

EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs



Cornelia Riehle

News

The annual [EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum](#) on Justice and Home Affairs took place in Tirana from 3-4 November 2022. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Home Affairs and Justice of the Czech Republic (which held the Presidency of the Council of the EU until 31 December 2022), their counterparts from the Western Balkans, and the European Commissioners for Home Affairs and for Justice. Furthermore, representatives of the Swedish Council Presidency (first half of 2023) and the upcoming Spanish Council Presidency (second half of 2023) attended the meeting.

In the area of home affairs, the representatives discussed cooperation possibilities in addressing the security impact stemming from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Next to an agreement to further invest in strategic analysis, the ministers agreed to intensify the exchange of information, i.e. through Europol, and to make use of the possibilities for operational cooperation under the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). Stronger efforts should be taken to combat trafficking in human beings and to protect vulnerable people against this threat. Efforts to combat radicalisation and violent extremism, to prevent and monitor the spread of Russian disinformation, and to protect critical infrastructure in the Western Balkans should be upheld.

Measures were discussed to strengthen the following:

- Migration, asylum, and border management, including the monitoring of trends along the Western Balkans migratory route;
- The reinforcement of border management capacities;
- Cooperation on return and readmission;
- Fight against migrant smuggling.

The latter includes the launch of a regional Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership to strengthen law enforcement and judicial cooperation against criminal smuggling networks.

In the area of justice, the importance of strengthening judicial independence and respect for the rule of law was emphasized. Lastly, measures to develop a more strategic approach towards tackling organised crime, high-level corruption, and money laundering were discussed.

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