European Parliament

The migration issue

SUMMARY

Refugee movements and migration are at the centre of global attention. In recent years, Europe has had to respond to the most severe migratory challenge since the end of the Second World War. The unprecedented arrival of refugees and irregular migrants in the EU, which peaked in 2015, exposed a series of deficiencies and gaps in EU policies on asylum, external borders and migration. In response to these challenges, the EU has embarked on a broader process of reform aimed at rebuilding its asylum and migration policies based on four pillars: reducing the incentives for irregular migration by addressing its root causes, improving returns and dismantling smuggling and trafficking networks; saving lives and securing the external borders; establishing a strong EU asylum policy, and providing more legal pathways for asylum-seekers and more efficient legal channels for regular migrants.

The record migratory flows to the EU witnessed during 2015 and 2016 had subsided by the end of 2017 and 2018. However, in order to deliver what the Commission calls an effective, fair and robust future EU migration policy, the EU, based on the Treaties and other legal and financial instruments, has been implementing both immediate and longer-term measures. Europe, due to its geographic position and its reputation as an example of stability, generosity and openness against a background of growing international and internal conflicts, climate change and global poverty, is likely to continue to represent an ideal refuge for asylum-seekers and migrants. This is also reflected in the growing amounts, flexibility and diversity of EU funding for migration and asylum policies inside as well as outside the current and future EU budget.

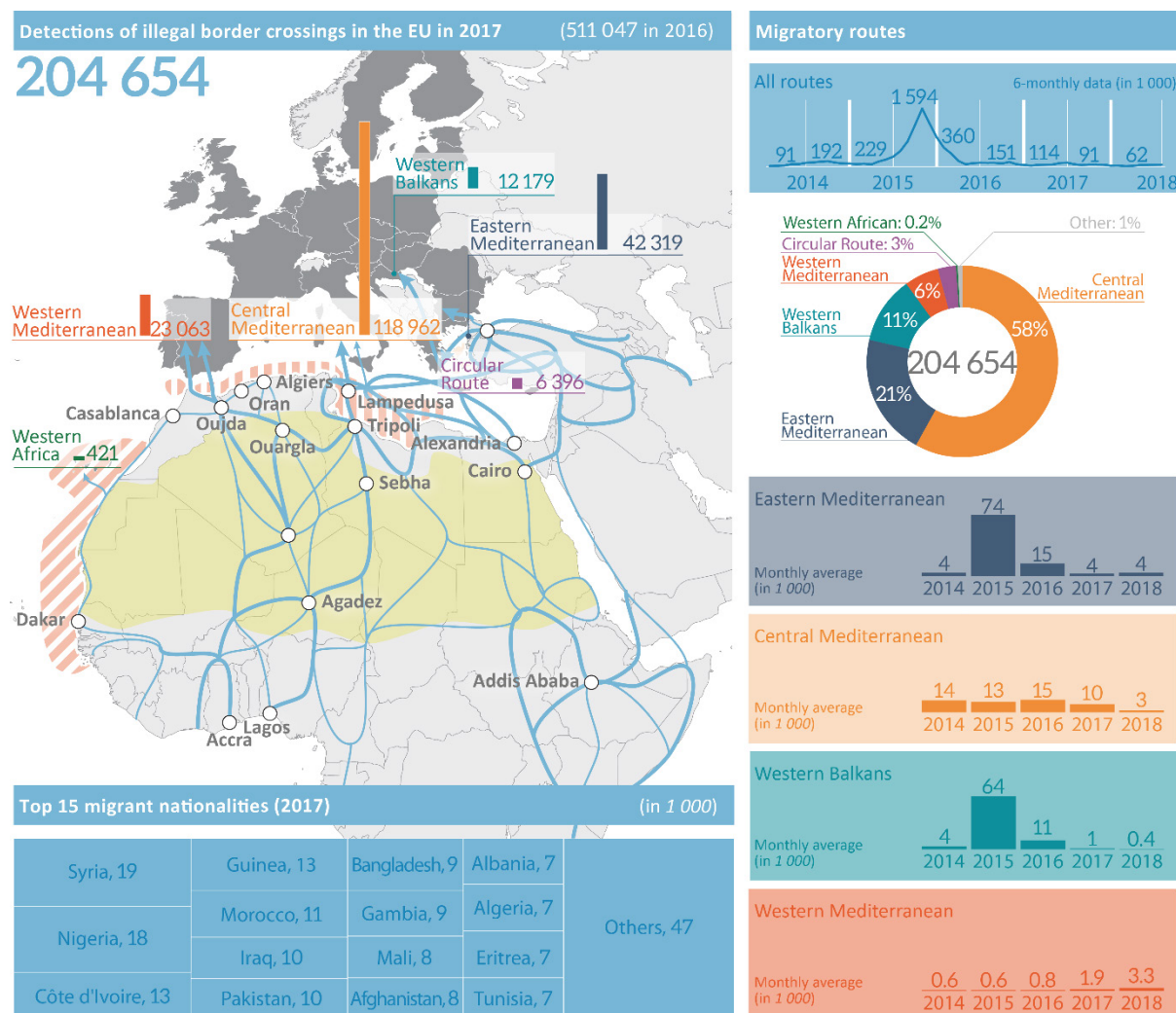*See also the parallel Briefing on* *'EU support for democracy and peace in the world'*.
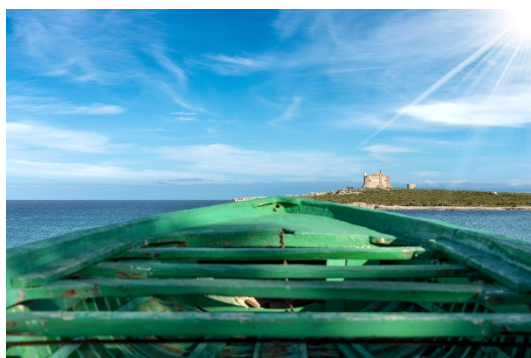
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State of play

The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in recent years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000. Since the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the issue of international migration and its relation to development has risen steadily on the agenda of the international community.

Figure 1 – Main migratory routes into Europe

Detections of illegal border crossings in the EU in 2017 (511 047 in 2016)

204 654

Western Balkans — 12 179
Eastern Mediterranean — 42 319
Western Mediterranean — 23 063
Central Mediterranean — 118 962
Circular Route — 6 396
Western Africa — 421

Migratory routes

All routes — 6-monthly data (in 1 000)
91 192 229 1 594 360 151 114 91 62
2014   2015   2016   2017   2018

Western African: 0.2% | Other: 1%
Circular Route: 3%
Western Mediterranean: 6%
Western Balkans: 11%
Eastern Mediterranean: 21%
Central Mediterranean: 58%
204 654

Eastern Mediterranean
4 74 15 4 4
2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Central Mediterranean
14 13 15 10 3
2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Western Balkans
4 64 11 1 0.4
2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Western Mediterranean
0.6 0.6 0.8 1.9 3.3
2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Monthly average (in 1 000)

Top 15 migrant nationalities (2017) (in 1 000)

Syria, 19	Guinea, 13	Bangladesh, 9	Albania, 7
Nigeria, 18	Morocco, 11	Gambia, 9	Algeria, 7
	Iraq, 10	Mali, 8	Eritrea, 7
Côte d'Ivoire, 13	Pakistan, 10	Afghanistan, 8	Tunisia, 7

Others, 47

Data source: Frontex; graphic by Giulio Sabbati, EPRS.

The EU's management of migration is scattered over many legal and policy instruments. Since the unprecedented levels of migration flows to Europe in 2015, this policy has been largely based on the European agenda on migration. EU action in this area consists of proposing and implementing immediate and longer-term measures focusing on the internal and external dimensions of its migration policy and on the EU's external borders. Measures include the return and re-admission of irregular migrants who have no right to enter or stay in the EU, the fight against migrant smuggling, the protection of EU's external borders, the creation of legal pathways for those who are in need of international protection, the establishment of a solid EU asylum policy based on balance between solidarity and responsibility, and addressing migration in cooperation with third countries through political and financial means. The EU details common standards across its several regulations and directives but the actual implementation of asylum and migration policy lies with the Member States, who must ensure that their national legislation is compliant with both EU law and

international agreements. The EU's external migration policy is part of the general EU approach on migration, and is complementary to EU foreign policy and development cooperation. It is based on common goals set by the Member States and is reflected in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Cooperation with third countries is covered under the global approach to migration and mobility (GAMM), through which the EU has engaged in political dialogue and has established partnerships with third countries.

The challenges that the EU has confronted since the recent unprecedented, uncontrolled arrival of large numbers of refugees and irregular migrants, exposed a series of deficiencies and gaps in EU policies on asylum, external borders and migration. It put pressure on the EU's asylum system, a legal framework covering all aspects of the asylum process. Under the existing system, asylum seekers are not treated uniformly and recognition rates in different EU countries vary. Moreover, only a very few countries, based on their geographical position, are responsible for essentially all asylum claims submitted within the EU. To render the legal framework more efficient, harmonised, fairer and more resistant to future migratory pressures, it needs to be reformed. One of the first urgent measures after the migration wave in 2015 was intended to alleviate the migratory pressure on Greece and Italy, who have borne the brunt of the influx. The aim was to relocate eligible applicants for international protection – nationalities with an overall asylum recognition rate of 75 % or higher in EU Member States – to other Member States, thus ensuring fair and balanced distribution and sharing of responsibility for asylum-seekers in the EU. However, not all Member States were willing to participate in the scheme, reflecting contrasting attitudes in public opinion and difficulties in balancing solidarity and responsibility between different EU countries.

Furthermore, reducing irregular migration necessitates an effective policy on return and readmission of irregular migrants. The Commission, due to the low return rates, has therefore been focusing on improving its own capacities through the renewed return action plan and proposed revision of the return directive and has been concluding re-admission agreements or practical arrangements with countries of origin and transit from Africa and Asia.

Uncontrolled migratory flows also exposed weaknesses in the management of the EU's external borders. A key element in the EU's support for its Member States has been the operational support provided under the hotspot approach. This includes identifying and registering every arrival of asylum seekers, as well as providing adequate reception conditions and capacity. Although the fingerprinting of migrants has progressed and, according to the Commission figures, has reached close to 100 %, reception conditions remain a serious concern. The years 2017 and 2018 saw a significant fall in detected illegal border crossings along the EU's external borders, mainly on the eastern and central Mediterranean migratory routes, but the overall pressure on Europe's external borders remains relatively high. Besides, the journey to the EU can be extremely dangerous, and smugglers frequently expose migrants to life-threatening risks. Preventing the loss of lives, notably in the Mediterranean Sea, necessitates search and rescue operations as well as fighting human trafficking and smuggling networks.

Migration is a macro-critical policy issue on a global scale. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a zero-migration scenario, in the developed world, by 2025, only New Zealand and Ireland will still have growth in their working age population, as all other countries experience a severe decline. One way, amongst others, to counterbalance the decline or stagnation in population growth is to open legal channels to migration, and this calls for a global solution. There is also an urgent need to replace irregular migratory flows, which have caused so much suffering and extreme human rights violations, with legal channels for migration. As European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said in his State of the Union speech in 2017, 'Irregular migration will only stop if there is a real alternative to perilous journeys.'

Public expectations for EU involvement[1]

Figure 2 – Percentage of respondents who would like the EU to intervene more than at present

Source: EPRS based on Eurobarometer 85.1 - 2016; 89.2 - 2018.

According to a series of Eurobarometer surveys done for the European Parliament on 'perceptions and expectations', the support of EU citizens for even stronger EU involvement on the issue of migration has dropped from 74 % in 2016 to 72 % in 2018. Although there is a decrease, it is insignificant and the overall support for EU involvement on the issue of migration remains very high.

The variation in opinions across Member States is significant. The strongest support for increased EU action in dealing with migration is registered in Cyprus (88 %), Spain (85 %) and Portugal (84 %). The weakest support for increased EU action in this field is seen in Austria (55 %), Latvia and the United Kingdom (56 %). Despite the differences between the Member States, the support for increased EU involvement in migration issue is shared by the majority of citizens in every Member State.

The overall fall in support for increased EU involvement in the migration issue is 2 percentage points. At Member State level, the most significant decrease is in Estonia (decrease of 15 percentage points), the Czech Republic (decrease of 13 percentage points) and the UK (decrease of 12 percentage points). Eight Member States show an increase in the desire for intensified EU involvement in the migration issue, with the most significant increase registered in Spain (increase of 6 percentage points).

Figure 3 – Expectations for more EU action than at present: percentage points difference between 2016 and 2018

Source: EPRS based on Eurobarometer 85.1 - 2016; 89.2 - 2018.

There is a significant improvement in the evaluation of the EU involvement in the issue of migration since 2016. The proportion of Europeans who considered the EU action to be insufficient has dropped with eight percentage points (from 66 % in 2016 to 57 % in 2018), but this opinion is still shared by the majority of the European citizens. The proportion of Europeans who considered the EU action on the issue of migration to be adequate has increased by 7 percentage points (from 19 % in 2016 to 26 % in 2018). Despite the improvement in the evaluation of the EU performance in this area, involvement in the migration issue remains the policy area with the worst evaluation amongst those included in the study.

This positive change in evaluation of the EU's involvement in the migration field is most prominent in Romania (increase of 19 percentage points), Ireland (increase of 14 percentage points) and in Bulgaria (increase of 12 percentage points). The improved evaluation of EU involvement is almost universal, with only three Member States demonstrating worse evaluation rates for EU action on migration in 2018 compared to 2016 This opposite trend is registered in Austria (decrease of 9 percentage points), in Malta (decrease of 8 percentage points) and in Luxembourg where the change is marginal (decrease of 1 percentage point).

Figure 4 – Perception of EU action as adequate at present: percentage points difference between 2016 and 2018

Source: EPRS based on Eurobarometer 85.1 - 2016; 89.2 - 2018.

Differences in the evaluation of EU action amongst Member States remain significant. They range from as low as a 10 % evaluation of 'adequate' in Greece, to 43 % in Croatia, and 40 % in Denmark.

The migration policy area has one of the largest gaps between citizens' expectations and their evaluations of EU involvement (together with the fight against unemployment and tax fraud). While the magnitude has decreased significantly, mostly due to the improved evaluation of EU action, there remains much more to be done to address citizens' concerns.

EU framework

Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) binds the EU, as a non-state actor, to align itself with United Nations norms, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter in its role in promoting and protecting human rights through all its actions, bearing the particularly the rights of children in mind.[2] The EU has a shared competence for developing a common immigration policy. Under EU law, Article 67(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union 'shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between Member States, which is fair towards third-country nationals'. Third-country nationals shall also include stateless persons. Article 78 TFEU provides for the EU to develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection. The article also frames the role of the European Parliament and the Council as co-legislators when adopting measures for a common European asylum system. In case of a sudden inflow of third-country nationals into one or more Member States, the Council can adopt temporary measures based on a Commission proposal and after consulting the European Parliament. Article 79(1) provides for enhanced measures to combat illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings with the Parliament and the Council acting in accordance with ordinary procedure, while Article 79(3) allows that the Union 'may conclude
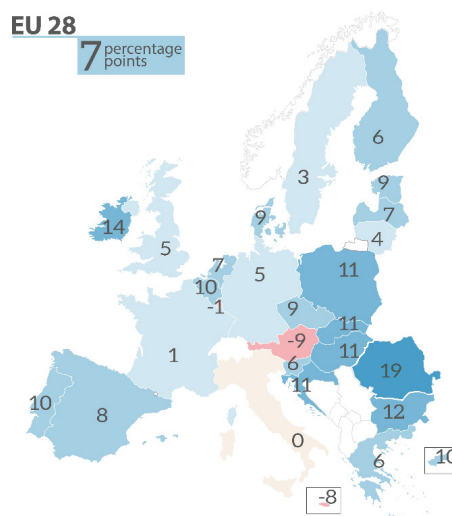
agreements with third countries for the readmission to their countries of origin or provenance of third-country nationals who do not or who no longer fulfil the conditions for entry, presence or residence in the territory of one of the Member States'. Article 80 TFEU refers to the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States when they pursue policies on border checks, asylum and immigration. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights provides for the right to asylum in Article 18 and the prohibition of *refoulement* in Article 19. Compliance with the Charter is a requirement for the validity and legality of the Union's secondary legislation, including directives and regulations in the field of asylum.

The common European asylum system must respect states' obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (Geneva Convention) and other relevant treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It must also comply with the principle of non-*refoulement* contained in Article 33 of the Refugee Convention.[3]

Most EU funds related to migration policies have been allocated under Heading 3 (internal) and Heading 4 (external) of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This includes the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), intended to promote the efficient management of migration flows and develop a common Union approach to asylum and immigration, and the Internal Security Fund (ISF), providing support for the management of external borders and the common visa policy (ISF Borders and Visa) and financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, including migrant smuggling. According to the April 2018 data, the AMIF initial allocation for 2014-2020 MFF increased from €3.8 billion to €6.6 billion, while the funds for ISF increased slightly from €3.7 billion to €3.8 billion.

Decentralised EU agencies also work on migration, notably the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), involved in external border management and control; the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), assisting in the implementation of Member States' obligations under the asylum system; and the European Union Law Enforcement Agency (Europol), assisting police cooperation between Member States, including in the area of migrant smuggling. EU agencies operate under indirect management, meaning the Commission delegates budget implementation to those agencies. According to the 2018 data, the total EU contribution from the 2014-20 MFF to Frontex increased from the initial commitment of €628 million to €1 638 million (April 2018), to EASO from €109 million to €456 million (April 2018) and to Europol from €654 million to €753 million (April 2018).

The Instrument for Emergency Support within the Union is to be awarded up to 2019, in cases of disasters of 'exceptional scale and impact' where 'no other instrument available to Member States and to the Union is sufficient'. By April 2018, the Commission had contracted €605 million in emergency support for refugees in Greece. Funds such as Horizon 2020, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) also allocate funds to migration, more specifically to the integration of refugees and migrants. Funding for the EU's external migration policy has been based on different instruments to respond to new priorities, such as the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the European Fund for Sustainable Development (see table 1 in Budgetary Initiatives). These instruments were created with the purpose of using resources from both the EU budget and MS, however, fulfilling national commitments has often proved difficult. EU funding for migration is expected to continue to increase up to 2020, to support progress in the area of migration management in all Member States.

Deliveries of the current parliamentary term

As a first and immediate response to the unprecedented levels of migration flows to Europe in 2015, the European Commission adopted a ten point action plan on migration in April 2015, which was also supported by the Council and the European Parliament (EP). As the measures contained in the plan proved insufficient, the Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015,

providing concrete immediate and long-term measures to establish a strong EU asylum policy, save lives and secure external borders, reduce the incentives for irregular migration, provide more legal pathways for asylum-seekers and ensure cooperation with third countries. Parliament has adopted numerous own-initiative resolutions addressing migration, in particular its resolution of 12 April 2016, on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration, and its resolution of 5 April 2017, on addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action. These resolutions assess the various policies at stake, and develop a set of recommendations.

The EU's internal action on migration

Reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

Under the existing common European asylum system (CEAS), asylum seekers are not treated uniformly and recognition rates in different EU countries vary, resulting to some extent from the discretion in implementing the directives current asylum legislation allows Member States. Besides, only few countries, based on their geographical position, are responsible for essentially all asylum claims submitted within the EU. To make the legal framework more efficient, harmonised, fairer and more resistant to future migratory pressures, the Commission launched its reform in May and July 2016. It introduced two packages of proposals, covering fair allocation of asylum applications among Member States and providing a common set of rules at EU level to simplify and shorten the asylum procedure, ensure uniform standards for protection and rights granted to beneficiaries of international protection and further harmonise reception conditions in the EU, discourage secondary movements and increase the prospect of integration. The reform of the system, which is not advancing due to contrasting attitudes in public opinion and difficulties in balancing solidarity and responsibility between different EU countries, will only be completed once the Parliament and the Council reach a political agreement on individual files.

Strengthening external borders

As emphasised in the European agendas on migration and on security, addressing current challenges requires improvements to the management of external borders. The EU has focused on making better use of the opportunities offered by information systems and technologies (IT), such as the reinforcement of controls at external borders and creating a system to register entry and exit of third-country nationals. One of the biggest achievements has been the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in September 2016, which happened in record time. The Agency provides enhanced support for Member States in the field of migration management, the fight against cross-border crime, and search and rescue operations.

Reducing irregular migration and increasing returns

In tackling migratory challenges along different routes, the EU has focused on ensuring a presence at sea, to save lives and dismantle human trafficking and smuggling networks. To prevent the loss of lives, notably in the Mediterranean Sea, and fight human trafficking networks and smugglers, the EU established a series of naval operations, such as EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA. Furthermore, due to the low return rates, the EU has also focused on improving its own capacities, through the renewed return action plan and cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, as well as on concluding re-admission agreements or practical arrangements with countries of origin and transit from Africa and Asia.

Ensuring sufficient legal pathways to the EU

In May 2016, Directive 2016/801/EU on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing was adopted. Its adoption completed the package of legal migration measures that had been proposed by the previous European Commission, which included a Directive on intra-corporate transferees (Directive 2014/66/EU) and a Directive on seasonal workers (Directive 2014/36/EU). In June 2016, the Commission proposed a new legal migration package, which includes an action plan on integration of third country nationals. In September 2016, the Commission launched its legal migration fitness check, with the aim of evaluating the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and EU added value of several EU legal migration tools. These include, in addition to those mentioned above, the Family Reunification Directive (2003/86/EC); the Long-term Residents Directive (2003/109/EC), as amended; the original EU Blue Card Directive (2009/50/EC), which is currently under revision; as well as the Single Permit Directive (2011/98/EU).

The EU's external cooperation on migration

EU external policy is based on the global approach to migration and mobility (GAMM) created in 2005. It builds upon international engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels and is based on the 2011 evaluation. The current version of the GAMM was adopted in 2012 and seeks to create a balanced and comprehensive approach to migration by partnering with non-EU countries. The EU's external migration management is based on a wide range of tools, building dialogue and partnerships with countries of origin and transit, based on solidarity and responsibility.

The European agenda on migration launched the partnership framework on migration with third countries to build and expand the existing initiatives. The framework enhances support for people in need, in the context of crisis-response, while establishing the foundations for enhanced cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination with the migration and mobility policy as its core. The European Parliament, in its resolution of 5 April 2017, stressed its concern and solidarity with regard to the large number of refugees and migrants who suffer profound human rights violations in their countries or origin. The EU has called for tailor-made, long-term partnerships with neighbouring countries, as well as with other countries of transit and origin. The impact of migration flow on the policy dimension, and notably on the development/security nexus, is further developed in the EU global strategy on foreign and security policy presented in June 2016. The strategy establishes the concept of 'principled pragmatism', with an emphasis on tailored approaches to individual countries. Measures included in the new skills agenda for Europe are also relevant for third-country nationals and should support their integration.

Since 2005, the EU has supported **return and reintegration** of migrants in third countries through the Development Cooperation Instrument thematic programme on migration and asylum. Between 2005 and 2015, €65 million in EU funding was allocated for this purpose, benefitting over 50 projects in third countries with a reintegration dimension. The European migration network's expert group on return, identifies 96 programmes designed to help migrants to return and reintegrate in their home country in the EU, implemented by 26 Member States, plus Norway.[4] These programmes aim to assist migrants who have been granted a period of time for voluntary departure before a forced removal is executed. Specific programmes address the needs of vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, victims of human trafficking, and people with specific medical needs. Specific initiatives in support of reintegration of migrants 'have been adopted to both support reintegration related actions in partner countries and the Member States' Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes, thereby demonstrating an increasing understanding of the nexus between the success of the EU migration policy and the partner countries' development.'

Within the EU framework, Member States have been resettling refugees from third countries directly under the provisions of the EU emergency resettlement scheme and the EU-Turkey statement. However, the number of resettlements remains modest. In September 2017, the European Commission recommended that Member States additionally resettle at least 50 000 vulnerable persons by October 2019, focusing on North Africa, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. The EP and the Council are also negotiating two proposals that could open up more legal pathways to migrate to Europe, one on the EU resettlement framework providing safe and legal avenues to Europe for those in need of international protection, and another on the EU Blue Card, which seeks to attract and retain highly skilled workers.

Total commitments for EU funds, decentralised agencies and other support systems in the area of migration for the whole 2014-2020 MFF period have increased from €8.4 billion in the initial MFF allocation to €14.2 billion by April 2018. As the management of migration rose as a priority on the EU agenda, the amount, flexibility and diversity of EU funding for migration inside as well as outside the EU budget has grown. This change is a consequence of the unprecedented levels of migration flows in 2015, putting pressure on both Member State capacities, especially at the EU's external border, and on decentralised agencies in terms of material and human resources. The additional measures approved in 2015 in line with the European Agenda on Migration have had an immediate budgetary impact, as notably reflected in amending budgets No 5/2015 and No 7/2015. Revised EU budgets, also called for by the EP, were intended to help countries under most pressure to address new needs as regards border control, hotspots, and to provide the necessary humanitarian support to refugees and migrants, including shelter and healthcare. Member State capacity was also reinforced by experts and assets made available through funding of the Border and Coast Guard, Europol and the EASO. EU funding has also been provided to Member States for resettlement of

people in need of protection from outside the EU. However, in its resolution of October 2017, the EP again reiterated its conviction that the Heading 3 ceiling has proven vastly insufficient to fund the internal dimension of those challenges adequately. The EP's remarks were taken into account in the general budget for the financial year 2018. According to the European Commission, the overall spending from the EU funds (AMIF and ISF), which represent the majority of the EU budget for migration-related activities, has proven mainly effective. The funds have improved asylum systems and strengthened reception capacity in the Member States and reinforced the border management capacity at the external borders of the Union. The funds generate significant EU added value by supporting actions with a transnational dimension, burden-sharing between Member States, increasing national capacities, staff training, and other measures.

Table 1 – Financial instruments for external cooperation on migration[5]

Instrument	Budget	Geographical scope
European Development Fund (EDF)	2014-2020 period: €30.5 billion allocated to the 11th EDF for 2014-2020	African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) partner countries of the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) of Member States
Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)	2014-2020 period: €19 661.64 million (current prices)	Geographical programmes (Latin America, Middle East and South Asia, North and South-East Asia, Central Asia); the Pan-African programme (Africa as a whole) (continental and trans-regional projects); and the thematic programme on migration and asylum (projects in key countries)
European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)	2014-2020 period: €15 432.63 million (current prices)	South Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Palestine) and Eastern Neighbourhood countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) either bilaterally or regionally (in this latter case Russia is also included)
Madad Fund (2014)	2014-2018 period: €1.4 billion to date	Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Syria
Bêkou Trust Fund	€239.5 million of pledges	Central African Republic
European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa	2015-2020 period: Resources currently amount to €3.37 billion including over €2.98 billion from the EDF and EU financial instruments (DCI, ENI, HOME and ECHO), and €399.8 million from EU Member States and others (Switzerland and Norway)	The Sahel region and Lake Chad area, the Horn of Africa, North Africa and the neighbouring countries of the eligible countries may benefit from its projects
Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance II (IPA II)	2014-2020 period: €11 698.67 million (current prices)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey
EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT)	2016-2017 period: For 2016-2017: €3 billion, 2018: Additional €3 billion allocated in March 2018	Turkey
European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD)	Initial budget of €3.35 billion	Africa and EU Neighbourhood region
2016 London Conference	2016: US$12 billion of pledges	Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt
Brussels I Conference and Brussels II Conference	2017: US$6 billion 2018: US$4.4 billion 2019-2020: US$3.4 billion	Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt

Potential for the future

Current trends show that Europe will no doubt continue to be attractive to migrants and asylum-seekers and management of migration flows will continue to figure high on the EU agenda. This is because of a range of factors, such as growing international and internal conflicts, climate change, and continuing economic disparities between the EU Member States and other countries. The EU must therefore combine a range of internal and external migration policy tools. What the European Commission calls an effective, fair and robust EU migration policy, adapted to future challenges, would give asylum to those who have the right to international protection and return those who do not; prevent loss of lives, notably in the Mediterranean Sea; dismantle human-trafficking networks and smugglers; strengthen the external borders and ensure a real alternative to perilous journeys, such as opening up legal migration channels as the best way to fight human-trafficking networks and smugglers. This needs to be accompanied by a strengthening of the management of external borders, including by making better use of the opportunities offered by information technologies (IT) systems.

To address the issue of such large movements of refugees and migrants at global level, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016, in which it called for the development of two global compacts, one on refugees and one on other migrants; both compacts were adopted in December 2018. The EU, positioning itself as a global actor in migration has played a strong role in the preparation of the compacts. These compacts 'provide the opportunity to move ahead in strengthening the norms, principles, rules and decision-making processes that will allow for more effective international cooperation in responding to what is a defining issue'. Providing continued institutional support to address these issues and implement the outcomes of the global compacts will be a challenge. June 2018 was a crucial month for leaders to agree an EU approach towards migration. On 14 June 2018, the European Commission published a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

In this new proposed funding architecture for the EU's external action (MFF 2021-2027), the European Commission therefore proposes to simplify its structure by tearing down artificial barriers between instruments. With a proposed budget of €89.5 billion over the 2021-2027 period, the NDICI radically overhauls the manner in which the financing of European Union external action is administered. In an effort to streamline existing financing instruments, NDICI will merge a total eight regulations and one decision, most of which will expire on 31 December 2020 (See box). The increase in the external action budget from €94.5 billion in the 2014-2020 period to €123 billion for the 2021-2027 period constitutes a rise of 30 %, as calculated in current prices. If we deduct yearly inflation up to 2027, the increase would be 13 %. The NDICI will channel the biggest share of external action funds. It will be the EU's main tool to contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, prosperity, peace and stability. The instrument will be based

Instruments to be merged under the proposed NDICI

1   the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI),
2   the European Development Fund (EDF) including the EDF's ACP investment facility,
3   European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI),
4   the Partnership Instrument for Cooperation with Third Countries (PI),
5   the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR),
6   the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP),
7   European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) which consists of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) and the External Action Guarantee and includes also the External Lending Mandate (ELM).

This broad instrument will be complemented by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA); Instrument for Humanitarian Aid; Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP); Instrument for Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) including Greenland; and the separate Instrument for European Nuclear Safety.

on four pillars: geographic (€68 billion); thematic (€7 billion); a rapid response component (€4 billion), and an emerging challenges and priorities cushion (€10.2 billion).

Following an informal meeting of 24 June 2018, and after the European Commission presented elements on which the European Council could make progress with asylum reform, the EU leaders achieved no breakthrough in terms of internal aspects of migration and the EU's asylum policy at the June 2018 summit, and all subsequent summits in October 2018 and December 2018. This illustrated the remaining differences between Member States as regards, in particular, reform of the Dublin Regulation that determines the EU Member State responsible for examining an application by an asylum seeker seeking international protection. Instead, due to domestic political situations and internal pressures in some countries, the European Council conclusions prioritise strengthening the EU's external borders. In its contribution, the European Commission states its intention to present new proposals to ensure 'a more European management of the external borders' and to 'increase the coherence and effectiveness of the EU's return policy'.

Consequently, the European Commission, following President Juncker's State of the Union speech in September 2018, proposed strengthening the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, upgrading the EU's agency for asylum and increasing returns, and called for enhanced legal pathways to Europe for humanitarian and economic purposes, including by speeding up resettlement and addressing shortages of specific skills. The European Commission is thus further tapping into the potential of the EU Treaties, especially Articles 77(2)(d) and 79(2)(c), and is pushing for more decentralised agencies. Apart from strengthening EU external borders and streamlining the asylum procedures, European Council debates and conclusions also prioritise rapid processing of migrants and preventing them from reaching Europe in the first place, by stemming illegal migration on all existing and emerging routes. The European Commission therefore presented an assessment of the initiative to establish controlled centres in the EU and regional disembarkation options for migrants rescued during search and rescue operations on their way to Europe.

All EU leaders who have intervened in the Future of Europe debates in the Parliament so far have acknowledged that migration was one of the EU's main challenges, and agreed that it can only be addressed at EU level. While all of them consider it necessary to step up cooperation with countries where migrants originate or transit, most have also stressed the need for progress on CEAS and on the issue of relocation. Some EU leaders also supported a general increase in funding, or a more ambitious and specific initiative, such as a 'Marshall Plan' for Africa. The next MFF 2021–2027 for migration-related issues is to be almost tripled to reach more than €34.9 billion, compared to €14 billion for the 2014-2020 period. The framework will focus on supporting what the European Commission calls a robust, realistic and fair migration policy through a reinforced Asylum and Migration Fund of €11.2 billion. This fund will support a stronger and more efficient European asylum system, and faster and more frequent returns, as well as early integration of non-EU nationals staying lawfully in the EU in the short-term, and previously not included among the fund's responsibilities. The long-term budget will also address a significant strengthening of EU's external borders through the creation of a new Integrated Border Management Fund worth €9.3 billion and through a significant increase of funding of €12 billion for the decentralised agencies supporting MS protecting EU borders, notably the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

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ENDNOTES

[1] This section has been drafted by Alina Dobreva, with graphics by Nadejda Kresnichka-Nikolchova.

[2] A common concern to both the UN and the EU is the respect of the human rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees.

[3] Member states of the Council of Europe must also guarantee to everyone within their jurisdiction, including migrants, the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

[4] The study covers all 28 EU Member States, except Croatia and Denmark, but including Norway. The study is based on the results of the review, mostly covering the 2013-2014 period.

[5] See Nikolai Atanassov N., Dumbrava C., Mentzelopoulou M-M., Radjenovic A., EU asylum, borders and external cooperation on migration, EPRS, European Parliament, May 2018, and Apap J., Claros Gimeno E., Mentzelopoulou M-M., Migration & asylum: Projects & funding, EPRS, European Parliament, May 2018.

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