

November 2015

## Outcome of the informal 12 November 2015 European Council on migration in Valletta

*The informal European Council on migration of 12 November 2015 in Valletta assessed the state of implementation of previously agreed measures. It followed the Valletta Summit held with African Leaders on 11/12 November 2015. The Valletta Summit resulted in a [Political Declaration](#) and an [Action Plan](#) to manage migratory flows, focusing on dealing with the root causes of migration by developing greater cooperation between EU and African partners.*

### 1. Valletta Summit on Migration with African Leaders

The objective of the 11/12 November 2015 Valletta Summit on migration, chaired by European Council President Donald Tusk, was to bring together European Leaders and African Heads of State or Government<sup>1</sup> to address the challenges presented by the ongoing migrant crisis and explore opportunities for increased cooperation between the EU and Africa.

In the Political Declaration issued after the Summit, participants outlined their concern at the sharp increase in the movement and number of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants and agreed to respond decisively by working together to manage migration flows. They recognised that there is significant interdependence between Africa and Europe, who face common challenges. They also committed to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and recognised the benefits of well-managed legal migration and mobility between the two continents. Underlining this, the European Union and Ethiopia signed a [Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility](#) in the margins of the Valletta Summit.

The Action Plan annexed to the Political Declaration addresses five priority areas dealing with the root causes of migration; enhancing cooperation on legal migration and mobility; reinforcing the protection of displaced persons; preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and making progress on returning people who are not legally entitled to stay in Europe. In all, sixteen priority initiatives were agreed, to be implemented by the end of 2016.

As indicated in the [EPRS Pre-European Council Briefing](#), an '[EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa](#)' was launched to assist the implementation of actions agreed upon at the Valletta Summit. The Emergency Trust Fund is made up of 1.8 billion euro from European Union financing instruments as well as contributions from EU Member States and other donors. So far, twenty-five EU Member States and two non-EU donors (Norway and Switzerland) have announced a total contribution of around 81.3 million euro.

European Council President Donald Tusk [remarked](#) that leaders 'are under no illusions that we can improve the situation overnight.' The follow up to the Valletta Summit will include a meeting between senior officials no later than January 2017, to assess the progress being made in implementing the Action Plan.

### 2. Informal European Council Meeting on migration

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<sup>1</sup> For a full list of participants, see [here](#).

Immediately after the Valetta Summit, the Heads of State or Government of 24 EU Member States<sup>2</sup> met for an informal European Council meeting, in Valletta, on 12 November 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to expedite the implementation of [previous European Council decisions on migration](#).

The discussions mainly concentrated on increasing cooperation between the EU and Turkey and the implementation of the [EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan](#). Leaders were briefed by European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans on the status of negotiations following his recent visit to Turkey. The Commission made a proposal to establish a [Turkey Refugee Grant Facility](#), which will mobilise substantial new funds to help Turkey receive and host refugees. It is expected that a total of 500 million euro from the EU budget will be allocated to this facility over the next two years. EU Member States will need to contribute a total of 2.5 billion euro.

While the European Council did not issue an official statement, European Council President Donald Tusk made [remarks after the meeting](#) summarising their discussions and what was agreed. He stated that 'regaining control of the EU's external borders is the first and most important action; [and serves] as a precondition for a European migration policy.' He believes that the reintroduction of 'border controls or "technical barriers" at the borders testify how grave the situation is'. Since September 2015, [Slovenia](#), [Germany](#), [Austria](#) and [Sweden](#), have [temporarily reintroduced Schengen internal border controls](#). On 11 November 2015, Slovenia started building a fence with Croatia and Austria announced it would build a fence with Slovenia.

In his [speech at the informal European Council meeting](#), European Parliament President Martin Schulz emphasised that the 'community method is the only proven way to tackle this crisis as a common European challenge.' He also stressed that Member States need to deliver on their financial commitments, their pledges to provide expertise and staff to FRONTEX and EASO and, also, implement the decisions taken on relocation. Both Mr Tusk and Mr Juncker welcomed the recent commitment by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary to provide 225 additional officials to FRONTEX and EASO. However, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker [expressed his dissatisfaction](#) with the relocation scheme's rate of implementation. Since then, following the terrorist attacks in France on 13 November 2015, a member of the incoming Polish Government announced that Poland would not accept EU-mandated quotas for refugees. This has proved a setback for this scheme, after Slovakia and Hungary indicated that they will bring the issue before the European Court of Justice.

Following the informal European Council meeting, European Council President Donald Tusk recalled that EU rules and laws must be applied and that 'without registration there will be no rights'. Furthermore, he expressed his belief that asylum seekers cannot decide where they will be granted asylum in the EU. He expects the Commission and the respective Interior Ministers to 'turn these principles into operational reality now'.

## Next steps

European Council President Donald Tusk announced that a special summit between the EU and Turkey on migration will be organised before the end of the year. According to its [draft annotated agenda](#), the 15/16 December 2015 European Council meeting will return to the issue of migration.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the absence of some prime ministers see [Eurocomment](#).

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To contact the European Council Oversight Unit, please e-mail: [EPRS-EuropeanCouncilOversight@ep.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-EuropeanCouncilOversight@ep.europa.eu)

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