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Press Release

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EU migration spending in neighbourhood countries "struggling to demonstrate effectiveness", say EU Auditors

The EU's spending on external migration policy in neighbourhood countries is struggling to demonstrate its effectiveness, according to the European Court of Auditors. The auditors' first report on external migration highlights a number of spending weaknesses which need to be addressed to improve financial management: complexity of policy objectives and governance, impossibility of measuring policy results, limited success in returning migrants to their countries of origin and coordination problems between different EU bodies and between the European Commission and the Member States.

"*Migration represents a fundamental challenge for the European Union*", **said Danièle Lamarque, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report**. "*EU spending on migration in the neighbourhood countries will only be effective if clear objectives are set, if funds are allocated to well-defined priorities, and if governance and the coordination between EU bodies and with Member States are improved*."

The auditors covered countries in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, specifically Algeria, Georgia, Libya, Moldova, Morocco and Ukraine. They examined 23 projects altogether, representing a contract value of €89 million out of a total amount of €742 million. Their main findings were:

No clear strategy: The EU's external migration policy is supported by a range of financial instruments – both a dedicated thematic programme and several other instruments (including part of the European Neighbourhood Instrument). The thematic programme was set very broad objectives, while the Neighbourhood Instrument was partly concerned with migration but did not include migration-specific goals. The other instruments have their own goals and do not focus on migration. The objectives of all these instruments were not interlinked, and there was no clear strategy for determining the contribution made by each one to migration policy. It is therefore not possible to assess the degree to which they have furthered the EU's external migration policy.

Impossible to determine total expenditure: Although the EU employs a range of financial instruments, it does not have precise data on the amount each one contributes to migration spending. The auditors estimate that total expenditure was €1.4 billion for 2007-2013, but they were only able to determine

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors.
The full report is on www.eca.europa.eu

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exactly how much was spent in the case of the thematic programme (€304 million). Owing to weaknesses in the Commission's information systems, they were also unable to ascertain to what extent EU funds were allocated to the main thematic or geographical priorities through the thematic programme on migration.

No clear evidence that priority is given to the neighbourhood: The auditors estimate that the thematic programme devotes only 42 % of funds to the EU neighbourhood, which therefore cannot really be deemed a main geographical priority. This might even be considered an insufficient concentration of available funds to tackle the growing instability in the area of migration.

Fragmentation of funding: Resources devoted to assistance for non-EU countries fell far short of the rapidly expanding needs caused by the significant increase in irregular migration in the Mediterranean region, especially after 2013. As projects were part of a number of thematic priorities in many countries, it was impossible to focus a critical mass of funding on any given partner country. The thematic programme, for example, covered a large geographical area and a wide range of interventions that were very different in nature and scope. Neither the scope for action under the programme nor the ambition of its objectives bore any relation to the limited volume of available resources, meaning that projects were spread too thinly to have a critical mass sufficient to produce significant results in the countries concerned. This situation limited the EU's ability to ensure that its intervention produced a genuine incentive effect in non-EU countries, or to develop effective cooperation with them on migration concerns. At a time when resources are scarce, they must be allocated to priorities where there is the greatest potential for adding value.

Poor monitoring and oversight: The indicators chosen for monitoring did not reflect all the objectives of the thematic programme. The result indicators measured the activities funded, but rarely the results they achieved. Few of the audited projects had result indicators with baselines and targets. Quantifiable indicators were not quantified, indicators in budgets changed from one year to the next, some instruments were not covered, indicators were not mutually consistent (between budget and activity report, for example), and they were poorly documented. For example, the same figure was given in 2009 and 2010 for the number of irregular migrants identified and readmitted to non-EU countries. Consequently, policy results could not be monitored or correctly reported in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

Weaknesses compromised the effectiveness of spending: In two thirds of the completed projects audited, the objectives were only partly achieved. This was often due to their excessively vague or general nature, which frequently made it impossible to measure results. In a very few cases, political instability also played a role. Some projects were more geared to the interests of the Member States, which limited their impact in the partner countries.

The auditors identified a small number of cases in which these weaknesses were suitably addressed. One such example is a project in Morocco to care for 4,500 highly vulnerable sub-Saharan migrants by housing them in three reception centres and ensuring that their rights are made known and respected.

Effectiveness was lacking in three key areas:

Firstly, there are only partial signs of migration having a positive impact on development. This very general objective, a priority of the EU's external migration policy, seeks to maximise the beneficial effects of migration on development in the countries of origin. The projects examined were limited in terms of impact and viability, and focused more on development than on migration. The Commission's approach to ensuring that migration has a positive development impact is unclear, and the same is true of the policies needed to achieve this impact.

Secondly, return and readmission support is having little impact. The audited projects (representing one quarter of those funded) provided services to migrants in situations of voluntary or forced return. These projects were limited in their scope and effectiveness because of a lack of active involvement, both by Member States in preparing the return of migrants and by the countries of return, which often perceived the readmission policy to be a component of EU security policy. Many migrants are unaware that they qualify for EU support when they are readmitted.

Thirdly, respect for human rights, which should underpin all actions, remains theoretical and is only rarely translated into practice.

Complex governance: The complexity of the governance arrangements, which involve a great many participants, weakens coordination both within the Commission and between the Commission and its delegations. Despite a number of recent initiatives, there is still insufficient streamlining in this area.

EU/Member State coordination of external migration spending is very difficult: As Member States may contribute directly to external migration spending, an effective coordination mechanism is essential. However, there was no funding strategy to determine who was financing what or how the funds should be distributed.

In the report, the auditors make a number of recommendations to the Commission:

- Clarify the objectives of migration policy, establish a framework for assessing performance and direct financial resources towards clearly-defined and quantified priorities;
- Improve the preparation and selection of projects;
- Emphasise the connection between migration and development;
- Enhance coordination within the EU institutions, with partner countries and with Member States.

Notes to Editors

The Treaty requires the EU to frame a common policy on immigration, asylum and external border controls, based on solidarity among Member States. The common immigration policy (Article 79 of the Treaty) seeks above all to manage migration flows and enhance measures to combat irregular immigration. The EU also accords particular importance to managing migration flows in cooperation with migrants' countries of transit or origin.

In this regard, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), established in 2011, focuses on four priorities: combating irregular migration, better organising legal migration, enhancing the external dimension of asylum policy and maximising the development impact of migration. The GAMM was adopted in the form of conclusions by the Member States meeting in the Council, and it is therefore not legally binding in the Member States. It is primarily addressed to the EU neighbourhood countries, which are at one and the same time countries of origin, transit and destination.

ECA Special Report No 9/2016 "EU external migration spending in Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbourhood countries until 2014" is available in 23 EU languages.