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WORKING DOCUMENT

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

N° prev. doc.: WK 16821/2023 INIT

Subject: Revised action file: Tunisia - Implementation report

Delegations will find attached "Revised action file: Tunisia - Implementation report".

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

Operational Coordination Mechanism for the External Dimension of Migration

MOCADEM

Revised Action file

TUNISIA

12 September 2024

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Specific objectives

Continue dialogue and intensified cooperation with Tunisian authorities on overall migration issues, including in the framework of the [EU-Tunisia](#) Memorandum of Understanding signed on 16 July 2023, in order to notably:

- Prevent irregular departures from, as well as irregular arrivals to, Tunisia, strengthen counter-smuggling cooperation and border management, notably through the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership, and increase search and rescue efforts;
- Reinforce protection of those in need;
- Increase assisted voluntary returns from Tunisia and sustainable reintegration in sub-Saharan Africa;
- Strengthen return, readmission and reintegration cooperation between Tunisia and the EU;
- ~~Highlight the importance the EU attaches to legal migration, and develop a successful, mutually beneficial Talent Partnership.~~ Highlight the importance the EU attaches to legal migration in line with the mutual needs of Tunisia and the EU Member States, to the benefit of sectors of activity and occupations jointly identified

The protection of human rights of all migrants and the full respect of international law are guiding principles for EU engagement.

Joint priorities on migration have been spelled out in the Joint Press Statement following the visit of Commissioner Johansson on 27 April [2023](#), which identifies three key areas of action:

- 1) Operational Partnership on anti-smuggling;
- 2) Protection and support of voluntary return of irregulars from Tunisia to countries of origin;
- 3) Establishing a Talent Partnership on legal migration.

These priorities have then been further developed under the [EU-Tunisia](#) Memorandum of Understanding, notably under the pillar on migration and mobility.

To implement these objectives and agreed actions, enhanced coordination within and between MS and EU services, and between capitals and Tunis, will be needed. A thorough understanding of the migratory situation in Tunisia is useful to guide EU engagement.

In parallel, it is crucial for the EU to step up efforts to address the root causes of irregular migration through programmes in support of youth, access to quality education, creation of sustainable economic opportunities, decent jobs, vocational training and education, step up support to small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the EU should support the Tunisian authorities in establishing a legal and institutional framework for the management of migration, reception and asylum.

- Under pillar 5 of the MoU, there has been progress in the implementation of migration-related priorities and programmes, from 2022 and 2023 NDICI budget. Out of the total of EUR 105 million on migration programmes from the 2023 budget under NDICI, EUR 53 million were contracted by the end of August 2024. Technical meeting between Tunisian authorities and European Commission on the implementation of Anti-smuggling and border management programmes, 28 November 2023.
- Technical meeting between Tunisian authorities and European Commission on the implementation of anti-smuggling and border management programmes, 22-26 April 2024.

Prevent irregular departures from, as well as irregular arrivals to Tunisia, strengthen anti-smuggling and border management cooperation and increase search and rescue efforts.

Measure 3: Roll out the Anti-smuggling Operational Partnership (ASOP) and launch of a new **regional** Anti-Smuggling programme.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States
- **Timeframe:**
 - o Q2 2023: Appoint focal points at the EU side and Tunisian side, explore Tunisian and Member States' availability to launch a Joint Investigation Team under the ASOP.
 - o Q4 2024: finalisation of the ~~contract of~~ Anti-Smuggling **contract for Tunisia regional action to enhance investigative capacities and prosecution of smugglers/traffickers, strengthen international cooperation in the fight against smuggling and trafficking in human beings** ~~persons as well as to reinforce patrolling of border areas. increase the investigative and prosecution capacity, number of convictions and criminal networks dismantled, as well as to improve the code of conduct of the police forces.~~

Achieved:

- Europol analyst has been deployed since 19 September 2023 to the Italian Central Operational Service in Rome to assess the existing information on the flows from Tunisia and to identify suitable cross-border investigations.
- A mentorship programme between Tunisian mentees and EU mentors (AT, IT and ES) on migrant smuggling to start in October (Euromed Police).
- 2 regional info campaigns are underway since May and June 2023 respectively: one covering Tunisia, Niger, Nigeria targeting the Central Mediterranean Route (consortium of organisations from IT, BE and GR); started on 1 May 2023, and the other covering Tunisia, Morocco (consortium of organisations from IT, FR and ES).

Planned:

- A new programme (EUR 18 million of NDICI 2023 budget), i.e. "Fight smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons in Tunisia" is about to be signed. The project aims to enhance investigative capacities and prosecution of smugglers/traffickers, strengthen international cooperation in the fight against smuggling and trafficking in human beings as well as to reinforce patrolling of border areas. Preparatory activities started in June 2024.

Measure 4: Support the Tunisian Coast Guard and the Tunisian migration and border management system, while ensuring the safeguard of human rights of migrants.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States
- **Timeframe:**

- Q2-Q3 2023: Explore with Tunisian authorities' ways of reinforcing cooperation at technical level, including at international airports.
- Q2-Q3 2023: Encourage Tunisian dialogue with key countries of origin on factors driving irregular flows to Tunisia.
- Q2-Q3 2023: Strengthen Tunisia's active participation in the ongoing border management projects, e.g. SAR, training academy and BMP projects.
- Q4 2023: finalisation of contract on border management for Tunisia.

Achieved:

- Ongoing programmes of a total of EUR 35 million (adopted in 2021, contracted in 2022) and 17 million (2023) to support for Search and Rescue operations, including to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and the training academy of the Garde Nationale Maritime of Tunisia.
 - Support search and rescue operations at sea in Tunisia (EUR 16.5 million 2021 budget, EUR 17 million 2023 budget)
 - Strengthening the Tunisian Coast Guard Training Pillar (EUR 13.5 million 2021 budget)
 - Border Management Programme Maghreb (Tunisia: additional EUR 5 million 2021 budget)
 - Contract to support the Garde Nationale Maritime with one search and rescue vessel and trainings (EUR 18 million 2023 budget)
- Deliveries include 20 engines and spare parts for engines and 6 engines to the Tunisian coastguards that are keeping at least 17 boats operational. Equipment so includes cameras, generators, lifejackets, forklifts as well as cars and scanners. Two Tunisian officials have been deployed in Rome as of 9 October.
- Contract for the delivery of fuel (Italy).
- On 4 June 2024, Tunisia announced the creation of its own Search and Rescue (SAR) Zone after having submitted documents to International Maritime Organization.
- As of August, irregular arrivals from Tunisia to the EU have decreased by more than 80% compared to the same period last year (13 995 in 2024 so far according to UNHCR).

Planned:

- [REDACTED]

Measure 5: Intensify and formalise EU agencies' (Frontex, Europol, CEPOL, EUAA, Eurojust) cooperation with Tunisia.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EU agencies
- **Timeframe:**

Achieved:

- A 2-day familiarisation visit by a Tunisian delegation to Frontex took place on 13-14 September 2023. The visiting delegation was comprised of personnel from the Ministry of Defence, Navy, Coastguard and Border Police under the overall lead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [REDACTED]

Planned (by end of Q4 2024)

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

Strengthen return and reintegration cooperation between Tunisia and the EU

Measure 7: Strengthen EU and Member States' assisted voluntary return and reintegration projects for Tunisian nationals, in particular on the basis of existing good practices, and promote synergies and coherence of these actions with the Joint Reintegration Services of Frontex, the EU-funded national reintegration support mechanism 'Tounesna' and the TEI of the Central Mediterranean route.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS, Frontex and Member States
- **Timeframe:**
- Q2-Q3 2023: Ongoing discussions between COM, EUD Tunisia and Frontex on complementarities/synergies between JRS Programme and "Tounesna".

Achieved:

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- COM further topped-up financing for sustainable reintegration of Tunisian returnees in Tunisia through the national reintegration mechanism "Tounesna".

Planned (by end of Q4 2024):

- Organisation of a meeting between the European Commission and the Tunisian authorities to discuss support for sustainable reintegration in Tunisia

Measure 8: Pursue all opportunities to improve cooperation on readmission with Tunisian authorities,

[Redacted]

- **Lead actors:** Commission
- **Timeframe:** Ongoing

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- Return figures for 2023 continue to be below pre-pandemic 2019 figures with a return rate of 11% (compared to 22 per cent in 2019). [Redacted]

Planned (by end of Q4 2024)

- Organisation of a technical meeting on readmission with Tunisian authorities.

Highlight the importance the EU attaches to legal migration.

Measure 9:

- **Lead actors:** Member States, Commission

Measure 10: Launch of a Talent Partnership.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States (participating: Italy, France, Germany, Belgium – observers: Luxembourg, Spain, Netherlands, and Sweden)
- **Timeframe:**
 - o Q2 2023: First Roundtable ~~planned (date TBC)~~ to set the main elements of the partnership and roadmap thereafter.
 - o Q3 2024: Second Roundtable to review the progress made since the first Roundtable

Achieved:

- **1st Roundtable** held in June 2023 on **Talent Partnership between Tunisia, COM and Member States (IT, FR, DE)**. 2nd Roundtable held in June 2024 and focusing on progress made on both sides since the first roundtable and to discuss key recommendations for advancing Talent Partnership’s objectives. It also allowed to explore concrete recommendations on the 3 themes discussed: Bringing together job offers and applications and employment agencies; Supporting vocational training and higher education systems for mobility; Return migration, circular migration and reintegration in Tunisia as part of mobility schemes.
- Ongoing legal migration programmes and projects in Tunisia supporting the Talent Partnership include Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa (THAMM+), Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Éducation (PASE) and Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), as well as the fourth being evaluated under Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF) with a budget of EUR 5,7 million.
- Top-up THAMM (around EUR 7,5 million for Tunisia) signed in Q4 2023.

Planned (by end of Q4 2024):

- Development of a joint roadmap based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Talent Partnership Roundtable to be finalised in Q4 2024
- Follow-up technical meeting in November 2024 to endorse jointly agreed roadmap

ANNEX: Common messages


General messages (complemented by the lines to take agreed in the MaMa Working Party)

- Recall the long-standing, close and comprehensive partnership between the EU and Tunisia and express the EU's will to continue and deepen this mutually beneficial cooperation, based on mutual commitments, shared priorities, democratic values, and the respect for human rights. The EU-Tunisia partnership encompasses the full range of shared interests – political, economic, and sectoral in addition to migration – and must be deepened across the board to be effective.
- On the economic front, the European Union is convinced that the implementation of structural reforms is a key element in ensuring the country's macroeconomic stability and future prosperity. The EU and its Member States stand ready to accompany the Tunisian authorities at every stage of this process by supporting socio-economic reforms that create jobs and investment.
- The prospect of the EU-Tunisia Association Council meeting in the coming months will provide an opportune moment to adopt the new 2024-2027 Strategic Priorities and to take stock of the various areas of our bilateral cooperation.
- Recall the EU's intention to work closely with Tunisia through the prism of the implementation of the five pillars of the Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic partnership concluded on July 16, 2023, and the Ten-Point Plan for Lampedusa presented by the European Commission on September 17, 2023. The European Union remains ready to implement all the commitments it has made in recent months, in all areas of our partnership.

Complementing messages on migration

- Express strong concerns over recent numbers of irregular departures from Tunisia, resulting in several serious incidents of shipwrecks and severe loss of life at sea. [REDACTED]
- Emphasize the importance of the protection of human rights of all migrants, including access to an asylum procedure, basic services and infrastructure, as well as of preventing and addressing all forms of violence against migrants.
- Thank the Tunisian authorities for the efforts to prevent the loss of human lives and underline the need to strengthen these efforts, while respecting human rights of rescued migrants.
- [REDACTED] Stress the importance of accurate data on migration.
- Stress the EU's willingness to strengthen support to Tunisia in the field of border management, search and rescue, and through capacity building in the field of migration and reception, based on an updated assessment of the needs of the Tunisian authorities and on ensuring the protection of migrants' human rights. Encourage active participation of relevant Tunisian actors in the SAR project.
- Highlight that the fight against the networks of migrant smugglers and human traffickers will be further supported through the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership, launched on 27 April 2023 and through enhanced cooperation with EU agencies. On border management, developing cooperation between Tunisia and Frontex would be an important step forward. [REDACTED] Stepping up

operational cooperation with EU MS law enforcement authorities would also be a significant step forward.

- Underline EU's willingness to continue to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in Tunisia and countries of origin of those migrating to/through Tunisia, focusing particularly on youth by supporting education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
- Underline the potential of the Talent Partnership, bringing together several Member States' engagement in the field of legal migration (Italy, France, Germany, Belgium – as participating MSs - and Luxembourg, Spain, Netherlands, and Sweden – as observer MSs) and creating a platform for exchanges on labour market needs and concrete follow-up actions, including the facilitation and scaling-up of mobilities, in line with the mutual interests of Tunisia and the EU. Look forward to the conclusion of Joint Roadmap later this year (technical meeting expected for Q4).
- Highlight the regional TEI (Team Europe Initiative) for the Central Mediterranean migration route, which should enable us to strengthen, in an integrated and coordinated manner, the support of the EU and the Member States to Tunisia, taking into account all the migration matters that arise along the route, in dialogue and cooperation with Tunisia and other participating states.
- Stress the need for Tunisian authorities to facilitate assisted voluntary returns from Tunisia to countries of origin, sustainable reintegration and protection of those in need, in full respect of the human rights of all migrants and reiterate the EU's commitment to step up support. Welcome the removal of fees for departures.
- Recall that the EU and Tunisia remain committed to effective cooperation with each other in the field of return and readmission with all Member States. Underline the readiness of both the EU and its Member States on one side and Tunisia's on the other to work on returns (both voluntary and non-voluntary) and reintegration of Tunisian nationals, including in the framework of the EU supported national Tounesna mechanism, as well as the Frontex JRS and other EU and Member States reintegration projects.
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- Stress that the EU is following with concern the developments in Sudan, and its already visible impact on the migratory situation in the region, including Tunisia.