

Specific objectives

- Reinforce relations with Iraqi authorities, including the current caretaker government, on migration issues in order to notably :
 - o Lift the Iraqi authorities' opposition in principle to the execution of all return decisions to Iraq.
 - o Establish smooth cooperation on the readmission of Iraqi nationals in an irregular situation.
 - o Integrate return, readmission and reintegration into broader cooperation on migration.

Outcome: A first report will be prepared on progress achieved by the end of March.

Actions:

Political and technical outreach

Action 1: Building on recent contacts, jointly agree on key messages (annex) to be taken forward in forthcoming meetings at EU and where relevant, at national level with the Iraqi authorities to make progress on the issue of returns, including non voluntary returns, and reintegration; including, as appropriate, consistent messages with regard to the KRG.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS and Member States
- **Timeframe:**
 - o **Q1 2022:** Meetings of MFA and other Iraqi authorities with the Commission and EEAS in Brussels or Baghdad in the coming weeks (date to be confirmed).
 - o **Q1 2022:** Political or high-level meetings of the Commission and Member States

Action 2: Establish a regular framework for discussion at local level, allowing online format between EU and Member States representations in Iraq, notably to coordinate contacts and strategy on return, readmission and reintegration issues and to ensure feedback to MS.

- **Lead actors:** EEAS (EU delegation), Commission and Member States (Embassies)
- **Timeframe:**
 - o **Q1 2022:** Establish, as soon as possible, regular local European consultations on readmission

Action 3: Re-launch and facilitate the informal migration dialogue with the Iraqi authorities, as soon as possible.

- **Lead actors:** Commission and EEAS, in the presence of Member States.
- **Timeframe:**
 - o **S1 2022:** As soon as a new government is in place.

Support measures for return and reintegration

Action 4: Fund and deploy a EURLO (European Return Liaison Officer) in Baghdad, and possibly also in Erbil, building on previous experience (Finnish Liaison Officer, 2018-2019) and taking into account the limited accommodation capacity of the EU delegation in Baghdad.

- **Lead actors:** Frontex, SE would like to assist in finding a pragmatic solution to enable the deployment and / or hosting of a EURLO in Iraq/Bagdad, Commission, EEAS.
- **Timeframe:**
 - o **S1 2022:** As soon as possible.

Action 5: Compensation for the 10 return flights from Minsk provided by Iraq.

- **Lead actors:** Commission/ possibly MS: Exploring the possibility of compensation for the 10 return flights from Minsk provided by Iraq
- **Timeframe:** As soon as possible

Action 6: Support voluntary return and reintegration measures for Iraqi nationals for the most affected Member States by the Belarus situation (i) through AMIF, up to €1,000 per person ; (ii) through in-kind support from Frontex (identification/mobile identification mission; interpretation; flight organisation).

- **Lead actors:** (i) Member States, (ii) Commission and (ii) Frontex
- **Timeframe:** available as of now

Action 7: Coordinated strengthening of national and EU level assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes, in conjunction with the Frontex reintegration service.

- **Lead actors:**
 - o Commission: Under the Awda Amina project (funded by the EU under the DCI programme and implemented by the IOM) approximately €1 million has been reallocated to support the reintegration of returnees and build referral mechanisms operated by national and local authorities until 2023.
 - o EU Delegation in Baghdad: Mapping of reintegration support actions
 - o Frontex: Implementation of the Joint Reintegration Services in Iraq taking the mapping into account, and exploring possibility of reintegration capacity building project.
 - o Member States with bilateral reintegration programmes in Iraq and ERRIN activities
- **Timeframe:**
 - o **Q1 2022 - By end of March 2022:** Mapping of national and European voluntary return and reintegration programmes, and consideration of options for enhanced support ;
 - o **April 2022:** Subject to Iraqi agreement, implementation of Frontex reintegration programme in Iraq.

Action 8: Capacity support to Iraqi authorities on civil registration and identification, at national and local level, and capacity building of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.

- **Lead actors:**
 - o Commission: The NDICI-Global Europe €75 million project adopted at the end of 2021 will include inter alia the facilitation of civil identification and registration, including

the registration of housing/land/property rights. It will benefit all Iraqis and in particular displaced people and those in vulnerable situations and will improve the overall quality of the registration system.

- Member States : bilateral projects

- **Timeframe** : Ongoing

Other targeted measures

Action 9: Continue to support implementation of Iraq's National Migration strategy, actions to address the root causes of irregular migration, long-term support for reintegration actions, anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking projects, and support for the reception of Syrian refugees and Iraqi IDPs

- **Lead actors:**

- Commission:
 - Total allocation of €75M under the Annual Action Programme - NDICI for 2021; to address the needs of returnees and displaced persons through reformed national systems, in particular those related to the provision of basic services, job creation and governance;
 - Additional future regional funding related to migration.
- Member States: participation in the TEI on Iraq including a component on IDP support and reintegration (DE, FR, IT, NL, SE).

- **Timeframe:** Ongoing

Use of the visa lever or other levers

Action 10: Resume exchanges on the application of Article 25a of the Visa Code in view of the exchanges with the Iraqi authorities, so as to maintain a lever to encourage the Iraqi authorities to resume non voluntary returns.

- **Lead actor:** Council, Commission, EEAS

- **Timeframe :**

- **March 2022:** Resume discussions in Visa working party, depending on developments.

ANNEX: Common messages to Iraqi authorities

[General support]

- Recall the European interest in a stable, peaceful and prosperous Iraqi state.
- Stress the determination of the EU and its Member States, reaffirmed at the June 2021 Foreign Affairs Council to which the Iraqi Minister was invited, to continue to support Iraq in full respect of its sovereignty, in the face of the many challenges, in terms of stabilisation, security and the fight against terrorism, democratic strengthening, and the implementation of its programme of economic and social reform.
- Highlighting all the political, financial and technical support from the EU and its Member States and encouraging the strengthening of sectoral cooperation implemented in the framework of the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, while stressing the need for Iraq to pursue reforms and address the root causes of fragility and forced displacement.

[Cooperation in the context of the Belarusian crisis]

- Welcome the excellent cooperation of the Iraqi authorities in the context of the Belarusian crisis, both in preventing further arrivals of Iraqi nationals (suspension of flights to Belarus) and bringing them back.

[EU Return Priorities]

- Stress the need for cooperation with the EU on the readmission of Iraqi nationals illegally present on the territory of Member States, with several tens of thousands of removal decisions issued in 2021, in view of the current caseload and the priority issue of the need for the possibility of non voluntary returns at EU level, when voluntary returns are not possible.
- Take note of positive signals and insist on the need to achieve results rapidly on the principle of resumption and execution of returns of Iraqis illegally staying in MS, and recall that this is a particular point of attention in the framework of the discussions underway in the Council on restrictive visa measures.
- Underline the EU's readiness for a gradual approach to the resumption of non voluntary returns for all categories of Iraqi nationals, initially on a limited scale, and according to a timetable to be deined jointly.
- Ask the Iraqi authorities to continue and reinforce the constructive dialogue with the Commission and the EEAS in order to be able to submit proposals on the matter, in coherence with their engagement under Article 105 of PCA, and guarantee the Iraqi side a level of communication that takes account of the high political sensitivity of the subject.
- Underline the readiness of the EU and its Member States to use all necessary means to facilitate this resumption of returns, notably of local reintegration assistance, including those adapted to individual situations of the non voluntary returnees. Stress the possibility to offer a coherent European package, well-coordinated with Iraqi partners, including capacity-building corresponding to the needs of Iraqi partners and aligned with development programs and strategies also on the local level.