EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION: to provide an independent, evidence-based assessment of the contribution of European Union (EU) external action support in the policy area of migration between 2008 and 2018.

THREE OVERARCHING THEMATIC AREAS: Legal (labour) migration, Trafficking of Human Beings (THB) and Smuggling of Migrants (SoM).

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: the Enlargement and Neighbourhood (South and East) regions, relevant countries/sub-regions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Asia.

TEMPORAL SCOPE: 2008-2018. Spending activities covering the three thematic areas in scope have been analysed for the period 2011-2018.

Evolution of EU migration-targeted support by financing instrument

Between 2011 and 2018, a total of EUR 975 million was allocated to migration-targeted interventions. Overall, amounts showed an increase during the observed period, with a peak in 2017 of EUR 246 million and a notable decline in 2015 to EUR 54 million.

CONTEXT

The EU’s reference framework for external action in the area of migration has built on global frameworks such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and more recently the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the UN Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The GCM created the first UN-wide cooperative framework and covers all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner, dealing equally with the work with countries of origin, transit, or destination.

Article 79(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU; the “Lisbon Treaty”) declares that the EU shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of Member States and third-country nationals residing legally in EU enhanced measures to combat illegal immigration. In the early years of the evaluation, EU migration strategy was provided by the Global Approach to Migration (GAM), replaced in 2011 by the broader Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which was designed to be the overarching framework of the EU’s external policies regarding migration, embedded in the EU’s overall foreign policy framework including development cooperation. In May 2015, the EU responded to the “refugee crisis” (the spike in asylum seekers and irregular migrants risking and sometimes losing their lives to gain entry to Europe) with the European Agenda on Migration (EAM), intended to address immediate challenges and equip the EU with the tools to better deal in the immediate-, medium- and long term in the area of migration.
The EU developed an increasingly comprehensive approach to migration, including THB and SoM, while the EU’s Development and Enlargement policies offered a solid foundation for implementing the EU’s external policy agenda. Yet, despite some progress, the EU faced considerable difficulties to deliver results in line with its aspirations in the three focal areas of this evaluation.

While context differs between the different regions covered by this assignment, the evaluation has found that the factors facilitating or hindering EU support were largely independent of geography.

The EU is committed to encouraging mutually beneficial labour migration, including from third countries to the EU; yet most EU MS are taking a restrictive view due to domestic political pressures, resulting in the EU’s ability to deliver change in this area being limited. While migration governance in partner third countries has been improved with EU support, interest in promoting migration between third countries is typically modest.

In the area of THB and SoM, the EU provided valuable technical advice and capacity building, as well as useful inputs to policy development and legislative reforms in partner countries. Yet, this evaluation has found little evidence that the incidence of these crimes, or the operations of the criminal organisations and networks responsible, has been diminished to an extent anywhere near the EU’s ambitions.

Although the evaluation has found areas where there is more need for coordination, coherence, etc., the EU’s partnership with international (usually UN) Implementing Partner agencies has worked well, and civil society has been increasingly implicated.

The EU has added value through scale and long-term engagement. It can deploy large sums, provide highly specialised expertise, finance multi-country interventions and engage partner countries across a broader policy front than EU MS.

### EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation followed a theory-based approach that relied on mixed methods to assess EU support in the area of migration. The design was based on multiple case studies, with data collection activities being carried out during an extensive desk phase and a (partially remote) field phase. To guide data collection and analysis, the team prepared a detailed evaluation matrix, structured around **seven evaluation questions (EQs):**

- Four EQs focussed on the strategic framework, design and implementation of EU external support in the area of migration.
- Three EQs focussed on results in the three key thematic areas: Legal (labour) Migration, Trafficking of Human Beings (THB) and Smuggling of Migrants (SoM).

The combination of tools and methods used for **data collection and analysis** varied according to the different EQs, but multiple sources were systematically used to triangulate the information collected. Main activities included an extensive documentary review, a financial analysis of EU external action, remote and face-to-face interviews and one online survey.

The main challenges encountered were coping with gathering data on outcomes and impacts, the non-consistency of some datasets at EU level, obtaining documentation on non-spending activities, and managing the field phase due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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**11 CASE STUDIES**
Comprising eight country case studies and three dialogue processes and multi-country programme case studies.

**11 FIELD VISITS**
A total of eleven field missions were planned (due to Covid-19 restrictions only four took place in-country)

**2 000 DOCUMENTS**
Over 2 000 documents were consulted on a range of migration-related issues (including an average of roughly 80 documents per case study).

**270 INTERLOCUTORS**
More than 270 interlocutors were interviewed (both remotely and face-to-face in Brussels or during the in-country and remote field missions). These were primarily EU officials at HQ and in the field, EU MS, international, regional and bilateral partners, country-specific authorities and country specific CSOs.

**185 RESPONDENTS**
Over 185 respondents to the online survey. These additional contributions enable evidence from other sources of information to be strengthened and corroborated.
**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

**C1. A broad and solid foundation for external actions related to migration**
The EU has developed a broad and solid foundation, consistent with international agreements. However, the commitment of the EU to encouraging mutually beneficial labour migration is at odds with the restrictive EU MS policies regarding such migration and EU support still puts greater emphasis on suppressing irregular migration than on encouraging regular migration.

**C2. A lack of strategic direction and implementation guidance on migration**
The implementation of migration policies in response to country needs has been hampered by a lack of coherence / shared vision both among European actors (NEAR, DEVCO, EEAS, HOME and EU MS) and between European actors and partner countries on what the strategic priorities should be and how to translate these into concrete actions.

**C3. The EU’s global vision and ability to raise broad migration issues is a source of value added in EU external actions**
The EU’s global vision and ability to raise broad migration issues has been a source of value added in EU external actions – specifically over its EU MS, whose priorities are bilateral – as have scale and long-term commitment. The EU’s ability to finance multi-country interventions and to provide highly specialised expertise through its agencies such as Frontex and Europol, as well as through Twinning and has set it apart from EU MS.

**RESULTS**

**C4. Modest results in promoting mutually beneficial legal (labour) migration despite a contribution to improving governance frameworks**
EU results in promoting mutually beneficial legal (labour) migration have been modest, especially between partner countries where the EU has contributed to improving governance frameworks and the technical ability to enforce them, but with little contribution to concrete results in terms of increased flows. Despite the aspirational nature of the GAMM and EAM, European political realities have focussed attention heavily on reducing irregular migration to Europe.

**C5. THB and SoM**
Despite the EU’s solid support to implementing policies in THB and SoM and the growing realisation among partner countries that THB and SoM are not only a security threat but have negative impact on development and accession potential, partner country capacities to address THB and SoM remain weak and monitoring progress is problematic.

**C6. EU engagement in dialogue**
The EU’s ability to sponsor ongoing dialogue processes has been a source of value added. At bilateral level, dialogue has often been difficult, but has served a useful purpose nonetheless by keeping channels of communication open and allowing the expression of views. Lack of a shared vision impairs bilateral dialogue. At multilateral level, limited practical consequences in terms of actions and programmes limits the effectiveness of dialogues.

**TOOLS AND APPROACHES**

**C7. Good complementary in the wide range of instruments, financing channels and modalities used**
The entire range of EU instruments and modalities has been deployed, with rationale for choice of tool rarely made explicit but, in the end, with good effect. There was little budget support in the area of migration, but that was for reasons having to do with the readiness of the partner, not the nature of the sector. In the few countries reviewed where budget support has been deployed (Moldova, Morocco), it has worked well and provided a good platform for dialogue.

**C8. Partnerships**
Good partnerships with IOs (UN agencies and non-UN international organisations such as ICMPD) as well as EU MS agencies has enhanced EU external action in the area of migration at various levels; promoting expertise, taking advantage of good ground presence and long-standing relationships with stakeholders, and (implicitly) promoting coordination and complementarity. However, it raises issues of hand-over and sustainability. The EU’s engagement with civil society in the area of migration has deepened over the period reviewed.

**C9. Monitoring and Learning**
Learning and monitoring have been hampered by the poor availability of properly detailed data on migration, THB, and SoM – age, sex, country of origin, etc. Possibilities for learning in partner countries is limited by factors such as staff turnover and political volatility. Experience and information from the field is not sufficiently exploited to enhance programming and project design.
## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions reached, the team identified ten recommendations grouped in three clusters.

### Strategic framework

| R1 | Addressing coherence issues in the EU strategic framework |
| R2 | Share balanced, and realistic strategic vision with EU MS and partner countries – an urgent necessity |

The EU should expand external action in the area of legal (labour) migration, THB, and SoM in the next MFF, building on the solid policy foundation established in the last two decades; but, first, it should address some important coherence issues.

The EU should develop a strategic vision, in which EU MS and partner countries can join, of policies to promote regular migration and tackle irregular migration including THB and SoM. This should reflect a realistic view of what cooperation can and cannot accomplish.

### Approach to implementation

| R3 | Promotion of mutually beneficial legal (labour) migration from third countries to Europe: an opportunity, not a threat |
| R4 | Legal (labour) migration – Increased support for migration between partner countries |
| R5 | THB and SoM – Understanding the issues |
| R6 | THB and SoM – Enhancing the design of EU interventions |
| R7 | THB and SoM – Measuring the performance |

As the goal of promoting mutually beneficial migration from third countries into the EU has largely failed, to the disappointment in particular of partner countries, a new initiative is needed to promote legal avenues to migration, not only to address European labour market needs, but to discourage irregular entry into European space.

The EU should increase its support for mutually beneficial migration between third countries. It should place emphasis not only on continued support to improved migration governance, but on support for implementation that will lead to increased regular migratory flows.

The EU should reinforce the distinction between THB and SoM and step up its own knowledge production and dissemination at country level.

The EU should put greater emphasis on analysing local and national context, including political economy and interests and incentives of agents at all levels in the design of THB and SoM interventions, with particular attention to fundamental rights and protection. While continuing to consider THB and SoM as perpetrated by transnational criminal organisations, the EU should take better into account the loosely networked and informal nature of many such organisations.

The EU should place greater emphasis on improved monitoring of THB and SoM, including data collection and sharing, in order to judge more credibly actual results of its external actions.

### Institutional linkages

| R8 | Strengthen EU internal institutional linkages |
| R9 | Increased EUD’s role in EU support at regional level |
| R10 | Continued strategic and transparent partnerships with International Organisations and EU MS agencies |

The EU should strengthen coordination between EU services to better reflect the interlinkages between the internal and external dimensions of the EU policy framework in the area of migration. The political dimension of migration cooperation should be strengthened.

The relevance and effectiveness of regional projects at country level should be enhanced by increasing the role of EUDs in the selection and design of country-level activities.

The EU should continue to work principally through international agencies and EU MS agencies as IPs, but adopt a more strategic and transparent approach to the choice of partner IPs.