



EU Commission 2024-2029 – external dimension of migration – elements for an ambitious partnership approach

Current global migration and displacement dynamics urgently require successful migration cooperation between the EU and its international partners. Important steps have been taken since the European Council concluded in February 2023 to step up EU efforts to develop equitable and durable partnerships with countries of transit, origin and destination. However, the pressure on the EU external borders remains high. The Netherlands will therefore urge to step up the efforts for broad and ambitious partnerships, to reduce irregular migration towards the EU, foster returns whilst advancing protection of migrants worldwide.

Required actions

1. Develop comprehensive, durable and equitable partnerships along migration routes

We must approach our partnerships from a broad entry point, as our international partners share our interest in promoting stability, security, and economic prosperity. Thus, the Commission should develop broad, comprehensive country partnerships along the various migration routes. These partnerships should include extensive migration cooperation and various instruments and policies, ranging from – for example - fair trade and development cooperation to investments in employment and climate adaptation, security and energy – whilst upholding international human rights standards. Strengthening cooperation on migration, such as better border management, targeting human trafficking and migrant smuggling, protection, return and reintegration, and strengthening regular migration – should continuously be part of these partnerships, while acknowledging and supporting the substantial efforts of partners already hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees. At the same time, the EU should not shy away from negative measures where appropriate if migration cooperation stalls.

2. Strengthen Team Europe

A unified EU is a much stronger negotiating partner. To enable the Commission to successfully develop and implement these partnerships, Commission-wide engagement is needed in a whole-of-Commission spirit, from expert level up to the political level. Furthermore, coordination between Commission, EEAS and member states should increase significantly. The relevant Council mechanisms are in place to use more efficiently and actively, and coordination amongst EU capitals and in partner countries through EU delegations is of key importance. EU needs and interests should be communicated in a strategic manner, and in a dialogue on equal footing, showing a solid understanding of the needs of our partners, while we work to promote the visibility of EU-efforts in our partner countries much more.

3. Partner up in the fight against migrant smuggling

Member states, The Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies and partner countries should partner up comprehensively in the collective fight against migrant smuggling. Therefore, the Netherlands welcomes the continuation of the development and implementation of Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships, as part of broad comprehensive partnerships. Furthermore, EU efforts could be intensified by supporting (existing) initiatives to set up and operate working with a (regional) network of prosecutors to enhance the information exchange as well as by supporting the use of magistrate liaison officers or law enforcement liaison officers in third countries. Furthermore, progress on adequacy decisions is imperative to enhance the exchange of information between third countries and MS. Lastly - the use of the EU's sanction regime to end impunity and effectively disrupt and counter the most relentless migrant smuggling networks, their kingpins and its beneficiaries could also be further explored.



4. Promote return cooperation

The obligation of all countries to duly receive and readmit their own nationals who are not legally staying, stands as an essential element of a well-functioning global migration system. While support by Commission and Member States is of key importance, both in terms of support to relevant national authorities and providing reintegration support through international organizations, negative measures must be leveraged as well, both within and beyond the various migration instruments where appropriate.

5. Invest in international protection and advance (innovative) migration management

Targeted, long-term and large-scale EU investments in both international protection, asylum systems and migration management in partner countries are required. This must include a dialogue on asylum and migration policies, in which both IOM and UNHCR could play a crucial role. In line with the letter by the President of the European Commission of 13/12/2023, the EU should look into possibilities how to strengthen, develop and support out-of-the-box ideas, such as places of safety in partner countries, models similar to the EU-Türkiye declaration and return hubs, between partner countries and the EU and its Member States – within the framework of European and international law.

6. Enable JHA Agencies to be active on the external dimension

JHA Agencies need to further develop their activities in partner countries, in line with strategic and geographic priorities set by the Council and ideally as part of broad and comprehensive partnerships. Frontex and the EU Asylum Agency could make an important contribution to migration cooperation with partner countries, to strengthen capacities in the field of asylum, protection, border management and return, while Eurojust and Europol could further support international investigations and effective prosecution. The conclusion of working arrangements for cooperation between those agencies and partners in this regard is key. It goes without saying that activities of the JHA-agencies need to be in line with international and European law, guaranteeing fundamental rights.

7. Ensure adequate financing and monitoring for the external dimension of migration

We need to ensure adequate and balanced financing for the external dimension of migration, to enable both reactive measures in case of high irregular departures for example to deploy joint operational activities to disrupt migrant smuggling networks, and to cover preventive efforts by investing in protection, migration management. Investing in root causes is in this context key to develop countries and improve economies and societies in countries of origin and transit. Furthermore, there is a clear need for an aggregated, transparent overview of the Commission and Member States actions on the external dimension of migration. A migration marker for all relevant instruments could be a useful starting point. In addition, this type of programming must respect to the largest extent possible the do-no-harm principle, thus requires continuous monitoring, evaluating and learning, including to assess our impact on reducing irregular migration and migrant smuggling, improving return cooperation and protection of migrants. A concrete monitoring mechanism should be set up for this.