



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 15 September 2020  
(OR. en)

10743/20

LIMITE

JAI 696  
ASIM 62  
MIGR 93  
COAFR 250  
RELEX 633

## NOTE

---

From:	Presidency
To:	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum
Subject:	Migration Cooperation with African Partners: Operationalising anti-smuggling and border management cooperation with African Partners of 13 July 2020 - Presidency discussion paper

---

## Context

After a COVID-19 related drop, irregular border-crossings are again on the rise. In addition, new trends have emerged. This concerns in particular the Central Mediterranean route. In the last two months, the numbers of arrivals in Italy (**19 194** migrants in 2020 until 31 August 2020), Malta (**2 162** migrants in 2020 until 31 August 2020) and Spain (**13 158** migrants until 27 August 2020) have risen again as well as the percentages of citizens from North African countries, resulting in higher pressure on the Member States concerned. Increasing arrivals have also been detected along the Atlantic route: arrivals in the Canary Islands (3 656) have been almost seven times higher this year than in the corresponding period last year (556), representing about 31% of the total arrivals to Spain by sea.

Migrant smuggling raises important questions in countries of origin and transit for irregular migration. It is in the shared interest of the EU and third countries to jointly address this common challenge. On 13 July 2020, in close coordination with the European Commission, Italy chaired a virtual conference on enhancing cooperation to address migrant smuggling and border management with five African Partners (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania). In addition to Italy, France, Spain, Malta and Germany as the current Presidency of the Council of the European Union took part in the conference, together with Commissioners Johansson and Várhelyi. At this video conference, all participants stressed the importance of combating migrant smuggling as a common priority and announced that engagement would be stepped up at all levels between African and European Partners. To put the conclusions of these discussions into practice, enhanced efforts will be jointly undertaken to counter migrant smuggling, including in relation to border management. These efforts should potentially be extended to other aspects of migration management in close consultation with the Member States and North African Partners, if appropriate and in synergy with other relevant initiatives. They would need to be developed as part of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration with key partners, in line with the upcoming Pact on Migration and Asylum. Joint and concerted **operational measures and initiatives** should be part of further elaborating a holistic approach to migration and asylum, relying on comprehensive, tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships between the EU and African partner countries.

This operational strand of work intends to complement **already existing EU initiatives and support, including Member States' bilateral and regional initiatives and support**, with the aim of ensuring that the European Union and its Member States further coordinate their efforts, speak with one voice and support the African Partners in countering migrant smuggling, including by addressing related border management issues. Synergies between activities of the Member States and the EU in the North African region should thus be enhanced.

To accelerate progress in this direction, the German Presidency has, by letter of 14 August 2020, invited Member States to express their interest in being part of this initiative on operationalising anti-smuggling and border management cooperation with African Partners (with a deadline of 4 September 2020). Building upon this call, the European Commission, in coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS), will drive the mapping of ongoing activities of the European Union and the Member States with African Partners, including bilateral and regional cooperation, in countering migrant smuggling and related border management issues.

The aim is to strengthen our cooperation in countering migrant smuggling with the five African participants of the July 2020 conference, as an important contribution towards developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial partnerships with key countries of origin and transit under the upcoming Pact on Migration and Asylum. Member States and potentially other actors, including states along the migrant smuggling routes, may be invited to join at any stage of the process. Consistency with the objectives and with other activities of relevant initiatives, should be ensured.

## **Way ahead**

Against this background, the German Presidency proposes the following approach:

1. Following a ‘Team Europe approach’, which takes into account Member States’ existing and future bilateral cooperation, the Commission will take forward the work on operationalising anti-smuggling and border management cooperation with African Partners, together with the EEAS and representatives of the Council Secretariat and of the Member States willing to support this initiative, relying on the input of the relevant EU delegations and Agencies. The purpose will be to steer dialogue and coordinate EU and Member State activities with each of the five African Partners in countering migrant smuggling and in related aspects of border management. Depending on the assessment of already existing cooperation in target countries, one or more driver Member State for coordination purposes may be identified, if necessary. Coordination at the closest possible level to realities on the ground and in close interaction with African Partners is essential. EU delegations in the partner countries are therefore ideally placed to drive coordination on the ground with each partner country, under the overall coordination to be ensured at headquarter level by the European Commission, the EEAS and the Member States supporting the initiative. Existing coordination structures should be examined and used where relevant.

2. Member States which have specific knowledge of and conduct cooperation with the five African Partners in relation to migrant smuggling and related aspects of border management are invited to share this information with the Commission, providing their best assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, needs and potential for development with these countries in these areas. The European Commission, with the support of the EEAS, will use this input to prepare a comprehensive overview of ongoing activities and available funds by the European Union and the Member States, as well as a preliminary list of the priority targets for increased cooperation. In assessing the African Partners' capacity and needs in countering migrant smuggling and related aspects of border management, the Commission and EEAS will work in close consultation with relevant authorities of partner countries and Member States, making full use of the input by EU delegations. Identified gaps should then be the target of new activities and projects at EU or Member State level. In this respect, the Member States should be able to also draw on the support of relevant EU Agencies (Frontex, Europol, EASO, CEPOL) and will work, where appropriate, with other relevant international partners. Coordination with the UN should be ensured.
3. The European Commission, in coordination with the EEAS, and the Member States interested in taking the work forward, will engage in a dialogue with the five African Partners as a step towards developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial balanced partnerships with key countries of origin and transit. Existing national and international coordination structures ought to be used.
4. Member States are to be appropriately involved in the framework of the SCIFA and the High-Level Working Group (HLWG) regarding the road map, the status of implementation of the initiative and the extension of the initiative to other aspects of migration management.

## **Immediate action**

Due to the urgency of the current situation, the Commission will be called upon to organise in September a virtual meeting between Italy, Germany, the European Commission, the EEAS, Tunisian authorities and other interested Member States to identify the most pressing needs and discuss ad hoc measures. This process could serve as a model for the other African Partners. In the coming period, video conferences will be organised with African Partners to follow up the commitments made by participants at the July 2020 conference.

## **Questions**

- 1. Do you have additional ideas for the type and scope of this exercise?**
  - 2. Do Member States agree on the proposed immediate action measures?**
  - 3. What additional projects or initiatives can Member States propose to counter migrant smuggling and enhance border management in any of the five African Partners?**
-