



## Migration routes: Commission presents new Action Plan for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes

Brussels, 6 June 2023

The Commission is presenting today an [EU Action Plan on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes](#).

In her letter to the European Council of 20 March 2023, President **von der Leyen** reiterated the Commission's ongoing work with the Member States most concerned on the Action plans for the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic too. This Action Plan is also a direct follow-up to the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2022. The Ministers committed then to implement the EU Action Plan for the Central Mediterranean, followed by the EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans, and endorsed the development of similar action plans for the main migration routes.

The EU has been strengthening its partnership with key countries of origin and transit along the route, in full coordination with its Member States as Team Europe. Measures undertaken by the EU, Member States and international partners have contributed to the important decrease of irregular arrivals. Nonetheless, the number of irregular arrivals\* remain sustained. This calls for continuous vigilance and concrete operational responses, anchored on the current effective cooperation.

This Action plan presents 18 targeted operational measures structured along **two pillars**. The goal is to support Member States to strengthen migration management along this route, preventing irregular departures and saving lives, while working closely with key partner countries.

### **Pillar One: Strengthen engagement with partner countries**

Reinforced cooperation with partner countries is key to address migration challenges and counter smuggling. Through a whole-of-route approach, the focus is set on preventing irregular migration by combatting smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, strengthening border management. To this end, the EU will step up work on:

- **Identify short-term operational priorities and coordination measures** among EU and Member States to address migration with a whole of the route approach, in a Team Europe approach.
- **Prevent irregular migration by combatting smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings.** By implementing the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership with Morocco, launching in this context a regional programme funded under NDICI-Global Europe, and overall consolidating counter-smuggling activities with partner countries in Africa along the whole route, while sustaining efforts to fight human trafficking.
- **Border management** by strengthening capacities of Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia to develop targeted actions preventing irregular departures and fostering increased bilateral cooperation between Frontex and Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal.
- **Return, readmission and reintegration** by supporting protection and voluntary return operations in North Africa and the Sahel countries, and enhancing the ongoing engagement to improve practical cooperation on readmission and a sustainable reintegration of returnees in their countries of origin.
- **Protection and legal pathways** by fostering the effective implementation of protection mechanisms in partner countries, while promoting and supporting legal pathways to protection in the EU through resettlement, humanitarian admission and complementary pathways.
- **Labour migration and Talent Partnerships.** The operationalisation of the Talent Partnership with Morocco is a priority. The Commission is currently also assessing the feasibility of launching with Nigeria and Senegal legal migration and mobility schemes.

### **Pillar Two: Strengthen operational measures on search and rescue, return procedures, as well as smoother and faster voluntary solidarity**

Reinforcing effective border management and returns from the EU to partner countries is essential in a functioning migration management system. The EU will accelerate its work to:

- Frontex **targeted assessment of the situation in the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic**, in close cooperation with Member States.
- **Reinforced cooperation on returns to partner countries between EU Member States** (return counselling, support with identification and travel document issuance, coordination of return flights, etc.), as well as the sustainable reintegration of returnees, including with the support of the EU Return Coordinator and through the High-Level Network for Return.
- **Link up the reintegration of voluntary returnees with Member States and European companies' investments in countries of origin and transit**, in countries of origin and transit, notably when it comes to fostering job creation and skills development.
- **Achieve more efficient and faster reactions under the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism, with the support of the Commission and the EU Agency for Asylum. As the Mechanism** will continue its implementation, pledging States are also encouraged to be flexible alleviating the pressure on the reception system in Member States of first entry in line.

## Next Steps

The Commission presents this Action Plan in view of the upcoming Justice and Home Affairs Council on 8-9 June and of the European Council on 29-30 June.

The EU and the Member States will need to work jointly to achieve the goals set in this Action Plan and to ensure its effective implementation. Reporting and monitoring through the existing Commission and Council mechanisms are essential. This Action Plan complements the ongoing work targeting other key migratory routes to Europe and may act as a model to develop similar plans for other migratory routes.

## Background

In 2018, irregular arrivals to the EU via the Western Mediterranean route increased significantly. As of 2019, while irregular arrivals saw a decrease on the Western Mediterranean route, they saw an important increase on the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, particularly in 2020 and 2021 and with considerable decrease in 2022 (by 31%, compared to 2021) and in 2023 so far.

When it comes to the long-term sustainable solution to manage migration, the Commission continues working to deliver on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. In parallel to this, the Commission is proposing a series of operational measures to address current challenges along the main migratory routes to Europe. This Action Plan is the third one that the Commission put forward to support Member States, following the one on Central Mediterranean and Western Balkans in 2022.

The EU will continue to promote sustainable and structural solutions to our common migration challenges, based on a comprehensive, whole-of-route approach, and including renewed action on the external dimension of migration.

## For More Information

[Action Plan on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes](#)

[Action Plan on the Western Balkans](#)

[Action Plan for Central Mediterranean](#)

[New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#)

*\*Updated on 06/06/23 at 15:30*

IP/23/3056

## Quotes:

Whilst we continue to make steady progress on the overhaul of the EU's migration and asylum legal framework, we still need to take constant and continuous action to manage migration in the immediate term. The set of operational measures we are proposing today to address migration along the Western Mediterranean route is part of this work to be vigilant in addressing the challenges our Member States are facing today.

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life - 06/06/2023

This Action Plan on Western Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes is the latest part of our commitment to meet the challenges of irregular migration in an operational way. This plan outlines proposals on anti-smuggling measures, better border management, returns processes, and legal pathways. It is part of our Team Europe strategy working with partners along the whole routes, preventing irregular departures to save lives.

Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs - 06/06/2023

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