member States. The swift agreement reached on the Solidarity Pool was an example of unity and shared commitment. The responsibility transfers will be critical for an effective and well-functioning system. I count on your continued engagement in this process for this first cycle to succeed, as we start preparing for the second annual migration management cycle. I also count on your sustained political commitment for decisive action and information sharing to deliver on the full implementation of the Pact.

The political agreement secured on the **Return Regulation** represents another landmark achievement, complementing the new legal framework. We are turning the page on 20-year-old rulebook and setting up a **common European system for return**. The Return Regulation will provide the necessary tools to make returns more efficient, with faster and more effective procedures. It will support the swifter return of persons posing security

risks, prevent and manage absconding more effectively and provide for stronger rules on forced returns. It also introduces the possibility for Member States to set up return hubs in third countries, as an innovative way to tackle illegal migration, while ensuring the respect of international human rights standards and principles in accordance with EU and international law. In Autumn, the Commission will present a proposal for the digitalisation of case management in returns and readmission which will help consolidate this common European system for return. We are also preparing to propose an upgraded mandate of Frontex, allowing the agency to contribute even more decisively to return operations.

*Sustained progress in migration management rests on pursuing a comprehensive approach. Alongside efforts to prevent and address illegal migration, we must also ensure that the EU remains attractive to global talent, enabling European companies to recruit the skills and talent needed to drive innovation, growth and competitiveness. To this end, while respecting Member States' competences, we must continue expanding **legal mobility pathways**, accelerating our efforts to ensure the **EU Talent Pool**, which is now in force, becomes fully operational by next year. The first-ever **European Legal Gateway Office** in India is paving the way for similar initiatives with other key partners like Egypt. We also continue our cooperation with international partners in the framework of **Talent Partnerships**. Effective migration management must prioritise the protection of third-country workers from abuse and the prevention of illegal employment, including through a strengthened European Labour Authority.*

*We are putting in place a framework for a more consistent and resilient EU visa policy. We are working on a new and more transparent system for visa exemptions that serves the EU's strategic interests more effectively, while ensuring rigorous monitoring of compliance with visa exemption conditions to prevent the misuse of visa-free travel. In addition, we are exploring ways to facilitate mobility and simplify procedures, including through new legislation to enable extended short stays in the Schengen area where justified. At the same time, we are working with our partners to ensure a **smooth readmission of third country nationals**. As part of comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnerships, we will make full use of incentives across all key sectors and policy areas, such as visa policy, trade and development assistance. The annual report under Article 25a of the Visa Code, which assesses readmission cooperation with certain key third countries, will be adopted very soon and followed by proposals for suspension measures under the Visa Code, as appropriate.*

The overall reduction of illegal border crossings this year is reflected across almost all routes, and while we continue to monitor the situation on all migratory routes, we see that our attention remains necessary and should be focused on certain trends. So far, arrivals to Greece have fallen by 13% because of the reduction of arrivals from Türkiye, but the increase in arrivals from East Libya remains of concern. Further reductions are seen as regards Cyprus with 42%, 16% via the Western Balkans, 52% along the Central

Mediterranean route, 71% on the Atlantic Route and 97% at the Eastern land borders. There has also been a 40% decrease in exits via the English Channel. The Western Mediterranean route remains stable but with an increase of 8% so far.

***Libya** remains the top country of departure for illegal crossings to Italy. Overall arrivals from Libya to the EU declined in early 2026, while arrivals to Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route rose to around 20 000 in 2025. Continued EU engagement with Libya remains indispensable. We are providing targeted financial and operational support to strengthen border management, search and rescue and anti-smuggling capacities, and reduce illegal departures and the loss of lives at sea, alongside substantial support for the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees. With the Libyan authorities and IOM, we are supporting voluntary returns from Libya to the migrants' countries of origin. From a whole-of-route perspective, we are equally focussed on illegal arrivals to Libya. The East Corridor initiative brings the EU, international organisations and key countries along the route from South Asia to Europe around one table and over the next 12 months will aim to tackle shared migration challenges through closer cooperation.*

*In **Tunisia**, our support remains multifaceted, addressing various aspects including border management, migrant smuggling, protection, legal migration, assisted voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration. The forthcoming delivery of three additional search and rescue vessels to the Tunisian Coast Guard will further strengthen operational capacities. Since 2023, illegal arrivals from Tunisia to Italy have decreased by 97%. We are closely monitoring the situation regarding protection needs and the efforts to find a solution on the registration of new asylum seekers, as well as the action of international organisations. Developing a national protection system is an important priority of our engagement. In 2025, IOM facilitated the voluntary return of 8 853 migrants from Tunisia to their countries of origin and of over 2 000 in 2026. Assisted voluntary returns from North African countries to countries of origin have also intensified significantly through EU-funded operations, with over 35 800 returns in 2025 and over 12 000 this year.*

*Our cooperation with **Morocco** ranges from border management, fighting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, to legal pathways and a Talent Partnership promoting mutually beneficial labour mobility. Our work on a future Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership is intensifying. In addition, a new migration budget support programme is expected to be signed before the end of the year, and it will support the implementation of the Moroccan Migration strategy.*

*With **Algeria** we will step up our dialogue and cooperation in comprehensive migration management, including fighting migrant smuggling, effective return and readmission as well as voluntary returns to countries of origin. An informal EU-Algeria dialogue on migration will take place shortly.*

*The conflict in the **Middle East** has already displaced millions and, although there is currently no direct migratory pressure, further conflict increases the risks of spill-over towards Europe. We are keeping a close eye on the situation in the Gulf countries and the potential repercussions that the socio-economic developments may have on the significant number of migrant workers in the region. We continue to monitor developments closely and work with Member States, international organisations and partner countries to enhance our preparedness and respond to emerging needs. Stronger support to countries in the region, combined with increased vigilance and strong border surveillance remain essential, including from a security perspective.*

*The situation in **Iran** and **Afghanistan** requires sustained EU attention and engagement. With 4.6 million Afghans, including asylum seekers and persons in need of protection, the risk of further displacement remains a concern. The EU is actively engaged in Afghanistan and in the wider region, delivering targeted humanitarian support. We continue to monitor developments, coordinate with regional and international partners, and ensure that EU support remains responsive to emerging protection, humanitarian, and displacement-related needs. A comprehensive and coordinated approach with Member States on the issue of returns will continue to be pursued, bearing in mind the challenges arising from the acute humanitarian and human rights situation. Work continues in **Pakistan** on the prevention of illegal migration, where we aim to support integrated border management and step up support on counter-smuggling.*

*I am deeply concerned with the escalation in **Lebanon** and the severe impact on civilians. According to the Lebanese authorities, over 1 million people are internally displaced, around 25% of the population, and according to UNHCR, nearly 450 000 Syrians and Lebanese have crossed to Syria. We are adjusting our assistance to Lebanon to cater for immediate needs, humanitarian aid and durable solutions. This year, we will support Lebanon with EUR 100 million in humanitarian assistance. Together with Member States, we have launched a EUR 32 million Recovery Programme to support Lebanon in responding to emergency and early recovery needs. EUR 63 million will soon be made available to support internal security, as well as land and sea border management in Lebanon. Beyond the emergency, we continue supporting the Lebanese government in maintaining stability and continuing the work on reforms for Lebanon's long-term sustainable recovery through the EUR 1 billion financial package we had foreseen for 2024-2027.*

*The **EU-Syria High-Level Political Dialogue** and the **Syria Partnership Coordination Forum** held on 11 May in Brussels were an opportunity to discuss issues of strategic interest for Syria and the EU, including on migration. The work continues with the authorities and UNHCR to ensure that the conditions are conducive to safe, dignified and sustainable returns to Syria. Alongside Syria's essential socio-economic recovery, we will continue to support the transitional authorities in building administrative capacity to ensure an inclusive transition that allows for the necessary conditions to be in place for*

Syrians to be able to return home. We are focused on implementing financial assistance, including the EUR 620 million-package in support of Syria for 2026-2027 as announced in January.

*From the outset of the conflict in the Middle East, we have closely engaged with **Türkiye**, which has planned contingency measures. So far, the situation at its border with Iran shows no major change but we stand ready to provide support should the need arise. Our effective cooperation with Türkiye continues across all areas related to migration, including border management, combating migrant smuggling and support to voluntary returns. The High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security later this year will be an opportunity to advance our cooperation further, including on readmission and returns.*

*We continue close engagement with our **Western Balkan** partners. Support for their contingency and preparedness remains a priority, to ensure their readiness, should the migratory situation change. Alignment with the EU list of visa-required third countries remains imperative, with particular focus on those countries whose nationals present an illegal migration or security risk to the EU.*

*In April, we presented the first iteration of the Action Plan of the **Pact for the Mediterranean**, outlining 21 actions of mutual interest including higher education, research and innovation, skills development, economic development and investment in migration management, security and preparedness. The implementation of the Action Plan is already delivering results.*

*We are making good progress on the commitments made in the joint statement following the 2025 **EU-Egypt Leaders' Summit**. The EUR 200 million allocated under the migration and mobility pillar of our Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, is being deployed rapidly to also enhance Egypt's capacity to address challenges along migratory routes. Funding to date has focused on protecting vulnerable migrants, refugees and host communities, combatting smuggling and trafficking, and strengthening migration governance. This year we will prioritise border management, search and rescue capacities notably towards Libya, while continuing protection efforts. Engagement with Egypt on migration issues also includes introducing transit visa measures for certain nationalities to curb illegal migration and enhancing readmission cooperation. Work continues with UNHCR and the Egyptian authorities to ensure that the adopted asylum law is followed by the appropriate complementary rules to develop a solid national asylum and protection system.*

*Our partnership with **Jordan** has taken on even greater significance in the current geopolitical landscape. Following the inaugural EU-Jordan Summit in January, we are accelerating the implementation of our Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership. A EUR 25 million project will support Jordan's integrated border management and internal security.*

A further EUR 80 million offer social assistance and access to basic services to refugees, including support to voluntary returns and skills development to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

*On the Atlantic route, our steady engagement with **Mauritania** and **Senegal** have delivered, with a significant reduction in illegal arrivals. Our migration partnership with **Mauritania** adds an element of stability in a region requiring increased attention. A EUR 28 million protection programme on the border with Mali is underway whilst our EUR 25 million support on border management at sea has contributed to an increase in search and rescue operations. We will explore reinforcing our partnership with Mauritania, elevate the political dialogue to ministerial level and strengthen cooperation under the Pact for the Mediterranean. Discussions with **Senegal** continue on a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, with focus on cooperation on readmission and progresses on the prevention of illegal sea departures.*

*We continue our work, together with international partners, to **fight smuggling networks** that are putting lives at risk for unscrupulous financial gain. The December 2025 Joint Declaration of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling has so far been endorsed by 61 partners. Over the next two years, the Global Alliance will concentrate its efforts on strengthening operational cooperation along migratory routes, tackling misinformation, digital smuggling and illegal migration by air, and disrupting illicit financial flows, including through a 'follow-the-money' approach. Through sustained political engagement, the Global Alliance will continue to reinforce international cooperation and deliver a coordinated response to this global challenge.*

*Within the EU, a new **sanctions regime** targeting migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and other forms of organised crime, will establish restrictive measures aimed at freezing assets, restricting movement and cutting off profits of criminal networks. At the same time, I encourage the European Parliament and the Council to expedite agreement on the proposed directive on migrant smuggling, once the Parliament adopts its position on this critical dossier.*

*Our determined efforts to fight migrant smuggling also extend to the **Channel route**. The fact that over 65 000 persons crossed the Channel illegally in 2025, underlines that the pull factors and the scale of the challenge faced on this route are significant. Preventive measures have led to crossings falling by 40% this year. But further decisive action is needed. As announced in my letter to you in March, the Commission presented an **EU Action Plan for the Channel route** providing a structured EU-level response. It aims to strengthen migration diplomacy to prevent departures, disrupt smuggling networks and target their criminal infrastructure, as well as to strengthen border management. The United Kingdom's contribution to these efforts will be essential in realising the full potential of this Action Plan.*

*Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to pose a serious threat to our internal security. The EU maintains its support and solidarity with **Ukraine** and its people. We will offer protection to Ukrainians as long as needed, while supporting Ukraine in its determination to defend itself against Russian aggression. Therefore, the Commission will propose to prolong the temporary protection to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, while limiting its scope to ensure that any further extension would not undermine the legitimate ability of Ukraine to defend itself.*

Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we have taken unprecedented measures to restrict the entry of Russian nationals into the EU. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on their consistent and uniform application across all Member States. The Commission is working on updated guidelines on visa issuance to Russian applicants and the list of supporting documents. We will further address security risks stemming from hostile actions of third countries by proposing to introduce targeted restrictive visa measures as part of the upcoming revision of the Visa Code.

*The progress we have achieved together is substantial. But the tasks ahead remain demanding. In an increasingly volatile geopolitical landscape, **the EU remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening partnerships**. We will continue to collaborate, at global and regional levels, on shared priorities and new approaches to manage migration. At the same time, we must work together to ensure that all the elements of our new legal framework are fully operational. By doing so, and while ensuring the necessary scale of funding through the next Multiannual Financial Framework, we will equip ourselves to meet not only today's challenges, but also those of the future.*

The Annex to this letter provides a detailed overview of ongoing actions.

Looking forward to our discussion this week.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ursula v. d. L.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ursula von der Leyen