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**NOTE**

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From: Commission Services  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Operationalization of the Pact – Action plans for strengthening  
comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and  
transit  
Draft Action Plan : Iraq

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

The Commission would very much appreciate that the text of the draft action plan be handled with discretion.

## Draft Action Plan: Iraq

<p><b>Overall EU Objectives – Lines to Take</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU will continue to make significant political, diplomatic and financial efforts to promote a stable, sovereign, prosperous, and democratic Iraq.</li> <li>• The EU will continue to encourage the Iraqi government's implementation of a political, economic and security sector reform agenda. Important steps in this regard will be the delivery of free, fair and inclusive elections in October 2021, for which the EU will deploy an EU Election Observation Mission and implementation of the Government White Paper on economic reforms.</li> <li>• The EU will further encourage Iraqi efforts to establish balanced relations with its neighbours and its potential role as a bridge builder in the region.</li> <li>• The EU remains fully engaged, in close cooperation with Iraq and international partners, in completing the fight against Da'esh as part of the efforts under the Global Coalition against Da'esh.</li> <li>• Iraq detains an estimated 45 Foreign Terrorist Fighters who are EU nationals, and their families, on its territory and has repeatedly raised the question of their return. While the decision to repatriate or ask for the extradition of Foreign Terrorist Fighters falls entirely under national competence, the EU supports Iraqi authorities in the collection and digitalisation of battlefield evidence, which is crucial for the prosecution of Foreign Terrorist Fighters.</li> <li>• The EU seeks to support Iraq's efforts to address strategic deficiencies in their Anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism regime (AML/CFT), which the EU identified. (Iraq is not listed by the FATF).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goals for managing migration and addressing forced displacement – Lines to Take</b></p> <p><b>Protection/Displacement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In April 2021, the Government of Iraq published its National Plan to End Displacement under the auspices of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and the Ministry of Planning. The EU will continue supporting durable solutions for over one million Internally Displaced Persons within Iraq, including safe, dignified, non-discriminatory and voluntary returns to areas of origin and their reintegration.</li> </ul> <p><b>Root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU intends to address root causes of instability, conflict and protracted displacement in Iraq through various policies, instruments, and funds.</li> </ul> <p><b>Migration governance and management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrivals of irregular migrants from Iraq to the EU via the border with Belarus increased drastically this summer. Iraq has responded constructively to EU requests for cooperation on helping to resolve the situation at the EU-Belarusian border, where the majority of irregular migrants are of Iraqi origin. The EU welcomes that Iraq has temporarily suspended all commercial flights from Baghdad to Minsk and is working with Lithuanian authorities to identify Iraqi nationals. The EU urges Iraq to extend the suspension of flights to Minsk and to swiftly react to prevent any other alternative irregular migration routes that may be developed.</li> <li>• Further cooperation on tackling the smuggling networks that facilitate irregular migration flows should be sought, including by making full use of the immigration liaison officers deployed in the region through the ILO network. In parallel, information and awareness raising campaigns could be promoted about the risks of taking irregular migration pathways and falling prey to migrant smugglers and human traffickers.</li> <li>• The EU welcomes and supports Iraq's efforts on migration management, building on the 2020 National Migration Strategy. Iraq is among 152 UN Member States that endorsed the UN Global Compact for Migration (UNGCM) in 2018 and the first country in the MENA region to devise a national strategic framework for its implementation. Early 2021, Iraq joined a group of 18 UN Member states willing to undertake pilot initiatives, technical assistance and participation in multilateral processes towards the implementation of the UN GCM.</li> </ul>



### Return and readmission

- While irregular arrivals have diminished in recent years, Iraqi nationals are estimated to represent the second biggest group of third-country nationals on the territory of EU Member States that have been ordered to return. The EU aims to ensure Iraq's acceptance of return, notably non-voluntary, of Iraqi nationals who do not have a right to reside in the EU, and readiness to swiftly readmit them in accordance with international law and as committed under the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The EU stands ready to support reintegration of the returnees in Iraq, which may represent a useful incentive for people to return.
- A lack of technical know-how and capacity in Iraq with regard to identity/data management systems makes cooperation on returns challenging and should be addressed.

### Measures

- **EU–Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (2018) and EU Strategy for Iraq (2018):** provide a framework for EU-Iraq relations.
- **EU-Iraq informal migration dialogue** is an integral part of the EU's overall engagement with Iraq within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and sets out a comprehensive cooperation on migration and forced displacement (notably irregular migration and returns, migration and development, migration governance and border management). The last meeting of the Migration Dialogue took place in February 2021. In addition, the Commission and EEAS met on 30 July 2021 with the newly established Iraqi National Committee on Migration; a follow-up meeting is foreseen in September.
- **The EU deploys a wide range of policy tools**, including development cooperation, security, visa, trade, agriculture, investment and employment, energy, environment and climate change, and education support, which are part of a tailor-made approach.
- **European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM Iraq):** established by the Foreign Affairs Council of October 2017, supports civilian security sector reform in Iraq, including border management.
- **Art. 25a of the Visa Code:** Iraq is one of the countries included in the Commission proposal for restrictive visa measures as cooperation on return and readmission was considered unsatisfactory. Following subsequent outreach from the Commission and the EEAS, the Iraqi authorities have set up a National Committee on Migration headed by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs and conduct exchanges with the EU on the subject of migration, including returns.
- **Past funding activities from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020:** Since 2014, the EU has provided over €1.3 billion to Iraq: €469 million in humanitarian aid; €590 million in development funding due to the exceptional crisis situation; €162 million from the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (Madad Fund); €51 million in crisis response assistance from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and €8.3 million from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Civil Society Organisations thematic line. The EU's ongoing development cooperation, also beyond Madad support, mainstreams migration management holistically to promote durable solutions to improve livelihoods, and the delivery of basic services for internally displaced populations in Iraq, refugees and Iraqi returned and their host communities.
- **Future funding from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027:** The 2021-2027 programming period is designed in the context of the EU concluding its shift from post-crisis recovery support to stabilisation through a dedicated Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) and Annual Action Plans (in preparation). Detailed figures and contents will be provided once available. Tentatively, the MIP for Iraq, mainstreaming migration in all sectors, is likely to focus on job creation and economic diversification, human development with a focus on education and social protection, and digital and participatory governance and democracy. The regional programme for Asia/Pacific could also address migration and forced displacement, complementing actions implemented at national level.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measures to address the strategic deficiencies in the AML/CFT regime:</b> A dedicated project is currently being prepared by the EU to support Iraq towards that purpose by providing tailored technical assistance for AML.</li> <li>• <b>Member States' bilateral engagement:</b> see Annex II.</li> </ul>
<b>Timelines for action</b>
<b>A. Next Steps for engagement by EU and by Member States</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Informal Migration Dialogue</b> (beginning of 2022 TBC) - where overall cooperation on migration governance, migration and development as well as specifically fight against irregular migration and return will be discussed.</li> <li>• <b>Second meeting with the National Migration Committee</b> – September 2021 (TBC) - follow up to the first meeting in July to assess progress in return cooperation.</li> <li>• <b>Other political meetings:</b> the EU-Iraq Cooperation Committee, 15 September, taking stock of the preceding technical Subcommittees (on Human rights and Democracy, Trade, and Energy, respectively) to be followed by the EU-Iraq Cooperation Council at ministerial level, by end of 2021.</li> <li>• <b>Steering committee of EU-funded project on migration governance</b> – AWDA AMINA (12 September 2021).</li> <li>• <b>Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) on the Silk route (tbc)</b> – Explore the possibility to develop RDPP for the Silk Route countries, responding to an interest expressed by Member States and following the implementation of similar programmes in North Africa and the Horn of Africa.</li> <li>• <b>Regional Dialogue – Silk Route Partnership for Migration - the Budapest Process</b> (next Senior Officials Meeting in November 2021).</li> </ul>
<b>B. Next steps for funding measures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NDICI-Global Europe – country/regional MIPs:</b> Second high-level geopolitical dialogue with the European Parliament (October 2021 tbc); Comitology procedure (October/November 2021); Adoption of Multiannual Indicative Programmes (December 2021).</li> <li>• <b>Annual Action Plan 2021:</b> The Commission is likely to propose (Autumn 2021) to the NDICI Committee an Annual Action Plan that reinforces the EU's role in Iraq's displacement management (IDP, refugees and returns). The EU expects that access to, and efficiency of civic documentation and basic service provision for all Iraqi residents, including Iraqi IDPs, Iraqi returnees from Syria, and Syrian refugees in Iraq as well as the creation of conditions for the displaced populations' integration into national systems would increase the legitimacy of the Iraqi Government, preventing in the long term violence and extremism at a national scale. In the medium-term, the Action could support the Government's preparations for the (future) return of Iraqis from northeast Syria and their re-integration in Iraq. The foreseen assistance is expected to support the creation of conditions and perspectives for displaced populations and the host community, building on previous interventions delivered through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (Madad).</li> </ul>

## ANNEX I

### Existing EU cooperation and areas of engagement under the New Pact

#### i. Asylum/ international protection

- The “Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq” (RDPP II) focuses on supporting durable solutions for Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons and addressing host community needs in the three countries. Denmark manages the programme through offices in Copenhagen, Beirut and Amman. Under MFF 2014-2020 the programme was funded by a platform of European donors with a total budget of €54 million (EU: €20 million financed via the EU Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis; Czech Republic: €400 000; Denmark: €28.8 million; Ireland: €500 000; Switzerland: €4.4 million).

#### ii. Addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement

- The EU has a relatively positive and neutral image in Iraq, and aims at leveraging its influence and the whole array of its instruments, policies and funds. The EU’s approach to development cooperation preserves stability in Iraq by addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement holistically, such as by supporting incremental long-term reforms, rebuilding the social cohesion between citizens and institutions through support towards sustained improvements in governance, fostering fair and sustainable employment opportunities and building a solid human capital.
- Under the MFF 2021-2027, the EU proposes an Annual Action Plan to the NDICI Committee in 2021 to support improved access to, and efficiency of basic service provision for all Iraqi residents (including Syrian refugees) and Iraqi citizens (such as Iraqi IDPs and Iraqi returnees from Syria) to increase the legitimacy of the Iraqi Government and prevent violence and extremism. The assistance will support re-integration and the creation of conditions and perspectives for displaced populations and host community, building on previous interventions. To ensure sustainable inclusion, the assistance will address the creation of conditions for the displaced populations’ integration into reformed national systems, especially those relevant to basic service delivery (education, social protection), the labour market and it will address structural problems with civic identification, as well as housing land property rights.

#### iii. Migration governance, and management

- Since 2019, the Iraqi migration policy environment has advanced significantly with technical support to the Iraqi government delivered through the first and second phase of the EU-funded “Awda Amina” project, implemented by IOM. Through the first phase, IOM and a dedicated inter-ministerial technical working group on migration carried out a detailed Migration Governance Indicator Assessment that established a definitive evidence base for policy-making and identified several deficiencies in Iraq’s migration governance framework. The technical working group then developed the National Migration Management Strategy that comprehensively addresses migration in Iraq in line with relevant strategic frameworks such as the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the Global Compact for Migration. The strategy was endorsed by the Minister of Migration and Displacement in October 2020. The National Migration Strategy and the inter-ministerial Technical Working Group on migration are the building blocks of Iraq’s first national architecture for migration management.

##### *Border Management*

- Under MFF 2014-2020 Iraq participates in a regional project on Integrated Border Management (€12 million, implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), January 2019-December 2022). The programme supports the countries of the Silk Routes region in building more effective and efficient border management systems by increasing their capacity for border management and developing their national IBM

strategies/guidelines, to ensure that these are coherent and effectively co-ordinated at a national, and, if possible, at a regional level. The focus is on effective border control, human resources development and preventing the irregular migration.

- A Council Decision extended the EUAM Iraq mandate until April 2022 and expanded its mandate to border management with the main objective to support the development and implementation of an Iraqi-owned National Border Strategy, centred around Integrated Border Management.
- Frontex does not currently implement border related-activities in Iraq and negotiations on a working arrangement with the country are not foreseen.

#### *Migration management*

- A regional project on Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries is funded under MFF 2014-2020 (€12.5 million, implemented by ICMPD, August 2017-December 2021). An information centre for potential migrants – the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) - has been operating since December 2020 to empower Iraqis to make informed decisions on migration by sensitising them to the risks of irregular emigration, opportunities of legal migration and alert them to signs of exploitation and ways of protecting themselves against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.
- Under the same project, ICMPD provided technical advice to the Ministry of Migration for the drafting of Iraq's first Policy on Engagement with Iraqis Abroad and supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in expanding its rules and regulations for labour migrants in Iraq as well as for Iraqi workers in other countries. It also provided post-arrival orientation and services for foreign workers, and reinforces the capacities in developing labour skills and market data; strengthening labour inspection and compliance as well as improving skills development and training for potential labour migrants.

#### *Countering Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings*

- A Silk Route Project to enhance law enforcement cooperation in addressing migrant smuggling is funded under MFF 2014-2020 (€1.3 million, implemented by a consortium of Member States led by Austria, participants Hungary and Bulgaria until 31 December 2021).
- Glo.ACT – a regional project on the prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling is funded under MFF 2014-2020 (€12.5 million, implemented by UNODC, January 2018-June 2023). The project works alongside partner countries in developing and implementing more effective national and international responses to trafficking in human beings, as well as migrant smuggling, linked to: (i) strategy and policy development, (ii) legislative assistance, (iii) capacity building, (iv) regional and trans-regional cooperation and (v) protection and assistance to victims of trafficking and migrants in vulnerable situations.

#### *Migration Data*

- A regional project on migration data and flows (REMAP) is funded under MFF 2014-2020 (€12 million, implemented by IOM, October 2018-October 2021). The well-established DTM in Iraq funded by various donors and with the support of the REMAP project, has been able to include an additional 'observation group' to existing Mobility Tracking data collection activities to add 'returnees from abroad' and align tools with those of other REMAP project countries to allow for regional analyses. The Returnee Longitudinal Study in Iraq focusses on European returnees from Germany, Greece, or Finland to understand the long-term integration of Iraqi nationals that returned from Europe.

#### *Awareness-raising Campaigns*

- Info Migrants portal: aims at countering misinformation on the risks of irregular migration, funded under MFF 2014-2020.

#### **iv. Returns, readmission, reintegration**

- Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes: Member States provide support to voluntary return and reintegration of Iraqi nationals based on their national programmes, co-financed by AMIF.
- Two ERRIN contracts active in Iraq (in Erbil and Bagdad), both awarded to European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC). Close to 10 000 people have received reintegration support from ETTC under ERRIN. The typical assisted voluntary return and reintegration may consist of (in-kind) social, legal and medical support, housing support, schooling, language and vocational training, business start-up assistance and bespoke assistance for vulnerable groups. The financial value of such programs differs per Member State, but can be considered within the €1 000 – €2 000 range. Member States participating: AT, BE, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, LU, MT, NL, NO, SE.
- Cooperation on tackling irregular migration by suspending flights from Iraq to Belarus and facilitating identification of irregular migrants and voluntary returns from Lithuania should be sustained and built upon for further engagement on readmission and addressing irregular migration, including non-voluntary returns.

#### **v. Legal migration and mobility**

- Under the call for proposals for pilot projects on labour migration launched on 28 February 2020 there were no applications related to Iraq. 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 Iraq if there is Member States' interest.

## **ANNEX II**

### **Member States' bilateral engagement [EUMS to provide]**



## ANNEX III

<b>Key figures and trends</b>
<p><b>Irregular migration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal border crossing of Iraqi nationals to the EU: 2 066 in 2020 (6 433 in 2019) of which 626 in Greece, 619 in Italy, 481 in Hungary</li> <li>• Illegal stay of Iraqi nationals in the EU: 17 780 in 2020 (31 810 in 2019) of which 7 330 in France, 5 385 in Germany and 1 495 in Greece.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Return</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi nationals ordered to leave the EU: 11 785 in 2020 (20 975 in 2019) of which 2 335 in France, 1 855 in Germany, 1 725 in Sweden</li> <li>• Return rate: 19% in 2020 (25% in 2019)</li> <li>• Highest return rate in 2020<sup>1</sup>: 108% in Romania, 54% in the Netherlands, 50% in Estonia and Cyprus</li> <li>• Lowest return rate in 2020<sup>2</sup>: 0% in Italy, Czech republic, Poland</li> </ul>
<p><b>Asylum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time asylum applications by Iraqi nationals: 16 265 in 2020 (26 850 in 2019) of which 9 845 in Germany, 1 465 in Greece, 765 in Sweden</li> <li>• First Instance asylum decisions: 22 135 in 2020 (29 845 in 2019)</li> <li>• EU recognition rate: 39% in 2020 (39% in 2019)</li> <li>• EU recognition rate incl. humanitarian protection: 43% in 2020 (43% in 2019)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Forced displacement in the country</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over a million IDPs are still living in displacement. Iraqi government has started a (forced) closure of IDP camps where almost 300 000 people still lived in 2020</li> <li>• According to UNHCR, Iraq continues to host around 247 000 Syrian refugees (97% of them living in the Kurdistan Region) and 40 000 from other countries (mainly Turkish, Iranian, Palestinian, and Sudanese)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Legal migration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time residence permits: 28 843 in 2019 of which 16 786 in Germany, 4 303 in Sweden, 1 020 in Belgium– No available data for 2020</li> <li>• Total valid residence permits: 265 894 in 2019 of which 169 791 in Germany, 26 286 in Sweden, 17 561 in Finland– No available data for 2020</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short stay visa applications to the EU: 9 722 in 2020 (57 501 in 2019)</li> <li>• Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 47.6% in 2020 (46.1% in 2019). Top three MSs of MEV issuance in 2020: Germany (1740), France (392), Italy (230)</li> <li>• Visa refusal rate : 37.8% 2020 (38.6% in 2019)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Both CY and EE issued 10 return orders. EL is 4<sup>th</sup> (47% return rate), DE is 5<sup>th</sup> (38%).

<sup>2</sup> 0% also in SK, ES and SI. Except IT, they all issued less than 100 return orders.

<sup>3</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20fact%20sheet-June%202021.pdf>;  
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/iraq>