International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Migration has become a key concern for the European Union following the intense flows of asylum-seekers and other migrants: Frontex has reported 26 600 illegal border crossings in the first two months of 2015 alone and a sharp rise in deaths at sea, costing the lives of 1 829 victims so far. The European Parliament has repeatedly urged a holistic approach to migration, most recently in its resolution of 17 December 2014. There have also been calls to consolidate cooperation with key international partners, such as the International Organization for Migration.

**Mandate, structure and budget**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was established in 1951 in the aftermath of World War II. Over the years it has grown alongside the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) into one of the two most important intergovernmental organisations addressing migration, enlisting 157 member states and 10 observer states, as well as major international organisations, including the EU and the UN, as observers. Its activity is defined in the IOM Constitution and Strategy adopted in 2007 and reviewed in 2010, setting out its main goal as 'facilitating humane and orderly international migration'. 97% of its 9 000 staff members work directly in the field, providing operational assistance. IOM's migration management task is divided into a wide range of activities, such as:

- covering transport costs of migrants and arranging their resettlement;
- helping states build capacity to control migration;
- participating in operative migration control and assisted voluntary returns (AVR);
- providing humanitarian aid to people displaced due to a conflict or natural disaster, for instance through its Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF);
- drafting publications and advising governments, migrants and the private sector.

IOM is represented by its Director General, currently US national, William Lacy Swing, and has its seat in Geneva. The budget of IOM for 2014 was US$2 039 million and the organisation carried out a total of 2 396 projects. As it is claimed that IOM’s budget is mostly raised through projects and grants, IOM is in direct competition with NGOs for donor funding. IOM has been criticised by Human Rights Watch as well as Amnesty International for its lack of a legal mandate concerning human-rights protection.

**Strategic cooperation between the EU and the IOM**

The EU has observer status in the IOM and is one of the key donors to the IOM budget, contributing €213.05 million over the 2007-13 period. The EU also contributes to the International Dialogue on Migration, an annual policy forum set up in 2001 between stakeholders from countries of origin, transit and destination. In 2011, the EU signed a framework agreement with the IOM to instigate closer cooperation in financial and administrative matters related to migration, including the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), of which IOM is the main implementing partner. While GAMM has come under criticism, not least in the light of the current migratory surge and the debate on a fairer distribution of refugees and asylum-seekers, the European Commission presented a new European Agenda on Migration on 13 May 2015. Building on the framework agreement, a strategic partnership agreement was signed in 2012 between the IOM, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS). This includes regular consultation, joint research and studies on migration policy as well as dialogue on humanitarian aid and emergency operations. Examples of recent cooperation include a structured dialogue between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean on migration, EU Mobility Partnership projects and drafting Migration Profiles.