

EU Trust Fund for Africa: €115.5 million to enhance security, migrant protection and job creation in the Sahel region

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** said: *“We have witnessed in the recent weeks an increase of widespread violence and terrorist attacks in the Sahel and Lake Chad region. New EU programmes and top-ups to existing programmes worth €115.5 million will further strengthen our actions on the development and security fronts. They will also help reinforcing the State presence in fragile areas, create jobs for young people and protect migrants in need. In order to continue the good work of the Trust fund in the near future, its quickly depleting resources have to be replenished.”*

With the security situation in the Sahel becoming increasingly volatile, the EU is committed to continuing its cooperation at regional and national level. It will support the **G5 Sahel** countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) in their efforts to provide a common response to major cross-border threats and regional development needs. An additional €10 million will strengthen the G5 Sahel’s defence and security capacities, while €2 million will support the coordination of the [Sahel Alliance](#). In **Burkina Faso**, an extra €30 million will reinforce the existing [Sahel Emergency Programme](#) to strengthen access to basic social services and foster community dialogue.

Other measures will bolster efforts to protect migrants, fight human trafficking and improve migration management. An additional €30 million will serve to [protect migrants and refugees along the Central Mediterranean route and look for sustainable solutions](#) in the **Sahel and Lake Chad region**. It will further increase the number of migrants benefitting from protection and voluntary return while ensuring their sustainable and dignified reintegration. In **Niger**, the [Joint Investigation Team](#) has dismantled 33 criminal networks and 210 smugglers have been convicted over the past two years. It will receive an extra €5.5 million to build on this success. In **Ghana**, €5 million for capacity-building and equipment will strengthen the country’s border management.

Two measures aim specifically at developing economic and development opportunities. In **Ghana**, new activities worth €20 million will improve job prospects and encourage the transition to green and climate resilient economies. In **Mali**, an additional €13 million will support job creation and the provision of State public services in fragile security areas around Gao and Timbuktu.

Background

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was established in 2015 to address the

root causes of instability, irregular migration and forced displacement. Resources currently allocated to this Trust Fund are €4.2 billion from EU institutions, EU Member States and other donors.

Today's assistance adds to the 188 programmes already approved across the three regions (North of Africa, Sahel and Lake Chad region and Horn of Africa), worth a total of €3.6 billion. These funds were divided up as follows: Sahel/Lake Chad €1.7 billion (92 programmes); Horn of Africa €1.3 billion (70 programmes); North of Africa €582 million (21 programmes). This amount includes 5 cross-region programmes.

For More Information

[EU – IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration](#)

[EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#)

Previous sets of actions approved

- [Seventh package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of € 141 million approved in November 2018
- [Sixth package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €173 million approved in May 2018
- [Joint operational Committee](#) for the Sahel and Lake Chad, North of Africa and Horn of Africa windows approves a package for a total amount of €150 million in February 2018
- [Fifth package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €274.2 million approved in December 2017
- [Fourth package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €381 million approved in December 2016
- [Third package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €146 million approved in June 2016
- [Second package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €280 million approved in April 2016
- [First package of actions](#) in the Sahel and Lake Chad under the EU Trust Fund for a total amount of €100 million approved in January 2016

[ESMA updates register of derivatives to be traded on-venue under MiFIR](#)

Today's update follows the authorisation of one additional Dutch venue where some of the classes of derivatives subject to the trading obligation are available for trading. In addition, the register also reflects the recent adoption by the European Commission of an [equivalence decision](#) for Singapore. EU counterparties are now able to comply with the derivatives trading obligation when concluding transactions on the Singaporean venues listed in

the Annex to the decision.

The register provides clarity to market participants on the application of the trading obligation under MiFIR and in particular on:

- the classes of derivatives subject to the trading obligation;
- the trading venues on which those derivatives can be traded; and
- the dates on which the obligation takes effect per category of counterparties.

Statement by President Juncker on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union at the European Parliament's plenary session

President Tajani,

Honourable Members of this House,

The developments in Westminster over the past days have convinced me of what I already knew. The best way forward is the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement. It has already been agreed by the Government of the United Kingdom, endorsed by this House as well as by the European Council.

In its decision 10 days ago, the European Council paved the way for an extension of the Article 50 negotiation period until the 22 May – on the condition the Withdrawal Agreement was approved by the House of Commons by 29 March. This was not the case.

In light of Prime Minister May's statement last night, I believe we now have a few more days. If the United Kingdom is in a position to approve the Withdrawal Agreement with a sustainable majority by 12 April, the European Union should be prepared to accept a delay until 22 May.

But 12 April is the ultimate deadline for the approval of the Withdrawal Agreement by the House of Commons. If it has not done so by then, no further short extension will be possible. After 12 April, we risk jeopardising the European Parliament elections, and so threaten the functioning of the European Union.

The Withdrawal Agreement is and has always been a compromise. A fair compromise in which both sides obtained some but not all of what they sought. It is the kind of compromise through which the European Union was built. The kind of compromise that enables the European project to advance. The kind of

compromise we need at the moment.

Much of the debate in the House of Commons has related to the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom. The European Union stands ready to add flexibility to the Political Declaration, to pave the way for a close economic partnership between the European Union and the United Kingdom in the future.

We stand ready to refer to a range of options, from a free trade agreement, to customs arrangements, to a Customs Union all the way to the European Economic Area. The openness we have shown from the start could be laid out, in purest clarity.

On the EU side, we stand ready to launch the talks and negotiations on the future partnership as soon as the Withdrawal Agreement is signed. Before the ink is dry. The Commission's negotiating team is in place. Michel Barnier, our Chief Negotiator, is ready. I would expect the same level of readiness on the United Kingdom side.

Whether this happens or not depends on the United Kingdom. The European Council gave the United Kingdom the time and the space to decide.

Yet I believe that a "no deal" at midnight on the 12 April is now a very likely scenario. It is not the outcome I want. But it is an outcome for which I have made sure the European Union is ready.

We have been preparing since December 2017. We have always known that the logic of Article 50 makes a "no-deal" the default outcome. We have long been aware of the balance of power in the House of Commons.

In that time, the Commission has published 91 preparedness notices, 32 non-legislative acts, 19 legislative proposals and 3 Communications. We have visited all 27 Member States to support their preparations. We have held 72 seminars with the Member States.

The measures we and the Member States have taken will mitigate the worst impact of a "no-deal" scenario. The protection offered is real. The measures will make sure that EU and UK citizens can continue to live and work where they are at the moment. They make sure that planes can take off and land. We have adapted our financial instrument to make it possible to help fishing communities. We have identified the ways in which law enforcement cooperation can continue. We have taken steps to mitigate disruption on our financial markets.

The measures we have taken are time-limited and unilateral. They provide a cushion for key EU interests at least until the end of the year. But disruption will be inevitable for citizens, for businesses and for almost every sector.

The United Kingdom will be affected more than the European Union because there is *no such thing as a "managed or negotiated no-deal"* and there is no such thing as a *"no-deal transition"*.

And whatever happens, the United Kingdom will still be expected to address the three main separation issues.

- Citizens' rights would still need to be upheld and protected.
- The United Kingdom would still have to honour its financial commitments made as a Member State.
- And thirdly, a solution would still need to be found on the island of Ireland that preserves peace and the internal market. The United Kingdom must fully respect the letter and spirit of the Good Friday Agreement.

"No-deal" does not mean no commitments. And these three issues will not go away. They will be a strict condition to rebuild trust and to start talking on the way forward.

At the European Council next week, we will listen to Prime Minister May's intentions and decide how to proceed. The principles that will guide my actions are clear. I will work until the last moment to avoid a "no-deal" outcome.

The only ones who would benefit from such disruption are the opponents of the global rules-based order. The only ones who would cheer are the populists and the nationalists. The only ones who would celebrate are those who want both the European Union and the United Kingdom to be weak.

The European Union will not kick any Member State out. I will personally do everything I can to prevent a disorderly Brexit and I expect political leaders across the EU27 and in the United Kingdom to do the same.

Thank you.

Union for the Mediterranean commits to tackling employment challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The Ministers highlighted 4 priorities for action, stressed the need to measure the impact of policies and agreed to launch a "Community of Practice" to exchange best practices.

On 2 and 3 April, the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour was held under the title "Jobs, skills and opportunities for all".

Participants at the conference discussed the most pressing labour market needs in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular the persistent inequality in access to jobs, mostly for women and young people. Echoing this, the Ministers stressed that **economic progress and social cohesion should go hand in hand**. They reiterated their commitment to creating the

conditions to mainstream gender in employment and labour policies.

Following the conference, EU Commissioner Thyssen stated: *“We need to encourage positive results on the ground in the Mediterranean region. Despite progress, too many women, young people and vulnerable persons still remain out of a decent job. At the same time, we need to equip people with digital skills, which are increasingly in demand. This is a joint responsibility at all levels; with employers, unions and civil society organisations. With new tools to exchange best practices and monitor progress, we aim to gear up our joint work on fair jobs and growth on both sides of the Mediterranean.”*

Jordanian Minister Said Murad emphasized the *“We need to further discuss the regional challenges affecting the labor market in our region in order to create job opportunities for young people, as well as to exchange knowledge and experience on the best practices to reduce poverty and unemployment. We should also focus on the subject of increasing women’s contribution to the economy. “*

UfM Secretary General Kamel said: *“The broad-ranging and multifaceted nature of the employment challenge calls not only for coordinated efforts and apt policy reforms, but also for integrated approaches that emphasize youth employability, women’s socio-economic empowerment, social dialogue promotion, transition from informal to formal economy, as well as skill and job matching, just to name a few of the domains in which the UfM Secretariat has already been engaging fully.”*

The Ministers emphasised **the importance of skills and talent development**, particularly for the digital sector, to face the emerging demands from the labour market. To curb the excessive share of the informal economy, they highlighted the potential of the **social and solidarity economy**. The Ministers also tasked the UfM Secretariat to work on the launch of a **“Community of Practice”** that would allow experts and concerned actors from public authorities, social partners and civil society organizations to collect, assess and disseminate good practices. To foster a result-oriented approach, a UfM regional framework will be created to share information on labour market trends and promote a culture of monitoring and evaluation. The UfM Secretariat will coordinate the set-up of this framework to which countries will contribute on a voluntary basis.

The Ministers underlined the added value of ongoing UfM initiatives on employment and labour, in particular on employability, business-enabling infrastructure and job intermediation. They highlighted, for instance, the benefit of the [Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs \(Med4Jobs\)](#), which promotes region-wide cooperation projects in the areas of youth employability, small and medium enterprise (SME) development and inclusive growth. They also acknowledged the key role of the UfM Secretariat to accompany and ensure the coordination of UfM-endorsed projects. Finally, the Ministers agreed to convene the 5th Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour in 2022 to assess the progress made.

Background

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, youth unemployment is twice as high as adult unemployment. If we consider only the Southern Mediterranean shore, young people are even three times more likely than adults to be out of a job^[1]. Women continue to be underrepresented on the labour market due to persisting barriers and a remaining gap between legislative efforts and actual implementation.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together the European Union countries and the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Its aim is to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.

This 4th edition of the Ministerial Conference was co-chaired by **Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner** for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and **Samir Said Murad, Minister of Labour of Jordan**. It was hosted by **José António Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal**, in the presence of **Nasser Kamel**, UfM Secretary General.

The Ministers agreed to focus actions **on four regional priorities**:

- supporting decent job creation and entrepreneurship;
- mobilizing public and private stakeholders to create partnerships and synergies;
- building inclusive labour markets to integrate potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and
- investing in quality education systems and training, skills and employability in a changing world of work.

More information

[Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour](#)

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^[1] Global employment trends for youth, 2017, ILO:
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_600465.pdf

Rule of Law: European Commission

launches infringement procedure to protect judges in Poland from political control

The new disciplinary regime undermines the judicial independence of Polish judges by not offering necessary guarantees to protect them from political control, as required by the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Firstly, the Commission is of the opinion that Poland failed to fulfil its obligations under Article 19(1) of the Treaty on European Union read in connection with Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which enshrine a right to an effective remedy before an independent and impartial court.

Polish law allows to subject ordinary court judges to disciplinary investigations, procedures and ultimately sanctions, on account of the content of their judicial decisions. Also, the new disciplinary regime does not guarantee the independence and impartiality of the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court which reviews decisions taken in disciplinary proceedings against judges. This Disciplinary Chamber is composed solely of new judges selected by the National Council for the Judiciary whose judges-members are now appointed by the Polish parliament (Sejm).

Furthermore, the new disciplinary regime does not ensure that a court "established by law" will decide in first instance on disciplinary proceedings against ordinary court judges, as it empowers the President of the Disciplinary Chamber to determine, on an ad-hoc basis and with an almost unfettered discretion, the disciplinary court of first instance to hear a given case. Moreover, the new disciplinary regime for judges restricts procedural rights of defendants in disciplinary proceedings. The new regime no longer guarantees that cases are dealt with within a reasonable time, allowing the Minister of Justice and the President of the Republic to keep charges permanently pending over judges through disciplinary officers appointed by them. Also, the new regime affects judges' right of the defence.

Finally, the Commission considers that Poland failed to fulfil its obligations under Article 267 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enshrines the right of courts to request preliminary rulings from the European Court of Justice. As developments in Poland show, the new disciplinary regime allows for judges to be subject to disciplinary proceedings for the content of their judicial decisions. This includes decisions to refer questions to the Court of Justice. As judges are not shielded from being exposed to disciplinary sanctions for exercising this right enshrined in Article 267 TFEU, the new regime creates a chilling effect for making use of this mechanism. The functioning of the preliminary reference mechanism – which is the backbone of the Union's legal order – requires national courts to be free to refer to the European Court of Justice any question for a preliminary ruling that they consider necessary, at

whatever stage of the proceedings.

The Polish Government now has 2 months to reply to the Letter of Formal Notice.

Background

The rule of law is one of the common values upon which the European Union is founded and embraced by all member states. It is enshrined as such in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. It is also essential for the functioning of the EU as a whole, for example with regard to the Internal Market, cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, and ensuring that national judges who are also 'EU judges' can fulfil their role in ensuring the application of EU law and can properly interact with the CJEU in the context of preliminary ruling procedures. The European Commission, together with other institutions and the Member States, is responsible under the Treaties for guaranteeing the rule of law as a fundamental value of our Union and making sure that EU law, values and principles are respected.

Events in Poland led the European Commission to open a dialogue with the Polish Government in January 2016 under the Rule of Law Framework. The process is based on a continuous dialogue between the Commission and the Member State concerned. The Commission keeps the European Parliament and Council regularly informed.

Due to lack of progress through the Rule of Law Framework, on [20 December 2017](#), the Commission triggered the Article 7(1) procedure for the first time, by submitting a Reasoned Proposal for a Decision of the Council on the determination of a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law by Poland. There were already several debates (26 May and 16 October) and three hearings on the Rule of Law in Poland amongst Member States in the General Affairs Council (26 June, 18 September and 11 December).

In addition, on [2 July 2018](#), the Commission launched an infringement procedure on the Polish Law on the Supreme Court, on the grounds of its retirement provisions and their impact on the independence of the Supreme Court. On [24 September 2018](#), the Commission referred the case to the Court of Justice of the EU. On 17 December 2018, the Court of Justice issued a final order imposing interim measures to stop the implementation of the Polish law on the Supreme Court.

On [29 July 2017](#), the Commission launched an infringement procedure on the Polish Law on Ordinary Courts, on the grounds of its retirement provisions and their impact on the independence of the judiciary. The Commission referred this case to the Court of Justice of the EU on [20 December 2017](#).

For More Information

[Press release](#) – Rule of Law: European Commission refers Poland to the European Court of Justice to protect the independence of the Polish Supreme Court (24 September 2018)

[Press release](#) – Rule of Law: European Commission acts to defend judicial independence in Poland (20 December 2017)