


Special session:
The European Union's Pact on Migration and Asylum

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On behalf of the **European Commission (DG HOME)**, **Ms. Bogdana Sybikowska** recalled that 2026 constitutes a key operational milestone for the European Union's migration governance framework. Following four years of complex negotiations and a two-year transition period, the Pact on Migration and Asylum, entered into full application on 12 June 2026.

She underlined that the Pact aims to reinforce the EU's migration system by establishing effective tools to operationalise the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility among Member States. It was recalled that the Pact is firmly grounded in the Union's core values, including full respect for international law principles, the right to asylum, and the protection of fundamental rights for all individuals irrespective of their legal status.

Central to the Pact is the recognition that: 1) the responsibility of EU Member States with regard to external border and asylum applicants, within a border free Schengen area, cannot be achieved without internal solidarity, and that 2) effective migration management within the EU cannot function in isolation and depends on sustained and mutually beneficial partnerships with countries of origin and transit.

On the internal dimension, the Pact introduces a set of interlinked measures aimed at strengthening the management of arrivals and ensuring a more efficient and predictable system. These include mandatory pre-entry screening at the EU's external borders, the introduction of border procedures, the revision of the [EURODAC](#) system, enhanced interoperability of information systems, and, importantly, the establishment of a new mandatory solidarity mechanism.

With regard to the [screening phase](#), this constitutes a new important first step. It will enable the rapid identification of individuals, the conduct of security and health checks, and the identification of vulnerabilities at the EU external borders within a 7-day window (4 days in certain instances). This process will support the determination of the appropriate pathway for each individual, namely whether they should be channelled towards: entry on the EU territory, an accelerated asylum procedure, an asylum border procedure, a regular asylum procedure, or, where appropriate return procedures. Following this screening phase, if an individual applies for international protection (asylum and subsidiary protection) and meets certain criteria - such as being a national of a country with a low international protection recognition rate, having misled authorities, posing a risk to national security or public order - his or her application will be examined under the border asylum procedure, conducted at or near the external border within a maximum of 12 weeks. This approach is intended to allow for faster decision-making of certain asylum applications deemed unlikely to succeed for various reasons as well as to prevent unauthorised movements within the EU territory (commonly referred to as "secondary movements"), while ensuring strict respect for fundamental rights standards and procedural safeguards. This includes access to free legal counselling, independent monitoring of border procedures, and enhanced protection for vulnerable individuals, notably for unaccompanied minors who will benefit from dedicated safeguards such as multidisciplinary age assessments and timely guardianship arrangements. Operational readiness for the screening and border procedures is further supported by advancements in data systems and interoperability, in particular through the upgraded Eurodac database, which will enhance information-sharing, identity management, and coordination across Member States.

Another major structural shift of the internal aspect of the EU migration reform lies in the move from previously voluntary and ad hoc solidarity pledges to a mandatory solidarity mechanism among EU Member States. Through the European Annual Asylum and Migration Report and on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative criteria prescribed by the Pact, the European Commission will assess which Member States shall be considered: 1. under migratory pressure; 2. at risk of migratory pressure; 3 or facing a significant migratory

situation resulting from cumulative challenges over the last 5 year. On this basis, a solidarity pool – to which Member States are required to contribute - will be created each year. Within primary solidarity measures, Member States are free to choose whether they which to contribute through relocation of asylum seekers, financial support, or alternative solidarity measures of various form (operational support, capacity building, services, staff support, facilities and technical equipment in the field of migration, reception, asylum, return and reintegration and border management). This mechanism institutionalises the predictable responsibility-sharing among Member States prescribed by [Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) while conserving the flexible nature of solidarity demonstrations. It will be complemented by the application of a new set of solidarity and responsibility rules in the event of [crisis and force majeure](#).

In parallel, the Pact significantly reinforces the return dimension, recognising that effective, swift, and dignified returns are essential to the credibility and sustainability of the EU migration system. This will include enhanced operational support from [Frontex](#), and strengthened cooperation on readmission with key third countries. The [European Commission's proposal for Return Regulation](#), introduced in March 2025, further aims to harmonise and streamline return processes across EU Member States by establishing clearer rules governing both voluntary and forced return. It also introduces the mutual recognition of return decisions across Member States and a European Return Order, both of which are intended to facilitate the enforceability of return decisions, including in cases of secondary movements. In addition, the proposed regulation sets out mechanisms to address situations of non-cooperation by individuals subject to return decisions and introduces the possibility of establishing return hubs. All measures are firmly grounded in robust safeguards for fundamental rights.

Beyond its internal architecture, she recalled that the Pact is embedded within a broader external framework, notably the [European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy](#) adopted in January 2026. This strategy sets out a comprehensive five-year roadmap that integrates migration policy into the EU's external action, with priorities including: 1. stepping up migration diplomacy by approaching migration as a core external policy element; 2. strengthening EU borders through enhanced Frontex operations and interoperable databases; 3. operationalising the Pact's reforms; 4. more effective return and readmission cooperation, leveraging visa policy and tailored partnerships; 5. labour and talent mobility to address skills shortages and undermine smuggling networks; and 6. leveraging EU's financial resources to support migration governance in partner countries.

Under Article 5 of the [Asylum and Migration Management Regulation](#), the Pact foresees a close cooperation with relevant third countries at bilateral, regional, multilateral and international levels, focusing on promoting legal pathways; supporting partners and building their operational capacities in migration, asylum and border management; prevent irregular migration and combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; addressing the root causes and drivers of irregular migration and forced displacement; enhancing effective return, readmission and reintegration; and ensuring full implementation of the common visa policy.

In line with this, key external initiatives include preventing irregular migration and combating migrant smuggling, notably through initiatives such as the [Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling](#), which brings together over 60 countries to address smuggling networks, including their financial and digital dimensions, along migration routes. The EU encourages additional endorsements to the [Joint Declaration](#). Next Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Global Alliance is set on 1 July will take stock of the progress in the implementation of the Global Alliance and present the "Global Alliance Work Plan 2026-2028". Complementary efforts include information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, such as the [Global Alliance Rapid Response Initiatives](#).

At the same time, the EU continues to invest in legal migration pathways, including resettlement schemes and Talent Partnerships, aimed at addressing labour market needs while offering safe pathways for those in need as well as alternatives to irregular migration. The [2026–2027 Union Resettlement Plan](#) provides 10 430 places for those fleeing conflict, and with Talent Partnerships offering 7 000 training opportunities and 6 500 mobilities to the EU. These efforts are supported by existing EU legislation facilitating the admission and fair treatment of various categories of migrants, including students, researchers, and highly skilled workers.

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum has required from Member States not only the alignment of their national legislations but also significant operational adjustments and sustained political engagement. The [May 2026 State of Play Report](#) highlights significant progress in Member States' legislative alignment, capacity-building, and infrastructure development. At the same time, the report identifies remaining gaps, notably in ensuring sufficient capacity at external borders, finalising national legislation in all Member States, and fully operationalising key systems such as EURODAC in the coming months. The intervention concluded by noting that, while the Pact provides a comprehensive and structurally coherent framework, its effectiveness will ultimately hinge on consistent and robust implementation, underpinned by sustained political commitment across Member States, as well as strengthened and mutually beneficial cooperation with partner countries.

On behalf of Germany Interior Ministry, **Benjamin Scholz**, presented the operational implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum in Germany, highlighting both progress achieved and remaining challenges in translating the reform into practice. He recalled that the Pact represents the most significant reform of the EU's asylum and migration system to date, requiring the implementation of 11 legislative acts at national level, covering both legal and operational dimensions. At the EU level, the [European Commission published a Common Implementation Plan](#) (CIP) in June 2024, followed by the submission of National Implementation Plans (NIPs) by Member States in December 2024. Germany developed its NIP with the support of ICMPD and is among a limited number of Member States that have already completed the necessary legislative amendments, as reflected in the latest Commission State of Play report. He stressed that the two-year transition period has proven relatively short given the scale and complexity of the reform. He recalled that the Pact aims to establish a more harmonised, effective and orderly system, addressing previous shortcomings linked to fragmented national practices and limited coordination. By introducing more consistent standards and procedures, he emphasised that the Pact seeks to discourage irregular secondary movements within the EU, which in other words means that if individuals have a right to asylum regardless of their status or nationality, they are not entitled to choose their country of destination freely (first entry rule, family ties, among other criteria). He recalled that the overarching objective is therefore to ensure humanity in a controlled and orderly framework, while balancing responsibility and solidarity among Member States. Turning to the main components, he highlighted that the Pact introduces a screening phase at external borders, involving identity verification, security checks, and initial health and vulnerability assessments. While primarily applicable at external borders, screening may also take place within national territory if certain conditions are met. In Germany, this raises practical challenges given the federal structure, with responsibilities shared across 16 Länder, as well as tight deadlines (3 to 7 days to proceed to the screening phase) and the need to recruit qualified personnel for this purpose. He then detailed the introduction of the mandatory border procedures, a key innovation of the Pact. He recalled that the legal "fiction of non-entry" aims to enable swift decisions within a maximum of 12 weeks for asylum and 12 weeks for return procedures, while ensuring full respect for fundamental rights. In Germany, these procedures will be implemented at external border points, hence international airports and seaports, with dedicated facilities planned near major airports. He stressed that implementation raises logistical and organisational challenges, including infrastructure capacity, coordination with federal states, and meeting strict procedural timelines. Interim solutions will be implemented as not all facilities will be fully operational by June 2026. He further

highlighted the reform of responsibility rules (former Dublin system) and the introduction of a mandatory solidarity mechanism as central pillars of the Pact. Germany, while currently classified as a country at risk of migratory pressure, remains one of the main destination countries, particularly due to secondary movements within the EU, and continues to face significant pressure on reception systems. For the first cycle of the solidarity mechanism, Germany will contribute through “responsibilities offsets” (when the secondary movement has already occurred), particularly in relation to cases linked to Italy and Greece. At the same time, he emphasised that the success of key elements - particularly return procedures - will depend heavily on effective cooperation with partner countries, underscoring once again the importance of aligning internal reforms with the EU’s external dimension of migration governance. He further referred to ongoing discussions at EU level on the possible development of “return hubs” in third countries, as part of broader efforts to improve return efficiency. For the record, these proposals are not included in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and have not received consensus or majority among Member States. Germany is part of a core group of five Member States - alongside the Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, and Austria - working on the operationalisation of innovative solutions, which may include the concept of return hubs. Another potential component of future migration policy is the safe third country concept, which may be applied to asylum applications where at least one of three conditions is met: the existence of a connection between the applicant and the third country (such as the presence of members of their family in the country, previous residence of the applicant in the country or linguistic, cultural or similar links); the applicant has transited through the third country on the way to the EU and could have requested effective protection there; an agreement or arrangement exists with the third country at a bilateral, multilateral or EU level for the admission of asylum seekers, with the exception of unaccompanied minors. He concluded by underlying that while the Pact provides a comprehensive framework, its implementation involves significant operational, logistical, and political challenges, particularly in a federal system such as Germany’s. Ensuring adequate infrastructure, meeting tight procedural deadlines, and coordinating across multiple administrative levels will be critical.

On behalf of **Malta’s** Ministry for Home Affairs, Security and Employment, Ms. **Diandra Pace** highlighted that the country’s approach to migration management is shaped by a unique set of structural factors. These include its geographical location along the Central Mediterranean Route, its limited territorial size, and its high population density. Together, these elements mean that Malta is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in irregular migration flows. Even relatively small numbers of arrivals can have a significant impact, making migration management a sustained national priority that requires ongoing preparedness, adaptability, and response capacity. Malta emphasised that its foremost priority is to uphold full respect for international law and fundamental human rights, while pursuing a comprehensive migration approach that integrates asylum management with relocation, returns, and contingency planning. Since 2000, Malta has recorded approximately 28 750 irregular arrivals, representing around 5% of its population. The country hosts one of the highest shares of refugees relative to its population size within the European Union, placing it among the Member States most in need of strengthened solidarity measures. In this context, relocation has proven to be a particularly effective tool in alleviating pressure. Malta expressed its appreciation for the valuable contributions of Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland in supporting these relocation efforts. A central message of Malta’s intervention was the critical importance of solidarity and responsibility-sharing within the EU. As a frontline Member State, Malta underlined that solidarity shall not be discretionary, but rather an essential pillar of a well-functioning European migration system. The Pact on Migration and Asylum represents a significant step forward, notably through the establishment of a structured solidarity pool, enabling support in the form of relocations, financial contributions, or operational assistance. Malta stressed that without effective solidarity, the system risks structural imbalance, whereas with it, migration management becomes more predictable, equitable, and sustainable across the Union. Malta also reaffirmed its readiness to contribute to solidarity efforts when other Member States face migratory

pressure. At the same time, Malta welcomed the introduction of the new responsibility framework under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR). While maintaining the first-entry principle, the framework introduces more efficient criteria for responsibility allocation and reinforces measures to prevent secondary movements. Malta considers that this system enhances stability and predictability, while embedding national responsibilities within a broader balanced framework of EU solidarity. From an operational perspective, Malta highlighted the importance of the screening phase as the initial step in migration management. The newly established border procedures are particularly relevant in the context of maritime arrivals, enabling more efficient case processing at or near the external border. However, Malta also noted a number of implementation challenges, including shorter procedural timelines, the need for increased and specialised staffing, existing funding gaps, and ongoing difficulties in ensuring effective returns. Addressing these challenges will require updates to the national legal framework, the strengthening of independent human rights monitoring mechanisms, and enhanced cooperation with EU agencies such as EUAA, Frontex, and EU-LISA to ensure operational effectiveness and coordination. Malta is currently reinforcing its screening capacity, asylum systems, border procedures, and return mechanisms, while maintaining full respect for fundamental rights, particularly for vulnerable groups such as minors. In parallel, the country continues to prioritise preparedness and contingency planning, embedding readiness across legislation, operations, and standard procedures. This includes regularly updating contingency plans, maintaining scalable reception capacities, and conducting risk assessments and simulation exercises. Finally, Malta highlighted the increasing importance of legal migration pathways, particularly labour migration, which has grown significantly in recent years. In 2025 alone, 85 022 residence permits were issued, with the main nationalities being India, Nepal, China, and Colombia. Labour migration has become essential to Malta's economy, helping to address labour shortages and demographic challenges. At the same time, it has placed additional pressure on infrastructure and services, leading to the adoption of a Labour Migration Policy in 2025 aimed at strengthening governance, upholding rights, and aligning migration with labour market needs.

On behalf of **France**, **Maxime Giraudet** recalled that so-called "innovative solutions" are neither part of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum nor a concept agreed upon or endorsed by EU Member States. He stressed the importance of keeping discussions on these ideas separate from those concerning the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. On behalf of **Spain**, **Ambassador Méndez** expressed full support for the French position and reiterated that the so-called "innovative solutions" are not included in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and have not been agreed upon by the EU Council, neither in terms of their denomination nor their substance. She emphasised that both terminology and content carry significant legal implications. Spain does not support the terminology, as it considers that there is no innovation in the concept, nor is there a specific problem requiring solutions. Migration, she noted, is not a problem but a reality that must be managed responsibly and effectively, in cooperation with partner countries in an equal-to-equal relationship and with due respect of human rights and international law principles. She further recalled that the term "innovative solutions" has been consistently rejected by the EU Council's Legal Service, as it has no legal definition stating its meaning or content. Therefore, no one can be asked to agree to something which is legally undefined concepts as this could potentially lead to breaches of EU rule of law. As for the so-called return hubs mentioned by the delegations of Germany and Malta, Ambassador Méndez also recalled that there is no EU agreement on this specific matter either, therefore those Member States choosing to promote return hubs would be expected to bear full political and financial responsibility for them. She concluded by reiterating Spain's long-standing and firm opposition to both "innovative solutions" and "return hubs" specifically, noting that should such concepts be operationalised by some Member States in the future, they would remain national decisions engaging respective national responsibilities.