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WORKING DOCUMENT

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

N° prev. doc.: WK 10724/2023

Subject: Revised action file: The Gambia - Implementation report

Delegations will find attached "Revised Action file: The Gambia - Implementation report".

Please note that the tracked changes indicate the proposed updates to the text outside of the boxes outlining ongoing/completed and pending actions.

Draft revised Action File -

12 September 2024

THE GAMBIA
IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Specific objectives

The Gambia, as a country of origin and departure towards the Atlantic route, [REDACTED] should be part of a comprehensive and coordinated approach regarding all aspects of migration and mobility towards the EU. That includes:

- Reinforcing engagement with Gambian authorities, both at political and diplomatic level, through high level contacts and technical exchanges.
- Strengthening migration governance and management, by addressing the root causes of irregular migration and promoting legal/labour migration pathways.
- Fighting against trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling.
- Reinforcing border management by improving cooperation between Frontex and Member States with the Gambian authorities.
- Enhancing effective cooperation on readmission and returns, as well as the sustainable reintegration of migrants returned along the migratory routes.

Political and technical approaches

Action 1: Continue to engage with the Gambian authorities, especially in the aftermath of a full electoral cycle. To that end, pursue high-level contacts and share common lines on migration issues aiming at (i) recalling the main objective of substantially and sustainably improving cooperation on readmission on the basis of the EU readmission arrangement¹, and (ii) continuing regular technical exchanges (in the "Joint Working Group" [JWG] format established by the administrative arrangement on readmission cooperation).

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS and Member States:**

- Continue to engage with the Ambassador of The Gambia to the EU, Pa Musa Jobarteh, appointed in April 2023 and indicated by The Gambia as the focal point in readmission matters.
- Engage with the Gambian authorities for preparing the ground for constructive discussions at the Joint Working Group in October 2023.
- Continue operational cooperation resumed in March 2022, and improve it in line with JWG operational conclusions of October 2022 and March 2023
- [REDACTED]

¹ Good practices between the Government of The Gambia and the European Union for the efficient operation of the identification and return procedures of persons without authorisation to stay, doc 8570/18.

- **Lead actors :**
 - **EEAS:**
 - [REDACTED]
 - Facilitate discussions and cooperation at political level whenever needed.
 - Ensure consistency with all other dimensions of EU external action with our partner.
 - **Commission and Member States:**
 - Identify additional support for socio-economic development and possible funding to further strengthen the Migration Partnership with The Gambia and address the root causes of irregular migration such as supporting the creation of economic opportunities with special emphasis on the integration of women in employment, training and remittance management.
 - Involve in bilateral projects, including participation in the Good Governance framework of the TEI.
 - Consider developing a structured framework for mobility schemes, including diaspora engagement and mobility, and further reduction of the cost of remittances.
- **Timeframe:**
 - **Ongoing**

Pending

- ➔ Unleashing the potential of youth in West Africa / Individual measure for West Africa, Action 2 (NDICI AAP 2024 planned to be adopted, EUR 101,6 million for up to 12 countries including The Gambia). The overall objective is to improve the inclusion of youth in resilient and climate-smart green economic transitions that address the root causes of irregular migration in West African countries. The decision should be adopted by the end of 2024 and implementation should start in 2025.
- ➔ Flexible Mechanism “Migration and Development in The Gambia”. One component aims to promote youth employability and strengthen The Gambia’s human capital, in view of improving the possibility for young Gambians to legally access qualified job opportunities within the country and abroad (~EUR 4 million with ENABEL) – Proposal development ongoing. Signature of the contract foreseen for the first semester of 2025.

Reinforce border management

Action 3: Examine the need and operational interest to strengthen the Common Operational Partnership (COP) project with The Gambia, including by securing the continuation of the support via COP2. [REDACTED]. Reinforce cooperation in border management and strengthen capacities of the Gambian authorities, especially the Gambian navy, including the launch of joint coast guard patrols, and the donation of operational equipment.

- **Lead actors: Commission, EU Delegation, Member States, Frontex:**
 - Joint DE-ES action: Germany plans to donate boats to the Gambian government and has expressed interest in collaborating with the Guardia Civil to organize training in the handling of the boats.

- DE: Advanced planning aiming at increasing Gambian capacity on maritime security including SAR through providing vessels in close cooperation with ES, providing the respective naval training.
- Frontex: The mandate of FLO Senegal has been extended to also cover The Gambia (and Mauritania) in order to provide the Agency with better coverage of the third countries directly involved in the Atlantic Migratory Route. [REDACTED]

- **Timeframe:**
 - **Ongoing**

Ongoing/Completed

➔ “Support to the Gambian SSR process for improved security, migration and border management” (DCAF - EUR 2 million) - [NDICI AAP 2022]

Pending

➔ Flexible Mechanism “Migration and Development in The Gambia”. One component aims at strengthening the Gambia’s operational capacity in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, including, when relevant, by the provision of relevant tools, equipment and/or infrastructure to government offices and border management posts (based on needs and feasibility assessment). (~EUR 3.5 million – discussion on Implementing Partner ongoing – with funding decision likely to be still adopted in 2024, contracting foreseen later in 2025).

➔ In March 2023, Frontex's management board authorised the deployment of a liaison officer covering The Gambia (as well as Senegal and Mauritania) in order to, inter alia, address departures on the Atlantic Migratory Route. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Measures to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

Action 4: Support relevant Gambian authorities in countering migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and dismantling criminal networks in compliance with international human rights law, also building on the renewed EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling and the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025.

- **Commission, EU Delegation, Member States:**
 - MEUR 1.4 of funding through the Internal Security Fund (ISF) was allocated for a COP project against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. Consider options for funding a possible second phase of the project.

- Annual Action programmes 2022 and 2023 for The Gambia were adopted by the Commission in conformity with the MIP. They include actions (EU contribution: MEUR 6 and Budget Support MEUR 40) on supporting the Gambian Security Sector Reform process for improved Security, Migration and Border management, as well as improving governance on migration management. These actions are also relevant for the fight against smuggling of migrants and Trafficking in Human Beings. Contracts under AAP 2022 are to be signed in July/August 2023, while the financing agreement for the AAP 2023 is expected to be signed last quarter of 2023.
- Involvement in the framework of measures to combat migrant smuggling / bilateral projects, following the Commission's possible future calls for proposals in this field (the next call is planned for launch in 2024). DE: measures of the German Federal Police supporting Gambian Immigration Department, with focus on capacities of the Gambian border guards on detecting fraud documents and coastal security. ES: Civil Guard joint patrols (since 2020), with the Gambian Navy (for maritime patrols) and the Gambian Immigration Department (for land patrols).
 - NL: PROMIS project which aims to improve capacity for investigating and prosecuting trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, improving regional and international cooperation regarding trafficking in human beings and smuggling, and improving protection and human rights of migrants in countries of origin and during migration. The project applies a gender lens and works to enhance capacities to apply a gender-sensitive approach to migration policies, migrant protection measures and law enforcement.
- **Timeframe:**
 - **Q4 2023:** Identify further lines of work in the fight against migrant smuggling and how a mutual collaboration between Member States and the Gambian authorities could build on this.

Ongoing/Completed

- ➔ While funding for Common Operational Partnership (COP) was initially foreseen under ISF, it was made available under the 2024 NDCI Flexible Mechanism.
- ➔ COP for The Gambia allows Government to increase investigations on smuggling events and to prevent departures. (Spanish Police - EUR 1.5 million; the project will finish in December 2024)
- ➔ Fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings is part of the COP activities aimed at strengthening the Gambia's operational capacity. Needs have been identified in particular as regards capacity building activities for the Gambian officials of the Joint Office (Common Operational Partnership - Gambia Immigration Department COP- GID), the Prosecutor's office, the Risk Analysis Cell (RAC), the main immigration posts officers (Tanji and Barra) and the personnel from the airport and investigators from the National Committee on Anti Trafficking. It will also cover activities strengthening the immigration posts of Barra and Tanji (north and south of the Gambian coast) fundamental enclaves for the fight against the smuggling of migrants (SoM).

Pending

- ➔ Flexible Mechanism “Migration and Development in The Gambia”. One component aims at strengthening the Gambia’s operational capacity in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, including, when relevant, by the provision of relevant tools, equipment and/or infrastructure to government offices and border management posts (based on needs and feasibility assessment). (~EUR 3.5 million – discussion on Implementing Partner ongoing – with funding decision likely to be still adopted in 2024, contracting foreseen later in 2025). Since COP is combatting Trafficking/Smuggling, it is also mentioned under Action 5.
- ➔ Managing migration better in West Africa/ Individual measure for West Africa, Action 1 (NDICI AAP 2024 to be adopted, EUR 100 million for up to 12 countries, including The Gambia). It includes a component on Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking of Human Beings of EUR 15 million, aimed at promoting the development of an efficient governance architecture to combat trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants at the national and regional level: the decision should be adopted by the end of 2024 and implementation should start in 2025.

Action 5: Develop and raise awareness campaigns about legal and safe pathways and raise awareness of the risks of irregular migration for Gambian nationals, countering the narrative of smugglers and traffickers.

- **Lead actors:**
 - **Commission, EU Delegation:**
 - Consider mapping and developing awareness campaigns through (social) media and events in The Gambia, specially aimed at youth. Diaspora engagement in this field could bring positive and concrete results.
 - Support awareness raising and information campaigns on the risks related to irregular migration and on available legal pathways.
 - A new regional campaign has been selected with EU-funding of MEUR 1.4 through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for Senegal, the Gambia and Niger: “INFORMA: INformation, FORMation et Migration en Afrique de l’Ouest”. It is implemented by a consortium of associations from BE, ES, FR, IT (including COSPE, Carta di Roma and the European Journalist Federation) and it builds upon the project in Senegal “Nouvelles Perspectives”.
- **Timeframe:**
 - **Q1 2024:** Assess the actions carried out and their results.

Ongoing/Completed

- ➔ INFORMA - INformation, FORMation et Migration en Afrique de l’Ouest – Ongoing Regional Project (~EUR 1.4 million – COSPE & consortium, duration until end of April 2025): activities in Gambia consist of training on “Migration reporting” to media representatives.

Cooperation on returns and readmission

Action 6: Continue enhanced contacts at technical level – involving the Commission, Frontex (including EURLO), EEAS/Delegation and EU Member States as relevant – to improve implementation of the EU readmission arrangement, consolidate progress and further improve cooperation in all phases of the return and readmission process. [REDACTED]

- **Lead actors:**
 - **Commission, EEAS/Delegation and Member States:**
 - Commission to continue the meetings of the Joint Working Group under the readmission arrangement and the technical exchanges with the focal point.
- **Timeframe:**
 - [REDACTED]

Ongoing/Completed

- ➔ State and Resilience Building Contract 4 – Budget Support (SRBC4) [NDICI AAP 2023], total EU contribution of EUR 40 million for 4 sectors. Two specific performance indicators on migration (one related to the management of readmission requests and one related to return and reintegration), amounting EUR 5 million.
- ➔ Joint Working Group (JWG) take place twice a year since end 2022. Latest fourth JWG took place on 17 May 2024. Monitoring exchanges with the Focal point take place.

Action 7: Provide on-the-spot support to Member States' cooperation on the readmission of Gambian nationals, through enhanced cooperation between Member States (e.g. at the level of political counsellors in the Embassies). Ensure the involvement of the EURLO and the EMLO, by holding regular meetings of the local information exchange network to deal with migration related issues and readmission, and to increase alignment and coordination within the EU position as expressed in the Joint Working Group meetings. Ensure the extension of the EURLO's mandate beyond 2023.

- **Lead actors:**
 - **EU Delegation:**
 - Hold regular exchanges on migration, including on readmission, at adequate level, e.g. at political counsellors' level.
 - **EURLO (+Member States):**
 - Continue assisting the Member States to advance on pending readmission cases (completing and clarifying on the evidence and facilitating the interviews, when necessary) and in the organization of return operations;
 - **EMLO:**
 - Report on this activity in the framework of the EMLO monthly report available on the IPCR portal; bring the discussions on best practices, challenges and proposals to the Joint Working Group established under Article 12 of the readmission arrangement.

- **Member States:**
 - Notify timely and with the information necessary, as per the readmission arrangement, each return of any type to the EURLO.
 - **IT:** Since 2016, a long-term mission of two liaison officers from the Immigration Department of The Gambia has been operating in IT as part of a bilateral Memorandum with the Italian Department of Public Security. The mission benefits from funding from Frontex. The two Gambian liaison officers carry out identification interviews throughout the Italian territory. COM proposed that the liaison officers perform short-term ID missions in other Member States to increase the effectiveness of the deployment, which has been refused by The Gambia. The long-term mission to IT was prolonged until January 2024.

Pending
 → [Redacted text block]

Action 8: Ensure that all Member States make use of Frontex Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) for returns from the EU; encourage coordination of national authorities of the different reintegration supports/initiatives; envisage further supporting reintegration through community-based long-term reintegration and capacity building.

- **Lead actors:**
 - **Commission:**
 - The Migration Protection Return and Reintegration (MPRR) in Sub-Saharan Africa MEUR 170 was adopted in 2022 and includes The Gambia (contract expected to be signed before end of July 2023, retroactivity of costs covered since August 2022).
 - Explore ways to enhance reintegration via additional community-based or structural support.
 - **Member States:**
 - Ensure a close cooperation between bilateral reintegration projects and the Frontex' JRS service provider, as well as other reintegration programmes, such as the "Returning to New Opportunities" programme led by DE.
 - **Frontex:**
 - Continue JRS activities and enhance capacity adequate to the pace of return operations and provide support to MS within the framework of JRS.
 - [Redacted text block]

- [REDACTED]
- **Timeframe:**
 - **Ongoing**

Ongoing/Completed

- ➔ Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration (MPRR) regional MIP for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) 2022-2027 implemented by IOM (NDICI AAP 2022, EUR 263.4 million for 16 countries including The Gambia): this programme is the successor of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative and since August 2022 focuses on the protection of vulnerable migrants within SSA, and support of assisted voluntary return and sustainable reintegration for returnees in the region, through a rights-based and comprehensive approach. Current MPRR contract with IOM covers for assisted voluntary returns until 31 March 2025 and will be extended.
- ➔ FRONTEX: Provision of post-arrival and reintegration assistance to Gambian nationals – Joint Reintegration Services (~ EUR 0.7 million – Caritas Gambia - Budget allocated on a yearly basis).

Pending

- ➔ Flexible Mechanism “Migration and Development in The Gambia”. One component is on community-based and psycho-social reintegration support to returnees. This component aims, on the one hand, at providing reintegration assistance to returnees in the form of community-based projects. On the other hand, this component aims at strengthening the provision of Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) services to returnees in need of such type of support by building the capacity of the local authorities/services and of the local communities. (EUR 4.5 million IOM) - Proposal development ongoing. Signature of the contract foreseen for the first semester of 2025.
- ➔ Managing migration better in West Africa/ Individual measure for West Africa, Action 1 (NDICI AAP 2024 to be adopted, EUR 100 million for up to 12 countries, including The Gambia). It includes a component on reintegration, aiming at contributing to the sustainable reintegration of returnees and promoting the development of an efficient governance architecture to combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants at the regional level): the decision should be adopted by the end of 2024 and implementation should start in 2025.

Action 9: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
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- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

ANNEX: Common messages

[General messages]

- Highlight the opportunities for strengthening the EU's relationship with The Gambia, and for providing social, economic and political support in a context of consolidation of democracy in the aftermath of the local and legislative elections, and two years after the presidential.
- Welcome the appointment of the Gambia's Ambassador to the EU as the focal point on migration matters and thereby opening a regular channel of communication on this important matter at the EU level.
- Welcome the support given by The Gambia in the framework of the resolutions adopted at the UN General Assembly on the conflict in Ukraine and recall, where appropriate, that the European Union welcomes and provides shelter to all persons on Ukrainian territory, regardless of their nationality.
- Underline the importance for the EU and The Gambia to maintain a permanent dialogue on migration, following a holistic and human rights-based approach, in order to anchor cooperation in a jointly defined and mutually beneficial framework.

[Migration Governance]

- Starting from 2019, the flow of Gambian migrants to the EU began decreasing significantly compared to the peak in arrivals reached in 2016. However, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] -the numbers have been increasing drastically during the past years. From 540 arrivals in 2021 to 9247 arrivals in 2023 and already over 10 000 in the first quarter of 2024.
- Underline the EU's readiness to strengthen its cooperation on the field of migration, in particular considering possible support to the Gambian Diaspora Strategy, which is currently being developed.
- However, it should be stressed that this strengthening must be based on constructive cooperation between the EU and The Gambia on all migration-related issues.
- Recall also the possibility of adding to already existing projects, those aimed at addressing root causes such as creation of economic opportunities and promoting alternatives to perilous routes of irregular migration through legal pathways. The Gambia already benefits from the EU-funded regional programmes "Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa Phase II" (FMM II) and the "Intra African Academic Mobility Scheme", and is one of the 7 countries under the 'Platform for Remittances, Investments and Migrants' Entrepreneurship in Africa' (PRIME)

[Readmission]

- To state that, in the context in which the European Union finds itself, it is now crucial to guarantee the dignified and sustainable return of persons who do not have the right to stay, in accordance with the commitments under international law.
- Indicate that the return ratio of Gambian nationals in 2021 was 8 %. 2170 removal orders were issued in 2022, with a return ratio of 13%. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

• [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

[Reintegration]

- Underline the EU efforts to ensure sustainable reintegration for returnees, in line with 2021 EU Voluntary Return and Reintegration Strategy. To date, already 469 Gambians have received support from the Joint Reintegration Services of Frontex. We do understand the concerns of The Gambia and the importance attached to reintegration. Beyond individual reintegration, other options might be considered to further strengthen capacities and to provide support to community-based projects to accompany increased arrivals from the EU.

[Combating migrant smuggling networks and trafficking in human beings].

- Welcome the good cooperation on border management, including smuggling and trafficking under EU-funded initiatives.
- Underline the interest of the EU in strengthening cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings along the entire Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes, and to enquire about additional needs of the Gambian authorities in this regard and the level of implementation of existing laws and procedures to fight migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.