

November 2015

Outlook for the informal 12 November 2015 European Council on migration in Valletta¹

At their informal 12 November 2015 European Council on migration, Heads of State or Government² will assess the implementation of the measures agreed upon at the [informal European Council of 23 September 2015](#) and the [European Council of 15 October 2015](#). The meeting will immediately follow the Valletta Summit, where European and African Leaders will address the main issues linked to the current migration crisis. Expected results include the launch of the 'European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa'.

1. Purpose and possible results of the meeting

The informal 12 November 2015 European Council in Valletta will be the fifth meeting dealing with migration at the level of Heads of State or Government in eight weeks and the seventh since April 2015. European Council President Donald Tusk has repeatedly [stated](#) that the refugee crisis 'is perhaps the biggest challenge Europe has faced for decades and it has the potential to change the European Union as we know it'. Indeed, in October, the European Union witnessed a record of [218,000 refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean](#), while the [autumn 2015 European Economic Forecast](#) has estimated that, between 2015 and 2017, an additional three million people could arrive in the EU.

According to European Council President Donald Tusk's [invitation letter](#), the purpose of this meeting is to assess the state of implementation of measures already agreed, including stepping up cooperation with third countries; decisions on relocation; setting up hotspots, reinforcing reception capacities and providing FRONTEX and EASO with additional expertise, and reinforcing the control of the EU's external borders. The introduction by a number of EU Member States of individual measures at internal Schengen borders is also expected to be discussed.

While the primary focus will be on assessing the implementation of what was agreed in September and October, European Council President Donald Tusk has indicated that EU Heads of State or Government will also settle on guidelines, if necessary. These could be based on the [results](#) of the extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9 November 2015, potentially including calls to:

¹ This will be the first (informal) European Council meeting since the Treaty of Lisbon came into Force 1 December 2009 which did not take place in Brussels.

² No Polish government representative will participate at the informal European Council, as Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz will step down following the results of the recent elections in Poland.

- gradually extend the deployment of Rapid Border Intervention Teams (RABITs) to support the EU's external border control;
- deploy European Migration Liaison Officers (EMLOs) as a matter of priority to Ethiopia, Niger, Pakistan and Serbia by 1 December 2015;
- continue the Commission's work on resettlement as a matter of priority;
- support accelerating the fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap with Turkey and the full implementation of the readmission agreement, with Turkey;
- define as a matter of urgency a common information Strategy addressed to asylum seekers, migrants, smugglers and traffickers.

Following European Council President Donald Tusk's earlier [statement](#), it is also possible that the statement agreed by the informal European Council will include a reference to Russia's latest military engagement in Syria and its possible link to an increase in refugee numbers.

2. Valletta Summit

An important component in establishing a comprehensive and effective European migration policy is enhancing cooperation with countries of origin and transit. At the [23 April 2015 European Council](#), Heads of State or Government agreed to reinforce political cooperation with African partners at all levels in order to tackle the causes of illegal migration and combat the smuggling and trafficking of human beings. To support these efforts, EU leaders [called for an international summit](#) involving African and other key partner countries. The summit will be held [on 11/12 November 2015 in Valletta](#) and will include representatives from the 28 EU Member States, the European Commission, the African Union Commission, the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations and the [International Organisation for Migration](#) (IOM). The purpose of the meeting is to develop a sustainable response to the migrant crisis and improve existing frameworks for cooperation. It will focus on [five key areas](#): addressing the root causes of migration; establishing and organising legal migration channels; enhancing the protection of migrants and asylum seekers; tackling exploitation and trafficking of migrants; and improving cooperation on return and readmission.

Existing cooperation between the EU and Africa on migration and asylum is based upon the [Global Approach to Migration and Mobility \(GAMM\)](#) framework, which was established in 2005 and updated in 2012. This forms the basis for [cooperation at different levels](#), including the [Rabat](#) and [Khartoum](#) processes³, and the more recent [EU-Africa dialogue on migration](#).

Following the [results of the Foreign Affairs Council of 26 October 2015](#), it can be expected that an agreement will be reached in Valletta on stepping up the EU's level of engagement and strengthen cooperation with third countries on migration, including readmission policies and efforts to advance legal migration and mobility possibilities, both at bilateral and multilateral level. The

³ The Rabat and Khartoum processes are initiatives to involve the countries of origin, transit and destination in preventing and fighting illegal migration and emphasise the regional aspect of the management of migration flows. Since 2006 the Rabat Process – the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development with Western and Central African countries – has brought together more than fifty countries. Launched in October 2014, the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, known as the 'Khartoum Process', has addressed human trafficking and smuggling from and via Eastern Africa. The participating countries include the EU's 28 Member States, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Tunisia.

[Valletta Summit](#) will also launch the 'European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa'.

In preparation for the Valletta Summit, the political leaders of the EPP, S&D and the ALDE political groups in the European Parliament sent a [joint letter](#) to all 28 EU Heads of State or Government. They called for intensified dialogue with the African Union and key African countries in order to address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration to and from Africa and stress that this should be based on a common approach and shared responsibilities.

3. Developments since the last European Council of 15 October 2015

3.1 Leaders' Meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkans Route

On 25 October 2015, at the [invitation of the President of the European Commission](#), Jean-Claude Juncker, the Heads of State or Government of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Council, the current and incoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) informally met to find a 'collective, cross-border approach' to address the ['emergency situation'](#) unfolding along the western Balkans route. When reporting to the European Parliament on the latest European Council of 15 October 2015, Commission President Juncker [emphasised](#) that the decision to hold the meeting was taken in conjunction with European Council President Donald Tusk⁴.

The result of the meeting was a [Leaders' Statement](#) outlining 17 operational measures which could be implemented immediately. These measures included raising capacity to 50,000 reception places in Greece and another 50,000 on the route through the Balkans countries by the end of this year. This will help to facilitate the return of refugees who do not need international protection. There was also a commitment to establish national contact points which will report directly to the countries involved and facilitate both the exchange of information and greater coordination required to achieve a controlled and orderly movement of people along the Western Balkans route. EU and Balkan leaders also agreed to increase police and judicial cooperation.

The first concrete [follow-up](#) activities by countries and European agencies to the Western Balkans Route Leaders' Meeting have included pledges for an additional 12,000 reception places and the additional border deployment of police officers. There has also been a [recent](#) upscaling of the European Commission's internal coordination mechanism ([ARGUS - General Rapid Alert System](#)) – which allows for a rapid and coordinated Commission response including an accelerated decision-making process.

3.2 Activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Slovenia (22 October 2015) and Croatia (26 October 2015) both activated the [Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#) requesting temporary shelters, heating devices, sanitary items, protective clothing and other relief items. The [European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) (ERCC) is in close contact with the countries' authorities.

⁴ For an in depth analysis of the issue of political leadership in the migration crisis during the September informal European Council and the October European Council see [Eurocomment](#).

3.3 EU Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements

On 30 October 2015, the Luxembourg Presidency triggered the [Integrated Political Crisis Response](#) (IPCR) arrangements on an 'information sharing mode'. These aim to monitor the development of migratory flows, support decision-making and to better implement the agreed-upon measures. EU Member States, institutions and agencies are requested to continuously share updated information via a common web platform. The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) will then provide regular integrated analysis of the information provided, to facilitate common decision-making and a coordinated crisis response.

3.4 State of play of implementing 23 September European Council decisions

In his [statement to the European Parliament on 27 October 2015](#), European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker again stressed the fact that there has not been enough progress by Member States in implementing European Council decisions, in particular regarding relocation measures as pledges for increased financial contributions and additional staff. During the [plenary debate](#), some called upon the European Council President to increase pressure on the Member States to deliver. The recent European Commission overview on the '[Measures to Address the Refugee Crisis](#)' outlines the current degree of fulfilment of pledges by Member States on additional financial contributions, enhanced relocation schemes, the implementation of 'hotspot' measures and also the requirements for the EU civil protection mechanism.

4. Next steps

4.1 G20 summit

The view that migration is 'both a global challenge and a global responsibility' has been [expressed](#) by both European Council President Tusk and Commission President Juncker in a [joint letter](#) to the EU Heads of State or Government on the G20 summit to be held in Antalya (Turkey) on 15/16 November 2015. The letter argues that the G20 also have a responsibility to respond to the 'refugee crisis' and indicates that migration will be an important item for the discussion at the G20 summit. Both the outcome of the Valletta summit and of the G20 summit will be debated in the European Parliament's [plenary session on 25 November 2015](#).

4.2 December 2015 European Council

The issue of migration is likely to feature prominently on the agenda of the European Council Meeting of 18/19 December 2015.

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