



Brussels, 14 July 2023
(OR. en)

11441/23

LIMITE

JAI 967
MIGR 235
ASIM 69
RELEX 843
COAFR 238

NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)
Subject: Migratory situation in Senegal and Gambia

SENEGAL

1. Context

Senegal is a key partner for the EU in the economic, cultural and development fields. High-level visits are frequent. Dialogue is permanent and fluid, and the two sides have a shared ambition to contribute to a more just, peaceful and integrated world. Indeed, Senegal is a key player in the resolution of major regional crises. With more than 2 800 troops deployed in UN peace missions, it is the leading contributor in West Africa and the third largest on the continent.

Even if the EU remains Senegal's long-standing partner, and one with which Senegal is particularly aligned in terms of democratic values, it is a country with the appetite and consequent diplomatic capacity to open itself up to a wide range of relationships with other international actors.

2. Migration issues

In 2022 the total number of arrivals in the EU via Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route was significantly reduced compared to 2021 (-26 %), both via the Western Mediterranean Route (-25 %) and via the Atlantic Route (-30 %). This decline, which is continuing in 2023 so far (-12 %

compared to the same period in 2022), is largely due to Senegal's cooperation and other significant efforts in preventing irregular migration, which must be duly acknowledged.

Senegal and the EU share a need for a comprehensive approach on migration. All regions of Senegal are affected by migration flows towards Europe via two routes: the Atlantic Route (to the Canary Islands, via Senegal or Mauritania) and the land route (via Senegal, Mali, Niger and Libya, towards the Central Mediterranean), which are the subject of the two Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) on migration. Senegal is part of the TEI on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route, and is also an active member of the Steering Committee of the Rabat Process, a dialogue on migration between Europe and Africa that includes the Atlantic Route and the Western Mediterranean Route.

The EU implements a number of programmes in Senegal on migration-related issues.

- Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa – regional programme that supports the protection of stranded migrants in Sub-Saharan African countries, as well as their voluntary return and reintegration. This aligns with the EU's voluntary return and reintegration strategy, focusing on sustainable reintegration support in migrants' home countries and strengthening national systems for return, readmission and reintegration.
- Common Operational Partnership project and its follow-up through the NDICI-Global Europe Project '*Appui à la sécurité intérieure et à la Stabilité*' (EUR 15 million), and NETCOP, where a second phase of EU support through the Internal Security Fund was granted in April 2023 to support the fight against migrant smuggling, border management and related practices.
- Youth-focused budget support (EUR 70 million) – the fourth axis of this budget support is related to migration governance, i.e. the adoption of a national policy and action plan on migration, the continuation of the territorialisation of Senegal's reintegration policy, as well as returns and readmissions.
- The project '*Agropoles d'avenir et l'intégration des chaînes de valeur dans les systèmes alimentaires*', through which the EU seeks to have a strong impact on the root causes of irregular migration.

- Platform for Remittances, Investments and Migrants' Entrepreneurship in Africa (PRIME Africa).
- Pilot project for business mobility with Belgium under the MPF (EUR 2.6 million), which aims to build the capacities of Senegalese entrepreneurs and connect them with their Belgian peers.

The Commission holds a Council mandate to negotiate a Status Agreement between Frontex and Senegal that would allow the deployment of Frontex staff to support border management in Senegal.

The EU and Senegal work closely together on the root causes of irregular migration by developing training and employment opportunities for young people, strengthening the fight against migrant smuggling networks and cross-border criminality, developing opportunities for circular migration and facilitating the return of migrants. Migration governance is also an area of cooperation through the support to the national migration policy. Furthermore, the period 2021 to 2023 has seen the first phase of the EU-Senegal Joint Strategy, the objectives of which include migration.

The possibility of launching of a Talent Partnership with Senegal was also provided for in the Skills and Talent package. The expected adoption of Senegal's national migration strategy and action plan, provided for in the context of the current EU budget support, should facilitate coordination in all areas of migration, in particular in programmes for youth training.

The first technical dialogue on migration between the EU and Senegal took place in December 2022. At the second technical dialogue, in May 2023, the Commission took note of positive steps taken by Senegal in its cooperation with some Member States. Senegal has acknowledged that it has capacity-related problems, and discussions are underway on how to support the country in this regard. Most Member States are in favour of continuing their engagement in order to make further progress towards a substantial and sustained improvement in cooperation.

Cooperation in the area of returns is a crucial and sensitive matter that requires up-to-date information for meaningful discussions. Considering the significance of the topic, it is important to await the release of the third country readmission cooperation report, scheduled for 19 July, as it needs to undergo IMEX review prior to any discussions by the Presidency.

THE GAMBIA

1. Context

The Gambia holds the distinction of being the continent's smallest nation. Although it is classified as a low-income country, its economy had been steadily expanding until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this global crisis resulted in significant job losses as the tourism sector, a key driver of the economy, came to a halt. The country is also grappling with a high rate of demographic growth, which ranks among the highest globally. Approximately 1 in 4 individuals in The Gambia, particularly children under the age of 5, faces food insecurity, which is a pressing concern for the nation.

After the change of government and historic democratic turn taken by the country after the presidential elections at the end of 2016, an ambitious EU-The Gambia partnership in support of the latter's democratic consolidation has been established, with an unprecedented political and financial investment behind it (around EUR 500 000 000 invested from 2017 to 2024, all EU financial sources included). The democratic transition, which the EU supports, has had a huge impact on migratory flows, with a dramatic drop from almost 10 000 arrivals of Gambian nationals in the EU each year before 2016 to 500-1000 per year since then.

The new **Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027** is currently being implemented with the following priorities: 1) promoting good governance, including support on migration and for the democratic transition; 2) green economy for sustainable growth and job creation, which will focus on mobility and urban planning, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and tourism; and 3) human development, in particular focusing on education and empowerment for women and girls, and social protection and inclusion.

2. Migration issues

Like Senegal, The Gambia has made considerable efforts prevent irregular migration and enhance its cooperation on this issue, which have resulted in the abovementioned reduction in arrivals in the EU. The Gambia is also part of the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route TEI, as well as a member of the Rabat Process.

The Commission is currently funding, through the Internal Security Fund – Police, a Common Operational Partnership project with The Gambia against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

The EU and The Gambia work closely on border management, including on the fight against the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings under the initiative ‘Supporting the Security Sector Reform process in The Gambia for improved human security, migration and border management’.

The country is also a beneficiary of the PRIME Africa programme.

The EU is expected to support returns and readmissions under the upcoming State and Resilience Building Contract 4 (SRBC4), to be adopted in 2023, as part of the enhancement of The Gambia’s ownership of migration management.

The EU-The Gambia readmission arrangement (non-binding) has been applied over the past 16 months. During that time, The Gambia has engaged in positive cooperation (e.g. lifting a moratorium on chartered flights; continuing cooperation on returns via commercial flights; continuous dialogue through Joint Working Groups in October 2022 and March 2023, mapping out room for improvements on identification and travel documents issuance procedures; appointing a focal point for coordinating migration issues through The Gambia Embassy in Brussels).

The Presidency presents the following questions to steer the discussion on the way forward:

- *Can Senegal's cooperation on returns be considered to have improved in recent months, meaning that there are no obstacles to its consideration as a candidate country for Talent Partnerships?*
- *How could cooperation be improved by supporting The Gambia and Senegal in building up their technical capacity to prevent irregular migration, in addition and in coherence with instruments and dialogue at EU level?*
- *What is the role of international cooperation in the fight against irregular migration driven by document forgery in both countries, and what specific measures should be taken to foster greater cooperation between countries?*
