



Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat

**Brussels, 18 April 2024**

**DOCUMENT PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE  
TO THE PUBLIC (21.06.2024)**

**WK 5625/2024 INIT**

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**WORKING DOCUMENT**

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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations

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N° prev. doc.:	WK 3934/2024 INIT
Subject:	Revised Action file "Mauritania - Strengthening cooperation on migration"

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Delegations will find attached the revised action file ""Mauritania - Strengthening cooperation on migration".

Revised action file      **Mauritania - Strengthening cooperation  
on migration**

18 April 2024

**Specific objectives**

The parties will strengthen the regular dialogue on the issues and challenges of migration and forced displacement, based on reciprocity, which will provide a framework for agreeing on joint objectives and actions as well as joint recommendations in view of better organising legal migration and mobility, promoting well-managed mobility, preventing and managing irregular migration – including through the creation of opportunities for the youth, better managing the borders, combating migrant smugglers and human traffickers, hosting refugees and promoting international protection, including of asylum seekers, while at the same time providing support to host communities, facilitating the return of Mauritanian nationals who do not have the right to stay in the EU, while respecting human rights and international standards pertaining to persons in need of international protection, as applicable to Mauritania and the EU.

Since February 2024, Mauritania has taken over the presidency of the African Union. This provides an opportunity to build on the EU's solid partnership with Mauritania to advance the EU-AU partnership, in particular in view to the upcoming EU-AU Ministerial.

**Results:** A first report on progress will be prepared during the 4th quarter of 2024.

**Actions:**

***Developing EU-Mauritania dialogue on the implementation of the Joint Declaration on Migration***

**Action 1:** On the basis of the Joint Declaration, hold dialogue on a regular basis, at high level and at senior official level once a year – alternately in Mauritania and in the EU – and at technical/operational level as appropriate. This dialogue will aim to exchange information and views on legislation, policies and best practices, to continuously explore possibilities for practical cooperation, to formulate policy and operational recommendations and to progressively develop actions - with clear and measurable objectives - in any of the priority areas of the Joint Declaration:

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission/EEAS:** Launch a comprehensive and regular dialogue in the context of the implementation of the Joint Declaration. Establish an action plan/timeline for upcoming dialogue at political and technical level and priority areas and objectives for each meeting. Discuss the action plan with the Mauritanian counterpart.
  - On 7 March Commissioner Johansson and the Mauritanian Minister of Interior and Decentralisation signed a Joint Declaration launching the migration partnership and the migration dialogue.
  - On 8 March, the Commission's mission at technical level took place in Nouakchott to start discussing the draft Action Plan (in terms of process). It was agreed to have regular meetings at technical level every 2-3 months to

work on the content of the Action Plan, which is a different document than the Roadmap of the Joint Declaration. The Action Plan is a living document aiming to keep focus on/facilitate the implementation of the Joint Declaration and will build on the 5 priority areas/ objectives agreed in the Joint Declaration. It will drive the migration dialogues and will serve as a tool to monitor implementation. EU Member States will be closely involved, including through ad-hoc meetings. A technical-level mission to discuss the Action Plan will take place as soon as possible.

**Timeframe :**

- **Q2/Q3 2024:** Establish an action plan/timeline

***Creation of socio-economic opportunities for the youth***

**Action 2:** Address the root causes of irregular migration, primarily by promoting the creation of employment opportunities for the Mauritanian youth, in particular through education, vocational training and investments. Improve the relevant skills and competences of the Mauritanian youth, in particular young women, adapted to the labour market. Increase access to finance and microcredit, training and incubation of enterprises.

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:** EUR 20 million programme<sup>1</sup> under the NDICI (Flexible Mechanism) on Preventing irregular migration in and from Mauritania through reinforcing its youth's and migrants' access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and jobs (validated in November 2022, contracted in 2023).
- **EIB:** 20 million EUR micro-credit for small enterprises

**Timeframe:**

- **Q1/Q2 2025**

***Protection and asylum***

**Action 3:** Strengthen the capacity to identify, register and document asylum seekers in Mauritania while ensuring compliance with the international protection framework. Strengthen reception and protection capacities for asylum seekers and refugees in Mauritania, while guaranteeing the respect for human rights and with particular attention to the most vulnerable. Strengthen access to socio-economic services for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities, and support Mauritania's efforts to implement the commitments made at the World Refugee Forum in 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Project implemented by Agence Française de Développement, IOM and GIZ in support of migrants.

- **Lead actors:**

○ **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

- Exchanges are ongoing with Mauritania and key stakeholders to identify an EUR 2 million project (under EU Home Affairs Funds) to address urgent needs raised by Mauritania in terms of protection capacities (particularly after disembarkations).
- Under the Regional Development and Protection Programme, two projects are currently running for an amount of EUR 3,5 million implemented by UNHCR and IOM, for the registration, documentation and refugee status determination and the solutions - regional programme (NDICI), EUR 5 million to support refugees and host communities in M'Berra.
- Additional EUR 28 million under the NDICI (Flexible Mechanism) for protection and durable solutions for asylum seekers, refugees, and host communities in Mauritania. This is part of the EUR 60 million package under the Flexible Mechanism validated in February 2024, to be contracted in the coming months.

- **Member States:** Support UNHCR, IOM and local NGOs.

**Timeframe :**

- **Q1/Q2 2025**

***Legal migration and mobility***

**Action 4:** Encourage mobility of students, researchers and entrepreneurs. Explore possibilities to enhance circular mobility, by improving information on legal migration opportunities, taking into account the respective labour market situation. Support Mauritanian diaspora networks in Europe and the integration of Mauritanian legal migrants in the country of residence, including with regard to remittances, in the interests of Mauritania's sustainable development.

- **Lead actors:**

○ **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

- There is an ongoing call for proposals under HOME funds (AMIF, which will remain open in 2024), for legal migration projects including mobility schemes (Lot 2) and Support to the EU's migration priorities with partner countries (Lot 1).<sup>2</sup>
- The Commission will assess how Member States have transposed and implemented the Students and Researchers Directive; the Commission will examine if Mauritanian citizens face any obstacles under the scope of this Directive.

**Timeframe :**

- **Q1/Q2 2025**

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<sup>2</sup> Further info at: <https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/calls-for-proposals/cfp-2022>

**Action 5:**

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

- **Schengen coordination, local level:**

**Timeframe :**

- **Q3/Q4 2024**

***Irregular migration, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, return and readmission***

**Action 6:** Step up efforts to prevent irregular migration, including through information and awareness-raising campaigns and border management measures as a key element in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and the protection of the most vulnerable.

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:** The EUR 20 million programme<sup>3</sup> under the NDICI (Flexible Mechanism) on preventing irregular migration in and from Mauritania through reinforcing its youth's and migrants' access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and jobs (validated in November 2022, contracted in 2023), includes an action on improving information on migration.

The regional programme Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration (MPRR, implemented by IOM) is supporting the assisted voluntary returns of migrants from Mauritania to their countries of origin (724 migrants from August 2022 to January 2024).

**Timeframe :**

- **Q3/Q4 2024**

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<sup>3</sup> Project implemented by Agence Française de Développement, IOM and GIZ in support of migrants.

**Action 7:** Combat and prosecute criminal networks engaged in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, including through joint investigations, capacity building of the security services and judicial authorities, as well as operational cooperation.

- **Lead actors:**

o **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

- o Counter-smuggling and anti-trafficking are considered in GAR-SI 3 (Groupes d'Action Rapide – Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel), as part of the EUR 10.5 million programme (NDICI) on control of territory, stability of border areas, and migration management that was adopted in 2022. A Common Operational Partnership (COP) is funded under the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUR 4.5 million), implemented until December 2024. The COP is expected to continue under NDICI, with support from the Flexible Mechanism (EUR 7 million). This is part of the EUR 60 million EUR package of the Flexible Mechanism validated in February 2024.
- o In September 2023, a project was approved under EU funds (AMIF/MPF) for EUR 1.7 million: “the Migration Intelligence Services Partnership to foster Euro-Africa Cooperation (MISPEAC) on anti-migrant smuggling”. It will complement the Common Operational Partnership. The project seeks to promote peer-to-peer collaboration in the common goal of fighting irregular migration along the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes by enhancing intelligence and operational partnerships among Spain, Senegal, The Gambia and Mauritania.
- o Under EU funds (ISF) there is also the NETCOP II (follow-up of NET COP – Networking of Common Operational Partnerships), a project of about EUR 1.9 million focused on establishing an operational network between the Common Operational Partnerships (COP) and Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) in West Africa and the Sahel (including Mauritania) to contribute to the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

o **Member States:**

- o Spanish Guardia Civil will continue to lead the GARS project in Mauritania. [REDACTED]
- o Spanish Policía Nacional will continue to lead the Common Operational Partnership (POC) in Nouakchott. Current phase will run until 31 December 2024.

**Timeframe :**

- o **Q3/Q4 2024**

**Action 8:** With regard to any procedure initiated to return Mauritians illegally staying in Europe to their country of origin, the European Union and Mauritania will strengthen their cooperation on return and readmission and ensure that the rights and dignity of individuals are fully protected and respected, in line with the Samoa agreement.

- **Lead actors:**

- o **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

- Mauritania is not one of the countries assessed in the Commission’s fifth report on readmission cooperation under Article 25a of the Visa Code. Should Mauritania fulfil the criteria for the next report, its cooperation on return and readmission will be assessed in 2025. At this stage, exchanges on return and readmission will take place in the framework of the migration dialogue.

**Timeframe :**

- **Q3/Q4 2024**

***Border management, surveillance and control***

**Action 9:** Strengthen the resources and capacities of the authorities responsible for border management, surveillance and control, including through enhanced cooperation between Mauritania and Frontex in accordance with the needs identified by Mauritania in this field, in particular in terms of equipment and training, and in compliance with its sovereignty.

**- Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:**

A EUR 10.5 million programme (NDICI) on control of territory, stability of border areas, and migration management was adopted in 2022. This was complemented in 2023 with the adoption of another programme (NDICI, EUR 6.4 million) about strengthening the management of land and sea borders. In addition, another EUR 25 million (NDICI, Flexible Mechanism) programme was validated in February 2024 on strengthening operational and border management capacities as well as search, rescue and protection of migrants at sea and on the coast. This is part of the EUR 60 million package under the Flexible Mechanism validated in February 2024, to be contracted in the coming months.

- **Frontex:**

[REDACTED]

Frontex opened an AFIC (Africa Frontex Intelligence community) risk analysis cell in Mauritania in September 2022. AFIC provides a framework for regular knowledge and information sharing in the field of border security (migration flows and cross-border criminality).

The mandate of the Frontex liaison Officer based in Senegal was extended in 2023, so as to cover Mauritania and The Gambia.

- **Member States:**

- Spain will continue to:

- Support the Mauritanian Coastguard’s border surveillance operations ;

- Support the presence of two Mauritanian Liaison Officers (1 Gendarmerie Nationale and 1 Police Nationale) in Guardia Civil's Regional Coordination Center (CCRC);
- Develop joint border surveillance patrols with Mauritanian Security Forces;
- Deliver relevant equipment;
- Deliver relevant training both in border surveillance and border inspection.

**Timeframe :**

- **Q3/Q4 2024**

**Action 10:** Strengthen search and rescue operations.

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS, EU Delegation:** Support to search and rescue will be part of the EUR 25 million (NDICI, Flexible Mechanism) programme that was validated in February 2024 on strengthening operational and border management capacities as well as search, rescue and protection of migrants at sea and on the coast. This is part of the EUR 60 million package of the Flexible Mechanism validated in February 2024, to be contracted in the coming months.
- **Member States:**
- Spain will continue to support Mauritanian Search and Rescue operations (through the aforementioned joint border surveillance patrols with Mauritanian Security Forces).

**Timeframe :**

- **Q3/Q4 2024**



**ANNEX I: Common messages**

**[Strengthening exchanges on migration issues]**

- Underline the strategic interest of Mauritania for the EU, and the comprehensive approach to our cooperation, not only in migration, but also well beyond the migration agenda, including security, fisheries and, more recently, energy.
- Emphasise that in this regard the mobilisation of EUR 210 million for Mauritania is not only to support migration management including the fight against migrant smuggling, promote security and stability, humanitarian aid for refugees and support to host communities, but also to support Global Gateway initiatives, including investments, infrastructure and job creation primarily in the field of energy.
- Welcome the strengthening of relations between the European Union and Mauritania, i.e. the Joint Declaration and underline the importance for the EU and Mauritania to maintain a regular dialogue on migration, following a holistic and human rights-based approach, in order to anchor cooperation in the new framework.
- Stress the importance to already start working on the implementation of the Joint Declaration. Encourage Mauritania to actively engage in the forthcoming discussions to ensure that upcoming projects respond to Mauritania and the EU's needs and priorities.
- Underline the importance of promoting safe, orderly and regular migration on the basis of the Joint Declaration.
- [REDACTED]

**[Border Management]**

- Acknowledge the important efforts Mauritania is already making to strengthen maritime and land borders management; prevent or intercept departures; improve coordination on search and rescue at sea and dismantle criminal networks. Inform Mauritania about EU's preventive approach and increased support in these specific areas, including operational cooperation and the supply of operational equipment.
- [REDACTED]
- Welcome the setting up of a risk analysis unit within the framework of the work carried out by the AFIC; Express the EU's willingness, in accordance with the Joint Declaration, to strengthen its support for the Mauritanian authorities in the area of border management and the fight against migrant smuggling networks.
- [REDACTED]

### **[Fight against migrant smugglers]**

- Encourage Mauritania to adhere to the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, by participating in the Expert meeting on digital smuggling planned for April/May organised jointly by the Commission and Europol, as well as the next International Conference on the Global Alliance to be organised by the Commission on 23 November 2024 (tbc).

### **[Identification of topics for migration cooperation]**

- Underline that, in the perspective of budgetary programming, in particular that of the NDICI— Global Europe with regard to Mauritania, the EU is determined to favour the axes of cooperation best suited to Mauritanian interests.
  - o If relevant, mention the multi-annual indicative programme for Mauritania, 125 million for the period 2021-2024 and specify the three priority areas (strengthening human development, transition to a green and blue economy, and governance including migration)
- Indicate that the EU could notably support the action of the new government in several of the most transformative areas with the greatest impact on the population and support the stability of Mauritania through economic and social recovery.
- Indicate that most of the cooperation in the field of migration between the EU, its Member States and Mauritania will be integrated in the framework of the Joint Declaration, whose objective, amongst others, is to strengthen coordination, coherence and complementarities between the actions financed by the EU and its Member States in the field of migration and forced displacement.

### **[Readmission]**

- Encourage the Mauritanian authorities to take advantage of the regular dialogue to identify measures to progress in the field of readmission and return, both voluntary and non voluntary.
- Insist on the need to improve cooperation in the identification procedures of Mauritanian nationals staying illegally in the EU and the issuing of travel documents for return (voluntary and non voluntary).
- Suggest extending to all EU Member States the good practices in place with some of them (notably, those with established bilateral cooperation).
- Encourage to cooperate on readmission along the lines of the Samoa Agreement.

### **[Protection]**

- Acknowledge the government's positive approach and progressive commitments taken during the Global Refugee Forum to welcoming approximately 150 000 refugees. Express support to assist the authorities in hosting the growing number of refugees in the country as a result of the increasing insecurity and current instability in the neighbourhood (Mali), in line with the commitments they took during the Global Refugee Forum.

- [REDACTED]

## ANNEX II

### Funding overview of the Commission's support to Mauritania in the area of migration

Over EUR 60 million of migration-related projects are currently ongoing in Mauritania. This includes fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking, security and border management, voluntary assisted return, support to refugees, protection and asylum and socio-economic development through jobs creation, professional trainings, access to finance.

In addition to the EUR 60 million mentioned above, President von der Leyen – in her joint mission with Spanish Prime-Minister Sanchez in February 2024 – announced an additional comprehensive package of EUR 210 million to support Mauritania in two main sectors: i) Global Gateway, including green hydrogen and ii) migration, forced displacement and security. [REDACTED]

- EUR 8.7 million - ECHO humanitarian support for the Malian refugees/ people forcibly displaced.
- EUR 22.5 million - African Peace Facility, to strengthen Mauritanian capacities and support fight against terrorism on the Malian border (non-lethal support) accompanied by a Human Rights and justice component.
- EUR 20 million - EIB loans for SMEs in order to support economic opportunities, access to finance and job creation.