

EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration: one year on

The joint initiative was launched to strengthen migration governance and to respond to the urgent need to protect and save the lives of migrants along the Central Mediterranean migration route. It covers 14 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Through the initiative, the EU and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) work with local, national and international stakeholders to implement projects in partner countries, with a total indicative budget of €140 million.

One year after launching the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, concrete results have been achieved: over 15,000 migrants have received voluntary return assistance and almost 15,000^[1] returning migrants are eligible for reintegration support in their communities.

Under the framework of the joint Task Force of the European Union, African Union and United Nations to address the migration situation in Libya, the work under the EU – IOM initiative will be accelerated, in particular as regards voluntary humanitarian return from Libya and reception and reintegration support in countries of origin.

Results

Increase protection and assistance for vulnerable and stranded migrants

Saving lives has always been and continues to be the highest and most urgent priority. The key focus of the EU – IOM joint initiative is to protect and assist migrants all along the migration routes, making sure that migration is safer and better managed and that migrant rights are fully respected. Faced with an increasing and intolerable number of migrants abandoned in the desert along the Central Mediterranean route, the EU-IOM initiative has also resulted in more than 2,600 stranded migrants being saved through search and rescue missions in Niger, conducted jointly with the Nigerien authorities.

Saving lives must go hand-in-hand with comprehensive measures to **improve conditions for migrants** along the migration routes. Migrants Resource and Response Mechanisms provide a comprehensive range of services to this end. The EU-IOM joint initiative has enabled the establishment of five new protection and assistance centres in **Mali** and **Burkina Faso** whilst continuing to support the five existing centres in **Niger**. In these centres, vulnerable and stranded migrants are provided with life-saving assistance and a range of support services, such as food or water (in one year, more than 400,000 meals were served) and temporary shelter, medical and psycho-social assistance,

access to information, counselling and family tracing.

The expansion of the Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms (MRRM) supports Niger's response to complex migratory flows, fosters economic and social development, and promotes feasible and effective alternatives to irregular migration from Niger.

In **Libya**, the key priority is and will continue to be to provide protection and improve the appalling conditions of stranded migrants. Through the EU-IOM initiative, more than 20,000 people have been assisted at disembarkation points, inside and outside detention centres or in host communities. So far, 6,000 people have received medical assistance, and 19,000 have been assisted through the distribution of basic items and hygiene kits. Direct assistance has also been provided to over 9,000 migrants during the Sabratha crisis, including through the distribution of more than 125,000 meals.

Support is also provided to socio-economic development at the municipal level in order to better integrate migrants, internally displaced people and returnees, and to stabilise their host communities. The EU-IOM initiative also includes collecting information on the profiles, vulnerabilities, intentions and needs of assisted migrants in order to inform policy and programme responses. This helps partner countries to provide adequate protection measures and reinforce migration governance.

Voluntary return

Voluntary return options are an **important protection measure** for many vulnerable and stranded migrants who wish to return to their countries of origin but do not have the necessary means to do so. In 2017, more than 15,000 individuals safely returned to their home countries and were supported with reintegration assistance. This measure will be stepped up to help an additional 15,000 people, who are stranded in Libya, to return home by February 2018.

Towards sustainable reintegration

Reintegration support helps returning migrants re-establish themselves in their countries of origin. Returnees typically receive support such as vocational training and assistance to set up micro-businesses or cooperatives.

This process can take time as returnees may encounter a number of challenges that can impact their ability to readjust and reintegrate. This can also have an impact on other members of their community. For this reason, involving local communities in the projects is crucial.

By addressing returnees' economic, social and psychosocial needs, local ownership, partnership and closer alignment to development planning is being ensured. For example, in Kayes region in Mali, the initiative supported the establishment of a poultry farm for 300 beneficiaries (migrants and community members) in partnership with the NGO Human-Help.

The IOM has also helped more than 900 migrants to return from Niger to Guinea

Bissau. As a result of the EU–IOM initiative, twenty returnees and community members are now working in a bakery project in Bissau City.

Enhance government and stakeholder policies and responses

An action is foreseen to strengthen the capacity of the actors involved in reintegration activities by supporting the national coordination structures and other relevant stakeholders.

The aim is to increase government ownership of the reintegration of returning migrants and to develop and strengthen coordination mechanisms.

In this respect, Standard Operating Procedures have been defined at a regional level for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration. They will frame the drafting of national operating procedures, as was the case, for example, in Cameroon.

Safe and informed migration for more than 53,000 beneficiaries

Awareness-raising actions are being implemented to provide reliable information on the costs and risks related to irregular migration, European asylum law and the factual realities awaiting migrants in Europe, as well as alternatives such as legal and safe migration, rights and obligations and opportunities for voluntary return and reintegration. These efforts reached 53,381 migrants in Niger between April and November 2017, providing them with a realistic picture on which to base their future decisions.

Improve data on migration flows, routes and trends as well as migrants' needs and vulnerabilities

In order to better provide assistance to vulnerable migrants and to support the governments in the definition of policy promoting safe, orderly and planned migration, a better understanding of current migration flows at a regional level is required. The joint initiative has provided bi-weekly data updates including cumulated numbers, enabling partners to collect reliable data and better monitor migration flows.

Next steps

The EU will support the acceleration of the IOM's programme for assisted voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin, funding an additional 15,000 voluntary returns from Libya by February 2018.

For More Information

[One year of EU partnership with IOM: migrant protection and reintegration in Africa](#)

[IOM projects under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#)

[1] By 30 November 2017.