

Brussels, 8 July 2021
(OR. en)

10472/21

LIMITE

JAI 860
ASIM 52
RELEX 642
MIGR 141
COASI 106

NOTE

From:	Commission Services
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Operationalization of the Pact – Action plans for strengthening comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and transit Draft Action Plan : Afghanistan

Delegations will find attached a draft action plan for Afghanistan prepared by the Commission Services.

Draft Action Plan: AFGHANISTAN

Overall EU Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU is committed to remain engaged in Afghanistan and to help promote the country's path to democracy and self-reliance. • The EU will continue to support an inclusive, Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process, with the prospect of negotiated political solution to the conflict. • The EU will continue to address the root causes of instability and conflict and protracted displacement, taking into account the potential impact of conflict and post-peace scenarios on people's migration choices. • The EU will continue to work on strengthening engagement with Afghanistan on all aspects of migration and forced displacement in a comprehensive way acknowledging that the security situation in the country is a key consideration for our engagement on migration. • Most scenarios for the future of Afghanistan foresee the likelihood of increased population movements within the country, in the region, and towards Europe. The EU and international partners should plan for all possible outcomes and work with a long-term vision. • The EU's support to Afghanistan is conditional upon the preservation and further strengthening of the democratic, human rights, and governance achievements of the last 20 years.
Goals for managing migration and addressing forced displacement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU aims to ensure continued financial, technical, and capacity-building assistance to support Afghanistan in addressing migration management and forced displacement issues, strengthen cooperation on migration governance, countering irregular migration, fighting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, enhancing border management and ensuring post-arrival assistance and sustainable reintegration to returnees from the EU Member States, countries along the migratory route, and from the region. • The EU is committed to working with international partners on durable solutions for Afghan refugees and addressing the needs of communities in countries where large numbers of them are hosted, protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the predictable, safe, orderly and dignified return and reintegration of Afghan nationals from neighbouring countries, including Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. • As chair of the Support Platform of the Solution Strategy for Afghan refugees (SSAR) in 2021, the EU will seek to strengthen the international response to the Afghan refugee situation and to stimulate further political, financial and material commitments. • The EU will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to those most affected by conflict, including emergency healthcare, shelter, food assistance, access to clean water and sanitation facilities, education in emergencies, and protection support targeting women and children.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU will continue to help address root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, including through support to livelihoods, access to health and education and democratisation. • The EU aims to continue cooperation on return and readmission with Afghanistan, including post-arrival assistance and sustainable reintegration to returnees. The signature of Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation (JDMC) demonstrates Afghanistan's commitment in this area, which should be acted upon. • The EU will look into pathways for regular migration, in cooperation with EU Member States and the private sector, drawing on Erasmus+ and depending on the interest of Member States, labour migration projects and eventually a Talent Partnership, as appropriate. • In view of the likelihood of increased migratory movements, the EU is committed to strengthening cooperation with and support to countries along the migration route from Afghanistan towards the EU, including Turkey and the Western Balkans.
Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political engagement under the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD, 2017), the EU Strategy on Afghanistan (2017), and the Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation (JDMC, 2021). • Deploying a wide range of policy tools, including development cooperation, security, visa, trade, agriculture, investment and employment, energy, environment and climate change, and education, which are adjustable over time and handled as part of a tailor-made approach. • Funding activities from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020: EUR 240 million migration and forced displacement; EUR 1.4 billion root causes; EUR 50 million reintegration; EUR 12 million awareness campaigns; EUR 16 million border management. • Future funding from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027: The draft Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 focuses on: (i) Reconciliation, Reintegration, Security and Rule of Law (ii) Strong Institutions and Public Services and (iii) Sustainable Economic Growth, Private Sector Development, Trade and Regional Cooperation, and Employment. A regional programme for Asia/Pacific will address migration and mobility. • Member States' bilateral engagement see Annex. The Commission has presented to Member States a proposal for a Team Europe Initiative on the regional dimension of Afghan refugees in the Asia/Pacific targeting Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.
Timelines
Next Steps for engagement by EU and by Member States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Joint Working Group under the JDMC, July or September 2021 (tbc), to discuss all aspects of the implementation of the JDMC and address challenges in readmission cooperation as set out in the Commission Report and identified by Member States. • EU-Afghanistan Joint Committee under the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD), September 2021. With migration on the agenda, the meeting could be used to present the EU's comprehensive approach in line with the New Pact and this Action Plan, and have a first discussion with Afghanistan on priorities and follow-up. • Meeting between the SSAR Core Group (with the EU as its 2021 Chair) and the SSAR Quadripartite Steering Committee (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and UNHCR), Sept/Oct (tbc), will

review progress in the implementation of the 2021 work plans of the Country Core Groups and the Global Core Group, plan for different potential outcomes in next years, and seek agreement on the way forward.

- **High-level event of the Core Group for the SSAR Support Platform with non-traditional stakeholders**, November 2021 (TBC). The main objective is advocacy, expanding support and promoting innovative approaches for the implementation of the SSAR.
- **"Virtual Mission" of the Core Group for the SSAR Support Platform to Iran (tbc)** to familiarise Core Group members with ongoing and planned activities in support of refugees and their host communities in Iran and monitor EU-funded support.
- **Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) on the Silk route (tbc)** – Explore the possibility to develop RDPP for the Silk Route countries, including Afghanistan, responding to an interest expressed by Member States and following the implementation of these programmes in North Africa and the Horn of Africa.
- **Deployment of a Frontex Liaison Officer to Pakistan with a mandate for Afghanistan, (tbc)**. The Commission has provided a positive opinion for a Frontex Liaison Officer to work alongside the European Migration Liaison Officer (EMLO) already posted in Pakistan with a regional mandate. Discussions in Pakistan are ongoing.
- **Regional Dialogue – Silk Route Partnership for Migration - the Budapest Process** (next Senior Officials Meeting in November 2021).

Next steps for funding measures

- **NDICI-Global Europe**: Second high-level geopolitical dialogue with the European Parliament (September 2021 tbc); Comitology procedure (October/November); Adoption of Multiannual Indicative Programmes (November/December). Priorities of the regional programme for Asia/Pacific include significant support to Afghan displacement crisis under heading "migration and mobility".
- **Coordination group on migration under NDICI-Global Europe**. First meeting September/October (tbc) to exchange information and views to ensure coordination and coherence between the use of NDICI – Global Europe funds to support migration-related actions and Member States' migration-related actions.
- **Team Europe Initiative Asia/Pacific targeting Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran** proposed by the Commission. Potential interest received from two Member States. The feasibility of setting up this initiative to be confirmed following discussions with a wider group of Member States in Q3 2021.

ANNEX I

Existing EU cooperation and areas of engagement under the New Pact

i. Asylum/ international protection

Under the MFF 2014-2020, Afghanistan and Afghans on the move in Pakistan and Iran are the main beneficiaries (EUR 240 million) of two regional measures addressing challenges of migration and forced displacement in Asia and the Middle East (EUR 97 million in 2016 and EUR 215 million in 2017). Humanitarian assistance is addressing humanitarian needs of returnees from Iran.

ii. Addressing root causes

- Ongoing bilateral cooperation under the MFF 2014-2020 (EUR 1,4 billion) focusing on: peace, stability democracy; sustainable growth and jobs; and basic social services (education and health); transparent and accountable governance, as well as economic growth and livelihood opportunities - all contributing to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and are important aspects preventing forced displacement and also pull factors for return.
- The draft future Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 focuses on three priority areas: (i) Enabling Peace, with a focus on Reconciliation, Reintegration, Security and Rule of Law (ii) Strengthening the State, focusing on Strong Institutions and Public Services and (iii) Sustainable Economic Growth, Private Sector Development, Trade and Regional Cooperation, and Employment.
- The Afghan displacement situation will also be addressed in the Regional MIP for Asia-Pacific, where Migration and mobility is proposed as one of three priority areas. Efforts to include Afghanistan in regional programmes for Central Asia will also be enhanced in the programming cycle 2021-2027.
- Cooperation with Afghanistan will be subject to its continued commitment to democracy, human rights, gender equality and transparent and accountable governance.

iii. Migration governance, border management, tackling irregular migration + migrant smuggling

- Continuing programmes in preparation, following a cross-border or regional approach as relevant and based on Afghanistan's needs.
- Frontex does not currently implement border related activities in Afghanistan and negotiations on a working arrangement with the country are not foreseen. The Commission assessed positively the possibility of deploying a Liaison Officer to Pakistan with a mandate for Afghanistan.
- Regional projects on capacity building for integrated border management (funded by the Commission under MFF 2014-2020 and implemented by International Centre for Migration Policy Development – ICMPD):
 - Silk Routes' Countries Integrated Border Management project (EUR 12 million)
 - Border Management in Central Asia and Afghanistan project (BOMCA 10 – additional EUR 4 million for Afghanistan) – a possible role for Frontex to implement limited activities is foreseen.

Awareness-raising Campaigns

- Regional Project on Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries (funded by the Commission under MFF 2014-2020 – EUR 12 million, implemented by ICMPD). An information centre for potential migrants – the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) has been operating since July 2018 to empower Afghans to make informed decisions on migration by sensitising them to the risks, dangers and consequences of irregular emigration, and alert them to signs of exploitation and ways of protecting themselves against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

- Info Migrants portal: aims at countering misinformation on the risks of irregular migration, funded by the Commission under MFF 2014-2020.
- Exploring further support for future information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration and the benefits of legal migration for 2022 (2021-2027 programming period).

Counter-Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings

- Ongoing Silk Route Project aiming to enhance law enforcement cooperation to address migrant smuggling (funded by the Commission – EUR 1,3 million, implemented by a consortium of Member States led by Austria, participants Hungary and Bulgaria) – until 31 December 2021.
- Ongoing regional action on the fight against trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling (law enforcement agencies, such as border police and customs, funded by the Commission – implemented by UNODC/GLOACT- EUR 12 million).

iv. Returns, readmission, reintegration

- Reinforced dialogue sought on readmission addressing beyond the technical aspects also conditions of return (e.g. priority areas of return and reintegration, land allocation, the provision of basis services).
- Effective implementation of the Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation (JDMC) signed on 26 April 2021 (successor of the Joint Way Forward – JWF).
- Work with Member States and the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) on reintegration assistance to returnees.
- Ongoing Commission funded project entitled “Reintegration and Development Assistance in Afghanistan” (RADA – EUR 50 million, implemented by IOM) supporting sustainable reintegration of returnees within their communities. IOM supports individual returnees from the EU Member States and non-EU countries (i.e. Turkey), as well as Afghan households in communities of high return in Afghanistan.

v. Legal migration and mobility

- Under the last call for proposals for pilot projects on labour migration launched on 28 February 2020 there were no applications related to Afghanistan. Although the priority area for the moment is north Africa, the geographical scope of future Talent Partnerships should be kept wide and opportunities should be sought to include Asian countries, including Afghanistan if there is Member States’ interest.

ANNEX II

Member States' bilateral engagement

Austria – bilateral cooperation on humanitarian aid, reintegration, development cooperation including on institution building for border and migration management (since 2017 EUR 10,5 million humanitarian aid); awareness raising and information campaigns; interested to consider developing an RDPP along the Silk Route, capacity building on migration management and protection; creating protection in the region - in the process of establishing a partnership with Afghanistan on capacity-building in the area of rule of law; fight against smuggling and irregular migration (cross-border crime) - contact with UNODC-Afghanistan to invite a delegation to Austria.

Belgium – over the past 10 years, Belgium has financed humanitarian aid programmes in Afghanistan and the region, among which specific programmes addressing refugees and internally displaced persons.

Bulgaria – bilateral law enforcement cooperation, trainings for police professionals from Iraq and Afghanistan (financed from the national Development Support instrument – currently on hold due to the pandemic), a technical meeting hosted by Bulgaria within the Budapest Process on dismantling migrant smuggling networks with Afghanistan's participation.

Czech Republic – bilateral country program on agriculture and education (Afghanistan is a priority Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient country for the period 2010-2017); civil Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Logar (running until 2013) focusing on agriculture, water and sanitation, health care and gender equality incl. empowerment of women (annual contribution through PRT Logar CZK 40 million; the program-based annual development budget CZK 20 million); direct budget support through government based development and security related trust funds - CZK 40 million per year since 2012 with existing cooperation to be continued at least until 2024 (ARTF – with focus on agriculture and rural development, LOTFA – focusing on assistance to civil police forces, ANATF – assistance to Afghan national armed forces); assistance to refugees and returnees from Iran and Pakistan to Afghanistan in close long-term cooperation with IOM and UNHCR with annual contribution CZK 10 – 15 million

Denmark – support under the Peace and Stabilization Programme for Afghanistan; On-going Regions of Origin Initiative focused on Afghanistan and Afghan refugees in the region (access to protection and durable solutions for refugees, rejected asylum-seekers, returnees, IDPs and host communities by improving living conditions, supporting the safe and dignified return and assisting re-integration, self-reliance and local integration in the country of asylum); on-going Regions of Origin Afghanistan Country Programme that supports a) Afghan government's initiative entitled "Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project" to support local needs, including needs of returnees (financed and monitored by the World Bank with a focus on community institutions, prioritizing grants for local infrastructure and services) and b) the UN Habitat's project "Sustainable Human Settlements in Urban Areas to Support Reintegration in Afghanistan (SHURA)", which aims to enable returnees and protracted IDPs in urban areas to become self-reliant, resilient and productive citizens; provision of direct assistance to NGOs addressing needs and opportunities among vulnerable people in communities most affected by displacement through cooperation with the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (focusing on water supply and sanitation), the

Norwegian Refugee Council (facilitating shelter solutions for reintegration of displaced Afghans) and Save the Children (focusing on building resilient communities).

Germany – support to Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) primarily in the implementation of the Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP) on the global Afghan diaspora; voluntary returns [support to voluntary returnees through REAG/GARP programme (travel and transport costs, travel agency assistance, financial start-up assistance and, in individual cases assumption of medical costs), StarthilfePlus” (financial start-up assistance), ERRIN and ERIN Action Plan (supplementary reintegration project to ERRIN for voluntary returnees 01/08/19 – 30/09/21 via two projects: business start-up and training and career for women)]; support to integrated durable solutions and legal assistance for displacement – affected communities (shelter upgrades, access to durable shelters and basic services including WASH and solar energy; rehabilitation of community WASH infrastructure and services; livelihood and food production support services; information, counselling, and legal assistance as well as trainings for duty-bearers on HLP/LCD; support to various small-/medium scale activities implemented via NGOs with IDPs/returnees as primary target group, including trainings on conflict resolution, mediation, anti-violence, as well as access to basic education; support actions related to integration of refugees from Pakistan and Iran in Northern Afghanistan (IDP/IDPII) with GIZ being project partner; funding projects related to awareness raising campaigns [(Afghanistan Migrant Communications 2021 - 2022” by The Seefar Foundation, a project that targets Afghans (Eastern Provinces), considering to migrate irregularly and “Voluntary Returnees as Messenger III” implemented by IOM, which addresses communities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan].

Hungary – enhanced engagement via Budapest Process.

Italy – carrying out a project in favour of Afghan refugees located in Iran (EUR 905,000) with collaboration of the Ministries of Health and Education of Iran and Afghanistan aiming at a) strengthening the maternity ward of a Tehran hospital, b) strengthening the capacity of the Department of Obstetrics of the Medical University of Kabul through the Afghan-Iranian academic collaboration and c) providing training in obstetrics to about fifty Afghan refugees in Iran, so as to facilitate their return to the country and the prospects of reintegration into society.

Netherlands – bilateral cooperation is limited in size and form and emphasizes awareness raising, return and reintegration.

Slovakia – ongoing bilateral cooperation on education projects (the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava (STU) assists the universities of Kabul and Herat with capacity building and the establishment of study fields in the area of chemical and food technologies, inorganic technologies and metallurgy. Through financial and material assistance, the Slovak Republic has also long supported Abdulhafiz Jalili Primary School in Mazar-e-Sharif).

ANNEX III

Key figures and trends
Irregular migration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal border crossing of Afghan nationals to the EU 10 140 in 2020 (34 154 in 2019) of which 4 603 in Hungary, 3 873 in Greece, 921 in Italy • Illegal stay of Afghan nationals in the EU 34 125 in 2020 (56,200 in 2019) of which 7 825 in Germany, 6 220 in Greece, 5 945 in Hungary
Return <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons ordered to leave¹: 18 350 in 2020 (29 630 in 2019) of which 5 235 in Croatia, 3 555 in Greece, 1 855 in Sweden • Return rate²: 6% in 2020 (8% in 2019) • Highest return in 2020: 83% in Romania, 29% in the Netherlands, 19% in Germany • Lowest return rate in 2020: 0% in Hungary, Italy, Slovenia³
Asylum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First time Asylum applications: 44 220 in 2020 (54 300 in 2019) of which 11 100 in Greece, 10 005 in France, 9 900 in Germany • First Instance asylum decisions: 41 775 in 2020 (34 035 in 2019) • EU recognition rate: 51% in 2020 (46% in 2019) • EU recognition rate incl. humanitarian protection: 58% in 2020 (54% in 2019)
Legal migration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First time residence permits: 49 635 in 2019 of which 25 297 in Germany, 6 718 in Sweden, 6 191 in Austria– NO available data for 2020 • Total valid residence permits: 287 531 in 2019 of which 162 342 in Germany, 48 527 in Sweden, 20 241 in France– NO available data for 2020
Visas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short stay visa applications to the EU: 353 in 2020 (1,676 in 2019) • Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 38% in 2020 (37.4% in 2019). Top three MSs of MEV issuance in 2020: France (44), Italy (33), the Netherlands (12) • Visa refusal rate : 1.7%⁴ 2020 (22.6% in 2019)

¹ Without DK data in 2020.

² Without DK data in 2020.

³ 0% also in CZ, EE, IE, LT, LU, PL and SK but they all issued less than 100 return orders.

⁴ The low visa refusal rate in 2020 due to the pandemic situation.

Forced displacement

- Registered Afghan refugees hosted by Pakistan and Iran: 2.4 million of which approximately 950 000 in Iran and 1.4 million in Pakistan. In addition, some 1.5 million undocumented Afghans are estimated to be living in Pakistan and 2 to 3 million in Iran (undocumented and passport holders). Overall current estimation of Afghans on the move (registered and unregistered) in neighbouring countries approximately 6-7 million Afghan nationals (source UNHCR)
- Afghan Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan: since 2012 close to 5 million due to reasons related to security, conflicts and climate change (source IOM)
- Pakistani Refugees in Afghanistan: 72 192 in 2020 ⁵

⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=5DrvBN>