

European Council – October 2024 – Migration State of Play

Key Objectives	Key actions under way and next steps
<p>Implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum</p>	<p><u>First steps in the implementation of the Pact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common Implementation Plan adopted by the Commission in June 2024 - Ongoing Commission support to Member States for the preparation of National Implementation Plans, including meetings of contact and expert groups - Adequate capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Implementing Act adopted on 5 August 2024 o Ongoing preparation by EUAA of a model for capacity needs for the screening and for the border procedures and a model centre (presented to Member States in the SCIFA meeting of 27 September 2024) [<i>see below the detailed EUAA support</i>] - Pact Coordination Platform and IT portal were created, with access available to the Member States, as well as relevant EU Agencies and Commission services. - Draft guidance for the screening process (discussed within the Schengen Borders Code Committee on 13 September 2024) being prepared. - Dry run of the Annual Migration Management Report, testing data and indicators to be included, as well as cooperative processes to be followed in view of the first Annual Report, was discussed with Member States in the Blueprint Network meeting of 4 July 2024; ongoing work on lessons learnt. <p><u>EU Agencies’ support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Frontex are working on a list of products to support Member States in the implementation of the Pact: models for the border procedure, guidance on alternatives to detention, template for information to applicants, and template on contingency planning and an accompanying manual. - The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) issued guidelines on the monitoring of the Fundamental Rights Independent Mechanism on 19 September 2024. <p><u>Five-year European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing preparation of the template for the national strategies, which will form the basis for the European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy.

	<p><u>Dublin Roadmap</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Dublin III Contact Committee discusses the issue of Dublin transfers. The next meeting will take place on 15 October. - The specific actions envisaged under the Dublin Roadmap ended in December 2023. The Commission continues monitoring the progress achieved and the ongoing measures. - The results achieved under the Dublin Roadmap and good practices identified during its implementation will serve as basis for the new implementing rules to be adopted in 2025 in the field of Dublin transfers, in line with the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation. <p><u>NEXT STEPS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Member States to transmit their National Implementation Plans to the Commission by 12 December 2024. The Commission has invited Member States to share their draft implementation plans by October, to allow for dialogue on needs and available resources, to help a timely finalisation of the plans. ➤ Adoption of the template for the national strategies in Q1 of 2025. ➤ Upcoming meetings of the contact and expert groups: Asylum Procedure Regulation (APR) on 11 October, Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR)/ Reception Conditions Directive (RCD) on 15 October, Resettlement on 15 October, Child migrants on 25 October, Reception on 25 November. ➤ First meeting of the Pact Implementation Coordination Platform by the end of 2025. ➤ Review of the safe third country concept in the APR by June 2025. ➤ Preparation of the AMMR implementing act on AMMR relevant provisions tentatively by mid-2025, in the framework of the AMMR Regulatory Committee.
<p>Stronger external borders</p>	<p><u>European digital border management</u></p> <p>Entry-Exit System (EES) start of operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readiness of all Schengen countries and of eu-LISA is a prerequisite for the EES to start operating. eu-LISA and 26 countries (out of 29) have sent their declarations of readiness (by 30 August and 5 September respectively).

- On 25 September 2024, eu-LISA's Management Board invited the Commission to assess the possibilities and modalities to start using the EES in a flexible manner before the end of 2024.

ETIAS

- Preparations continued with a view to making possible the entry into operation of ETIAS in 2025.

Dedicated funding for EES/ ETIAS

- In April 2024, DG HOME made available €64 million under the Specific Action 'Support to Member States for Smart Borders' to contribute to the preparations at national level for the entry into operation and functioning of EES and ETIAS. In July 2024, all 26 applications submitted were approved, for a total requested EU contribution of €52.1 million, and will be added to national programmes.

Digitalising border management and visa procedures

- The Commission presented a package of legislative proposals on the digitalisation of travel documents on 8 October.

European Border and Coast Guard

Implementation of the multiannual strategic policy for European Integrated Border Management (EIBM)

- Frontex is establishing a governance model to monitor the implementation by the Agency and the Member States of the Technical and Operational Strategy for EIBM, adopted in September 2023 by the Management Board.
- Alignment of the National Strategies for EIBM with the multiannual strategic policy adopted by the Commission and the Agency's technical and operational strategy will be verified under the Schengen monitoring and evaluation mechanism by the end of 2024.

Responding to instrumentalisation of migrants at the EU's external borders

Financial support

- Call for expressions of interest under the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) (Specific Action 'Enhancing border surveillance capabilities for countries at the borders with Russia and Belarus') was launched on 31 July, for an indicative amount of €150 million. The call invites Member States bordering Russia and Belarus to strengthen their border surveillance capabilities. Assessment of the 7 applications received is ongoing, with a decision expected in November 2024.

	<p>Operational support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing operational support from the EU Agencies can be stepped up, as needed. - Situational awareness is supported through Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint network and the Integrated Situational Awareness Analysis (ISAA)¹. <p>Legal measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Crisis Regulation, which sets out a comprehensive framework at EU level addressing situations of crisis, including instrumentalisation of migrants, will start applying in June 2026. <p><u>A complete and fully functioning Schengen area / Schengen governance</u></p> <p>Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Commission adopted Schengen country reports for Lithuania, Finland, Latvia and Estonia, and the evaluations of Croatia, Poland and Hungary were concluded. These allowed to identify key remedial actions and priority recommendations. - The Schengen Coordinator continues to engage with Member States to address potential concerns. 30 Schengen evaluation actions plans are being implemented and monitored. - The fourth individual Schengen Scoreboard will be received by Ministers in the margins of the Schengen Council in December 2024. - In line with the 2024-2025 Schengen Cycle priorities, strategic and operational measures remain focused on strengthening border management, increasing the effectiveness of returns, developing whole-of-the route Schengen cooperation frameworks, and preventing abuse of EU visa policy. - The eighth Schengen Barometer+, issued for the October JHA Council, provides a comprehensive situational picture of the drivers having an impact on the stability of the Schengen area. <p>Bulgaria and Romania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The decision to abolish controls at the internal air and sea borders between Bulgaria, Romania and other Schengen States started to apply as of 31 March 2024. - A decision to abolish controls at the internal land borders between Bulgaria, Romania and other Schengen States is still pending. - Bulgaria and Romania have been implementing specific steps to address irregular migration and security threats. The reinforcement of external borders, including through Frontex and regional initiatives with
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¹ In the context of the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements on the migration crisis.

Member States and third countries, has resulted in intensified anti-smuggling activities. An increased number of smuggling cases, as well as of identified regional coordinators of high interest (high-value targets) acting in the Western Balkan route, have been registered, with the support of Europol.

Croatia

- After internal border controls with Croatia were abolished as of 1 January 2023, Schengen evaluators concluded the Schengen evaluation of Croatia in February 2024. The evaluation showed that, despite increased migration pressure, Croatia is overall effectively contributing to the well-functioning of the Schengen area. Croatia has continued to mitigate the challenges through deployment of technical equipment and human resources, notably on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Internal Border Control

- A revised Schengen Borders Code entered into force on 10 July 2024. It contains an updated framework for the reintroduction of internal border controls, with clearer deadlines and stricter monitoring and reporting obligations for Member States and the Commission.
- Currently, eight Member States have internal border controls in place. Four Member States have notified the Commission of a reintroduction since the entry into force of the new regime.
- The Schengen coordinator is in close contact with all Member States concerned, to ensure that the impact of these controls on the free movement of people in the area of free movement and on the functioning of cross-border regions remains as limited as possible.

Enhanced national capabilities at the EU external borders

- The Commission on 4 March invited **Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Hungary** to apply for the Specific Action ‘Enhanced national capabilities at the EU external borders’ under the BMVI, for an indicative amount of €85 million. The action will support equipment, means of transport or upgrades to electronic border surveillance systems, which should contribute to the effective application of the Schengen *acquis* in Bulgaria and Romania, at the external land borders with Türkiye and Serbia, and reinforce border surveillance capabilities of Hungary and Croatia, in accordance with the EU *acquis*, at the external land borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Applications for an EU contribution of €93.2 million are being assessed, and a decision is expected in October 2024.

Stronger coordination of rescue operations, including with neighbouring countries

- The Commission continues to support cooperation between Member States to better coordinate search and rescue and save lives at sea. The Commission will continue to work towards improving information

	<p>sharing and coordination among Member States in the context of the European Contact Group on Search and Rescue (6 meetings so far; next meeting scheduled for November 2024).</p> <p><u>NEXT STEPS</u></p> <p>European Border and Coast Guard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Frontex and Member States must swiftly contribute human resources and technical equipment to the Standing Corps and to the technical equipment pool, as well as implement integrated planning, and proper reporting on the border situation. ➤ Decision expected in October on the €10 million ‘Specific Action to support Member States’ national strategies for a European integrated border management’. <p>eu-LISA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extraordinary Management Board on 16 October to follow-up on discussions in the JHA Council and agree on a way forward for the start of operation of EES.
<p>Fighting migrant smuggling</p>	<p><u>Ongoing legislative proposals to crack down on smuggling of migrants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulation on enhancing Europol’s support to preventing and combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking: Council position on the proposal endorsed by Coreper II on 19 June 2024; European Parliament position still to be adopted. - Directive laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the Union: Council position still under negotiation, state of play presented at the October JHA Council. European Parliament position still to be adopted. <p><u>Working with international partners in the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Global Alliance forms a key component of all bilateral discussions with partner countries. - To implement the Global Alliance, by the end of 2024 over 25 events will have been organised by the Commission or with the Commission’s active participation. These include the workshop on ‘Digital Smuggling’, together with Europol and Eurojust, involving also social media companies and in cooperation with third country partners; UNODC organised events in Pakistan and Kenya; and the Working Group on Smuggling of Migrants in Vienna.

- Ongoing inception phase of the project “Promoting Action and Cooperation among countries at global level against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Smuggling of Migrants (PACTS)”, €5 million (NDICI), contracted with UNODC in July 2024.
- Cooperation in international frameworks to counter migrant smuggling, such as within the framework of the G7 Anti-Smuggling Action Plan adopted by relevant Ministers of Interior endorsed on 4 October 2024, and regional processes, including the Niamey process.

Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships

- Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships (ASOPs) have been concluded with Morocco, Tunisia, Western Balkan partners, and Niger (implementation currently on hold).
- Implementation of the different ASOPs is ongoing with EU-funded projects, such as the EU4FAST project, addressing both human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans (*see further below for details on ASOP Morocco/ASOP Tunisia and Egypt*).
- Implementation of the Regional Anti-Smuggling programme in the Western Balkans worth €36 million (June 2023 – May 2027) aims to increase the capacity of Western Balkan partners to fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, with a focus on investigations and prosecutions.
- Regional programme to enhance international police cooperation against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings in North Africa worth €5 million signed at the end of 2023.

Preventing exploitation of workers with an irregular status in Europe

- The Commission will step up enforcement and, where necessary, review the rules on preventing exploitation of workers in Europe with an irregular status. The Commission monitors the implementation of the Employers Sanctions Directive 2009/52/EC and will be reporting on this implementation [*report tentatively foreseen end of 2025*]. This report will be part of a package together with the Implementation report on the Seasonal Workers Directive.

NEXT STEPS:

- A call for proposals for new information and awareness raising campaigns will be launched in Q4 2024, including a pilot facility to launch campaigns at a short notice to react to changing migratory situations.
- Second international conference on the Global Alliance to be held in 2025, ensuring continued political engagement of international partners, focused on concerted and targeted action at global level.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pursuing cooperation with Egypt in the framework of the implementation of the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership concluded in March 2024. Signature of the €20 million anti-smuggling project with Egypt is planned by end 2024, with a view to reinforcing Egypt’s capacities to detect and prosecute criminal networks engaged in migrant smuggling (the programme also works to support the action of Egyptian authorities to protect the victims of trafficking). ➤ Pursuing negotiations with Tunisia in the framework of the implementation of the Strategic and Global Partnership concluded in July 2023. Signature of a new anti-smuggling programme in Tunisia worth €18 million is planned by end 2024. ➤ EU financial support for new Common Operational Partnership projects with non-EU countries to counter migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (€12 million available in EU contribution through the Internal Security Fund, deadline for applications 8 October 2024). New projects will complement the portfolio of existing ones in Türkiye, Western Balkans, Western Africa, and Pakistan. ➤ The action “Global Initiative to counter the smuggling of migrants through evidence-based action to follow the money and the online dimension” (€15 million from NDICI) is under preparation. Expected adoption by the Commission in Q1 2025. ➤ The link between migrant smuggling and human trafficking will be discussed in December 2024 at the EU network of national coordinators for trafficking in human beings.
<p>New common approach on the return of irregular migrants</p>	<p><u>Legislative framework on returns</u></p> <p>The Commission intends to put forward a new common approach on returns, with a new legislative framework, including digitalised case management and mutual recognition of return decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new Commission will reflect on the way forward for the existing recast Return Directive (2018) and the opportunity of proposing a completely new legislative framework. - In this context, two studies are being prepared on: (i) the gaps and needs of EU law in the area of return, and (ii) a comprehensive, integrated and digitalised EU migration management system, focussing on the digitalisation of the return, readmission and reintegration processes. - The ongoing Schengen thematic evaluation on return will also feed important information on current challenges and good practices into this process.

- Discussions in Coreper on 16 September 2024, SCIFA and JHA Council on 10 October 2024 provide indications on the direction Member States are interested to explore for the future.

NEXT STEPS:

- Evaluation report from the Schengen thematic evaluation in the area of return accompanied by a Proposal for the corresponding Council recommendations planned for February 2025.
- Results of two studies on i) the gaps and needs of EU law in the area of return and ii) digitalisation of return, readmission and reintegration processes planned for Q2 2025.

Operational measures

Progress on the five key actions of the Returns Roadmap presented by the Commission:

- **Action 1 Joint identification actions leading to issuing of travel documents and Action 2 Assisted voluntary return, reintegration and joint return operations with Frontex:** 7 high-level planning and coordination meetings led by Frontex on seven priority third countries by end June 2024. Measures identified to increase the number of effective returns; implementation ongoing. Monitoring of results, with the first report at the High-Level Network for Returns in September. Frontex asked to consider additional measures. Frontex also asked to organise a planning and coordination meeting on Ethiopia.
- **Action 2 Assisted voluntary return, reintegration and joint return operations with Frontex:** workshop organised by Cyprus on incentives for more effective return case management on 16 April 2024, especially to encourage voluntary returns. Best practices document being finalised.
- **Action 3 Issuing of return decisions at the same time with a negative asylum decision:** online workshops organised by The Netherlands and Norway (13 May) on the comprehensive decision (negative asylum decision plus return decision), to be followed by an online workshop on the last-minute asylum claims (22 October). Peer support offered by Norway and the Netherlands to Member States.
- **Action 4 Mutual recognition of return decisions and follow-up enforcement action:** joint seminar between Schengen Information System and migration experts on the use of the SIS return alerts to expedite return processes (7 March 2024). Questionnaire to the High-Level Returns Network on need for more awareness, training, and support in September. Pilot project on mutual recognition by the Hungarian Presidency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action 5 Prioritising returns of illegally staying third country nationals posing a security threat: draft guidelines on the return of illegally staying third country nationals posing a security threat are under discussion in the High-Level Network for Returns. <p>Frontex support on returns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frontex’ capacity to support Member States has increased, and so has Member States’ uptake of Frontex support. Member States are making extensive use of Frontex support, not only in terms of flights, but also through return counselling and the EU Reintegration Programme. - The implementation of the EU Reintegration Programme has continued to grow, further streamlining the reintegration support offered to returnees from the EU. <p><u>NEXT STEPS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ By January 2025, Frontex to set up an enhanced coordination system, based on joint planning of Member States’ use of Frontex support on return, to improve financial planning and allow for better pooling of resources during all phases of return, including a more strategic use of Frontex return operations, particularly to priority third countries, in line with EU policy. It will also feed into the work on the Return Roadmap. ➤ The Commission, together with Frontex, to conduct an analysis on the opportunities to further strengthen the return component of the Standing Corps, with a view to consider expanding the return support that the Agency provides by Q2 2025. ➤ The Return Coordinator to work on developing a ‘targeted action’ manual by Q2 2025, to guide actors involved in return within Member States to be linked through an efficient workflow, building also on the results of the thematic Schengen evaluation in the area of return. ➤ Specific Action funded by AMIF amounting to €25 million to support Member States to incentivise voluntary return to priority third countries, supporting the implementation of building block 5 of the Pact Common Implementation Plan, and supporting implementation of the Returns Roadmap, to be launched by mid-October 2024. ➤ Launch of the €13 million (IPA-funded) regional Western Balkans return action, for both IOM and Member States-led components targeted by 1 January 2025.
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<p>Strengthening our readmission policies</p>	<p><u>Visa Code Art. 25a process</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visa measures due to insufficient cooperation on readmission were adopted on 29 April 2024 by the Council regarding Ethiopia. - Discussions are ongoing in the Council regarding the follow-up to the Commission’s fifth assessment report adopted on 23 July, as well as the Commission proposal of 23 July 2024 proposing visa measures due to insufficient cooperation on readmission regarding Somalia. <p><u>Readmission requirements in other instruments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Commission proposal for the new Generalised Scheme of Preferences Regulation included lack of cooperation on readmission as one of the grounds for withdrawal but was not accepted and the current GSP Regulation (with no readmission conditionality) has been extended to December 2027. - Samoa Agreement includes detailed obligations on return and readmission and covering countries where there is no readmission instrument in place with the EU. - Benchmarks related to internal procedures on readmission included in Budget Support programmes for Senegal and The Gambia. <p><u>NEXT STEPS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular follow-up on using the Article 25a mechanism to its full potential (in IMEX, JHA Counsellors and other Council formations), as well as specific follow-up to the proposals put forward by the Commission. ➤ Dialogue on readmission embedded in other dialogues (e.g. Samoa agreement) and follow up to take place in this framework. ➤ The Article 25a mechanism on strengthening readmission cooperation will be used to support the implementation of the border procedure of the Pact.
<p>Visa policy</p>	<p><u>Visa suspension mechanism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commission proposal to review the visa suspension mechanism set out in Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 adopted on 18 October 2023. Council General Approach endorsed on 13 March 2024. The European Parliament still has to adopt a negotiating position.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commission proposal to reintroduce visa requirement for Vanuatu based on the visa suspension mechanism adopted on 31 May 2024. Mandate adopted by the Council, discussion ongoing in the European Parliament. <p><u>Visa policy alignment of third countries having visa free access to the EU</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further visa policy alignment has been included as steps in the Reform Agendas 2024-2027 of Western Balkan partners under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. <p><u>Visa liberalisation dialogue</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visa liberalisation dialogue launched in September 2024 with Armenia. <p><u>NEXT STEPS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adoption of seventh report under the visa suspension mechanism by the end of November 2024. ➤ Develop a visa liberalisation Action Plan for Armenia in Q2 2025 setting detailed conditions to be fulfilled by Armenia in view of a possible visa-free regime with the country. ➤ Continue outreach to neighbouring countries with visa-free access to the EU on visa policy alignment. ➤ <i>N.B.:</i> Political Guidelines of the Commission for 2024-2029 include new EU Visa Policy Strategy.
<p>Legal pathways</p>	<p><u>Resettlement and humanitarian admission</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry into force of the new Resettlement Regulation in June 2024. Preparations of the first meeting of the High-Level Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Committee and the first Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan 2026-27 are underway. <p><u>Talent Partnerships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tunisia: Second roundtable held on 21 June 2024. Joint roadmap under finalisation. Identified sectors of interest: construction, agriculture, hospitality, transport. - Morocco: First roundtable in April 2023. Next roundtable planned for Q4 2024. Joint roadmap under finalisation. Identified sectors of interest: mechatronic, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, mechanical industry, renewable energy and green economy sector. - Egypt: First roundtable on 7 June 2023. Technical workshop planned for Q4 2024 (tbc), to be followed by second roundtable. Draft joint roadmap to be discussed. Identified sectors of interest: information & communication technology (ICT), construction, tourism, agriculture, transportation and energy.

- **Pakistan:** Second roundtable in April 2024, next one to take place in 2025. Joint roadmap under finalisation. New project to support the implementation of Talent Partnership being finalised (value: €3 million; implementer: GIZ, DE). Identified sectors of interest: ICT, care and long-term care.
- **Bangladesh:** Second roundtable in March 2024, next one to take place in 2025. Joint roadmap under finalisation. New project to support the implementation of Talent Partnership signed in July 2024 (value: €3 million; implementer: International Labour Organization). Identified sectors of interest: transport, ICT, construction, textile/ garments, ship building industry, agriculture and hospitality/tourism.
- In total, projects worth over €46 million are under implementation to support the five Talent Partnerships:
 - Almost €17 million under AMIF Migration Partnership Facility (Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan)
 - €23 million for the project THAMM (Towards a Holistic Approach to Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa) under NDICI-GE, for Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt.
 - €6 million under NDICI (Pakistan and Bangladesh)

Skills and Talent Mobility package: EU Talent Pool

- Commission proposal tabled on 15 November 2023. Council general approach endorsed on 13 June. Awaiting European Parliament's position to start trilogues as soon as possible.

Skills and Talent Mobility package: recognition of qualifications and validation of skills of third country nationals

- Commission Recommendation adopted 15 November 2023. [Webinar series](#) completed April-June 2024 to support implementation, in addition to regular discussions with Member States in the Group of Coordinators on recognition of professional qualifications.
- Reflection underway on next steps to harmonise rules on the recognition of qualifications and facilitate skills portability, as set out in the Political Guidelines 2024-2029.
- Support for the recognition of qualifications, skills validation, as well as skills development and training, is a focus of all current Talent Partnerships.
- September 2024: call for proposals under Erasmus+ programme aiming to support national recognition authorities with transparent and fair practices for the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals.

	<p><u>Long-term Residents Directive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last trilogues held on 30 November 2023 and 16 January 2024. Political agreement has not yet been reached. <p><u>Seasonal Workers Directive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compliance exercise ongoing (Infringements launched against all Member States). <p><u>Blue Card Directive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of infringements against 17 Member States for failure to notify. As of 1 October, 10 Member States did not notify complete transposition. <p><u>Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 60 actions by the Commission and the Member States in four key areas: labour market integration, education and training health care and housing. - Ongoing mid-term review, to provide an overview of the implementation status of the Plan's actions, identify remaining challenges and put forward strategic actions, notably on labour market. <p><u>NEXT STEPS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High-level Committee on Resettlement on 7 November, followed by a Commission Proposal for the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan to be adopted in mid-2025. ➤ Finalise Talent Partnership joint roadmaps with partner countries in upcoming meetings/ roundtables. ➤ Trilogues on review of the Long-term Residents Directive should resume quickly. ➤ Implementation report on the Seasonal Workers Directive planned for 2025, together with the Implementation report on the Employers Sanctions Directive. ➤ Mid-term review of Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion planned for Q1 2025.
<p>Strategic relations on migration with non-EU countries, especially countries of origin and transit</p>	<p><u>MIGRATION ROUTES TOWARDS EU</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To meet the challenges of irregular migration in an operational way, the Commission and the Member States are implementing Action Plans for the four main migratory routes: (i) Central Mediterranean; (ii) Western Mediterranean/Atlantic; (iii) Eastern Mediterranean; and (iv) Western Balkans. The

Commission continues to coordinate the implementation of its 10-Point Plan for Lampedusa that was presented on 17 September 2023.

- These action plans outline operational measures with an emphasis on stepping up prevention of irregular migration, protection of those on the move and enhancing management of flows in cooperation with key countries of origin and transit. This is a part of the Team Europe strategy that works with partners along whole routes, in order to improve migration management and save lives.

Central Mediterranean

In the first eight months of 2024, the number of irregular border crossings (41 250) along the route more than halved (-64%) compared to the same period last year (Frontex data).

Regional actions

- **Strengthened capacities of Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia:** €318 million migration package was adopted in June 2023. New regional programmes: fighting against the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking in human beings in North Africa (€18 million in Tunisia, €20 million in Egypt), as well as legal migration action for North Africa (€18 million for Egypt, Tunisia, also Morocco).
- **Regional Development and Protection Programme in North Africa** is under implementation (€28 million; 2023-2024) and a next phase is planned to start early 2025.
- A new **2024 migration package** for Southern Neighbourhood worth €208 million is expected to be adopted in November.
- The assisted voluntary returns from North African countries to the Sub-Saharan countries of origin have intensified significantly through EU-funded operations over the past four years, reaching more than 17 700 in 2024 by the end of August 2024 (compared to around a total of 5 000 in 2020 and 13 000 in 2023).

Tunisia: key steps

- Implementation continues on all pillars of the strategic and global partnership agreed in July 2023, including migration. **Next steps:** Inter service mission in October to discuss the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Tunisian authorities.
- Of the **€105 million** earmarked for Tunisia in 2023, €53 million have been contracted so far – focus on protection, assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin, and border management, as well as migrant smuggling (ASOP Tunisia). Engines and spare parts provided to the Garde Nationale Maritime are keeping at least 17 boats operational. Equipment such as cameras, generators, lifejackets, forklifts, as

well as cars and scanners were delivered. **Next steps:** €30 million contract for the supply of the coastal surveillance system will be signed before the end of the year.

- January-August 2024, 32 603 irregular migrants were **intercepted by Tunisian authorities** at sea and in the coastal areas, up 13% compared to the same period last year. Overall, in 2023, 43 394 irregular migrants were intercepted by Tunisian authorities up 58% compared to 2022. (Source: UNHCR)
- Since 2023, UNHCR Tunisia has been able to register 13 679 asylum-seekers and refugees and finalise over 1 000 refugee status determinations supported by the EU. Recent decision by TU to suspend UNHCR refugee registrations is being raised with the government, in particular the need for an interim solution as the country sets up its own system.

Egypt: key steps

- Implementation continues on all pillars of the Joint Declaration on the EU-Egypt Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, signed by Presidents von der Leyen and Al-Sisi on 17 March 2024 including migration. Commissioner Johansson adopted a joint press statement with Egypt in September 2024 in Cairo, underlining the shared commitment to a comprehensive approach to migration, linking migration to development, preventing irregular migration, facilitating dignified and sustainable return, readmission and reintegration and pathways for regular migration.
- Two Search and Rescue boats delivered to the Egyptian authorities in 2024.
- Continued implementation of action on Protection and Resilience of Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Migrants in Vulnerable Situations (€28 million)
- 4th Migration Dialogue and 2nd Security Dialogue held mid-July 2024 in Cairo
- **€200 million** are foreseen until 2027 to support priorities in the area of migration, in line with the comprehensive approach and Egypt's needs.
- Launch of the €12.2 million Joint UN-Egypt-EU Programme for Migrants and Refugees on 30 September 2024 to strengthen the protection and resilience of persons in need, especially women, youth and minors, as well as to provide livelihood support to the host communities.
- Ministry of Defence delegation **visited Frontex HQ** on 9-10 October to explore further avenues for cooperation.
- **Delivery of a third Search and Rescue boat** for Egypt planned to be completed by mid-October 2024.
- €82 million top-up to the ongoing border management project with an enhanced focus on the Egypt/Libya land border planned to be finalised by end-2024.

- **Signature of the €20 million anti-smuggling project** planned before end-2024, with a focus on reinforcing Egypt's capacities to detect and prosecute criminal networks engaged in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and protection of victims of trafficking...
- Consultations with Egypt ongoing on the **2nd EUAA-Egypt Roadmap** for Cooperation (2024-2026) focusing on the support that the EUAA can provide during the transition to an asylum system autonomously managed by Egypt's authorities (currently UNHCR-led system).
- Signature of **working arrangements negotiated with Europol and Cefpol** envisaged early 2025.
- **Three workshops to be organised in November** in Cairo: On programming of the €200 million for migration under the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership; on legal migration (including Talent Partnership Roadmap); on returns, readmission and reintegration, visa challenges and residency permits

Libya: key steps

- Since increased engagement, including three joint COM/EEAS technical missions and EU participation in the Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum hosted by Libya in July 2024, Libya has **removed the cost of exit visas** for voluntary humanitarian returns from the country, **expanded UN agencies' access** to detention centres and disembarkation points, and progressed in the operationalisation of the EU-funded **Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC)**. *Next steps:* A joint technical COM/EEAS mission will visit Libya for the third time before the end of the year to deepen the technical dialogue and assess progress on the ground. Further progress will be sought in the area of alternatives to detention, in particular children, to make the MRCC fully operational, to strengthen the management of the eastern and southern borders, regularisation of migrant workers and the stabilisation of the population of Sudanese refugees.
- January-August 2024, 14 778 people were reportedly **intercepted by the Libyan authorities**, up 39% compared to the same period last year. In 2024 so far, January-22 September, 27 764 arrivals from Libya to Italy were recorded, marking a 26% decrease year on year (Source: UNHCR).
- January-20 September 2024, 10 311 **voluntary humanitarian returns** took place from Libya.

Countries of origin

- **Bangladesh** The second Migration and Mobility Dialogue with Bangladesh, covering all aspects of migration including legal migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, took place on 5 March 2024, back-to-back with the Joint Working Group on return and reintegration of Bangladesh nationals (and the 2nd Talent Partnership Roundtable).

Ongoing inception phase of the NDICI financed Talent Partnership umbrella project for Bangladesh (€3 million), to be implemented by ILO (supported through an additional €1.8 million under the Skills21 project; both signed in July 2024).

- **Pakistan** The 15th meeting of the EU Pakistan Joint Readmission Committee took place on 24 April 2024, followed by the 2nd Migration and Mobility Dialogue on 25 April 2024, and preceded by the 2nd Talent Partnership Roundtable held on 23 April 2024: contract negotiations are ongoing on the Talent Partnership project (€3 million) with signature expected October 2024. Additional project, on “Sustainable reintegration of returnees and improved migration management in Pakistan” (€7 million) expected to be signed in October 2024.

Next rounds of Migration and Mobility Dialogues with Bangladesh and Pakistan will be organised in Q2 2025.

Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route

According to Frontex, by the end of August, the total number of arrivals in the Canary Islands was more than 25 500, an increase of 123% in comparison with the same period last year, while the Western Mediterranean route recorded an 8% drop in arrivals compared to last year.

Morocco: key steps

- Provision of **€152 million of budget support** (so far two tranches for a total of €79.6 million paid), with **positive results in border management** and the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking, as well as integration of migrants.
- Additional funding (approximately €40 million) has been allocated between 2021 and 2023, supporting programmes across all areas of migration.
- An **Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership** (ASOP) with Morocco was launched in July 2022 with Frontex and Europol enhanced cooperation ongoing and the possible launch of negotiations for working arrangements in 2024. **Next steps:** Frontex Liaison Officer (FLO) to be deployed in Spring 2025. Moroccan part of the Regional Anti-Smuggling Programme will be developed in the course of 2025.
- Between January 2023 and August 2024, **2 073 people have been returned** from Morocco to their country of origin with EU support.

Mauritania: key steps

- Following President von der Leyen’s visit to strengthen the partnership with Mauritania, marked by a Joint Press Statement in February 2024, and followed by the launch by Commissioner Johansson of the Migration Partnership in March 2024, implementation, including of the support package, is advancing.
- All components of the **€210 million package** will be contracted by end 2024, including support for migration management (notably support to forcibly displaced Malians in the East of the country), security, humanitarian aid, entrepreneurship and opportunities for youth. Contract for €20 million on support for refugees signed in July. Contract for the €25 million on maritime border surveillance signed on 28th August 2024. **Next steps:** proposed €100 million action for budget support, scheduled to go through the NDICI Committee in October for adoption by the College in November and possible disbursement of the first tranche still in 2024.
- On 11 September, the Commission adopted a harmonised list of supporting **documents for visa applicants** from Mauritania.
- Follow up on all elements of the migration partnership have been assured through technical missions and political level contacts, most recently Commissioner Johansson and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania in September in the margins of UNGA. **Next steps:** Migration and Mobility Dialogue with Mauritania will be scheduled in Q4 2024.

Senegal: key steps

- Building on earlier cooperation focused mainly on engagement with Frontex and on readmission following the proposal of visa measures under article 25a of the Visa Code, in the last two years the engagement on migration cooperation with Senegal has further expanded. A joint HOME/INTPA mission to Senegal took place on 19-20 September to discuss readmission and other aspects of cooperation on migration.
- **Negotiations on Working Arrangement** between Frontex and the Senegalese National Police are ongoing.
- New package of actions targeting **maritime and land border surveillance** under preparation, including rescue at sea and protection of migrants in general (contracting expected before the end of 2024). This will be complemented by an upcoming regional action “Managing migration better in West Africa” with €100 million for up to 12 countries, including a component on reintegration and a component on anti-smuggling/anti-trafficking (to be adopted by the end of 2024 with implementation starting in 2025).

- **Fight against migrant smuggling** and trafficking in human beings: Common Operational Partnership – Phase 2 started early 2024, as well as action supporting for deployment of a GARSII-2 Unit (Groupes d’Action Rapide – Surveillance et Intervention) in the south-east tackling terrorist threats, organised crime and human/trafficking/migrant smuggling (both actions with budget of €5 million each and implemented by CIVIPOL in consortium with FIIAPP).
- It is supported by **regional cooperation to counter migrant smuggling** and trafficking in human beings in the framework of the Niamey process and action **assisting intelligence services** of Senegal, The Gambia and Mauritania to counter migrant smuggling (€1.2 million and €1.75 respectively, both through the Internal Security Fund).
- In the light of shortcomings in Senegal’s cooperation on **readmission** a decision on restrictive visa measures is pending before the Council. Contacts have been intensified at all levels in Brussels and Dakar.

The Gambia: key steps

- There is comprehensive EU engagement with The Gambia on migration and mobility to address all aspects, including return and readmission, migrant smuggling and trafficking and legal migration including through the Team Europe Initiative on the Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route.
- Cooperation on **returns and readmission**: improvements over the last two years were acknowledged by lifting of the second layer of EU visa measures. However, cooperation is now deteriorating again, notably on charter flights.
- The fourth Joint Working Group (JWG) took place on 17 May 2024. The Gambia received additional funding of €15 million for migration management with the envelope connected to cooperation on migration. **Next steps**: continuous engagement in view of re-establishing cooperation on charter flights, next JWG planned for 17 December 2024.
- **Anti-smuggling**: Common Operational Partnership (COP) for The Gambia increased investigations of smuggling events to prevent departures (€1.4 million under the Internal Security Fund). A new phase of the COP will be financed under the Flexible Mechanism of NDICI.
- **Border management**: there is ongoing support to the Gambian Security Sector Reform for improved Human Security, Migration and Border management with EU contribution of €6 million.
- **Migration, readmission and reintegration** supported by two indicators in a €40 million Budget Support for €5 million.

Eastern Mediterranean

According to Frontex, during first eight months of 2024, irregular border crossings to Greece and Cyprus increased by 39% to 37 163 compared to the same period of 2023 with elevated migratory pressure from Türkiye. During 2024, the sea route to Italy saw a decline of 58%, while arrivals in Greece increased by 172%, particularly on the sea route. The number of irregular arrivals in Cyprus via the Green Line (UN buffer zone) fell by 60%.

Türkiye: key steps

- Engagement with Türkiye on all matters regarding migration in line with the April European Council Conclusions on EU-Türkiye relations. By the end of the year, a €1 billion package for refugees and host communities focused on basic needs, education, health care, border and migration management will be in place.
- Implementation of Individual Measure for ‘Support to Türkiye’s Efforts to Strengthen Border Management at the Eastern and Southeastern Border’, with a total budget of €220 million, funded under IPA 2022 and 2023 through ICMPD.
- Cooperation with Frontex advances – Türkiye’s National Coordination and Risk Assessment Centre (NACORAC) representatives visited Frontex HQ on 29-31 January 2024 with Frontex delegation visiting Ankara on 13-16 May.
- Full and effective implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the EU-Turkey readmission agreement towards all EU Member States remains essential. Following the 2023 EU-Türkiye High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security. Commission envisages to continue regular exchanges with relevant Turkish counterparts.

Lebanon: key steps

- Following the visit of President von der Leyen and President Christodoulides to Lebanon on 2 May, the EU announced a financial support package of **€1 billion for 2024-2027** to improve basic services such as education, social protection and health, for people in Lebanon, including Syrian refugees and host communities, and anti-smuggling and border management. Objectives include also support for voluntary return of Syrian refugees, where possible.
- On 1 August 2024 the **first €500 million** was adopted for 2024 and 2025 to strengthen cooperation in the area of migration, border management and security. Support to the security forces, including strengthening the Lebanese Armed Forces, has focused on funding related to border management.

- In view of the current deteriorating situation in the region, context the Commission is stepping up its humanitarian aid to Lebanon to €104 million in 2024 with the additional €40 million to help those most in need. The Commission is re-assessing targeting its interventions in the health, water sector and education sectors to better address current needs. The Commission is in close contact with Cyprus and Greece to ensure good preparedness and necessary contingency planning.
- **Frontex** has a mandate to start negotiations on working arrangements with relevant authorities of Lebanon. Frontex is implementing EU4BorderSecurity project (ENI, €6.5 million) currently ongoing until April 2025.

Western Balkans

According to Frontex, the number of detections on the Western Balkan route continued to fall significantly in the first eight months of this year and was down 77% (to just over 14 669 irregular border crossings) compared to last year.

Regional actions: key steps

- Strengthened presence of EU agencies – Frontex (new Status Agreements signed with Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and deployments in all countries. **Next steps**: Finalise the negotiations of the Status Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. EUAA: bilateral Roadmaps being renewed with Western Balkan partners, Europol: operational cooperation continuously strengthened.
- €350 million of **migration governance and management** funding under IPA III until the end 2024.
- Regional and bilateral support for border management, includes €7 million IPA Border security programme to improve local border police agencies’ border management capabilities, and €19.2 million supporting effective, protection-sensitive migration management systems in the region.
- The €36 million regional IPA project on **anti-smuggling** focuses on increasing border management capacities and strengthening law enforcement and judicial cooperation against criminal smuggling networks. The project includes opening in January 2025 the first operations room in the region, in Montenegro, to establish interoperable systems and interconnected databases and enhance exchange of information.
- Member States report very satisfactory cooperation on **readmission**. Frontex is helping strengthen implementation of readmission agreements, including third country national clauses, and implementation of bilateral readmission agreements is annually reviewed and discussed with Western Balkan partners.

- **Increased EU support to step up returns from Western Balkan partners:** As part of the 2024 migration package, a regional €13 million project will cover both voluntary and non-voluntary returns, with a focus on strengthening institutional systems and capacities to lead effective and rights-based return management operations.
- **Visa alignment:** significant steps taken since October 2022 have helped reduce irregular arrivals, but most Western Balkan partners still have visa free regimes with third countries causing potential migratory challenges, notably with Türkiye (all of them), China, Russia, and Belarus. Concrete commitments have been secured with all Western Balkans to further align their visa policy as part of their Reform Agendas under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.
- EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs, 28-29 October in Budva (Montenegro) will take stock of progress on the implementation of the EU Action Plan.

TACKLING ROOT CAUSES

The EU and its Member States remain, collectively, the largest provider of official **development assistance** in the world. We continue our close cooperation with UN family, in particular IOM and UNHCR.

- Global Gateway, the EU's investment strategy in support of sustainable infrastructure investments, will have mobilised up to €300 billion by 2027, to boost connectivity and support the green and digital transitions. Over half of the total amount will be invested in Africa, while €77 billion will be devoted to Economic and Investments Plans for the Eastern Partnership, Southern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans.
- The EU is supporting partners in preventing irregular migration through addressing its root causes – including through creating sustainable economic opportunities, vocational education and training, particularly for young people and addressing drivers of migration including poverty, poor governance, the adverse effects of climate change and instability both in countries of origin and transit.

Examples: In *Tunisia*, an EU education programme worth €65 million adopted 2022 improves the match of education and vocational training offers to the labour market needs in Tunisia and Europe. In *Egypt*, “EU Support to Youth Employability and Skills (EU4YES)” worth €25 million adopted 2023 improves technical education and training in line with identified labour market needs and the future of work, including the green and digital transitions. In *Morocco*, the €46 million support programme for the Plan d'Accélération de la Transformation de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et l'Innovation (ESRI Pact) promotes access to quality education. In *West Africa*, the causes of irregular

migration will be addressed through the new Action “Unlocking the potentials of youth in West Africa” to be adopted by end 2024 with €101,6 million for up to 12 countries to improve the inclusion of youth in resilient and climate-smart green economic transitions. In *Senegal*, Youth Budget Support Programme (€70 million) including a specific migration component (addressing reintegration, readmission); agriculture projects promoting employment and support to training and vocation education to enhance skills relevant to the Youth Olympic Games to be held in Dakar in 2026. In *Afghanistan*, the action “Addressing basic needs and supporting livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan – 2024” (€146 million), adopted in July 2024, will address the basic needs and support livelihoods of Afghans, contributing to increased stability, and decreased displacement within Afghanistan and from Afghanistan.

Multilateral engagement and regional process

- The EU supports a number of regional and inter-governmental processes which help to promote the whole-of-route approach: the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process), the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (Khartoum Process), the Silk Route Partnership on Migration (Budapest Process), and the Prague Process (West Balkans, Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia). Since 2018, the EU also supported the Niamey process in West and North Africa to prevent and combat migrant smuggling, as well as trafficking in human beings.
- 11th edition of the EU-IOM Senior Officials Meeting 15 October
- EU participation at the Joint High-Level Meeting of the Rabat and Khartoum processes, “Empowering EU-Africa Cooperation: Innovative Pathways for Skills Mobility” on 16-17 October in Lisbon.
- Board meeting with the participating MSs, coordination meeting with African partners of the Team Europe Initiatives on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean routes and on the Central Mediterranean, 18 October 2024, Lisbon.
- AU-EU Continent-to-Continent Migration and Mobility Dialogue (C2CMMD)’s Senior Officials Meeting, 18 October 2024, Lisbon.
- The 7th Budapest Process Ministerial Conference will take place on 12 November 2024.