

Somalia

EU engagement to date

There is no EU-level engagement with Somalia on readmission. Limited bilateral cooperation is in place at operational level with some Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. Article 13 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, to which Somalia is party, prescribes the commitment of the partner countries to cooperate with the EU in readmitting its own nationals.

Cooperation on readmission:

In 2019, 5 885 Somali nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 235 effectively returned to Somalia resulting in a **return rate** of 4%. Member States submitted 316 readmission requests to Somalian authorities, who issued 19 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 6%.

A total of 11 Member States reported having approached the authorities of Somalia for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019.

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

Among the responding Member States, three - representing 11% of the return decisions issued, assessed the overall cooperation with Somalia in the **identification procedure** as good, four - representing 25% - as average, noting difficulties in cooperating with the diplomatic representations, restrictions on forced returns and on the region of return. The remaining four Member States, representing more than half of the return decisions issued in relation to Somali nationals, assessed cooperation as poor or very poor, with lack of response and difficulties with the acceptance of evidence. Interviews are organised upon request for half of the responding Member States, and in some cases they can take place by phone. Interviews might also be required even though the necessary evidence is provided, as reported by half of the responding Member States.

According to four Member States, representing one third of the return decisions issued, the **issuance of travel documents** rarely or never takes place in a timely manner. One Member State, standing for 10% of return decisions issued, reported the issuance happening timely once the identification is confirmed. The remaining six Member States, accounting for nearly half return decisions issued, were not able to provide this info – in some cases due to the identification procedure never being completed, in other cases because a Member State travel document is used.

Additional elements other than nationality, such as health, family links, region of origin, and whether the return is voluntary are often taken into account by Somalia when deciding whether to issue travel documents or not.

Somalia might impose **restrictions to readmission upon arrival** of persons who are to be legally returned in the form of final verification of nationality or the family situation in the EU.

Five Member States reported that a travel document or laissez-passer issued by Member States are always accepted, in most cases in combination with prior approval.

Only one Member State reported that **charter flights** are accepted, with restrictions on the number of returnees and the issuance of the landing permit, while 6 reported not having attempted return via charter flights.

In general, Member States have assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as poor, four Member States reported that cooperation has improved since 2015, three that it has remained stable, three assessed cooperation as poor and one as satisfactory.

With a total of 5 885 Somali nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Somalia ranks 20th amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, one third of Member States interact with Somalia on a relatively high number of readmission requests though only a fraction (under 10%) of return decisions issued. No jointly agreed procedures are in place at EU level, with two Member States having bilateral agreements/arrangements in place, whose relevant provisions are often respected. For Members States with more than half of the return decisions issued, difficulties prevail in the identification procedure, namely in lack of responses and non-acceptance of evidence. Travel documents are rarely issued in a timely manner. Member States experience difficulties with forced returns and restrictions to readmission are imposed upon arrival. Furthermore, charter flights' acceptance is limited to one Member State, with restrictions also in place. For an enhanced cooperation on readmission, the identification procedures would need to be improved, by accepting relevant evidence and responding in a timely manner to all Member States, and be followed through swiftly with issuing travel documents, in all cases and for all Member States. This should result in an increased caseload processed, a better issuance rate for travel documents and eventually a higher return rate.