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Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(21.5.2025)

In general, it is possible for the EU and the Member States to cooperate with countries outside the EU in managing migration. This must be done in full respect of EU and international law.

Based on the information available to the Commission, Italy's initiative originally aimed at transferring certain categories of third-country nationals intercepted in the high seas to centres in Albania, under Italian jurisdiction, to examine their applications for international protection. In case of rejection of such applications, Italy would carry out return procedures from these centres.

When Member States extend the application of national law implementing EU law to situations falling outside the scope of EU law, they must do it in a way that does not undermine or circumvent the application of harmonised rules or obligations under EU law.

As per the latest available information, Italy is now using the centre for the purpose of detention of returnees, in the same way as it uses pre-removal centres in Italy, and therefore it is conducting procedures with the same requirements, time limits and guarantees as those performed in Italian territory.

The Commission is following the implementation of the protocol and is in contact with the Italian authorities.