

# EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on JHA



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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**News**

From 26-27 October 2023, the [annual EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs](#) was held in Skopje (North Macedonia). The Forum was attended by the Ministers for Home Affairs and Justice of Spain, their counterparts from the Western Balkans, the European Commissioners for Home Affairs and for Justice as well as representatives of the incoming Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies of the Council of the EU.

Discussions in the area of home affairs concentrated on current and future developments with regard to counter-terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism. Emerging threats, such as violent right-wing extremism, spreading violent extremist content online, and possible attacks on critical infrastructures, were some of the key points of reflection that shaped the Joint Action Plan on Counter-terrorism for the Western Balkans. The Ministers recalled the agreement to prolong the Roadmap for a comprehensive small arms and light weapons control in the Western Balkans beyond 2024.

To counter the impact of drugs on their societies, the Ministers analysed joint efforts to reduce drug supply, drug demand, and drug related harm. Discussion points included the cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCCDA), the establishment and operation of National Drug Observatories and National Early Warning Systems, and enhanced police cooperation.

Another focal point of the Forum involved measures to strengthen migration, asylum, and border management, e.g. the signing of Frontex Status Agreements, visa alignments, Readmission Agreements, and the importance of improving the registration of migrants as well as enhancing asylum and reception systems across the Western Balkans.

In the area of justice, the Forum underlined the importance of the rule of law and judicial reforms to strengthen judicial independence and accountability. Independent monitoring projects are also vital in this regard.

Lastly, the Ministers underlined their continuing support for Ukraine against Russia's war of aggression. They reinforced the need for joint actions, including efforts to improve the enforcement of restrictive measures and prevent their circumvention: the EU's Freeze and Seize Task Force, its recent proposal for a Directive on the criminalisation of the violation of Union restrictive measures, the Joint Investigation Team, the Core International Crime Evidence Database (CICED), and the newly established International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) (→[euclid news of 5 May 2023](#)).

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://euclid.eu>



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