



25th OSCE PA Winter Meeting

Report of Ms. Farah KARIMI

Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration to the Standing Committee

(Vienna, 20 February 2026)

Dear President,
Dear Members of the Standing Committee,
Dear Colleagues,

It is a particular honour to stand in front of you here in Vienna where, exactly ten years ago, you agreed unanimously to establish this Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and to update you on our activities.

Our Committee has identified three priority topics to guide its work in the coming year:

- Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: Implications for EU and non-EU Member States
- The Experiences of Local Authorities with Migration
- Migration and Economic Development

1. Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: Implications for EU and non-EU Member States

Following up on an online briefing on 3 November with the European Commission and UNHCR, a seven-member delegation of the Committee travelled to Brussels on 28-29 January to discuss progress made in preparing for implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum ('EU Migration Pact', see Annex I) as well as other recent developments in European migration policy reform. We met with a broad range of stakeholders at the European Commission and Frontex as well as with representatives of International Governmental Organizations and think-tanks.

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level, building on and amending

previous reform proposals. Its core objectives are to foster greater responsibility sharing, solidarity and effective border management among the EU Member States. The Pact consists of ten comprehensive legislative acts which entered into force in June 2024 following their adoption by the European Parliament and Council.

They will enter into application starting on 12 June 2026, leading to a complete overhaul of the European framework for asylum and migration management. The focus now is on implementing and operationalising this Pact at both the EU and national levels. This is a very complex process and progress at the level of national EU Member States is very uneven. It is due to this concern regarding preparedness for implementation as well as the huge impact which the new regulations will have on migration and asylum policy that our Committee has decided to raise awareness within the Assembly about the Pact and what implementation entails.

The EU Pact will have an enormous impact on people on the move and on the legislation in EU Member States. It is therefore crucial that we are all aware of the changes ahead.

A detailed report on the visit will also be available soon. In the meantime, I would like to share a few of the key takeaways from our discussions.

“Secure external borders”

One main component of the EU Migration Pact which I would like to highlight is the new, mandatory border procedure which will need to be implemented by EU Member States with the objective to enhance the effective management of the external borders of the EU.

Screening will have to be completed in a limited timeframe: seven days for the screening at the external borders and 3 days for the screening of persons apprehended within the territory. Some of our interlocutors stressed that there is a real risk that persons with vulnerabilities will be missed if they are part of large groups of migrants.

Each EU Member State is obliged to set up an independent monitoring authority; and it is up to the individual Member State to set up this monitoring mechanism. There is a need for stronger safeguards to ensure that persons in need of international protection are not subject to the new procedures, in full respect of fundamental rights as set out in the EU Charter, including the respect of the principle of *non-refoulement* and the right to an effective remedy. As UNHCR has rightly underlined, there is a need for sufficient resources to support referrals to appropriate protection and services, including legal assistance. Early screening is important to identify people with vulnerabilities, including stateless persons, victims

of trafficking, and unaccompanied or separated children, and to provide them with timely support and assistance.

Independent border monitoring mechanisms have a crucial role to play to ensure that the safeguards are effective, to guarantee access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and to prevent pushbacks.

We learned more about what implementation of the Pact and the new border procedures means for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex which will have to increase the number of staff to 10,000 by 2027. Frontex also has a network of 70 Fundamental Rights Officers whose task it is to monitor compliance with EU and international human rights obligations of Frontex staff. However, their mandate does not extend to national border staff and other stakeholders although they can play an advisory role. They can issue serious incident reports and have the authority to launch investigations.

At the same time, Frontex's accountability is not so easily delimited. Indeed, a landmark ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on International Migrants Day on 18 December 2025 also establishes a precedent for finding Frontex liable for human rights violations and for lowering the burden of proof for vulnerable migrants.¹

There is also concern that these new procedures will lead to an increase in the numbers of persons in *de facto* detention at the EU's external borders. Here I wish to relay the calls made by UNHCR and IOM to consider alternatives to detention while asylum claims are being examined.

Our interlocutors at the European Commission also mentioned plans to enhance digitalisation, e.g. through the new electronic Entry/Exit System (EES) in order to have an accurate picture of who is in the EU.² The Eurodac Regulation³ will turn the existing database into a fully-fledged asylum and migration database. The type of data registered will expand (not only fingerprints but also facial image, identity data, copies of identity/travel documents). The storage period for certain types of data will be extended to 5 years while the storage period for the data of applicants will remain for 10 years. The system will now also include data from children from 6 years of age, allowing authorities to identify children in case they get separated

¹ See: *Hamoudi v Frontex* ([C-136/24 P](#)), 18 December 2025.

² The new Entry/Exit System (EES) is a large scale IT system developed by the EU to prevent irregular migration and enhance security in the Schengen area. It started to be operational on 12 October 2025. However, European countries using the EES are introducing the system gradually at their external borders. Data collection will be gradually introduced at border crossing points with full implementation by 10 April 2026.

³ *Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 establishing Eurodac for comparing the biometric data of international protection (asylum) applicants and irregular migrants*. Eurodac is the new database for asylum and migration management which will be implemented in 2026.

from their families and help protect those vulnerable from human trafficking and exploitation.

Given the sensitivity of the personal data processed by this system, it is crucial to ensure individuals can effectively exercise their rights and the processing of personal data is supervised. There are also plans to use AI in the new border procedures. These are all developments which should be followed closely.

“Making solidarity work”

During the briefings, our interlocutors at the Commission outlined key achievements in preparing for Pact implementation. In November 2025, following the launch of the first [Annual Migration Management Cycle](#), the Commission designated the countries under migratory pressure and reached an agreement on the ‘Solidarity Pool’ for 2026 consisting of support measures for these countries. While the Member States are free to choose the form of their solidarity contributions between people solidarity (relocation of asylum seekers or ‘responsibility offsets’), financial support, alternative measures or a combination of these measures, once the Council decision is adopted, the Member States’ solidarity contributions become public and legally binding.

The EU’s Annual Asylum and Migration Report found that there had been a continued improvement of the migratory situation during the reporting period (July 2024-June 2025) with irregular border crossings down by 35 per cent.

Four EU Member States were found to be under “**migratory pressure**” based on the Annual Asylum and Migration Report: Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy – with the first two being designated as such due to the disproportionate level of arrivals over the last year, while the latter two were found to also be under migratory pressure because of a disproportionate number of arrivals following search and rescue at sea in the same period.

In addition to this first category of EU countries under “migratory pressure” there is a long list of twelve countries which are “**at risk of migratory pressure**”, “either because of high numbers of arrivals in the preceding year, ongoing strains on their reception systems or the threat of weaponisation of migration that could create disproportionate obligations in the upcoming year”.⁴ These countries will have priority access to the EU Migration Support Toolbox.

Finally, four of these countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia and Poland) as well as Czechia and Austria fall within a third category of countries facing a “**significant migratory situation**” because of the cumulative pressures of the last five years.

⁴ The EU countries “at risk of migratory pressure” are the following: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Finland.

They will have the possibility to request a full or partial deduction from their contributions to the Solidarity Pool for the upcoming year.

This leaves few countries who were not deemed to be under some form of challenge during the reporting period. Furthermore, any exempted country's share of relocations and financial contributions is not reassigned to other states. As a result, the total number of relocations of asylum seekers from the four countries under migratory pressure (Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy) to other EU countries agreed upon is lower than envisaged by the Commission: 21,000 rather than 30,000 ; at the same time, financial contributions amounted to €420 million instead of €600 million.⁵

The Commission will assess the overall migratory situation in the EU every year in order to ensure that this so-called "permanent solidarity mechanism" established by the Pact balances the challenges and the responsibilities placed on various Member States. The next year will show whether these support measures are sufficient⁶ and whether the new mechanism can withstand greater migratory pressures.

"Efficient and fair return procedures"

In December 2025, the European Council reached an agreement on new rules to speed up and simplify the procedures for the return of persons staying illegally in EU Member States – the new Return Regulation. On 10 February, the European Parliament endorsed the creation of an EU list of 'safe countries of origin'. This new EU-wide list of safe countries of origin will enable the fast-tracking of asylum requests by nationals of the listed countries - Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Kosovo, India, Morocco and Tunisia. Under the new rules, it will be up to the individual applicant to prove that this provision should not apply in their case because of a well-founded fear of persecution or the risk of serious harm if sent back to their country. EU accession candidate countries will also be considered safe countries of origin unless relevant circumstances, such as indiscriminate violence in the context of an armed conflict, if their citizens have EU-wide asylum recognition rate of above 20%, or economic sanctions due to actions affecting fundamental rights and freedoms indicate otherwise.

MEPs have also approved the Council's proposed regulation on the application of the 'safe third country' concept according to which an asylum application may be

⁵ The original figures of 30,000 relocations and EUR 600 million of financial support at Union level are taken from the Asylum Migration Management Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management. See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1351/oj/eng>.

⁶ The Solidarity Pool is for the second half of 2026 only as the new rules enter into application in June 2026.

declared inadmissible, if one of three conditions is met. This regulation introduces a new, third category whereby an asylum applicant may be sent to a third country with which a bilateral or multilateral agreement on the admission of asylum seekers exists. This lays the foundation for 'return hubs' to be established in third countries.

Sending asylum seekers to countries with which they have no connection is very problematic not only from an ethical standpoint but from a practical point of view. It is also significantly more costly to host migrants in return hubs in third countries.

It should be noted that unaccompanied minors cannot be sent to such third countries under this third category. The designation of a third country as 'safe' at both EU and national levels may be made with exceptions for specific parts of its territory or clearly identifiable categories of persons.

The new European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy

On 29 January 2026, while our delegation was in Brussels, the European Commission presented its first European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy⁷ which sets out the EU's political objectives on asylum and migration, with concrete priorities for the next five years. The stated objectives are threefold: "preventing illegal migration and breaking the business of criminal smuggling networks; protecting people fleeing war and persecution, while preventing abuse of the asylum system; and attracting talent to the EU to boost the competitiveness of the EU's economy." Recognizing that skills gaps and labour shortages will accentuate in many key sectors, also driven by demographic dynamics, the EU aims to become the most attractive place in the global race for talent by simplifying the rules for attracting the people with the skills which Europe needs.

This raises two main questions:

- How do we ensure that by reducing legal pathways, EU Member States will not see increasing numbers of migrants fall prey to the lucrative business of smugglers or traffickers in human beings?
- What about the undocumented migrants who are already within our borders and who are keen to contribute to our economies or are already contributing but are being exploited?

We need to come up with realistic solutions for those who, for a number of reasons, cannot be returned to their countries, provided they do not pose a threat to the security of our countries. There is also much talent to be found amongst within EU countries, as I underlined during our discussions at the Commission. Furthermore,

⁷ European Commission, European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy, Brussels, 29 January 2026 (COM(2026) 45 final), at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/european-asylum-and-migration-management-strategy_en.

Europe also needs unskilled workers. On 27 January 2026, Spain announced that it would regularize 500,000 undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.⁸ While this move might seem bold even shocking to some, its proponents argue that it will boost economic growth and social cohesion.

Pact for the Mediterranean

The Committee also had the opportunity to hear more about the new Pact for the Mediterranean in its discussions with representatives of the cabinet of the Commissioner for the Mediterranean and the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG-MENA). Launched last November, the Pact for the Mediterranean seeks to promote migration management as part of comprehensive efforts to create a connected, prosperous, resilient and secure common Mediterranean space from North Africa to the Middle East.

The Committee will endeavour to learn more about these initiatives seeking to embed migration management policies as part of comprehensive strategies to enhance relations with countries of origin and transit in the MENA region. These are welcome efforts, in line with the 'whole-of-route' approach, including through cooperation with international organizations such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

At the same time, as underlined by the UNHCR and IOM Heads of Mission in Brussels whom we met, the painful impact of the significant funding cuts on the ability of the humanitarian system to respond to needs on the ground and to enable such whole-of-route approaches are only too obvious.

The Committee will continue to follow preparations for implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and to call for due attention to be paid by all EU Member States to ensure that they are ready for the major deadline of 12 June 2026. We will also continue to look into the implications which implementation of the Pact will have on non-EU countries.

I would like to again stress the key importance of enforcing safeguards and establishing independent monitoring mechanisms to ensure respect for the human rights of people on the move as well as the need to step up efforts to counter migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. These are all essential components of effective and sustainable migration policies.

On 18 February I will raise some of these concerns with the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna and seek to learn

⁸ Eligible persons must have lived in Spain for at least five months or have sought international protection before 31 December 2025 and not have a criminal record.

more about the Agency's role in providing support to EU Member States as they implement the provisions of the EU Migration Pact.

2. The Experiences of Local Authorities in large urban centres with Migration

Local authorities are key stakeholders in migration management. Throughout the many field visits which it has carried out since its inception, the Committee has always sought to meet with mayors and other local authorities to listen to their perspectives and learn more about how migration is impacting their local communities, both positively and negatively.

The idea behind this second area of focus is to generate insights into how large urban centres deal with the complex realities of migration. focusing on the governance challenges and opportunities created by the presence of diverse groups of migrants and refugees. The discussions will aim to highlight examples of best practice and to also draw some lessons as to how we can foster more effective, equitable and sustainable approaches to migration management while strengthening social cohesion. Due consideration will be given to how city administrations balance social inclusion, public order and resource allocation and to mechanisms to ensure the participation of civil society and community organizations in policy making and implementation.

Our first case study was the city of Istanbul which hosted us for the November 2026 Autumn Meeting. During our Committee meeting on 17 November we heard from two speakers from the Presidency of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Türkiye as well as from a representative of the Union of Marmara Municipalities who briefed our Committee about the national framework as well as the perspectives of municipal authorities. We had also invited representatives from various migrant communities living in Istanbul to contribute to the discussion on achievements and challenges. The situation in Syria and sustainability of returns was also discussed.

The City of Vienna which is hosting us for this annual Winter Meeting was the subject of our second case study with contributions from the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), the Vienna Social Fund and the City of Vienna's Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity.

I also intend to use the opportunity of our upcoming Annual Session to focus on the experiences of local authorities in The Netherlands in dealing with migrants and refugees. Hopefully we can look at a few other large urban centres as well so that we can share examples of best practice and also identify challenges and how they are overcome.

3. Migration and Economic Development

The third priority topic, that of the dynamic relationship between migration and economic development, will be at the centre of our next field visit to Uzbekistan which we hope will take place during Spring 2026. We are hoping to soon welcome a new member of the Committee from Uzbekistan, Dr. Ulugbek Shermatov, who is putting together an excellent programme for the Committee. This visit will offer a precious opportunity to learn more about labour mobility of Central Asian migrants towards the EU and other countries and their contribution to the economic growth in host societies through labour market participation, entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer.

At the same time, we are mindful of the risk of 'brain drain' and we will seek to identify initiatives which also factor in the development priorities of the country of origin and which maximize the developmental benefits of migration while mitigating its adverse effects, fostering more balanced and sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders.

4. Next Steps

I look forward to reporting to you again in The Hague in July 2026 and to presenting our recommendations based on the work carried out this past year.

ANNEX I - The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

The EU Migration Pact consists of ten comprehensive legislative acts published in May 2024, and which will enter into force on 12 June 2026, leading to a complete overhaul of the European framework for asylum and migration management. Its core objectives are to foster greater responsibility sharing, solidarity and effective border management among the EU Member States.

EU countries will need to revise their national asylum and migration law according to the obligations stemming from the Pact, which are grouped into 10 building-blocks:

- **A common migration and asylum information system**, that will support coordination and information sharing among EU countries, speeding up the processing of applications within the Common European Asylum System;
- **A new system to manage arrivals** at the EU external borders, with the necessary tools to manage the processing of non-EU nationals, setting up fast and efficient procedures for asylum and return;
- **Rethinking reception** to ensure adequate standards of living, while preventing unauthorised movements;
- **Streamlining the decision-making process on asylum applications** at EU level, to foster converging assessment, fair and efficient procedures, and reinforce safeguards, rights and guarantees for asylum-seekers;
- **Expediting return processes**, by incentivising returnees to cooperate and return voluntarily;
- **Activating the new responsibility criteria** to determine the country responsible for an asylum application and for preventing unauthorised movements;
- **Enforce solidarity** by introducing a permanent, legally binding but flexible solidarity mechanism;
- **Reducing the risks of crisis situations** by enabling stronger resilience to evolving migratory situations;
- **Protecting the right to asylum** and human dignity, by introducing increased monitoring of fundamental rights and new safeguards for asylum applicants and especially the vulnerable persons;
- Stepping up efforts in the areas of **resettlement, inclusion, and integration**.

The focus now is on implementing and operationalising this Pact at both the EU and national levels. To facilitate implementation, the Commission has developed a Common Implementation Plan bringing together the various obligations stemming from the 10 ‘building blocks’ of the Pact.



Figure 1: 10 Building blocks to implement the core obligations of the Pact on Migration and Asylum (source: European Commission)

The Common Implementation Plan also identifies key milestones on the way to establishing the necessary legal and operational frameworks that would allow Member States to start applying the pact from 12 June 2026.

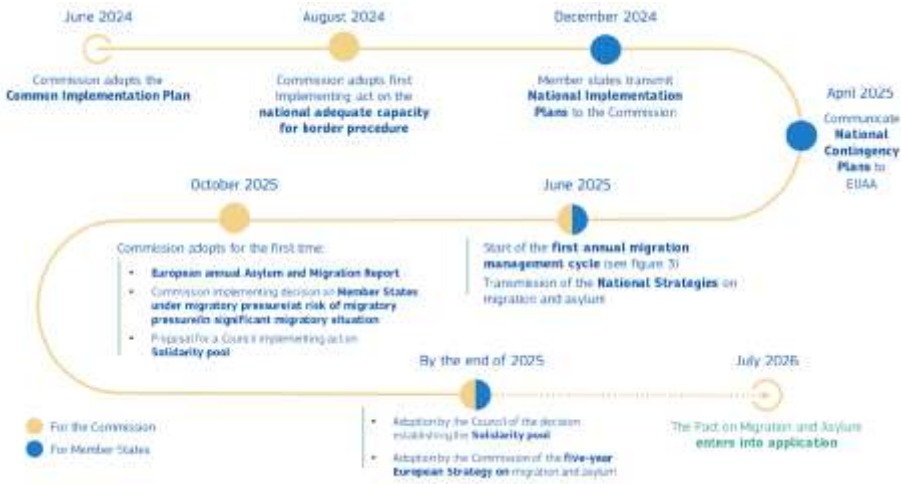


Figure 2: Timeline of the key milestones during the two years implementation period (source: European Commission)

On the basis of this Common Implementation Plan, each EU Member State was then required to establish a National Implementation Plan setting the actions and the timeline for their implementation by 12 December 2024, with the support of the Commission and relevant Union bodies, offices and agencies.

ANNEX II

Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

A. Mandate

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established following the unanimous decision of the OSCE PA Standing Committee on 25 February 2016 in Vienna. Its mandate is defined as follows:

- Serve as a focal point for the OSCE PA's work in the field of migration in all three dimensions of the OSCE: political and security questions; economic issues; and human rights and humanitarian questions; and report back to the President and the Standing Committee;
- Develop policy recommendations aimed at enhancing OSCE work in the field of migration and at improving the treatment of, and prospects for, migrants in OSCE countries;
- Promote discussion within the Assembly on issues related to migration, and promote parliamentary exchanges of best practice in these fields;
- Work closely with the OSCE Secretariat and Institutions as well as with relevant outside actors on issues related to migration to promote the understanding among the members of the Assembly of the importance of the work done in this field.

B. Membership

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration currently consists of 17 Members from 15 OSCE participating States (9 men, 8 women):

1. **Chair:** Ms. Farah KARIMI (Netherlands)
2. Mr. Alessandro ALFIERI (Italy), **Vice-Chair**
3. Mr. Kemal ÇELİK (Türkiye), **Vice-Chair**
4. Ms. Ayse ASAR (Germany)
5. Mr. Jan BAUER (Czechia)
6. Ms. Valérie BOYER (France)
7. Mr. Johan BÜSER (Sweden)
8. Mr. Fabrizio COMBA (Italy)
9. Mr. Mahmoud FARAHMAND (Norway)
10. Dr. Hedy FRY (Canada)
11. Mr. Kyriakos HADJIYIANNI (Cyprus), OSCE PA Vice-President
12. Ms. Pia KAUMA (Finland), President Emerita
13. Dr. Gudrun KUGLER (Austria), OSCE PA Vice-President
14. Mr. Artemi Vicent RALLO (Spain)
15. Ms. Özgül SAKI (Türkiye)
16. Mr. Angelos SYRIGOS (Greece)
17. Baroness Rosie WINTERTON (United Kingdom)

ANNEX III
Activities 2025/2026

A. Implemented Activities

18 September	<i>Online</i>	Meeting of the Committee convened by the new Chair, Farah Karimi (Netherlands), to discuss priorities and upcoming activities
3 November	<i>Online</i>	Web Dialogue on “Implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact: Implications for EU and non-EU Member States” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Michael Shotter, Director, Directorate for Migration and Asylum (HOME C), DG- HOME (Migration and Home Affairs), European Commission, Brussels - Ms. Cecilie Becker-Christensen Saenz Guerrero, Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Legal Support Unit, UNHCR’s Representation for EU Affairs, Brussels
17-19 November	Istanbul	23rd OSCE PA Autumn Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting of the Committee (17 November), with a focus on the experiences of local authorities with migration – The example of Istanbul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Serra Albayrakoğlu, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, PMM, Interior Ministry, Republic of Türkiye - Ms. Merve Ağca, Director of the Migration and Social Policy Center, Marmara Municipalities Union - Dr. Elif Güney Menderes, Senior Program Manager, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom - NGOs working with migrants & refugees ● Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (17 November)
18 December	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of International Migrants Day
2026		
28-29 January	Brussels	Field Visit focusing on EU migration policy reform, incl. implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, Return Regulation, Pact for the Mediterranean
11 February	<i>online</i>	Meeting of the Committee focussing on the situation in the US and upcoming field visits

B. Upcoming Activities

2026		
18-19 February	Vienna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bilats of the Chair with key stakeholders in the area of migration: OSCE Secretariat (OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, Transnational Threats Department/Border Security and Management Unit, External Co-operation Section, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Affairs) and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
18 February	Vienna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Field Visit to Jugendcollege Advanced Ost – an initiative of the City of Vienna offering language training, basic education, vocational orientation and social skills training to young refugees and migrants aged 15-25 years old.
19-20 February	Vienna	<p>25th OSCE PA Winter Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting of the Committee, with a focus on the experiences of local authorities with migration – The example of the City of Vienna (20 February) ● Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (20 February)
27 April	Copenhagen	<p>Bureau Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report of the Chair(tbc)
tbd	UZBEKISTAN	Field Visit (tbc)
20 June	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day
July	The Hague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Field visit with a focus on the experiences of local authorities with migration, in connection with the Annual Session
4-8 July	The Hague	<p>33rd OSCE PA Annual Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting of the Committee ● Report of the Chair ● Supplementary Item (tbc)