

Illegal Migration/Schengen Enlargement - Explainer of Austria's position

- By the end of the year, **Austria will reach more than 100.000 asylum applications.**
- In October 2022, **Austria had more asylum applications per capita than any other EU Member State.**
- These figures represent a **dramatic increase** and are even **higher than in 2015.**
- At least **75.000 out of these 100.000 illegal migrants have not been registered** in any other (associated) Schengen State, despite the fact that Austria doesn't have an external Schengen border.
- In other terms, **3 out of 4 illegal migrants** have travelled through one or more (associated) Schengen States **without being registered.**
- This clearly shows that neither the **Schengen system** nor the **EU migration and asylum system are properly implemented. This is a security issue for all European countries.**
- In addition, **around 90.000 displaced persons from Ukraine have been registered** in Austria since 24 February 2022, **approximately 56.000 are benefitting from basic care.**

- Austria has always considered **free movement of persons one of the greatest achievements of European integration.** It is our shared responsibility to preserve it.
- We always acknowledged the **efforts and accomplishments of Romania and Bulgaria** in preparing their Schengen accession.
- **Our position** is not directed against **Romania or Bulgaria, their governments or their people.**
- The unprecedented high number of **illegal migrants arrive at Austrian borders on different routes, including those via Romania and Bulgaria** (e.g. around 20.000 persons crossing Romania and around 35.000 persons crossing Bulgaria, according to our estimates based on e.g. cell phone data, interviews with migrants and criminal investigations on smugglers).
- Therefore, **at this point in time we favour postponing the Schengen enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria to a later date in 2023.**

- In light of our difficult situation and **disproportionate burden**, Austria will continue a close and results-oriented dialogue with the **European Commission, Romania and Bulgaria** with a view to **move forward.**
- **Austria** already put forward a **number of proposals** to ease the difficult migratory situation:
 - **Funding by the European Commission** of measures by EU Member States that directly contribute to the **border protection of other States.**
 - **Pilot projects for fast asylum procedures** at the **EU external border.**
 - Developing a **clear legal basis** at European level to ensure swift and shortened procedures for **persons with little chance of obtaining asylum** (i.e. Rapid Rejection Directive).
 - **Establishing a legal basis for asylum procedures in safe third countries.**
 - **Increasing the EU's support** for a stronger protection of the **EU external border** (also to the benefit of Romania and Bulgaria).
- The **EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans** put forward by the European Commission on 5 December 2022 is a **first step into the right direction.**
- But in view of the tense situation, we **need swift implementation steps and concrete results.**

- Austria will work with the **incoming EU Presidency on a way forward** in view of putting the **issue of Schengen enlargement back on the agenda.**
- Although **Austria currently faces the highest burden**, the overall migratory pressure has increased for the entire EU. That calls for **urgent action and sustainable measures at EU level.** Austria always stands ready to work constructively with the EU and its Member States.