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Council of Europe
The Commissioner for Human Rights

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Date 15 juli 2026
Reaction to the letter of the Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Commissioner O'Flaherty,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2026. To achieve a modern, humane and future proof asylum and migration system, this Government seeks to explore and implement innovative solutions, such as return hubs.

We welcome the opportunity to reaffirm that it is imperative for the design and operationalisation of return hubs to be in line with international and EU law. As you have referenced in your letter, the Government remains committed to build broad partnerships with third countries on equal footing.

The establishment of return hubs as part of those partnerships is to be specifically regulated by the EU Return Regulation and the broader EU acquis, and will be implemented in line with our international obligations, including the ECHR, the principle of non-refoulement and the Refugee Convention. Adequate risk assessment and mitigation, as well as monitoring and evaluation form an integral part of our approach, as well as transparency where possible.

We welcome to continue the discussions with the office of the Human Rights Commissioner as the development of return hubs and other new and innovative cooperation mechanisms take shape.

Yours sincerely,

The Minister of Asylum and Migration

Bart van den Brink