

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002324/26
to the Commission
Jean-Paul Garraud (PFE), Fabrice Leggeri (PFE), Matthieu Valet (PFE)
(5 June 2026)**

Subject: New surge in illegal immigration on the Libya-Crete-Gavdos route

On 27 and 28 May 2026, several press releases ⁽¹⁾ from the Hellenic Coast Guard reported numerous search and rescue operations south of Crete and the neighbouring island of Gavdos that involved more than 700 migrants.

Several boats reportedly left Tobruk in Libya in return for payment to smuggling networks. The press releases mention Frontex support and disembarkations in Gavdos, Souda, Kaloi Limenes, Agia Galini and Heraklion.

In light of the fact that the Libyan route to Crete and Gavdos is putting increasing pressure on the EU's southern external border:

1. What immediate operational measures does the Commission intend to support, with Frontex and the Greek authorities, to prevent illegal departures from Libya and to dismantle the smuggling networks?
2. Does it intend to make EU funding granted to third countries more conditional on them cooperating effectively with regard to checks and returns?
3. What guarantees can it give to ensure that manifestly unfounded applications are processed swiftly and that removals are carried out effectively?

Submitted: 5.6.2026

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(7 August 2026)**

Through a 'Team Europe approach' in Libya, the EU engages with key actors to improve border management, combat smuggling and ensure protection and voluntary returns, in line with international law, while supporting Member States concerned by departures from Libya including Greece, through significant technical, financial and operational support, including through the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

The EU mobilises development cooperation, trade, visa policy ⁽¹⁾ and diplomacy to encourage third-country cooperation on preventing illegal migration, combating smuggling, and facilitating return and readmission.

The Global Europe proposal ⁽²⁾, currently negotiated by the co-legislators, promotes engagement with partner countries, incentivises readmission cooperation and includes the possibility of suspending the implementation of programmes in cases of serious shortcomings in relation to third countries' obligation to readmit their own nationals ⁽³⁾.

The Asylum Procedures Regulation ⁽⁴⁾ allows certain applications that are likely to be unfounded to be examined in accelerated or border procedures ⁽⁵⁾ subsequently contributing to the swift return of persons not in need of international protection.

¹ Hellenic Coast Guard press releases of 28, 29 and 30 May 2026: <https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/synexeia-enhmerwshs-anaforika-me-entopismo-kai-diaswsh-49-allodapwn-sthn-ierapetra-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-40-allodapwn-kai-syllhpsh-toy-allodapoy-diakinht-toys-stoys-kaloys-limenes-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-36-allodapwn-kai-syllhpsh-toy-allodapoy-diakinht>; [https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/synexeia-enhmerwshs-anaforika-me-ton-entopismo-kai-diaswsh-38-allodapwn-sth-gaydo-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-130-allodapwn-epibainontwn-se-3-lemboys-notia-ths-gaydoy-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-60-allodapwn-epibainontwn-notioanatolika-twn-kalwn-limenwn-ptwsh/](https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/Banatos-loyomenhs-sthn-ikaria-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-103-allodapwn-stoys-kaloys-limenes-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-38-allodapwn-sth-gaydo-diakomidh-as8enoys/); [https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/entopismos-kai-diaswsh-40-allodapwn-sth-gaydo-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-37-allodapwn-sth-xrysh-krhths-mhxanikh-blabh-if-skafoys-stoys-o8wnoys-diakomides-as8enwn/](https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/synexeia-enhmerwsewn-anaforika-me-ton-entopismo-kai-diaswsh-103-allodapwn-stoys-kaloys-limenes-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-40-allodapwn-sth-gaydo-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-58-allodapwn-stoys-kaloys-limenes/); [https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/synexeia-enhmerwshs-anaforika-me-ton-entopismo-kai-th-diaswsh-40-allodapwn-notia-ths-gaydoy-synexeia-enhmerwshs-anaforika-me-ton-entopismo-kai-th-diaswsh-60-allodapwn-na-twn-kalwn-limenwn-entopismos-kai-diaswsh-69-allodapwn-notia-ths-gaydoy/](https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/entopismos-kai-diaswsh-36-allodapwn-sth-gaydo-traymatismos-epibainonta-if-skafoys-sth-lero-prosara3h-ep-tr-skafoys-sthn-kalymno-diakomidh-as8enoys/).

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), OJ L 243, 15.9.2009. Article 25(a) of the Visa Code also explicitly links visa policy to cooperation on readmission: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/810/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ COM/2025/551 final: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025PC0551&qid=1753799711782>.

⁽³⁾ The assessment would be based on a comprehensive approach, considering the EU's overall relations with the country concerned as well as the principle of proportionality. Suspension decisions would not affect humanitarian assistance.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU
PE/16/2024/REV/1: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj/eng>.

⁽⁵⁾ This includes applications where applicants raise issues unrelated to protection needs, originate from a safe country of origin, come from a country with EU wide recognition rate of 20% or lower, make clearly inconsistent or implausible claims, intentionally mislead the authorities or destroy documents in bad faith, lodge subsequent applications with no new elements or applications intended to delay return, or pose a danger to national security or public order.

The new Return Regulation ⁽⁶⁾ invites the EU and Member States to take appropriate measures in relation to all relevant policies and tools, where lack of cooperation from a third country on return and readmission is identified.

⁽⁶⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0207_EN.html.