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Answer given by Mr Avramopoulos
on behalf of the European Commission
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The efforts of the Commission to prevent the loss of life and to manage migration effectively are manifold: aiming not only at the effective control of the external borders, which is the precondition for the proper functioning of the Schengen area, but ensuring fair access to international protection to persons in need of it, and, creating opportunities of legal migration for the others. These efforts are the reply and not the cause of tragic deaths in the Mediterranean.

The aim of the EU–Turkey Statement is to replace irregular and dangerous migratory flows by organised, safe and legal pathways to Europe for those entitled to international protection in line with EU and international law.

Under Union law, the external borders may be crossed only at border crossing points and the borders between the border crossing points are under constant surveillance. Any measures taken in this context must be proportionate and in full respect of fundamental rights. The Member States concerned are also bound by the principle of *non-refoulement* and required to provide asylum seekers the possibility to reach a border crossing point in order to allow effective access to the asylum procedure.

It should also be noted that joint operations and constant efforts of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and patrolling assets of the Member States, such as the national coast guards, contribute daily to saving people in distress at sea, whose lives are put in imminent danger by reckless criminals who make profit by organising perilous journeys across the sea on overcrowded, unseaworthy boats.