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Section 2.5 External dimension

With migration being a global reality, over the years the EU has adopted a whole-of-route, multi-stakeholder approach toward migration and asylum management.[49] An effective response requires comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit in a number of areas,[50] including efforts to address root causes of irregular migration; increased capacity in managing borders and curtailing the work of smuggling networks; protection solutions to displaced populations around the world; and safe and legal pathways to Europe as an alternative to irregular migration.

An important instrument for addressing the external dimension of migration is the Budapest process, a key platform to promote international cooperation on migration management among countries form Europe and Asia. Following the 7th Ministerial Conference of the Budapest Process in November 2024, an action plan for 2025-2030 was presented, focusing on six priorities in addressing migration challenges:

- Prevent irregular migration and fight against migrant smuggling;
- Strengthen pathways for legal migration and mobility;
- Strengthen cooperation for safe, effective and prompt returns, readmissions and sustainable reintegration;
- Strengthen the positive impact of migration on development, while addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement;
- Ensure international protection and respect of the rights of refugees and people in need of international protection; and
- Support effective integration into host countries.[51]

To help address the conditions that generate forced displacement and irregular migration, the EU provides development aid and promotes fundamental rights around the world. Multi-annual indicative plans define policy areas and outline the overall basis of cooperation with different countries and regions.[52]

In light of the latest developments in the region, in January 2025 the European Commission announced a humanitarian package of EUR 120 million to assist Palestinians in Gaza, bringing the total assistance to EUR 450 million since 2023. The EU also launched a Humanitarian Air Bridge operation, which has transported over 3,800 tonnes of aid materials to Gaza.53

In March 2025, the Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” took place with the dual objective of mobilising humanitarian and financial aid for Syrians and host communities in the wider region, while rallying the international community to support a comprehensive and credible political solution to the Syrian conflict. 54 To this end, the EU committed nearly EUR 2.5 billion for 2025 and 2026.55

A priority in addressing mixed migratory movements and enhancing border management has been cooperation with partner countries in the EU’s neighbourhood. This increased engagement with the Western Balkans has taken place through the joint implementation of the EU Action Plan on Western Balkans, presented by the European Commission in December 2022.56 It covers a comprehensive approach on migration: border management, asylum and reception capacities, migrant smuggling, readmission and returns, and visa policy alignment. An important deliverable in this context in 2024 was the agreement signed in June 2024 between the EU and Serbia on operational cooperation in border management with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) (status agreement), which will allow Frontex to carry out additional joint operations in Serbia, including by deploying the standing corps at Serbia’s borders with non-EU neighbours.57

This added to the status agreements already in force with Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro.58 Negotiations on a status agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina were finalised in December 2024. Along the same lines, the newly-created position of the Commissioner for the Mediterranean incorporates in its agenda a migration-related portfolio,59 and the forthcoming Pact for the Mediterranean aims to address illegal migration, fight human smuggling, build partnerships and create legal migration pathways so that migration can benefit both sides of the Mediterranean.60

The collaboration with Türkiye, a key EU partner on migration, also continued in 2024. The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey manages a total of EUR 6 billion to provide humanitarian assistance, support for basic needs, education, healthcare and socioeconomic support. The EU has supported refugees beyond the facility; since 2011, EUR 12.5 billion have been allocated to assist refugees and host communities in Türkiye, including a total of EUR 878 million for migration management.61

In March 2024, a comprehensive partnership agreement was signed between the EU and Egypt covering six pillars of strategic importance. Out of a financial and investment package of EUR 7.4 billion, EUR 200 million will be allocated to cooperation in the area of migration and mobility to facilitate legal migration and curtail irregular migration through border management, anti-smuggling efforts and returns.62 The European Commission also launched a new migration partnership with Mauritania in March 2024. Through the partnership, EUR 210 million was mobilised to support migration management and the fight against migrant smuggling, while

promoting security and stability, providing humanitarian aid for refugees in Mauritania, and supporting host communities.63

Under the 2024-2025 EU Resettlement and Humanitarian admission scheme, 14 EU countries provided 61,000 pledges for resettlement and humanitarian admission.64 To help coordinate work in this area, the High-Level Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Committee was launched in November 2024. The committee is chaired by the European Commission and brings together representatives from the European Parliament, the Council, EU Member States, the EUAA, UNHCR, the IOM and civil society organisations. Supporting the implementation of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation, which was adopted in May 2024 as part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the committee helps the European Commission define the 2-year Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission plan that outlines the number of refugees to be admitted to the EU on a voluntary basis, and the countries or regions from which candidates for resettlement and humanitarian admission should take place.65

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