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Answer given by Ms Johansson
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.11.2024)

The Trade and Cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom (UK) provides a comprehensive framework of cooperation but does not contain specific provisions on asylum and migration.

The UK and Member States, along with the Commission, engage in the ‘Calais group’ discussions, supporting measures to deter irregular crossings and migrant smuggling in the Channel and North Sea.

Priority should be to step up operational cooperation, in particular combating organised smuggling networks and avoid dangerous situations at sea, notably by sharing of information and intelligence on both sides, covering all migratory routes.

Cooperation could also take place within the working arrangement between Frontex and the UK Home Office, with the aim of training, capacity building, sharing of best practices and information sharing that would be mutually beneficial. Frontex also supports coastal Member States in the Channel through joint operations, deploying personnel and equipment.

UK-French immigration controls at shared borders are governed by bilateral agreements¹, which fall outside the Commission’s authority.

EU-UK cooperation on tackling migrant smuggling has strengthened both strategically and operationally. Under the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), led by France with UK support, actions monitor smuggling in the Channel and coordinate countermeasures. Europol’s new task force focuses on dismantling key smuggling networks, with 2024 operations leading to multiple arrests across several countries.

In the 12 months period by June 2024, the UK authorities registered over 38 700 irregular arrivals, which represents a 26% reduction compared with the previous period. In the first nine months of 2024, the number of attempted crossings increased only marginally by 2%.

¹ The Sangatte Protocol (1991) and the Treaty of Le Touquet (2003). The latter allowed for France and the UK to carry out immigration controls in each other’s territories at seaports. On 14 November 2022, UK and France signed an agreement on bilateral cooperation in migration matters, in the framework of the Sandhurst Treaty, signed in January 2018 by the two countries to combat illegal crossings on the English Channel and North Sea. The arrangement sets out a financial allocation of EUR 72.2 million by the British Government to France.