



Commissioner Ylva Johansson

MISSION TO NIGER

13-15 February 2022

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In what framework does the EU conduct its migration policy with Niger?

The EU's Pact on Migration and Asylum provides the overall framework of our migratory engagement with Niger.

Such cooperation also builds upon the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) on Migration, and the Rabat Process (Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development) founded in 2006, which brings together European and North, West and Central African countries, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility. The 2018-2020 Marrakesh Action Plan envisages five key domains as well as 6 crosscutting priorities for action, including an approach based on human rights; issues of gender and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations; the fight against xenophobia, racism and discrimination. Under the Rabat Process, the system of reference countries allows partners to volunteer to coordinate and undertake activities within a particular domain of the Marrakesh Action Plan, in collaboration with other reference countries. Niger is collaborating with Côte d'Ivoire and Spain, under Irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

We are **engaged on the ground**, to support the Nigerien authorities:

- to ensure protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants, through life-saving assistance and support services in transit centres, awareness raising on the risks of a journey through the desert, rescue operations in the desert.
- We are also creating safe and legal pathways through resettlement focusing on the Emergency Transit Mechanism from Libya to Niger – to allow most vulnerable persons in need of international protection to come to Europe without having to risk their lives in the desert and at sea, and provide the option to voluntarily return home to those who wish to do so, where they receive reintegration support;
- to fight the criminal smuggling networks and to dismantle their business model, notably through budget support programme (AJUSEN) and the deployment of a Joint Investigation team; supporting the Nigerien authorities in drafting a national migration strategy. This also goes through the EU CSDP Mission EUCAP Sahel Niger that advises

and trains the Nigerien authorities in strengthening their capacities in the fight against terrorism and organised crime;

- To boost economic development and create viable and legal economic alternatives for people whose livelihoods were previously relying on trafficking activities, notably through the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

The new EU-Africa Strategy (March 2020) recognises Migration and Mobility as one of the five key areas for deepened future cooperation between Europe and Africa.

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On the EU-IOM Joint Initiative

- We are helping stranded migrants, together with the IOM, through the 6 EU-funded IOM transit centres throughout the country – where over 42,000 alone received life-saving assistance and a range of support services, such as food or and temporary shelter, medical and psycho-social assistance, access to information, counselling and family tracing.
- We provide them with the option to voluntarily return to their countries of origin, where they receive reintegration support. Since 2017, over 41,629 migrants (February 2021) have been helped to return home from Niger through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for migrant protection and reintegration. In addition, 9,000 Nigerien migrants back in their country have been assisted with post-arrival reception and/or reintegration assistance.
- EUCAP Sahel Niger is working with our international partners on the ground, in particular the IOM, to support the migrants along the routes. To date (February 2021), 29,589 migrants abandoned in the desert have been rescued by the IOM, in cooperation with Nigerien Security forces.
- With the additional support of German funding, community stabilization actions, decided jointly with local authorities and communities, are being set up in northern Niger and along the Algerian border in particular in the cities of Agadez, Arlit and Assamaka to minimize the consequences of the migration influx on the local populations.
- Furthermore, the EU supports awareness-raising activities, offering people reliable and realistic information on the risks a journey through the desert, towards Libya and Algeria can entail.

On the UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism

- We are working closely with the Nigerien authorities to create safe and legal pathways of migration, including through resettlement through the Emergency Transit Mechanism from Libya to Niger.

- The ETM allows vulnerable persons in need of international protection to come to Europe without having to risk their lives in the desert or at sea.
- In parallel we are also providing the option to voluntarily return home to those who wish to do so, where they receive reintegration support.
- Our priority certainly remains saving lives and providing legal pathways for those in need of international protection. The Evacuation Transit Mechanism (ETM) has enabled the evacuation of 3,710 refugees from Libya to Niger and the resettlement of 3,255 refugees from Niger to the EU.
- With COVID-19, we have called on the EU Member States to continue introducing flexible processing arrangements and making sure that transfers of those accepted for resettlement happen swiftly upon referrals.

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ANNEX III

Key figures and trends
Irregular migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illegal border crossing of Nigerien nationals to the EU: 30 in 2020 (44 in 2019) of which 18 in Italy, 11 in Malta and 1 in Greece• Illegal stay of Nigerien nationals in the EU: 325 in 2020 (405 in 2019) of which 140 in France, 110 in Germany, 20 in Belgium and 20 in Spain
Return
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nigerien nationals ordered to leave the EU: 280 in 2020 (330 in 2019) of which 150 in France, 50 in Germany and 45 in Belgium• Return rate: 7% in 2020 (11% in 2019)
Asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time asylum applications: 80 in the first 6 months of 2021. 235 in 2020 (445 in 2019) of which 65 in France, 45 in Belgium and 40 in Germany• First instance asylum decisions: 280 in 2020 (435 in 2019)• EU recognition rate excluding humanitarian protection: 12.5% in 2020 (30% in 2019)• EU recognition rate including humanitarian protection: 16% in 2020 (31% in 2019)
Forced displacement in Niger
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to UNHCR, as of 30 September 2021, there were 280 818 IDPs and 249 765 refugees (refugees: 186 957 Nigerians, 61 320 Malians, 1 488 other)
Legal migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time residence permits: 884 in 2019 of which 513 in France, 131 in Germany and 89 in Belgium. No available data for 2020• Total valid residence permits: 5 869 in 2019 of which 2 506 in France, 1 344 in Italy and 1 019 in Belgium. No available data for 2020.
Visas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short stay visa applications to the EU: 1 483 in 2020 (7 550 in 2019);• Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 39.7% in 2020 (43.7% in 2019). Top two Member States of MEV issuance in 2020: France (1 089) and Spain (91)• Visa refusal rate: 17.7% 2020 (14.7% in 2019)

Background on Emergency Transit Mechanism in Hamdallay, Niger (40 km from Niamey)

In November 2017, UNHCR established for the first time an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) for the evacuation of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers from detention in Libya to Niger. The programme was established in order to facilitate the processing of refugees and asylum seekers trapped in detention and to ensure access to protection and to durable solutions.

UNHCR and the Government of Niger signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in December 2017, temporarily expanding the Niger asylum space to these refugees and asylum seekers. This MoU has been extended in February 2020 for another two-year duration.

Evacuations

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya are identified for eventual solutions outside Libya based on their vulnerabilities. While in the past evacuees were either directly evacuated from detention centres or through the Gathering & Departure Facility (GDF), persons are at the moment selected mostly from urban settings with a history of being in a detention centre before being released. This is due to ensure no negative coping mechanisms are sought as well as to advocate for the 'end of detention policy' in Libya. The persons of concern are screened and their personal information is shared with UNHCR Niger.

The first evacuation flight took place on the 11th of November 2017. Since then, including a flight on 30 December 2021, **3,710 refugees and asylum-seekers** have been evacuated from Libya to Niger, of whom 3,255 have departed from Niger to third countries on resettlement or complementary pathways.

Process and living conditions in Niger

Once the refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Niger, UNHCR conducts a verification interview and registers them biometrically. This is followed by refugee status determination (RSD) procedures by the Government of Niger and UNHCR. Finally, interviews to prepare resettlement files are completed by UNHCR. These files are then submitted to third countries for consideration. For unaccompanied children, a Best Interests Determination (BID) is completed to seek the most appropriate solution.

UNHCR and partners provide accommodation in the ETM transit facility in the commune of Hamdallay, Tillabéri region (40km from Niamey) where food, medical care, education and psychosocial support are readily available. On 4 March 2019, a first group of 120 evacuees were transferred to the Hamdallay center, constructed for a maximum capacity of 1,500 persons. For particular vulnerable cases, such as persons with medical follow-up requirements, advanced stage of pregnancy or mother with newborn babies, three guesthouses remain operational in the city of Niamey. Durable construction and development of the transit facility is ongoing.

UNHCR Niger update (November 2021) - ABRIDGED

POPULATION OF CONCERN IN NIGER

- **249,662 refugees, 9,510 asylum-seekers, 36,465 returnees**
- **264,257 internally displaced persons** and 11,610 other persons of concern

Despite various security challenges caused by conflicts in the region, Niger has always kept its borders open and is currently hosting more than **250,000 refugees and asylum seekers, with 75% coming from Nigeria, 20 % from Mali, 4 % from Burkina Faso**. There are more than **300,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Nigerien returnees residing in Niger, mostly in Diffa**.

UNHCR's work in Niger focuses on the protection, assistance, and solutions for persons of concern, with particular attention to women, children and other persons with specific needs guided by a community-led approach. UNHCR also supports the Nigerien authorities to find durable solutions for displaced communities in Niger. Since 2020, prevention and response to COVID-19 has been crucial and in collaboration with the government of Niger, UNHCR has been providing medical supplies, equipment, and hygiene kits to persons of concern.

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Niger country fiche – January 2022 (INTPA-EEAS)



<p>Government (since April 2021) Head of State: Mohamed BAZOU PM: Ouhoumoudou MAHAMADOU Minister of Foreign Affairs: Hassoumi MASSOUDOU Minister of Interior: Hamadou Adamou SOULEY Presidential mandate: 2021-2026 Elections: Local, parliamentary, presidential in late 2026</p>	<p>Member States present in Niamey FR, DE, BE, ES, IT, LU</p> <p>Development aid (OECD) Net ODA/GDP: 9.46% (2018) ODA/Budget: 37% of revenues and 32% of expenditures (<i>based on calculation, 2019</i>) EU institutions + Member States ODA/Total ODA: 38% [EU = 20% of ODA, 2017-2018]</p>
<p>Population (WB) 24.2 million (2020) with annual average growth: 3.8% Youth: (0-14) 49.7% (2020) Age dependency ratio (percentage of working age population): 109.5 in 2020 (100.4 by 2030; 78 by 2050) Urbanisation level: 16.6% in 2019 (18.7% by 2030)</p>	<p>Human development (WB/UNDP) Gini Index: 0.34 (WB, 2014); HDI: 0.377 (189/189) (UNDP, 2019) Poverty rate: 44.5% pop (WB, 2014) Child marriage (<18 yr): 76%; (<15 yr): 28% (UNICEF, 2017) Illiteracy rate: 69.4% (UNDP, 2019)</p>
<p>Economy (IMF) GDP: USD 12 827 million (2018) GDP per capita: USD 571.5 (2018) Average annual growth, GDP (real): 5.7% (2014-2018) External debt/GDP: 25.4% (2018, WB) National budget/GDP: 21.7% (2020) Budget deficit/surplus: ∇ 3% of GDP Main productions: uranium, livestock, subsistence crops, oil, other minerals</p>	<p>Migration (Eurostat/WB) Remittances/GDP: 2.5% (WB, 2019) Regular migration to EU: 5687; first instance asylum decision in EU, granted 32% and rejected 68% (Eurostat, 2018) Irregular migration to EU: 425 (Eurostat, 2018) Return and readmission: 40 (12% of ordered to leave) returns from EU to Niger (Eurostat 2018)</p>
<p>Foreign direct investment (WB) FDI net inflows: USD 466 million, 3.6% of GDP (2018), FDI trend: ↗ (+ 55% over 2016-2018) Main MS: FR Remittances : 2.5% of GDP (2019)</p>	<p>Business Climate (TI/WB) TI Index: 120/198 and score 32 (2019); Trend: ∇ (34 in 2018, 33 in 2017) Doing Business score: 132/190 and score 56.8 (2020); Trend: ↗ (53.7 in 2019, 52.3 in 2018)</p>
<p>Trade (UN Comtrade)</p>	
<p>Imports to Niger (2016) France (28%), China (16.1%), USA (7.77%), Nigeria (5.82%), Thailand (5.78%) - EU share: 30.54% Main products: spare parts of goods (19.8 %), rice (8.18%), palm oil (4.15%), cement (3.74%), motor vehicles (3.13%), medicine (3.03%)</p>	<p>Exports from Niger (2016) France (31%), Thailand (11.6%), Malaysia (11.1%), Nigeria (9.46%), Mali (5.63%) - EU share: 31% Main products: uranium (32%), petrol (116.2%), rice (14.4%), palm oil (13.9%), gold (3.81%), pasta (3.33%)</p>

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EU response (2014-2020)

Under the previous MFF, the EU’s development cooperation focused on four strategic priorities: (i) supporting a resilient economy, new economic opportunities, job creation, private sector development, and sustainable and inclusive growth, (ii) reinforcing state capacities for good governance and to develop Niger’s human capital and ensure resilience, (iii) governance, peace and security, and (iv) migration management.

Food security, resilience and basic social services continue to be at the heart of the EU development cooperation with Niger and **gender equality** remains a transversal priority. The EU’s approach aims to help Niger implement and achieve the SDGs.

The 11th EDF national envelope placed a special emphasis on supporting Niger’s Initiative 3N (Nigériens feed Nigériens), which included the building of a remarkable tool, unique in the region: the national mechanism for the prevention, anticipation and response to food crises. This national initiative is a **structural response to recurring food crises in the country**, and to support it, the EU devised a 243 M EUR sectoral budget support programme over 5 years (2016-2021), which included a large component of technical assistance and complementary support. In the framework of this programme, 187 M EUR were disbursed over the five years to the benefit of the national treasury. Given the increasing severity of annual food crises during the lean season, it is however still often the case that Niger requires additional humanitarian assistance to bridge the gap between what the mechanism could anticipate and provision for, and the reality of the situation. Such humanitarian response should only come as a complement to an initial national response through the mechanism.

Development goals remain the cornerstone of the EU strategy in Niger, yet due to the growing instability in the country, security oriented actions have become more important. The EU has been implementing an integrated approach (security/development nexus) associating development, good governance and security/stabilisation activities, with a specific attention paid to very fragile areas i.e. the Tillabéri region at the border with Mali and Burkina Faso. The volatile situation of the latter’s requires flexibility and responsiveness in order to ensure efficient and consistent aid delivery.

This approach has been implemented through all instruments available. For the period 2014-2020, over **1.3 billion EUR has been allocated to Niger** through the NIP, RIP, EU Trust Fund, EU budget line, and, IcSP, other DGs interventions and CSDP missions. Under the bilateral envelope for Niger under the 11th EDF, 673.1 M EUR have been committed. Niger also benefits from substantial additional funds under the EU Trust Fund (295,6 M EUR in bilateral envelope and 151,3 M EUR via regional programmes), the West Africa Regional Indicative Programme (60.5 M EUR including 31.9 M EUR via blending), other blending instruments (44 M EUR) bringing the total in blending under the EIP to 75.9 M EUR, for Human rights (2.4 M EUR, EIDHR) and for resilience (19.5 M EUR, DCI FOOD; 15 M EUR DCI ENV). ECHO further committed 306 M EUR for the period 2014-2020.

The EU has been committed to support Niger make the best of its economic assets in the framework of the **Europe-Africa Alliance for Investments and Sustainable Jobs**. The Jobs and Growth Compact identified key constraints and opportunities to foster economic development in the country while generating sustainable and decent employment.

Gender equality and women empowerment are core values and cross-cutting priorities of EU cooperation with Niger. While progress has been made in the institutional and legislative areas, women and girls still face many socio-economic challenges. Through its budget support programme in the Education sector, the EU has been supporting reforms in favour of girl's education. Niger also benefits from the Spotlight Initiative (around 17 MEUR EU contribution plus 2 M EUR from UN agencies) and is implemented by four UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNWOMEN) in four priority regions (Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder and Tillabéri). A technical assistance on gender issues supports the implementation of the EU's Gender Action Plan II.

Humanitarian partnership: DG ECHO provided **30-40 million EUR** in support each year to address the most urgent needs of populations in crisis with a view to engage in Nexus opportunities when possible. Niger is burdened by a permanent food security issue and recurring food and nutrition crises, further impacted by climatic events such as droughts and floods. Every year, about 400'000 children under 5 years old will suffer from severe acute malnutrition, putting them at risk of death if they do not receive adequate treatment and causing irremediable damages on their abilities to cope with life challenges. The worsening security situation in the region also means Niger hosts a large number of refugees (around 230 000) mostly from Nigeria and Mali, weighing heavily on the limited resources of host communities in the regions of Diffa (Lake Chad), Maradi, Tillabéri and Tahoua. These regions have also seen a rise in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) since 2018 (some 265 000 in August 2020) with little prospects to return home anytime soon. After a 3 months period of multisector humanitarian assistance provided through the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), these IDPs face numerous constraints and often lack the ability to engage into economic recovery, which impacts their livelihoods and their ability to access basic social services such as health and education. State capacity to face the security and development challenges remains very limited. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic also weighed as a threat on these extremely vulnerable populations. DG ECHO's main priorities in Niger are: (i) addressing the multisector needs of people affected by conflict, (ii) responding to food and nutrition crises as well as epidemics and (iii) strengthening preparedness and response capacities in high-risk areas. Programmes are implemented through international NGOs, UN agencies and the Red Cross Movement.

COVID-19: In Niger, the EU announced the mobilisation of approximately 95 M EUR (redirected funds) to contain the spread and fight the COVID-19. The response covers the health and socio-economic aspects of the crisis. A Commission Decision for a new action (8 M EUR) for a response to COVID19 in the health sector has been adopted in August 2020. 3,5 M EUR supported a supplies, technical assistance and health sector resilience project, implemented by ENABEL and co-financed by Luxembourg (1,7 M EUR), in line with the Team Europe approach. This action also tackled the local production of infection's prevention items, general governance of the pandemic (e.g. surveillance) through technical assistance, as well as communication to fight infection spread, disinformation and stigmatization. Large budget support disbursements (90 M EUR over 2020 and 2021) have supported Niger in facing the socio-economic consequences of the crisis.

Key global, continental or regional initiatives covering Niger

- **Coalition for the Sahel, P3S and Sahel Alliance:** technical and financial partners' groups of coordination aimed at improving the efficiency of the international aid to the Sahel, particularly in a stabilisation context.

- **G5 Sahel Joint Force:** launched in February 2017 by the G5 Sahel countries, the Joint Force is the first military cooperation initiative of the organisation. It aims at countering trafficking and terrorism in the three border areas between Mali/Mauritania, Niger/Chad and Mali/Burkina/Niger. The EU supports the operationalisation of the Joint Force through the African Peace Facility, for a total amount of 265.6 M EUR, including voluntary contributions from EU MS.
- **Spotlight Initiative:** is a joint EU-UN initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls. On the 500 M EUR allocated to this initiative by the EU, 250 M EUR are dedicated to Africa. Four Western African countries are covered, including Niger with 17 M USD.

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