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## NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Working Party for Schengen Matters/ Mixed Committee (EU-Iceland/Norway/Switzerland/Liechtenstein)
Subject:	Schengen Governance - Reflections on further developments of the Barometer

At the meeting of the Working Party for Schengen Matters on 18 January 2024, the Belgian Presidency presented a note entitled ‘Schengen Governance: consolidation and roadmap towards a deeper and wider Schengen Union’. Delegations were asked two questions and given the possibility to express their views, both orally and in writing, regarding the preparation of the Schengen Council and the Schengen Barometer.

It should be recalled that **the main objective of the Barometer+** is to identify any vulnerabilities, risks, deficiencies and operational gaps that could have an impact on the good functioning of the Schengen area and require a rapid and coordinated European response. Since the first Barometer, the areas and indicators covered have evolved and been progressively adjusted to obtain a fuller *situational picture* and a better situational awareness of the Schengen area on the basis of data collected by the EU agencies.

The Schengen Barometer+ is the only tool which aims to provide a *comprehensive and integrated situational awareness* on the state of the Schengen area, thereby promoting coherence between all areas supporting the Schengen system.

The objective of the Belgian Presidency is to strengthen the Schengen Barometer+ so that it can respond to the needs identified by the Member States, in line with the conclusions of the February 2023 European Council. The Presidency wishes to focus on four work streams:

1. **Understanding and closing data gaps.** The agencies have a key role to play in this exercise, which requires an assessment of the fluidity and reliability of existing data flows from Member States as well as of an analysis of the available information. In this context, the possibilities to better integrate additional information sources, such as the Frontex vulnerability assessments, should be considered, while duly respecting the classification and protection of sensitive information and the nature of the Barometer.
2. **Reflecting trends and evolution over time.** To some extent the Barometer already provides a dynamic overview, however this dimension could be further reinforced and more systematically integrated.
3. **A balance between flexibility and predictability.** While keeping an agreed fixed structure, new threats, risks and vulnerabilities which could have a significant impact on the effective functioning of the Schengen area should be systematically included and evaluated with a view to identifying rapid joint responses.
4. **A stronger link between Schengen evaluations and the Barometer indicators.** This link, including synergies between the Schengen Barometer+ and the Schengen Scoreboard, will help to identify and swiftly address shared vulnerabilities by means of political orientations from the Schengen Council.

These work streams aim to strengthen the content of the Barometer+ while keeping it a short, concise and clear document that helps the Schengen Council to quickly understand the state of the Schengen area. The comprehensive coverage of the Barometer should not impede its strategic nature, with focused messages and ensuring political readability.

The Presidency welcomes the Commission's willingness to continuously improve the Schengen Barometer+ since its first edition and to continue this work with the organisation of a workshop in mid-April. To harness the full potential of this discussion, the Presidency considers important to pursue this work by bringing together Member State and agencies' experts on data collection and analysis, focusing on the needs and possibilities to further improve the Schengen Barometer+ along the lines mentioned above.

Ahead of this workshop, the Commission will inform delegations of the main outcomes of its spring 2023 consultation of the JHA agencies and the Member States on the structure and scope of the Schengen Barometer, which led to the establishment of the Schengen

Barometer+, highlighting the process for obtaining the data, the data required and the data gaps and ongoing work to address these.

The workshop will help Member States, agencies and the Commission to better understand the data collection process, identify and address structural and recurrent data gaps and improve the overall process while avoiding duplication. The Council, through the Working Party for Schengen Matters, will be fully involved in the follow-up to this exercise.

The Presidency will inform the Schengen Council in June of progress made to reinforce the structure and coverage of the Schengen Barometer+ in its capacity as a situational awareness tool, in line with the four work streams mentioned above. The Presidency, in close collaboration with the incoming Hungarian and Polish Presidencies, will also identify elements for further follow up in the framework of the Working Party for Schengen Matters.