

SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
23-24 April 2013
Warsaw

JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers responsible for home affairs met on 23 – 24 April 2013 in Warsaw under the Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum. The overall objective of the conference was to exchange views on key issues on the EU agenda and regional cooperation in order to identify common positions on the respective strategic topics, to further enhance regional cooperation as well as to intensify the platform of the “Friends of the Salzburg Forum”.

At the conference the Ministers agreed on the following:

***New technologies as an effective tool of border management to respond future challenges
from the perspective of the Salzburg Forum cooperation***

Bearing in mind the European Commission's ‘Smart Borders’ Package, reflecting a holistic approach to strengthening the Schengen governance and its significant impact on the Salzburg Forum Member States, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum, in the presence of the Deputy Chief of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Home Affairs, undertook the discussion on the benefits and challenges that entail the establishment of a European Entry/Exit System (EES) and the Registered Traveler Program (RTP), the financial implications of the implementation of the above systems for national budgets and the possible need for future development of other systems facilitating the management of migration flows, particularly at land borders.

The Ministers recognized that the establishment of the EES can contribute significantly to enhancing security of the Schengen area, including in the context of future visa liberalization in the East. However, the EES should be used not only to combat illegal immigration and improve border management, but also to support the fight against serious and organized crime and terrorism. Therefore, the system should be based on biometric data and be accessible to law enforcement authorities. The Ministers declared their intention to work closely in this regard.

For RTP, the Ministers shared their concerns about the added value of the system, in particular with regard to its use in land border crossing points, and agreed to act together in order to improve the cost-benefit ratio of the system.

Taking into account the need to ensure the conditions for an effective and timely implementation of the above systems in the Member States of the Salzburg Forum, the Ministers agreed on the need for an in-depth discussion at expert level concerning the financial implications of the systems under consideration and to undertake joint action to introduce safeguards to ensure full coverage of the costs of the systems from the resources allocated for this purpose in the framework of the Internal Security Fund.

New multi-annual program for the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

With the view of the forthcoming discussion on the post-Stockholm Multiannual Programme for the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice in the EU, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum in the presence of the representative of the European Commission, held discussion on the outstanding issues relating this programming, in order to identify the way it should be handled.

The Ministers discussed lessons learnt from the implementation of the Stockholm Programme in force and stressed the current challenges with its effective execution.

The Ministers called for an in-depth discussion on the future of the multiannual programming mechanism to be held within the Council and its preparatory bodies with a view to make a considerable contribution for the future European Council discussions.

The conclusion has been reached that the Salzburg Forum should play an active role in a process of elaboration of a concept of the future multiannual programming mechanism.

New legal basis of EUROPOL

At the request of Hungary, the Salzburg Forum Ministers noted the European Commission proposal on the merger of EUROPOL and CEPOL and took note of the Hungarian position paper on this issue. The Ministers exchanged opinions on their doubts arising from the Commission's proposal and its justification. The Ministers confirmed the vital importance of the issue for the Salzburg Forum Member States and declared their dedication to examine the possibility of elaboration of common position

Illicit trafficking in firearms

Due to the threat posed to the region by illicit trafficking in firearms, the Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum, the Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova, discussed the risks associated with illicit arms trafficking and identified problems encountered in this field, including the gaps at the European level that require further reaction. Bearing in mind the geographical location of the Salzburg Forum States, the importance of the role of the Forum in this process was also stressed.

The Ministers agreed that the conducted debate was, on the one hand, the contribution of the Salzburg Forum in the preparatory work of the European Commission to develop proposals for comprehensive legislation in this area and publishing in 2015 a report on the implementation of Directive 2008/51/EC amending Council Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons. On the other hand, the discussion became an impulse to increase the dynamics of cooperation in this area in our region, in particular with the Western Balkans countries, and fostering the discussion on the response to this threat in the EU, contributing to better identification of common problems in the area of illicit trafficking in firearms and to development of joint proposals for solutions.

The Ministers highlighted the most serious problems associated with the illicit trafficking in firearms which require an urgent response of the Member States and the EU. The Ministers indicated the actions that need to be taken at national, regional and EU level in order to reduce the phenomenon of illicit arms trafficking in Europe. The Ministers supported the inclusion of a related priority area in the next policy cycle of the EU.

Slovenia informed the Ministers that this important topic will also be on the agenda of the Brdo Process Conference, which will be held on 22nd May 2013 in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia.

Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of drug precursors

At the request of the Czech Republic and on the basis of the Czech contribution, the Ministers discussed the issue of growing abuse of drug precursors contained in medicinal products in the region and agreed on the necessity of enhanced cooperation in the area. As a first step, they agreed to establish an expert working group that would prepare and distribute a joint questionnaire in order to collect relevant information from the Salzburg Forum States on their respective national regulation and their proposals for future models of cooperation. On basis of the replies, the working group would propose further steps for the consideration of the Ministers at the next Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference.

Civil protection and rescue systems - exchange of good practices

The Ministers exchanged their experience and opinions on the solutions for national rescue systems, cooperation of rescue services with NGOs and directions for development of crisis communication. Furthermore, the Ministers jointly identified the areas for potential regional cooperation, including cooperation between the Salzburg Forum, the Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova.

The Ministers agreed that constantly appearing new threats become a challenge for national rescue services, and therefore, particular emphasis should be laid on conducting continuous risks monitoring and risk assessment of their occurrence which is one of the key areas of actions that determine functioning and responding of the rescue services. Furthermore, sharing experiences between Salzburg Forum countries and Group of Friends of the Salzburg Forum can contribute to raising standards of actions taken, increasing their efficiency and improving the security in a broad context.

The Ministers highlighted the importance of cooperation between rescue services and non-governmental organizations working for civil security, as well as the importance of effective crisis communication as an element for civil protection actions carried out in order to ensure a higher level of security for the population, in which a continuous collaboration is indispensable. The Ministers also recognized that in the face of disasters it would be reasonable to use the mechanisms developed within the broader international initiatives.

Cross-Border Enforcement of Road Safety Related Traffic Offences

The Ministers of the signatory states of the FS CBE Agreement (AT, BG, CRO, HU) welcomed the substantial progress made by their technical and legal experts which resulted in two finalized expert drafts for the practical implementation of the FS CBE Agreement: First, a legally binding Administrative and Technical Implementing Agreement (ATIA) and second a technical conception for the implementation. In the light of the well-advanced expert talks on the ATIA, the Ministers of the signatories agreed to initiate formal negotiations on the ATIA after having fulfilled their respective national requirements. With regard to the technical concept, the Ministers of the signatories opted for asking EUCARIS to present a proposal for a new software application for the technical implementation.

Romanian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the upcoming Romanian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum and reiterated their full commitment to continue close cooperation on issues of mutual interest under the umbrella of the Salzburg Forum.

Warsaw, 24th April 2013