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**NOTE**

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	The impact of migration phenomenon and process – including illegal immigration – on EU security

**DOCUMENT PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC (01.07.2025)**

**Introduction**

The European Union (EU) has increasingly become a destination of significant migratory flows in the last decades, however, its magnitude has increased as result of particularly recent international crisis, posing not only significant humanitarian challenges, but also to the security of the EU and its citizens, especially with regard to terrorism and organised crime.

The EU is heavily confronted with threats which are complex and multidimensional on its nature, such as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) from third countries and individuals associated with terrorist groups exploiting migratory flows to infiltrate the EU or state actors weaponizing migration as a tool for hybrid warfare. Significant efforts have been undertaken to improve and modernise border control tools and processes at the EU's external borders, facilitate information exchange, and strengthen overall border security, providing additional support to Member States on their endeavours to detect and prevent the entry and movement of such individuals within the EU's territory.

Global/external conflicts have raised the level of threat, holding a considerable potential for mobilisation and radicalisation.

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## **Security Threats Generated by Migration: Infiltration by Terrorist Organization**

The EU faces persistent and evolving security challenges stemming from the exploitation of migration flows by terrorist organizations.

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While the vast majority of migrants are fleeing conflicts and persecution, the potential for terrorist exploitation necessitates a robust and strategic response from EU institutions and Member States.

### **1. Terrorist Tactics and Historical Precedents**

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Terrorist networks have adapted to circumvent increasing control measures by exploiting legal asylum mechanisms, sometimes in conjunction with abuses of the visa-free regime.

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### **2. Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and their families**

Following the territorial collapse of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, thousands of FTFs and their family members, including EU citizens, have found themselves in camps or detention facilities DELETED

### **3. Radicalization Risks During Migration**

Migrants in transit or in camps are often vulnerable to being exposed to extremist ideologies. Terrorist organizations have deliberately targeted refugee populations for recruitment, by exploiting disillusionment, trauma, and lack of opportunity. In camps along the Syrian-Turkish border, radical preachers and online propaganda play a significant role in promoting extremist narratives.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by poor living conditions, lack of educational and vocational opportunities, and prolonged displacement. DELETED

#### 4. Situation in Syria after December 2024

The principal discrepancy between the November 2024 threat appraisal and the present analysis is attributable to the intricate and dynamic circumstances in Syria, particularly within the north-eastern region, consequent to the overthrow of the Assad regime by a coalition of insurgent forces under the leadership of the Islamist political organisation and paramilitary group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

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#### 5. Situation in Afghanistan

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The ongoing humanitarian crises and violations of human rights in Afghanistan are contributing to an increase in the number of refugees and migrants travelling to Europe.

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#### **Security Threats Generated by Migration: Instrumentalization by State Actors**

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##### 1. Belarus and Russia's Orchestrated Migration Crises

Since the imposition of EU sanctions on the Belarusian regime following the fraudulent 2020 elections, Alexander Lukashenko's regime, with Russia's support, has facilitated the movement of migrants from conflict-affected regions DELETED

## **2. Russian Exploitation of Migration during the Ukraine Conflict**

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has triggered the largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. While the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian refugees are civilians fleeing conflict, concerns remain about Russia's potential use of migration for intelligence or destabilization purposes.

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## **3. The Western Balkans as a Strategic Transit Zone**

The Western Balkans remain a critical corridor for irregular migration to the EU.

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Coordination with Western Balkan states on border control and counter-radicalization is therefore essential to prevent instrumentalization.

## Migration in Poland from the security and organized crime perspective

Current migration trends indicate that people fleeing unstable countries with high levels of political, ethnic and criminal violence are among those reaching Europe.

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### Conclusion

The EU faces significant security challenges

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A multifaceted, coordinated approach is needed to address these threats while maintaining humanitarian and legal commitments.

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In order to achieve this objective, it is essential that the authorities responsible for counterterrorism, border management, immigration and asylum adopt a multifaceted strategic approach, in line with the strategic approach included in Protect EU - a European Internal Security Strategy.

In response to security concerns, it is also crucial to balance security with humanitarian principles. Refugees and asylum seekers should not be treated as potential terrorists by default, and proper screening should ensure that those in need of protection are not unfairly targeted or excluded because of security concerns.

It is vital to acknowledge the significance of fundamental rights in this context. The progress made in promoting cooperation between immigration, asylum and counter-terrorism authorities

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will facilitate cooperation and exchange of information.

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## **Policy Recommendations and Next Steps**

The enhancement of border security requires the collection and seamless exchange of terrorism-related data

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It is clear that the trafficking of firearms by organised crime networks poses a significant risk, as well as the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings.

Further measures are being implemented to enhance collaboration and the exchange of information and best practices between immigration and asylum authorities, and counter-terrorism authorities at national level. This is with regard to foreign nationals who intend to remain in the EU and who may potentially constitute a security threat. It is imperative to ensure the efficient and expeditious return of individuals who do not have the right to remain in the country or, as matter of priority, the individuals who may pose a threat to national security.

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While terrorist organizations may attempt to instrumentalize migrants for their own goals, it is important to recognize that the vast majority of migrants and refugees are victims of violence, persecution, and conflict, not perpetrators of terrorism. The challenge for states, particularly those in Europe and other migration-receiving regions, lies in ensuring effective security measures while upholding humanitarian obligations and protecting the rights of migrants.

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## **Discussion Questions:**

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- How can we ensure better coordination between law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and border control authorities to track individuals likely to pose a security threat and terrorist suspects attempting to enter and/or circulating freely within the EU?

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