

Mauritania

EU engagement to date

The Commission has not engaged with the authorities from Mauritania on readmission cooperation as specific issues have so far not been raised by Member States and the country was not prioritised for EU level engagement due to a relatively low number of return decisions issued annually to its nationals. Article 13 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, to which Mauritania is party, prescribes the commitment of the partner countries to cooperate with the EU in readmitting its own nationals.

Cooperation on readmission

In 2019, 1 315 Mauritanian nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 70 effectively returned to Mauritania, resulting in a **return rate** of 5%. Member States submitted 43 readmission requests to Mauritanian authorities, who issued 10 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 23%.

A total of nine Member States report having approached the authorities of Mauritania for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019.

Two Member States report having **bilateral agreements/arrangements** in place with Mauritania, whose relevant provisions are often and very often respected.

More than half of responding Member States representing more than two thirds of all return decisions issued to Mauritanian nationals assess the overall cooperation with Mauritania in the **identification procedure** as poor or very poor. This is largely due to consular interviews being organised even in cases where sufficient evidence is provided and to biometric identification, which is available, but not conducted at all. At the same time four Member States, accounting for a third of return decisions, assess the cooperation as good or very good.

This is reflected in five Member States having an established routine (or a procedure formalised in an arrangement) for cooperation on identification which is often to always effectively implemented with Mauritanian diplomatic missions for four of them.

For half of Member States consular interviews are very often or always performed upon their request as necessary. This is never the case for a third of the responding Member States. Most Member States which experienced interviews, consider their outcomes as satisfactory and acceptable, but two find them unsatisfactory.

One Member State, accounting for two thirds of return decisions issued, confirms that Mauritanian authorities are always available to organise identification missions and with very good outcomes. Due to small caseloads, the remaining Member States have not approached Mauritania concerning possible missions.

Five Member States inform that interviews are also very often or always requested by Mauritanian authorities in cases where sufficient evidences to establish nationality was already provided (e.g. valid or expired travel documents).

Evidence accepted includes expired passports and several type of other documents for most Member States, but very rarely information extracted from the VIS. It is not possible for interviews to take place by phone or videoconference.

According to one-third of the responding Member States the **issuance of travel documents** often or always takes place in a timely manner (as soon as a week from confirmation of nationality, for one Member State). At the same time other three Member States, where more than two-thirds of all Mauritanian nationals ordered to leave are to be found, inform that timely issuance occurs rarely or never.

While more than half of responding Member States have not attempted to return by **charters flights**, they appear to be accepted for two Member States (with permission to land required for one of them) and not accepted for another two. In case of returns by **scheduled flights**, the same Member State signalled that Mauritania require that escorts must return by the same flight.

In general, one third of responding Member States have assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as stable since 2015. Three considered it as satisfactory, improved or good, and the same number as deteriorated, impossible to assess or consider that there is no cooperation.

With a total of 1 315 Mauritanian nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Mauritania ranks 37th amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, one third of the Member States engaged with Mauritania, and submitted a small number of readmission request. No jointly agreed procedures are in place at EU level and the two bilateral agreements/arrangements in place are often respected. While half of the responding Member States have an established business routine with Mauritania, cooperation on identification and issuance of travel documents is poor in those Member States where two thirds of Mauritanian nationals ordered to leave were found. Biometric evidence although usable, or VIS information is not taken into account in the identification procedure and consular interviews, where conducted, are also taking place for documented cases. For a more effective and predictable readmission cooperation, the identification procedure could be improved, including on the basis of biometric evidence and VIS information, the use of consular interviews with all requesting Member States, as well as the organisation of identification missions, and travel documents could be issued in a timely manner. Improvements could be brought by further acceptance of charter flights. This should improve the issuance rate of travel documents, encourage Member States to submit more readmission requests and result in a higher return rate.