



**Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference
23 - 24 June 2021, Prague, Czech Republic**

**PRAGUE DECLARATION
ON POLITICAL GUIDELINES FOR
THE JOINT COORDINATION PLATFORM
on effectively combating irregular migration
along the Eastern Mediterranean route**

We, the Ministers and representatives of the Western Balkans, the Salzburg Forum, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Switzerland in the presence of the European Commission, EASO, Frontex, Europol, ICMPD, IOM, UNHCR and the representatives of the Secretariat of the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) have met in Prague to further enhance cooperation and solidarity with a view of preventing irregular migration, as agreed in the “Vienna Declaration” of 23 July 2020.

Given the volatile migration and security situation and the ongoing migratory pressure along the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan routes, we reaffirm our preparedness for any situation requiring cooperation and solidarity and are committed to supporting each other in a pro-active and coordinated manner.

To this end, and as tasked by the Ministers in the “Vienna Declaration”, experts from interested partners have prepared a concept for an “Operational Platform – Eastern Mediterranean Route / Joint Coordination Platform (JCP)”. In addition, operational work towards implementing the Vienna Declaration has been successfully advanced.

Building on previous discussions and experience gained so far, we are committed to making best possible use of the JCP in our joint efforts towards combating irregular migration. We agree on the following political guidelines for future work to be undertaken by the JCP and its Vienna-based Secretariat:



The Joint Coordination Platform

- promotes better coordination of measures against irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean / Western Balkans route, while fully respecting fundamental rights,
- focuses on four areas that play a key role in countering irregular migration by effectively protecting our borders¹, return and asylum, and combating migrant smuggling as well as trafficking in human beings and striving to generate operational added value in these areas,
- is a service provider for those who report a need and those who wish to support (with these roles being interchangeable), and provides support whenever and wherever support is requested,
- facilitates rapid matching of needs and provision of relevant support along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes,
- carries out through its Secretariat a structured gap-analysis to provide the JCP partners with regular needs assessment (such as roadmaps including timelines), in order to facilitate the preparation of tailor-made actions according to needs and offers of support if requested,
- contributes to a comprehensive, user-friendly overview of migratory challenges and relevant security policy developments along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, including a situational overview and a comprehensive risk analysis,
- contributes to using and strengthening regional cooperation formats (such as the Salzburg Forum, Brdo Process, PCC SEE, IISG, SELEC),
- fully respects and complements the EU agencies' mandates and contributes towards their fulfillment (for instance by facilitating bundled contributions from partners) as well as ensures complementary approaches with international organizations, such as UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD operating along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes,
- avoids duplication of efforts through coordination and optimal use of resources,

¹ For Serbia, this means border/boundary management.



- contributes to further implementing both the Whole-of-Route approach and the comprehensive approach to migration “*which combines more effective control of the EU’s external borders, increased external action and the internal aspects, in line with our principles and values*”, as defined in the European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2018,
- has a lean structure that could be gradually further developed.

We are committed to making best possible, coordinated use of all existing instruments with a view to aligning strategic priorities, needs and actions along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes – always seeking to supplement efforts while avoiding duplication. We will continue to work towards further promoting the JCP as a tool for strengthening security and stability in the Western Balkans as well as bringing them closer to EU standards of the area of freedom, security and justice.

In this context, we will build on agreements, such as the “Council conclusions on enhancing cooperation with Western Balkans partners in the field of migration and security” of 5 June 2020.

We entrust the interested partners’ experts with drawing up a concept for further developing the structure of the JCP, which became operational on 1 January 2021.

We will continue to review progress on the above in the JCP Ministerial Committees, scheduled to take place once a year. In this context, it is also intended to evaluate the work of the platform and its Secretariat, with the evaluations to be launched one year after this conference and then to be carried out regularly on an annual basis.

Prague, 24 June 2021