

EU–Africa Summit on Migration

Valletta, 11-12 November 2015

With the aim of responding to the increased challenge of migration across the Mediterranean Sea, the European Council called for an international summit to discuss migration issues with African states and other key countries. The meeting, which takes place on 11 and 12 November 2015 in Valletta (Malta), will discuss means to provide assistance to partner countries to address the root causes of migration, strengthening cooperation on fighting irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling, and ways to boost the development benefits of migration.

Background

On 23 April, the European Council held a special meeting on the migration situation in the Mediterranean, and adopted a [statement](#) in which EU leaders decided to strengthen the EU's presence at sea, to fight trafficking and smuggling of human beings in line with international law, to prevent irregular migration flows and to reinforce internal solidarity and responsibility. Stepping up dialogue with the African countries, including through organising an ad hoc summit, were among the key actions identified by the European Council. The main pillars of a comprehensive EU approach to migration were further elaborated in the European Commission's Communication on a [European Agenda on Migration](#) and reiterated in the [Conclusions](#) of the Council of 12 October.

A comprehensive agenda to tackle migration

The EU–Africa Summit, taking place in Valletta on 11-12 November 2015, will gather together representatives of EU Member States, EU institutions and specialised agencies, members of the regional policy dialogues with countries along the western migratory route ([Rabat Process](#)) and the eastern migratory route ([Khartoum Process](#)), observers to the Rabat process, representatives of the African Union Commission, regional and international organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, as well as the League of Arab States, the United Nations (UN), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The European Parliament will be represented by its President, Martin Schulz.

The discussion will be structured around five specific areas:

1. Development benefits of migration and tackling the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement,
2. Legal migration and mobility,
3. International protection and asylum,
4. The prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings, and
5. Making progress on return arrangements and readmission agreements.

The summit aims to produce not only a **political declaration** underlining the commitment of the countries of origin, transit and destination to forge stronger partnerships on migration but also an **Action Plan (AP)** building on a review of ongoing and already planned measures, as well as adding new concrete actions to address migration. The AP will single out a number of 'short-term' initiatives to be launched by the end of 2016. All measures included in the AP will be considered interdependent, however, differentiation in relation to each country will be allowed. A monitoring and follow-up system will be established in the context of the

Khartoum and Rabat processes, with a first stocktaking meeting to be held in 2017. Financial support will be provided through existing financial instruments and by the newly established €1.8 billion [EU Emergency Trust Fund for Stability](#), with its [Constitutive Agreement](#) due to be signed at the summit. The Commission has amassed finance for the Fund by pooling together money from different financial instruments under the EU budget, mainly from the European Development Fund. EU Member States (or third-party donors including, for example, other countries or international organisations) are also expected to contribute to the Fund.

Main challenges

Preparatory meetings have highlighted [diverging views](#) between EU and African partners. While the first seem to be inclined to emphasise border security and enforcing return agreements, the latter would like to see more cooperation on mobility schemes. In recent years, the European Commission has made a number of proposals to facilitate labour migration to Europe, however it has been [pointed out](#) that in the current European political and economic climate Member States are only interested in highly skilled migrants and [circular migration schemes](#). In this context, it is doubtful that the summit will bring about a revision of provisions on mobility – with the possible exception of increased research and study opportunities.

A second critical issue refers to the possibility of creating burden-sharing arrangements in the [processing of international protection claims](#). Suggestions of processing certain claims for international protection outside EU Member States' territory (in the context of maritime interception operations, or in 'international' or 'transit' areas in the intercepting state's own territory), are usually met with firm opposition by African counterparts, which accuse the EU of [externalising](#) border-control policies and creating undue pull factors towards African countries which were to host such processing centres.

Thirdly, given the [low rates](#) of effective returns, cooperation with countries of origin on identification of irregular migrants and their return and readmission are likely to be [EU priorities](#) in Valletta. Return and readmission actions, however, have been [deemed](#) to be detrimental to development goals in certain African countries. At the same time, [experts](#) suggest that efforts to curb irregular migration in countries of origin and transit would need to be regularly monitored, in order to avoid supporting authoritarian regimes and repressive practices that could in turn exacerbate the outflow of refugees through those countries failing to meet the most basic human rights standards.

In addition, criticism has been voiced by several European and African [civil society organisations](#) and [NGOs](#). In particular, they argue that resorting to the conditionality of the 'more for more' approach – by linking development aid to agreements on readmission, stronger border controls or other actions not directly associated with poverty reduction – would defy the very purpose of development policy. Finally, [commentators](#) have underlined that for the Valletta Action Plan to be effective, the EU would need to develop a clear policy of incentives for countries of origin by, for instance, providing additional legal migration channels.

Outlook

The conference in Valletta provides a very timely platform for discussion on migration, bringing together origin, transit and destination countries around the same table.

With ambitious goals, the debate in Valletta will focus on how to design convincing incentives to increase the use of the existing tools of EU–Africa cooperation on migration (i.e. readmission agreements, regional dialogues, development cooperation), and on how these instruments need to be more effectively implemented and monitored. It will be an excellent opportunity to enhance trust among key countries and partners willing to respond positively to the migratory challenge.