
ALBANIA POSSIBLE CANDIDATE TO HOST EU 'DISEMBARKATION PLATFORM'

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Albania may become one of two host countries for regional disembarkation platforms that would gather and process immigrants attempting to enter the EU.

During the June 28 [] European Council summit, leaders of EU Member States are expected to adopt the proposal for the creation of regional disembarkation platforms outside the EU borders based on a proposal by European Council President Donald Tusk.

The disembarkation platforms will be used to gather and process immigrants seeking to enter the EU, differentiating between refugees in need of protection and economic migrants who would potentially face return to their countries of origin.

European Council President Tusk has proposed the creation of these centers as a possible solution to the political crisis brought about by the influx of immigrants into the EU. This solution can be seen as satisfactory for both anti-immigrant hard-liners, and those insisting EU welcome refugees.

The draft conclusions that will be presented to the European Council at the end of the month, among other things, include:

The European Council supports the development of the concept of regional disembarkation platforms in close cooperation with UNHCR and IOM. Such platforms should provide for rapid processing to distinguish between economic migrants and those in need of international protection, and reduce the incentive to embark on perilous journeys.

The European Council has deemed it necessary for at least two such disembarkation centers to be built, one in North Africa and one in the Balkans.

The two main countries that are being considered are Albania, for the immigrants coming via the Eastern Mediterranean route, and Tunisia, for those following the Western Mediterranean one.

All immigrants entering the EU by land or sea will be directed to disembark at the nearest disembarkation center, where they will be sheltered and processed.

Only those that will be deemed needing asylum in the EU will be redirected into EU territory, whereas the rest will be repatriated, or offered another solution.

EUs plan seems to enjoy the support of the UNHCR. UNHCRs Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Vincent Cochetel spoke to France Presse, a week ago, about the necessity of such centers in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Following a meeting with Balkans Ministers of Interior Affairs, EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos neither confirmed nor denied whether Albania was being considered as a possible location for a disembarkation center. Avoiding a direct answer, he simply stated that the topic had not been discussed during the meeting.

If the EU does end up adopting this plan, it is certain that the Albanian government will willingly volunteer to host such a center in the country.

Prime Minister Edi Rama publicly announced his willingness to help the EU, following a meeting with Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in May. Minister of Interior Affairs Fatmir Xhafaj is expected to show the same willingness during a meeting with his German counterpart Seehofer.

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