



Sir William Cash MP
Chairman
European Scrutiny Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

10 October 2022

Dear Sir Bill,

**Changes to cross-border police cooperation in the EU and to the Prüm rules:
potential implications for the UK**

Thank you for your letter of 7 September to the then Minister for Delivery, Baroness Williams of Trafford. Further to this and your other correspondence to date with Baroness Williams of Trafford on this matter, I am responding as the newly appointed Home Office Minister with responsibility for borders and tackling illegal migration.

UK-Belgium Law Enforcement Cooperation Agreement

You requested information on the scope and content of the bilateral law enforcement cooperation agreement being negotiated with Belgium and the arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny before the agreement is formally concluded.

Discussions on the bilateral agreement with Belgium are still in the early stages, with formal negotiations due to commence later in the Autumn. However, the centrepiece of the agreement will be a provision to allow information exchange between UK and Belgian law enforcement agencies without the need, in the Belgian system, for prior consent from a magistrate. Such consent is required in dealings with third countries, such as the UK, but can be waived where a legal basis is provided in an international agreement. This should enable faster, more efficient information exchange between the UK and Belgium in the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences. The wider scope of the agreement and additional capabilities to strengthen law enforcement data exchange are subject to live discussions with the Belgians.

Both the UK and Belgium are alive to the boundaries of EU and Belgian competence in these areas, and Belgium has sought approval from the European Commission to undertake this agreement with the UK.

The Government will lay the finalised agreement before Parliament for scrutiny and ratification by the Lords' International Agreements Committee, under the terms of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

We are not negotiating similar bilateral law enforcement cooperation agreements with other EU countries at this time.

Readmissions arrangements with the EU and with EU Member States

You requested an update on the progress being made by the UK in securing effective readmission arrangements with the EU to tackle illegal migration, and in the absence of that, entering into separate bilateral readmission agreements with the most concerned EU Member States.

We remain committed to discussions with our European partners, including the EU, on the shared challenge of tackling illegal migration. We continue to seek shared solutions, including readmission arrangements, at EU level or with individual EU Member States (MS), as per the Political Declaration you reference. You will understand that we cannot comment on the details of discussions to protect our relationships with international partners, and any ongoing discussions.

I am copying this letter to the Chair (Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP) and Clerk (Elizabeth) of the Home Affairs Select Committee; the Chair (Sir Robert Neill MP) and Clerk (David Weir) of the Justice Committee; and the Chair (the Earl of Kinnoull) and Clerk (Nick Boorer) of the Lords European Union Committee; George Wilson, Clerk to your Committee; Harry Stunell (Home Office Committee Lead); and Les Saunders in the FCDO.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to write.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,



Tom Pursglove MP
Minister of State for Immigration