



INFORMAL VIDEO CONFERENCE OF HOME AFFAIRS MINISTERS

Friday 12 March 2029

The video conference will be chaired by **Eduardo Cabrita**, Portuguese Minister for Home Affairs.

Home affairs ministers will discuss in public session the proposal for a directive to enhance the **resilience of critical entities** providing essential services in the EU.

They will exchange views on external aspects of migration, on the basis of the Commission communication on enhancing **cooperation on return and readmission**.

Ministers will also exchange views on **enhancing cooperation between the EU and North African countries**.

The Presidency will update ministers on the state of play of the migration and asylum pact and on ongoing work on other current legislative proposals.

A **press conference** will take place after the meeting **(+/-16.30)**

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[*Informal video conference of home affairs ministers, 12 March 2021 - meeting page*](#)

[*Press conferences and public events by video streaming*](#)

[*Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery*](#)

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

HOME AFFAIRS

Resilience of critical entities

Home affairs ministers will discuss in public session the proposal for a directive to enhance the resilience of critical entities providing essential services in the EU. They will focus in particular on the main obstacles to the implementation of the existing directive on European critical infrastructure and how they can be overcome, as well as on how best to strengthen the link between physical and digital security. Reinforcing the recovery capacity and business continuity of critical entities will also be addressed. Ministers will also discuss what could be learnt from the current pandemic in terms of continuity of vital services, to constitute good practices for future use.

In December 2020 the European Commission presented a proposal for a directive on the resilience of critical entities. This draft instrument aims to help strengthen the level of protection and resilience of infrastructures that provide fundamental services for social or economic activities and the well-being of citizens. The Commission proposal would cover critical entities in ten sectors: energy, transport, banking, financial market infrastructures, health, drinking water, waste water, digital infrastructure, public administration and space. These entities need to be able to prevent, resist, absorb and recover from natural disasters, accidents, terrorism or public health emergencies.

This proposal would replace the current directive on the identification and designation of European critical infrastructure, which was adopted in 2008. A 2019 evaluation of this directive highlighted the need to update and further strengthen the existing rules in light of the new challenges facing the EU, such as the rise of the digital economy, the growing impacts of climate change, and terrorist threats. The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown in particular how exposed critical infrastructures and societies can be to a pandemic and the high level of interdependence that exists among EU member states as well as globally.

Together with the proposed directive on critical entities, the Commission has also presented a proposal for a directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the EU, which aims to respond to the same concerns for the cyber dimension.

For more information:

[Commission proposal for a directive on the resilience of critical entities \(press release, 16 December 2020\)](#)

Asylum and migration

Enhancing cooperation on return and readmission

Ministers will discuss external aspects of migration, on the basis of a Commission communication on enhancing cooperation on return and readmission and the assessment of third countries' cooperation on readmission as part of the new visa code mechanism. The ministers will be invited to share their views on the way forward.

The recent revision of the visa code introduced a mechanism for using visa policy as leverage. Under this mechanism, the EU can adopt specific restrictive visa measures for countries which do not cooperate on readmission. On the other hand, it can also adopt positive visa measures if a country is found to be cooperating well. The Commission is tasked to regularly assess third countries' cooperation on readmission. On 10 February 2021, the European Commission issued its first assessment under this mechanism.

For more information:

[Return and readmission: improving cooperation \(Commission press release, 10 February 2021\)](#)

Migration and asylum pact

The Presidency will update ministers on the state of play of the negotiations regarding the migration and asylum pact. The update will cover ongoing technical work on the different files of the pact and will outline the way forward. The point will be taken in public session.

On 23 September 2020, the European Commission put forward a number of legislative and non-legislative proposals on various aspects of migration and asylum policy. At their video conference of 8 October, home affairs ministers had a first opportunity to exchange views on the proposed pact. Following this debate, the examination of the pact has continued at technical and political level.

EU-North African countries cooperation

Ministers will exchange views on enhancing cooperation between the EU and North African countries, on the basis of a Presidency proposal to launch a political dialogue on justice and home affairs with countries in the region, focused on enhancing operational cooperation.

In the home affairs area, the Presidency plans to cover a number of topics: migration, including legal migration, and border management; cooperation on civil protection and the response to humanitarian crises; hybrid threats and cybersecurity; law enforcement cooperation, possibly with a reinforced role for EU agencies. The Presidency initiative follows the impetus given to EU relations with the region, in line with the Commission communication on the Southern neighbourhood and the outcome of the leaders videoconference of 25-26 February.

A justice and home affairs political dialogue with North African countries would be based on the model of existing dialogues with the Western Balkans and the United States and would complement existing cooperation initiatives with these countries.

For more information:

[Commission communication on the Southern neighbourhood \(press release, 9 February 2021\)](#)

[Statement of the members of the European Council \(25-26 February 2021\)](#)

Other items

Current legislative proposals

The Presidency will inform ministers about the latest developments regarding work on current legislative proposals.

COVID-19/borders

The Commission will inform ministers of the overall situation at the internal and external borders in light of the measures introduced by member states.

Since the beginning of the pandemic member states have adopted a number of measures to protect public health, some of which have had a significant impact on the freedom of movement of persons. To avoid fragmentation and disruption of services and to ensure transparency and predictability for citizens and businesses, the EU is working to ensure more coordination.

On 13 October 2020, the Council adopted a recommendation establishing common criteria and a common framework on measures restricting free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This recommendation was updated on 1 February 2021, in response to the rise in infections and the risks posed by the more transmissible new variants of the virus.

In June 2020, the Council adopted a recommendation on temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restrictions. This recommendation was also updated on 2 February 2021.

For more information:

[COVID-19: travel and transport \(background information\)](#)

Schengen evaluation of Croatia

Ministers will be updated on the state of play of the Schengen evaluation of Croatia. The Commission will report on the recent closure of the last outstanding action plan in the evaluation process, which covers the field of management of the external border. The Presidency will take note of the information provided with a view to preparing the next steps.

Actions against judges and prosecutors

Lithuania will provide information regarding actions taken by Russia against Lithuanian judges and prosecutors.