
BULGARIA TO HOST NEW EU BORDER AGENCY LAUNCH

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Balkan Insight

EU migration commissioner on Dimitris Avramopoulos announced in New York on Tuesday that Bulgaria would be the venue for the launch of the new EU Border and Coast Guard agency, which will be tasked with helping to address the mass influx of refugees and migrants as well as cross-border crime.

Your country is under pressure [from migration], but it is not alone – it has Europe at its back, Avramopoulos told Bulgarian National Television after the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on Tuesday.

The proof for this is that on October 6 we will meet in Bulgaria to launch a fully European project – the new agency Border and Coast Guard agency, he said.

Avramopoulos added that with this project, Bulgaria will start playing an even greater role in the protection of its own borders, but also in securing the external border of the EU.

He discussed the current migration challenges facing the EU and Bulgaria and Greece, which he called frontline countries, with Bulgarias interior and foreign ministers, Romyana Bachvarova and Daniel Mitov, and President Rossen Plevneliev.

He noted that less than a week ago Bulgaria was granted 160 million euros in emergency funds by the EU to assist its border security efforts.

Bachvarova welcomed the new agency - which replaces the Frontex border security organisation - as a great success for European solidarity.

The fact that Bulgaria is involved in these new and positive decisions is of great importance for us, she said.

The office of Commissioner Avramopoulos confirmed to BIRN on Tuesday that that the European Border and Coast Guard is expected to start its work on 6 October but said it does not have any further details on the launch of the Agency yet.

Meanwhile, the leaders of other Balkan countries which have been on the frontline of the European refugee crisis used the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants to call for a global response to the ongoing plight of migrants.

It is important that we all take the responsibility for our global obligations and search for meaningful answers, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic said on Tuesday.

The issue of refugees remains of a humanitarian nature, but its proportions run much deeper because the global crisis is a political, economic, developmental, social, legal and human rights concern, she added.

Grabar Kitarovic said that although there has been some development in resolving the refugee crisis between Croatia, the EU and its partners, the problems of financing and managing the issue have remained unresolved.

Croatia has spent 20 million euros in helping the refugees. Just imagine how usefully this money could have been spent in helping those in dangerous situations, in conflict prevention, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, she said.

Serbia's foreign minister Ivica Dacic told the UN summit that his country is not keen on building walls on its borders but also has no capacity to give migrants long-term accommodation.

We do not want to erect walls and we are ready to show solidarity and take part of this burden, but as a country that faced problem with its own refugees, we do not have the capacity to shelter huge numbers of migrants, Dacic said, according to the Tanjug news agency.

He said that over 700,000 refugees and migrants have crossed Serbia on their way to Western Europe and that if borders are closed, Serbia will become a bottleneck in which refugees will be trapped.

Therefore, Serbia is advocating a comprehensive European and global solution, Dacic said.

He said that the international community still does not have a proper answer to the refugee crisis and that there are currently over 7,000 migrants in Serbia who are waiting for passage to Western Europe.

Despite the fact that the number of migrants coming to Serbia and the EU has dropped, because of activities of criminal groups, the Balkan route is far from closed, he said.

In his speech to the UN summit in New York, Montenegro's Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic reminded of talked about his country's experience in supporting refugees and displaced people during the Yugoslav wars and declared the country's readiness to accept migrants and refugees in the event of a sudden influx.

We strongly support the adoption of the global compact on refugees and migration. We express readiness to fulfil our obligations and contribute constructively and in line with our capabilities to international efforts to reaffirm the principles of refugee and migrant protection, Djukanovic said.

Note: This article was amended on September 20 to include the official confirmation from the office of EU Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos on the launch of the European Border and Coast Guard.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-to-host-the-launch-of-a-new-eu-border-agency-09-20-2016>

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