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Migration diplomacy: An analysis of policy approaches and instruments

European Migration
Network – OECD joint Inform

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Explanatory note

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1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

This European Migration Network (EMN)-OECD Inform examines the use of migration diplomacy to foster cooperation between countries to manage international migration. It focuses on good practices, challenges and impacts associated with migration diplomacy approaches and instruments. Several key points emerge:

- Seventeen EMN Member and Observer Countries¹ use migration diplomacy at national level as part of their international migration affairs, with six reporting that migration diplomacy is not a prominent part of their international migration affairs.
- For the six EMN Member Countries for which migration diplomacy is not a prominent part of international migration affairs, this is due to their strategic alignment with European Union (EU)-level initiatives and national limitations, such as national capacity and diplomatic networks. They find it more effective to engage within the EU's comprehensive and coordinated approach rather than pursuing bilateral agreements.
- Specific instruments and tools commonly used in migration diplomacy approaches in EMN Member and Observer Countries include bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), declarations of intent, appointment of special envoys, or diplomatic representatives.
- Bilateral agreements are among the most frequently adopted migration diplomacy instruments in EMN Member and Observer Countries. They cover different types of agreements, ranging from single issue agreements (e.g. readmission agreements, visa facilitation agreements, working holiday visa agreements) to more comprehensive cross-sectoral agreements (e.g. migration partnership agreements, mobility agreements).
- Examples of migration diplomacy instruments in non-EU OECD countries include the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration (2022) which promotes cooperation across the Americas through four pillars – stability, migration pathways, humane management, and emergency response; Australia's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme that offers Pacific islanders employment opportunities; and Japan's economic partnership agreements (EPAs) that enable nurses and care workers from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam to work in Japan with a pathway to indefinite residency.
- Eleven EMN Member and Observer countries report challenges in negotiations with third countries, emphasising the need for coordination, leveraging support, creating sustainable solutions, and acknowledging partners' capabilities.
- Key success factors for migration diplomacy negotiations include political stability in partner countries, effective coordination between national institutions, leverage, robust legal frameworks, resource allocation, and sustainability.



2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Context and scope of the inform

This EMN-OECD Inform explores the theme of migration diplomacy, focusing on the use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures with third countries to manage international migration. It analyses the policy approaches and instruments in migration diplomacy efforts applied by EMN Member and Observer Countries, as well as selected examples from OECD countries outside the EU.² While previous EMN publications have focused on issue-specific aspects, such as bilateral readmission agreements³ and mobility partnerships (MPs),⁴ this Inform takes a more comprehensive look at broader policy approaches and instruments in migration diplomacy.

Bilateral and multilateral migration diplomacy instruments, from diplomatic talks to instruments such as

special envoys, diplomatic representatives or migration partnerships, are essential to international cooperation on migration. They vary in form and may be formally or informally concluded, or legally binding.⁵ Although sending, receiving and transit countries all use migration diplomacy, their interests and power relationships vary, influencing policy outcomes.⁶ Migration diplomacy policy approaches include 'coercive migration diplomacy', which uses negative conditionality/penalties, and 'cooperative migration diplomacy', which is based on the positive conditionality of promises/rewards.⁷ Given the relevance of migration diplomacy, there is a need to better understand the conditions in which these policy approaches are more or less effective.⁸ Good practices, challenges and impacts associated with migration diplomacy approaches and instruments therefore require further examination.

¹ Note for the reader: key points provide a summary of the main information contained in the Inform. For ease of reading, key points do not contain footnotes. Please note that EMN Member and Observer Countries referred to in the key points are thoroughly listed in the relevant sections.

² EMN Member Countries (EU Member States except DK) and Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM, RS). OECD countries outside the EU include Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US).

³ European Migration Network (EMN), 'Bilateral readmission agreements - EMN Inform', 2022, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/EMN_inventory_for_bilateral_readmission.pdf, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

⁴ European Migration Network (EMN), 'Skills mobility partnerships: Exploring innovative approaches to labour migration - EMN-OECD Inform', 2022, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/17f0c5ba-52fb-4381-af32-6c1ca43a657c_en?filename=2022_March_Joint_EMN-OECD_Inform_Skills_Mobility_Partnerships.EN.pdf, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

⁵ Adamson, F. B. and Tsourapas, G., 'Migration Diplomacy in World Politics', (2019), *International Studies Perspectives*, 20 (2), pp. 113–128, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky015>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tsourapas, G., 'Migration Diplomacy in the Global South', In: Tsourapas, G., 'Migration Diplomacy in the Global South: Cooperation, Coercion and Issue Linkage in Gaddafi's Libya' (2017), *Third World Quarterly*, 38(10), p. 7, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

⁸ Adamson, F. B. and Tsourapas, G., 'Migration Diplomacy in World Politics', (2019), *International Studies Perspectives*, 20 (2), pp. 113–128, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky015>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

This inform aims to provide examples of current policy approaches and identify challenges and good practices, thereby contributing to discussions on the external dimension of migration and effective migration governance and management. It is not intended as a stock-taking or mapping exercise, nor does it analyse negotiation strategies and tactics (i.e. techniques used during negotiations), but, rather, draws from selected good practices,

challenges and lessons learnt.⁹ It covers diplomacy instruments from 2019 to mid-2024.

2.2. Definitions

The inform uses the following definitions, which – unless otherwise stated – are based on the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary.¹⁰

Term	Definition
Conditionality	The definition of conditions which upon fulfilment can lead to the release of benefits or in case of failure to comply can lead to sanctions. Conditionality can be thus used in a 'coercive migration diplomacy' strategy, where negative conditionality/penalties are applied, and in a 'cooperative migration diplomacy' strategy, which is based on promises/rewards. In the context of the EU negative conditionality has been described as a 'less for less' strategy (sanctioning a state for the lack of, or the absence of cooperation, e.g. by reducing, suspending, or cutting benefits). Positive conditionality, in turn, has been described as a 'more for more' strategy. There is also reverse conditionality, which describes the situation in which a third country takes over the bargaining initiative and issues (political or financial) demands in return for cooperation, or otherwise respond by threats or acts¹¹ such as reducing border patrols or supporting irregular onward migration.¹²
Issue linkages	The simultaneous negotiation of two or more issues for joint settlement, for example tying migration to other policy agendas. It can help countries to reach an otherwise unattainable level of cooperation.¹³ Tactical linkages are between unrelated or only loosely related issues, while substantive linkages¹⁴ bring together previously disparate issues (e.g. acknowledging the development-security nexus) that are functionally related; rather than each issue being an end in itself, they are considered a collective means toward a more complex end. Migration can feature in states' issue-linkage strategies, in both cooperative and coercive contexts of migration diplomacy.¹⁵
Migration diplomacy	The definition of migration diplomacy is based on academic understanding, entailing "States' use of diplomatic tools, processes, and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility".¹⁶ Here, it captures the use of strategies, diplomatic tools, processes, and procedures with other countries to manage international migration (i.e. excluding intra-EU mobility).
Migration diplomacy instruments	The forms/tools used in migration diplomacy, including formal and informal instruments. Instruments at national level include Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), Mobility Partnerships (MPs), letters/declaration of intent, framework agreements and other binding/non-binding agreements. They may also include regular diplomatic talks/exchanges on migration, or appointment of a special envoy or diplomatic representatives.
Policy approaches	The (set of) operational strategies used by policy actors to achieve their migration objectives by means of diplomacy. Approaches include: the use of a cross-sectoral approach and issue linkages that tie migration to other policy agendas, e.g. using trade agreements, economic or development aid as leverage; the use of negative conditionality, and/or the use of incentives.

9 Examples selected by an expert working in the field (e.g. policymaker, service provider, civil society organisation) or based on studies or evaluations.

10 EMN Glossary, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en, last accessed on 19 June 2024.

11 In that context, it has to be mentioned that the Pact on Migration and Asylum (see point 3.2.) includes a Crisis Regulation which provides quick protocols for situations of crisis and instrumentalisation of migrants, [Regulation - EU - 2024/1359 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1359/oj), last accessed 15 October 2024.

12 Rietig V. and M. Walter-Franke (2023). Conditionality in Migration Cooperation: Five Ideas for Future Use Beyond Carrots, Sticks, and Delusions. DGAP Report, <https://dgap.org>. Laube, L. (2021). Diplomatic Side-Effects of the EU's Externalization of Border Control and the Emerging Role of "Transit States" in Migration Diplomacy. *Historical Social Research*, 46 (3), pp. 78-105, <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.46.2021.3.78-105>. Rasche, L. (2022). The instrumentalisation of migration: How should the EU respond? Herties School. Jacques Delors Centre, www.delorscentre.eu, last accessed on 27 July 2024. Tittel-Mosser, F. (2018). 'Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration Policy: The Case of Morocco', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 14 (4), pp. 349-363.

13 Poast, P., 'Issue linkage and international cooperation: An empirical investigation', (2013), *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 30 (3), pp. 286-303, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894213484030>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

14 Betts, A., 'Substantive issue-linkage and the international politics of migration', in Bjola, C. and Kornprobst, M. (Eds.), *Arguing About Global Governance*, Routledge, 2010.

15 Tsourapas, G. 'Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya', (2017), *Third World Quarterly*, 38 (10), pp. 2367-2385, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

16 Adamson, F. B. and Tsourapas, G., 'Migration Diplomacy in World Politics', (2019), *International Studies Perspectives*, 20 (2), pp. 113-128, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ispl/eky015>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.



3. EU-LEVEL FRAMEWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS

Migration diplomacy is a key element of **European foreign policy**.¹⁷ It is an increasingly important feature at **EU level**, building on the initial **Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)**¹⁸ launched in 2011 and the **Migration Partnership Framework** with third countries introduced in June 2016,¹⁹ under the **European Agenda on Migration** from 2015.²⁰

3.1. Past developments

Earlier instruments included Mobility Partnerships (MPs)²¹ and common agendas for migration and mobility (CAMM).²² The **evaluation** of these instruments shows mixed results, depending on the partner countries' context. An evaluation of MPs with Cape Verde, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova – for example – indicated improved human, institutional and legislative capacity, as well as a positive impact on border management and international cooperation. Key shortcomings were noted in regard to legal mobility, development, international protection, and implementation and monitoring structures.²³ A study for the European Parliament also highlighted that the impact of MPs is often undermined by the limited legal migration opportunities offered by EU Member States within MPs, as well as EU Member States' limited engagement in the implementation of MPs. CAMMs are non-binding frameworks under the GAMM, designed as an alternative to MPs for cooperation on migration when either the EU or a third country is unwilling to commit to a readmission agreement, and they may transition into MPs if both parties later agree.²⁴

Other examples of tools are the **EU migration compacts** – bilateral commitments on migration management and economic development completed between the EU and Jordan,²⁵ as well as with Lebanon,²⁶ in 2016 to support countries of first refuge in providing assistance to refugees, regional stability and sustainable development, and the management of migratory flows. Another relevant

example of an EU-level migration diplomacy instrument is the **EU-Türkiye statement**.²⁷

3.2. Current approach

EU engagement with international partners on migration is one of the key pillars of the **new Pact on Migration and Asylum**,²⁸ **approved by the European Parliament on 10 April 2024**. The Pact announced the development of comprehensive, tailored and mutually beneficial migration partnerships with key countries of origin and transit.²⁹ Building on current EU migration partnership frameworks, it reinforces international partnerships to ensure the protection of those in need, address the root causes of migration and contribute to sustainable development, improve migration governance to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, foster cooperation on readmission and reintegration, and develop legal migration channels.³⁰

As part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum and its external dimension, the Talent Partnership initiative provides for an EU structured and strategic framework for Member States and the EU, in a Team Europe approach. Talent Partnerships aim at engaging with key partner countries in a mutually beneficial way on labour mobility and skills development, as part of broader cooperation on migration management, including effective return and readmission. Talent Partnerships are open to all skill levels and concern various economic sectors. They combine direct support for mobility schemes for work or training with capacity building and investment in human capital, including skills development, vocational education and training. The Commission launched Talent Partnerships with the following five partner countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The **external dimension** is followed-up in the **Council's Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and**

17 European External Action Service (EEAS), 'Migration is a key element of our foreign policy', 2023, www.eeas.europa.eu, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

18 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, COM (2011) 0743 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0743>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

19 European External Action Service (EEAS), 'Partnership Framework on Migration one Year on: Lessons Learned, Challenges and Way Forward', 2016, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/factsheet_partnership_framework_on_migration.pdf; Communication from the Commission on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration, COM (2016) 385 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0385>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

20 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Agenda on Migration, COM (2015) 240 final, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/07c6a804-95bb-451f-831b-5dfe41863f02_en?filename=com-munication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

21 European Commission, 'EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary – mobility partnership', 2024, <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

22 European Commission, 'International affairs', n.d., https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/international-affairs_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

23 Langley S. and Alberola, C., 'Independent Evaluation of the Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova', Maastricht University, 2018, [Evaluation-of-EU-Mobility-Partnerships.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/evaluation-of-eu-mobility-partnerships.pdf), last accessed on 27 July 2024.

24 European Parliament, 'EU Cooperation with Third Countries in the Field of Migration – Study for the European Parliament', 2015, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536469/IPOL_STU\(2015\)536469_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536469/IPOL_STU(2015)536469_EN.pdf), last accessed on 27 July 2024.

25 European Commission, 'EU – Jordan partnership: The Compact', 2017, <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu>; Joint Proposal for a Council Decision on the Union position within the Association Council set up by the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, of the other part, with regard to the adoption of EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities and annexed Compact, JOIN(2016/041 final – 2016/0289, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0041>, last accessed on 27 July 2024; For an analysis see ODI, 'The Jordan Compact: Lessons learnt and implications for future refugee compacts', 2018, <https://data.unhcr.org>; Vaagland, K., 'How strategies of refugee host states are perceived by donor states: EU interpretations of Jordanian migration diplomacy', (2023), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49 (12), last accessed on 27 July 2024.

26 Acts Adopted by Bodies Created by International Agreements Decision No 1/2016 of the EU-Lebanon Association Council of 11 November 2016 Agreeing on EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities [2016/2368], OJ L 350/114, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016D2368>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

27 European Council, 'EU-Turkey statement', 2016, www.consilium.europa.eu, last accessed on 27 July 2024; For an analysis, see Haferlach, L. and Kurban, D., 'Lessons learnt from the EU-Türkiye refugee agreement in guiding EU migration partnerships with origin and transit countries', (2017), *Global Policy*, 8, pp. 85–93; Horwood, C., Frouws, B. and Forin, R. (Eds.), 'Mixed Migration Review 2022: Highlights, Interviews, Essays, Data', Geneva: Mixed Migration Centre, 2022, <https://mixedmigration.org>; İçduygu, A. and Aksel, D.B., 'Two-to-Tango in migration diplomacy: Negotiating readmission agreement between the EU and Türkiye', (2014), *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 16, pp. 336–362.

28 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM (2020) 609 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b4f-ff13-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_3&format=PDF, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

29 European Commission, 'International affairs', n.d., https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/international-affairs_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

30 European Parliament, 'Briefing – The external dimension of the new pact on migration and asylum: A focus on prevention and readmission', European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 690.535, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690535/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)690535_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690535/EPRS_BRI(2021)690535_EN.pdf)

Migration,³¹ which discusses the EU's approach to countries and regions of origin and transit of asylum-seekers and migrants, as well as third countries of reception of refugees. In addition, a **mechanism for the operational coordination of the external dimension of migration (MOCADDEM)** was introduced in 2022³² to coordinate and react to issues related to the external dimension of migration (see section 4.1).

The **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument — Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe)** established in 2021³³ embedded migration in the programming of EU external funding at regional and country level,³⁴ and is the source of funding for migration-related programmes in Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and the Caribbean. Evaluations of the external funding instruments have pointed out the need to pay attention whether migration priorities do not undermine other policy priorities, in particular development objectives.³⁵

Cooperation with external partners is central to the newly established **Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling**,³⁶ which was launched in November 2023 by the European Commission. The Global Alliance is envisaged to work together on prevention, response, protection and alternatives to irregular migration, including addressing the root causes of irregular migration and facilitating legal pathways.³⁷

Examples of the opportunities and challenges of **recent EU-level migration diplomacy instruments** include:

- The MoU on a strategic and global partnership concluded between the **EU and Tunisia** in July 2023.³⁸ The MoU not only looks at migration and mobility, but also macroeconomic stability with an associated € 150 million support programme, economy and trade, green energy transition and cultural exchanges.³⁹ The European Commission President highlighted the

importance of supporting economic reforms and financial stability in Tunisia with this MoU,⁴⁰ while public debates on the cooperation with Tunisia have focused on human rights concerns.⁴¹

- In March 2024, the **Arab Republic of Egypt and the EU** signed the Joint Declaration launching a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership.⁴² Migration and mobility is one of the six key pillars of cooperation enshrined therein, alongside: political relations, economic stability, trade and investment, security, and demography and human capital committing to. The partnership is supported by financial and investment package of € 7.4 billion including up to EUR 200 million to support projects in the area of migration until 2027.⁴³ The two parties have underlined their shared commitment to the promotion of democracy, fundamental freedoms, and human rights, as well as gender equality and equal opportunities and reiterated their commitments to build on their long-standing relationship through this Partnership.⁴⁴ However, human rights organisations have highlighted concerns about democracy.⁴⁵
- In March 2024, the **EU and Mauritania** signed a joint declaration on strengthening a comprehensive migration partnership and building economic opportunities, including the mobilisation of € 210 million. The European Commission highlighted the need to create more opportunities for young people in Mauritania, supporting the protection of the most vulnerable, promoting legal migration, combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and strengthening border management including cooperation on search and rescue operations to save lives.⁴⁶ In Mauritania itself, the declaration has raised public concern, highlighting key challenges with this type of agreement, such as the potential erosion of national sovereignty, the exacerbation of racial and social tensions, and the risk of Mauritania being seen as merely enforcing

31 European Council, Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration, n.d., <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/working-party-on-external-aspects-of-asylum-and-migration/>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

32 Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/60 of 12 January 2022 on the Operational Coordination Mechanism for the External Dimension of Migration, ST/5095/2022/INIT, OJ L 10.

33 Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (Text with EEA relevance), PE/41/2021/INIT, OJ L 209.

34 NDICI-Global Europe foresees an indicative spending target for migration and forced displacement of 10% of the overall envelope, as well as a 'flexible initiative approach' on the use of EU funding for migration.

35 European Commission (2024). European Union's external financing instruments (2014-2020 and 2021-2027). Volume I, Synthesis report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2841/05549>, Oxfam, 'From Development to Deterrence? Migration spending under the EU Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)', 2023, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621536/bp-development-to-deterrence-migration-spending-under-NDICI-210923-summ-en.pdf?jsessionid=C61950F4C96866D8C24E85E63C3C27E5?sequence=23>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

36 European Commission, 'Commission launches a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling and proposes a strengthened EU legal framework', 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_6081, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

37 European Commission, 'Call to Action on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling', 2023, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/60f6cc08-c7ee-46db-bee5-689562d34436_en?filename=Call-to-action-global-alliance-to-counter-migrant-smuggling_en_1.pdf.

38 European Commission, 'Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic and global partnership between the European Union and Tunisia', 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3887, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

39 European Commission, 'The European Union and Tunisia come to an agreement on a EUR 150 million programme', *The European Union and Tunisia come to an agreement on a EUR 150 million programme*, last accessed on 7 November 2024.

40 European Commission, 'The European Union continues to implement the Memorandum of Understanding with Tunisia with the disbursement of EUR 150 million in financial support', 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_1301, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

41 The Guardian, 'What is the controversy over the EU migration deal with Tunisia?', 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/18/what-is-the-controversy-over-the-eu-migration-deal-with-tunisia>, last accessed on 28 August 2024; Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 'European and Tunisian migration policies: A recipe for failure and suffering', 2024, <https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/european-and-tunisian-migration-policies-recipe-failure-and-suffering>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

42 European Commission, 'Joint Declaration on the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union', 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-declaration-strategic-and-comprehensive-partnership-between-arab-republic-egypt-and-european-2024-03-17_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

43 European Parliament, 'Partnership agreement between the EU and Egypt', 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2024-000869_EN.html

44 European Commission, 'Joint Declaration on the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union', 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_24_1513, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

45 Human Rights Watch, 'EU deal with Egypt rewards authoritarianism, betrays EU values', 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/15/eu-deal-egypt-rewards-authoritarianism-betrays-eu-values>; Euronews, 'The EU's big bet on Egypt comes with a high price and high risks', 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/03/18/analysis-the-eus-big-bet-on-egypt-comes-with-a-high-price-and-high-risks>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

46 European Commission, 'The European Commission launches new migration partnership with Mauritania', 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_1335, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

European interests at the expense of its own societal stability.⁴⁷

As seen in the examples above, the development of migration diplomacy instruments may cause concerns among some stakeholders including the general public. Concerns about the external dimension of migration management are not new, but, rather, emphasise the complexity and potential implications of migration cooperation, underlining the relevance of sophisticated migration diplomacy.

Beyond the national and EU level, strengthening international cooperation and partnerships on migration are key components of **global and regional governance**

frameworks. These include the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,⁴⁸ Global Compact on Refugees,⁴⁹ and Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms on migration,⁵⁰ such as interregional forums on migration (IRFs; e.g. the [Rabat Process](#),⁵¹ [Khartoum Process](#),⁵² [Bali Process](#),⁵³ [Budapest Process](#),⁵⁴ [Prague Process](#)⁵⁵) and Regional Consultative Processes on migration (RCPs, e.g. [Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration, Mobility and Integrated Border Management](#)). While the importance of global and regional migration governance is well recognised, research points to fragmentation, complex interplays and power asymmetries in regional and global governance.⁵⁶



4. MIGRATION DIPLOMACY APPROACHES

Migration diplomacy approaches in EMN Member and Observer Countries and in non-EU OECD countries are driven by distinct geopolitical contexts, strategic priorities and resource capability.

4.1. Migration diplomacy approaches in EMN Countries

Seventeen EMN Member and Observer Countries⁵⁷ use migration diplomacy at national level as part of their wider international migration affairs, with six⁵⁸ reporting that migration diplomacy is not currently part of their international migration affairs.

The countries using migration diplomacy at national level have initiated **dialogues and partnerships** with key third countries. France has launched bilateral, regional and multilateral dialogue with priority countries to establish comprehensive cooperation, combining various diplomatic levers to achieve its migration diplomacy objectives (see Box 1).

Box 1. France appointed an ambassador for migration

To achieve its migration diplomacy objectives, France has strengthened coordination between the various departments concerned, notably the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas (MIOM) and the Ministry of

Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). Migration diplomacy is coordinated by the ambassador for migration, whose mission statement is jointly signed by the MIOM and the MEAE. The ambassador is supported by a ministerial task force comprising:

- **Migration correspondents** within the MEAE departments concerned with the external dimension of migration.
- **Migration referents**⁵⁹ within the 15 priority countries for France's migration policy, attached to the diplomatic chancellery and tasked with mobilising all local services concerned and facilitating migration cooperation.

The ambassador for migration (within the MEAE) and the Director of Immigration (within the MIOM) co-pilot an annual (internal) migration dialogue with priority embassies, which prepares the (external) dialogue with partner countries on their cooperation.

Austria uses migration dialogue, partnerships and agreements, depending on current migratory dynamics, and ensures sufficient financing and human resources to establish and maintain a partnership with a third country. Finally, bilateral, regional and multilateral migration dialogue and partnerships with priority countries of origin

47 Al Jazeera, 'The EU-Mauritania migration deal is destined to fail', 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/3/26/the-eu-mauritania-migration-deal-is-destined-to-fail>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

48 Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, A/RES/73/195, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org>, last accessed on 11 October 2024.

49 United Nations Global Compact on Refugees, New York, 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-compact-refugees-booklet>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

50 A full list of Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms on migration is available at www.iom.int, last accessed on 11 October 2024.

51 Rabat Process, <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/>, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

52 Khartoum Process, <https://www.khartoumprocess.net/>, last accessed on 11 October 2024; For a discussion on the Horn of Africa agenda, see Crawley, H. and Blitz, K., 'Common agenda or Europe's agenda? International protection, human rights and migration from the Horn of Africa', (2018), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1468393, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

53 European Commission, 'EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary – Bali Process', 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/bali-process_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

54 European Commission, 'EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary – Budapest Process', 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/budapest-process_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

55 European Commission, 'EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary – Prague Process', 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/prague-process_en, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

56 Kainz, L. and Betts, A., 'Power and proliferation: Explaining the fragmentation of global migration governance', (2021), *Migration Studies*, 9 (1), pp. 65-89, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnaa015>; Lavenex, S. and Piper, N., 'Regions and global migration governance: perspectives "from above", "from below" and "from beyond"', (2022), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48 (12), pp. 2837-2854, [10.1080/1369183X.2021.1972564](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1972564); Geddes, A., M.V. Espinoza, Hadj Abdou, L. and Brumat, L., *The dynamics of regional migration governance*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham/Northampton, 2019; For key effects of migration diplomacy, see Geddes, A. and Mauri, M., 'Localising Migration Diplomacy in Africa? Ethiopia in its Regional and International Setting', EUI Working Papers, RSCAs 2020/50, 2020, https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/68384/RSCAS%202020_50.pdf?sequence=1%26isAllowed=y, last accessed on 27 July 2024.

57 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FR, HU, IE, LT, MT, NL, SE, SI, SK and GE, UA.

58 EE, FI, LU, LV, PL, PT.

59 In the context of France's migration policy, migration referents are specialized representatives attached to French diplomatic missions (embassies or consulates) who are tasked with facilitating and coordinating migration cooperation between France and the host country. These migration referents serve as key points of contact to mobilise local services and enhance migration management efforts, both at the diplomatic and operational levels.

and transit form an important part of Sweden's diplomacy approach, with a focus on increased and efficient return.

Several EU Member States and Observer Countries reiterate the need for a **whole-of-government approach**⁶⁰ towards migration diplomacy.⁶¹ This is an integrated and coordinated strategy that involves multiple government departments and agencies working together to manage migration issues cohesively. It ensures that migration diplomacy is not handled by a single ministry (such as the Ministry of the Interior or Foreign Affairs) but is instead addressed across various sectors of government, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of migration. Accordingly, Austria and France have established inter-ministerial committees and mechanisms.

As part of cooperation dialogue on migration, EMN Member and Observer Countries use both **cross-sectoral approaches and issue linkages** (see section 5). The Netherlands's strategy consists of cross-sectoral approaches and issue linkages, with an integrated vision on the intended political and economic cooperation between the Netherlands and the respective target country/region. The Netherlands uses policy areas such as visa policy, security policy, human rights policy, development cooperation and foreign trade as part of its migration diplomacy strategy, such as ministerial visits to partner countries focusing on both economic opportunities and migration cooperation.

Four EMN Member Countries⁶² have adopted varying approaches to migration diplomacy, incorporating elements of **conditionality**. Germany emphasises cooperative migration diplomacy centred on rewards and mutual cooperation. By contrast, Finland's 2023 programme for government includes a more coercive approach, linking development cooperation to the readmission of nationals. Meanwhile, Belgium aligns with the EU's flexible – incentive approach, which combines cooperative measures with (to a lesser extent) negative conditionality, such as visa restrictions (see section 5.2).

Specific instruments and tools are commonly used by EMN Member and Observer Countries in their migration diplomacy approaches, such as bilateral agreements, MoUs, declarations of intent, appointment of special envoys or diplomatic representatives. Belgium has appointed a Special Envoy for Asylum and Migration, and Germany has appointed a Special Representative for Migration Agreements, both of whom are involved in multilateral processes and foreign policy. Spain has an ambassador at large for migratory issues within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see section 6.1).

Several countries report that their national approaches are **strongly embedded within efforts at EU level**.⁶³ Participation in collective EU diplomacy efforts and partnerships, such as the Rabat, Khartoum, Budapest,

and Prague Processes (see section 3.2), allows them to leverage the broader EU framework to manage migration. Ten countries⁶⁴ noted their preference for using the EU's comprehensive mechanisms for managing migration, acknowledging the benefits of a unified stance and shared responsibilities in addressing complex migration issues. Migration diplomacy is not a prominent part of international migration affairs in seven EMN Member and Observer Countries⁶⁵ due to their strategic alignment with EU-level initiatives and inherent national limitations. Due to their limited national capacities and diplomatic networks, these countries prefer to engage within the EU's comprehensive and coordinated approach, ensuring that they can address migration challenges more robustly and benefit from the shared resources and strategic advantages of the EU.

Box 2: Mechanism for the operational coordination of the external dimension of migration – MOCADDEM

As part of its Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2022, France set up the MOCADDEM,⁶⁶ to strengthen cooperation on migration management between EU Member States, European institutions and third countries. MOCADDEM aims to ensure overall coordination of the actions and funding committed by the EU and its Member States in third countries for migration cooperation. It identifies operational levers for joint action and avoids dispersing efforts with target third countries by requiring them to negotiate with all 27 EU Member States, while enabling them to benefit from EU financial resources.

A '360-degree' vision of all migratory routes is enhanced by the initiatives of Team Europe,⁶⁷ including two on the Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route and one on the Central Mediterranean, which ensure that projects set up by EU Member States and the EU itself are operationalised locally. Coordination at all levels, supported by the work of embassies in liaison with EU delegations on the ground, enables close coordination, avoiding duplication and strengthening synergies between all forums relating to migration issues.

4.2. Migration diplomacy approaches outside the EU

OECD countries use migration diplomacy together with other diplomatic initiatives focusing on trade or development, where migration aspects are not the focus of those diplomatic initiatives. One such regional governance framework in the Americas is the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection⁶⁸ (see Box 3).

60 For definition of the Whole-of-government approach see: https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/glossary-item/whole-government-approach%C2%A0_en, last accessed 11 October 2024. See also <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/taxonomy/term/737>, last accessed 14 October 2024.

61 AT, BE, CZ, ES, SE, and GE.

62 BE, DE, ES, FI.

63 CY, CZ, FI, LT, LU, NL.

64 CY, CZ, EE, FI, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT.

65 EE, FI, LV, LU, MT, PL, PT.

66 *Mécanisme pour la coordination opérationnelle de la dimension extérieure des migrations – Mocadem*.

67 Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) focus on identifying critical priorities that constrain development in a given country or region, where a coordinated and coherent effort by Team Europe would ensure results with a transformative impact, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en, last accessed on 25 July 2024.

68 The White House, 'Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection', 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/10/los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection/> <https://losangelesdeclaration.com/>, last accessed on 16 September 2024.

Box 1. Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection

The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection was signed in 2022. To date, 22 states have endorsed this Declaration. In May 2024, Guatemala hosted the third ministerial meeting and side meetings to discuss ongoing cooperation and outline the agenda for the coming year. The Los Angeles Declaration is organised around four key pillars: (i) Promoting stability and assistance for communities of destination, origin, transit, and return, (ii) Promoting regular pathways for migration and international protection, (iii) Promoting humane migration management, (iv) Promoting a coordinated emergency response. Special Coordinators were selected from each endorsing country at principal level or higher to lead this process.

At the inaugural meeting of Special Coordinators in Washington DC in 2022, countries identified 11 action packages, framed within the four pillars of the Declaration. Signatory countries made several commitments to continued cooperation, including a pledge by the US to provide USD 578 million to support partner and host communities to respond to humanitarian needs, expand pathways, and support regularisation and integration. Additionally, the US and Costa Rica announced a biometric data-sharing partnership and continued cooperation around Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs⁶⁹).

Japan has signed economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, including a migration component in a broader trade agreement (see Box 4). These EPAs include a commitment to develop a regular migration pathway for care workers employed in Japan. This could be described as positive conditionality, in which regular labour migration channels are opened in exchange for economic co-operation. Another example is the PALM, which strengthens the relationship between Australia and Pacific countries by providing employment opportunities in Australia for workers from Pacific countries (see Box 5).

Box 4: Japan's EPAs and migration

Japan has concluded EPAs with Indonesia (2008), the Philippines (2009), and Vietnam (2014). While most of the EPAs focus on trade and tariffs, they also include a mechanism for accepting nurses and care workers. Placement is managed by Japan's International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS), together with governmental organisations in the partner country. Language training is provided partly in the country of origin and partly in Japan. EPA candidates are trained in Japan for up to three years for

nursing, and four years for care work, and are then eligible to pass the Japanese national qualification exams. If successful, they have the option to stay in Japan indefinitely.

The EPAs include an annual cap on participants. In the early years, the government subsidised the programme to overcome Japanese employers' scepticism and ensure the success of the overall EPA. Demand for nurses and care workers is now high and employers compete to hire candidates brought through the EPAs.⁷⁰

Box 5: Pacific Australia Labour Mobility - PALM

Australia's efforts to improve relationships and strengthen ties with Pacific countries includes a number of migration measures. In April 2022, the government merged its Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) with its Pacific Labour Scheme to establish a new PALM scheme offering both short and long-term employment opportunities to nationals of nine Pacific island countries, and Timor-Leste. Seasonal workers could obtain three-year visas to work for up to nine months each year but were then obliged to return home for the remaining three months. The SWP experienced slower take-up from Australian employers, who had become used to a readily available workforce through existing working holidaymaker programmes, despite their lower levels of productivity. The PALM has seen increased interest, with around 74% of workers returning the following year, increasing their skill, predictability, and productivity value. Pacific countries track the impact of participation on local communities and change worker selection to improve the social and development impact of participation in the programme.⁷¹

4.3. Geographical focus of migration diplomacy

The geographical focus of the EMN Member and Observer Countries typically includes key countries of origin and transit along key migratory routes. The approach to migration diplomacy in specific regions or countries is aligned with the strategic priorities of EMN Member and Observer Countries, including: addressing the root causes of irregular migration; countering irregular migration and its risks; fostering labour migration and student mobility; promoting return, voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration. Ireland does not have a geographical focus, but, rather, engages with multiple countries in different regions depending on the migration focus, e.g. returns and readmissions, working holiday visas, critical skills recruitment.

69 Safe Mobility Offices assist refugees, vulnerable migrants, and other displaced persons to find support and access services in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Guatemala. They are part of the Safe Mobility Initiative. See U.S. Department of State, Safe Mobility Initiative. Helping those in Need and Reducing Irregular Migration in the Americas, Washington D.C., 2024, <https://www.state.gov/safe-mobility-initiative>

70 OECD, 'Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Japan', OECD Publishing, Paris, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1787/Oe5a10e3-en>

71 OECD, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Labour migration in Asia: Trends, skills certification and seasonal work', OECD Publishing, Paris, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9b45c5c4-en>

Box 6: Geographical focus in Austria

Austria has undertaken intensified migration diplomacy efforts with partners in the neighbourhood and along the main migration routes. The need to build strong partnerships is seen against the backdrop of a multitude of conflicts — particularly in Eastern Europe, Middle East, Sudan and the Sahel region — which impact irregular migration towards Europe.

As of June 2024, 56 migration and readmission agreements are in place, 25 of which are at EU level. These efforts show that Austria applies migration diplomacy approaches with various relevant partner countries, especially in the Western Balkans, Türkiye, Middle East, South Asia and Africa.

Nine countries⁷² report that their geographical focus is specifically or mainly on **countries of origin of irregular flows**. Belgium focuses on countries of origin and transit with substantial irregular migration. Lithuania's migration diplomacy prioritises the root causes of irregular migration, focusing on Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Mali in Africa, and Iraq and Palestine in the Middle East. In response to the instrumentalisation of migrant flows by Belarus, Lithuania focused on coordinated diplomatic efforts with Iraqi authorities, discussing return of irregular

migrants, as well as the social and economic situation in Iraq. Malta's geographical focus is on North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, which contain the main countries of origin and transit for irregular migration along the central Mediterranean route. Due to increasing irregular entries by Moroccan nationals, Slovenia signed a Joint Declaration with Morocco in June 2024 to intensify bilateral migration dialogue, focusing on return and readmission.

Box 7: Geographical focus in Finland

Finland's targeted geographical areas are determined by specific challenges, with a focus on comprehensive foreign policy (diplomacy, trade, development) and migration and return issues considered from the outset.

On **return and repatriation**, Finland is particularly focused on Iraq and Somalia. On **labour migration**, Finland aims to strengthen its cooperation with Brazil, India, the Philippines and Vietnam to enhance mobility for economic and professional reasons. A comprehensive analysis was conducted before selecting possible partner countries for international recruitment, considering availability of relevant skills, migration history between the countries, political circumstances for international recruitment, etc.



5. CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACHES AND ISSUE LINKAGES

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries apply **cross-sectoral approaches**, focusing on issue linkages and priorities within the area of migration and/or outside the area of migration (e.g. trade, development agreements/development aid, loans, administrative arrangements).⁷³

5.1. Overview of cross-sectoral approaches

As part of dialogue and negotiations, partner third countries typically seek broader cooperation across various migration-related topics of mutual interest (e.g. return/readmission, legal pathways, anti-trafficking efforts, visa facilitation, reintegration support). The conclusion of readmission agreements, for example, may proceed in parallel to negotiations regarding cooperation in different fields, such as a visa facilitation agreement, a customs agreement, or agreements on development cooperation.

Austria finds comprehensive cross-sectoral agreements more effective and engaging than single issue agreements. In its diplomacy approach, it focuses on concluding non-binding MoUs on mobility, migration and development and consular cooperation, including clauses on

readmission, educational exchange, development cooperation, security, and vocational training.

France's migration diplomacy is aligned with the 2015 Valletta Joint Action Plan (VJAP).⁷⁴ It emphasises several key issues in its bilateral relations with partner countries, including intensifying control of irregular migratory flows, enhancing cooperation on migrant protection and legal mobility, and improving return, readmission, and sustainable reintegration efforts. The Netherlands' migration strategy emphasises using integrated political and economic cooperation to create effective, durable, and mutually beneficial partnerships with target countries. In Finland, migration policy is integrally linked to labour policy, thus labour migration features in international efforts with linkages to trade.

Visa policy can also be used as leverage⁷⁵ with third countries. Four countries⁷⁶ have reported for the purpose of this Inform that they report on the assessment of third countries' readmission cooperation under Article 25a of the revised Visa Code, introduced in February 2020 as a tool to encourage third countries to readmit their nationals by linking readmission cooperation and visa policy. Article 25a allows for the possibility to leverage the EU

⁷² AT, BE, CY, FR, HU, LT, MT, SI, SK.

⁷³ AT, CZ, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, NL, SK and GE.

⁷⁴ Valletta Joint Action Plan, 2015, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf, last accessed on 25 July 2024.

⁷⁵ In the context of migration diplomacy negotiations, leverage broadly refers to the ability or power of a country or entity to influence the actions, decisions, or policies of another country or group of countries. This influence can be exerted through various means, such as economic incentives, political pressure, strategic partnerships, or other forms of conditionality. Essentially, leverage is the bargaining power that one party has over another to achieve desired outcomes in negotiations, particularly in the context of managing migration issues.

⁷⁶ BE, FI, FR, MT.

visa policy with third countries where action is needed to improve cooperation on readmission. On the other hand, if the cooperation on readmission is satisfactory, the mechanism allows the Commission to propose to the Council the adoption of a number of temporary positive visa measures. Since its implementation, the European Commission has finalised five reports assessing third-country cooperation on readmission, and put forward proposals for visa measures towards Bangladesh, Iraq, the Gambia, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Somalia.⁷⁷ Conversely, **visa facilitation agreements** can be a positive incentive for partner countries in bilateral agreements. For example, Georgia actively pursues visa waiver agreements to expand visa-free travel for its citizens (see Box 8).

Box 8: Georgia's migration diplomacy approach

Georgia's approach to migration diplomacy is outlined in its national Migration Strategy for 2021-2030. It emphasises international cooperation across several sectoral priorities, including enhancing migration management, facilitating legal migration, and combating irregular migration. A significant focus is on expanding visa facilitation and visa-free travel opportunities for Georgian citizens, with the strategy aiming to establish bilateral visa-free regimes with as many countries as possible. As a result, the number of countries allowing visa-free travel for Georgian citizens has increased from 65 in 2020 to 74 by 2024, contributing to enhanced people-to-people contacts, easier access to global markets, and reduced travel costs.

In addition to visa facilitation agreements, Georgia has actively pursued temporary labour migration (TLM) agreements as part of its migration diplomacy. These agreements, particularly with EU Member States such as Bulgaria, France, Germany and Poland, as well as other partner countries such as Israel, are designed to develop and facilitate circular labour migration. Georgia's migration diplomacy efforts include negotiating, signing, and implementing these agreements, which involve both technical and diplomatic phases. Despite the challenges of global economic shifts and the COVID-19 pandemic, which stalled or altered negotiations on occasion, Georgia continues to adapt its approach, aiming to replicate successful TLM agreements with additional countries and adjust to new global realities.

Several countries specifically link their efforts to address the **root causes of irregular migration**⁷⁸ and/

or **effective return and readmission**⁷⁹ in dialogue with third countries on **development cooperation**. As outlined in its Development Cooperation Strategies for Africa and the Middle East 2022-2025, Lithuania aims to address the root causes of irregular migration by fostering development in migrants' countries of origin through grant projects, humanitarian assistance and financial contributions. The Slovak Republic uses a cross-sectoral approach with various instruments of development cooperation (grant projects, in-kind humanitarian assistance, financial contributions), partnerships and investment to enhance development in countries of origin and create sustainable living conditions for local populations in partner countries. Sweden's migration policy is integrated into its foreign policy and coordinated by the Government Offices, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Justice, while focusing on increasing and managing **returns** from Sweden.

Some EMN Member States highlighted the **limits of a cross-sectorial approach**. Belgium and Ireland particularly noted the importance of development assistance seeking to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries as a priority.

5.2. Conditionality as part of cross-sectoral approaches

Some EMN Member Countries⁸⁰ report adopting **positive or negative conditionality** in their cross-sectoral approaches. For example, Germany's cooperative migration diplomacy is based on promises/rewards and issue-specific cooperation on individual policy areas. Finland includes coercive migration diplomacy in its 2023 programme for government, with development cooperation for third countries conditional on readmission of their own nationals and support for the international rules-based order as part of a comprehensive assessment. Belgium follows the EU's flexible-incentive approach, primarily characterised by cooperative measures and, to a lesser extent, negative conditionality-based policies (e.g. visa restrictions).

At EU level, Ireland argues for caution in the use of negative conditionality, particularly in the context of development and trade relations with poorer countries, which should have their own specific objectives. Similarly, Spain does not favour negative conditionality, noting that it is essential to establish partnerships with countries of origin and transit, pay attention to their needs and priorities, and foster ownership of migration-related public policies.



6. MIGRATION DIPLOMACY INSTRUMENTS

EMN Member and Observer Countries use migration diplomacy instruments as strategic tools and frameworks to negotiate, manage and facilitate international migration through diplomatic engagement and cooperation.

6.1. Overview of migration diplomacy instruments

While a comprehensive stocktake of migration diplomacy instruments is beyond the scope of this inform, most EMN Member and Observer Countries report using

77 European Commission, 'Visa measures for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia', [Visa measures for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia](#), last accessed on 7 November 2024.

78 AT, CZ, FR, LT, NL, and GE.

79 AT, BE, CZ, FI, FR, NL, SE.

80 BE, DE, ES, FI.

a wide range of instruments, including bilateral agreements,⁸¹ MoUs,⁸² letters of intent,⁸³ participation in global forums,⁸⁴ specific projects⁸⁵ and the appointment of special envoys or other dedicated experts.⁸⁶

Bilateral agreements are one of the most commonly adopted migration diplomacy instruments and can include a wide range of agreements from a single issue (e.g. readmission agreements, visa facilitation agreements, working holiday visa agreements) to more comprehensive cross-sectoral agreements (e.g. migration partnership agreements, mobility agreements). France has signed over 60 bilateral agreements with third countries to ensure coherent management of migratory flows, tailored to the needs of the signatory countries. These instruments aim to establish a controlled framework for safe, orderly and regular migration, preserve the respect of human rights and migrants' dignity, support states to manage and govern migration, and maximise the positive effects of migration on sustainable development in the societies and countries concerned.

Since 2023, Austria has stepped up its ambition to establish a resilient and holistic migration strategy through bilateral migration partnerships and agreements on mobility, migration and development, including with India, Morocco and Iraq. Spain has concluded bilateral agreements on circular migration with Morocco, Senegal and a number of countries from Latin America. Georgia has concluded bilateral temporary labour (circular) migration agreements with several EU Member States (France, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria) and other partner countries (Israel).

Several EMN Member and Observer Countries⁸⁷ have concluded **MoUs** with partner countries as a reference to mutual cooperation. Sweden has had an MoU on return with Iraq since 2008, which states that both countries agree to promote voluntary return and that forced return is a last resort. The Netherlands has signed a **letter of intent** with Egypt on migration cooperation.

Diplomatic representation is seen as a key instrument. In Belgium, the appointment of a Special Envoy for Asylum and Migration by the Minister of Foreign Affairs⁸⁸ shows a commitment to include migration in its foreign policy. The Special Representative for Migration Agreements in Germany,⁸⁹ who took office in February 2023, held diplomatic talks with representatives of various third countries, prompting several migration agreements and partnerships. In the Slovak Republic, 'flying consuls' were introduced to foster labour migration from third countries. Other instruments include training, capacity-building and participation in dialogue and global forums (see Boxes 9

and 10). Spain has an ambassador at large for Migratory issues within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of the Interior's Aid in Place programme makes cash donations abroad to assist refugees at the point of their initial displacement and to countries hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants or dealing with them as transit countries. This approach reduces the reasons for people to move further towards the EU and contributes to reducing irregular migration.

Box 9: France chairing Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)

Between July 2022 and March 2024, France chaired the GFMD⁹⁰ and organised its 14th Summit. The GFMD is committed to inclusive and proactive governance, capable of opening and deepening dialogue on the contemporary challenges of human mobility.

The French chair focused on two innovative areas: the effects of climate change on human mobility, and the cultural heritage acquired through migration. These axes were broken into six working groups, which led to the drafting of several background papers: the impact of climate change on human mobility; human rights and migration; the place of diasporas; labour migration; the place of migration in collective mentalities; and multi-level governance of migration management. The 14th GFMD Summit, held in Geneva from 23-25 January 2024 brought together over 1 300 participants, including GFMD stakeholders, governments, civil society, the private sector, local authorities, young people, international organisations and research institutes.

Box 10: Training Institute on Migration Capacity Partnership for the Mediterranean (MCP Med TI)

The MCP Med TI was established in Malta in 2021 as a permanent vocational training centre offering accredited training on various migration-related topics to beneficiary southern partner countries. In a spirit of partnership, these countries are also part of the Institute's Governing Board and have an equal decision-making role as donors. Current partners are Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia, together with donors Austria, Denmark, Malta and the European Commission (through the Migration Partnership Facility).⁹¹

81 For example, AT, BE, CY, DE, FR, IE, LV, NL, SK.

82 For example, AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, SK.

83 For example, DE, NL, SK.

84 For example, BE, CZ, FR, LU, NL, SK.

85 For example, BE, CZ, ES, LT, NL, SK.

86 For example, AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES.

87 For example, AT, BE, DE, FI, SK.

88 Belgium, Special Envoy for Asylum and Migration, <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/about-us/directorate-general-development-cooperation-and-humanitarian-aid-dgd>, last accessed on 4 August 2024.

89 Germany, Special Representative for Migration Agreements, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/ministry/commissioners/specialcommissioner-migration-agreements/specialcommissioner-migration-agreements-node.html>, last accessed on 4 August 2024.

90 The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) is considered a migration diplomacy instrument as it fosters international dialogue and collaboration on migration-related challenges, enabling countries to engage in cooperative solutions, share best practices, and influence global migration governance. Benefits include strengthened bilateral relations, better migration policies, and addressing issues such as climate-induced displacement and labour mobility.

91 MCP MED TI, <https://mcpmed-ti.edu.eu/>, last accessed on 4 August 2024.

6.2. Challenges and lessons of negotiations

Ten countries⁹² report a variety of challenges and lessons drawn from their negotiations with third countries.

Coordination at different levels of government and leveraging support in the partner country are crucial for effective migration diplomacy.⁹³ Austria has established interministerial roundtables to facilitate information exchange on developments in third countries, while Spain and France emphasise the importance of building ownership and creating constructive relationships with partner countries. France has migration referents within the 15 priority countries for its migration policy, attached to the diplomatic chancellery and tasked with mobilising all local services and facilitating migration cooperation. However, smaller states like Malta and Lithuania face limitations in leverage, necessitating support from larger entities such as the EU. Lithuania's experience shows that coordinated diplomatic efforts with the EU can effectively influence migration management. With EU support, Lithuania engaged in diplomatic efforts with Iraq to manage irregular migration instrumentalised by Belarus, leading to Iraq suspending flights to Belarus and facilitating the return of Iraqi migrants.

Sustainability and long-term impact are vital considerations in migration diplomacy.⁹⁴ The Netherlands and France underscore the difficulty of monitoring long-term impacts and the importance of creating sustainable solutions, including return and readmission processes. Spain identifies the mismatch between EU resources and partner country's needs as a significant challenge, noting the need for tailored support and mutual understanding. According to Spain, there is a discrepancy between the needs of African countries to combat irregular migration and the EU's financial tools, such as NDICI-Global Europe funds, which are not designed to finance requested resources such as equipment including patrol vessels and trucks.

Key success and facilitating factors identified for migration diplomacy negotiations include political stability in partner countries,⁹⁵ coordination,⁹⁶ leverage,⁹⁷ legal frameworks,⁹⁸ resource allocation,⁹⁹ and sustainability.¹⁰⁰ Austria highlights the need to identify the multifaceted aspects of migration and to maintain a precise definition of terms and policies to ensure effective negotiations. The Netherlands notes that cooperation agreements are drafted together with the partner country to ensure that cooperation is mutually beneficial. The bilateral Franco-Senegalese cooperation is seen as a good practice example for co-development: Senegal's successful programme to engage its diaspora in France, supported by substantial French financial and technical assistance, has become a model for diplomatic cooperation.

Despite these successes, significant **challenges** remain in negotiations, with external factors, as well as internal and external coordination issues, posing difficulties. Belgium and the Slovak Republic identify the volatile nature of partner countries' political situations as a challenge, as changes in governments or coups can render existing agreements worthless. Germany faces challenges due to conflicting national interests, lack of political relations with negotiation partners, and issue linkages of little interest to the other side, highlighting the complexity of aligning diverse national priorities.

6.3. Challenges and lessons learned in implementing migration diplomacy

Eight countries¹⁰¹ report challenges and lessons in implementing migration diplomacy instruments. While each country faces unique challenges, common themes include the need for effective coordination, adaptability, robust implementation mechanisms, and clear metrics for success.

The implementation of migration agreements is identified as a **challenge** by five countries.¹⁰² The Netherlands highlights that implementing diplomacy instruments may take a long time due to multiple layers and stages of negotiations. Political obstacles, such as government changes in both countries, can alter the course of negotiations. Georgia's main migration diplomacy efforts have focused on promoting bilateral temporary labour migration agreements with the EU and other countries, but global crises (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, war, economic instability) have altered priorities and labour market needs, necessitating adjustments to migration diplomacy instruments at all levels.

After an agreement has been concluded, it is not always clear whether the envisioned effect is achieved, as impact is not always measurable. In Spain, the complexity of a multiplicity of actors involved in the field of migration, including different levels of public administration and different ministries with diverse sensitivities and priorities, are somewhat difficult to streamline. Similarly, Austria reports that using all available synergies and swiftly integrating new policies into the daily work of the national administration can be challenging.

The Slovak Republic reports that problematic areas of the implementation of international agreements are resolved in accordance with the rules of international law on the settlement of disputes between states and by negotiations on an expert basis in the interest of a consensual and mutually beneficial solution for the contracting parties.

Challenges and lessons were also identified in non-EU countries highlighted in the OECD examples above. The Los Angeles Declaration faced hurdles in maintaining coordinated efforts and securing adequate resources

92 AT, BE, DE, ES, FR, MT, NL, SK and GE, UA.

93 For example, AT, ES, FR, MT, LT.

94 ES, FR, NL and UA.

95 For example, CZ, NL, SK.

96 For example, AT, CZ, ES, FR, MT, LT.

97 For example, CZ, FR, MT.

98 For example, CZ, FR.

99 For example, CZ, DE.

100 For example, CZ, FR.

101 AT, DE, ES, FR, MT, NL, SK and GE.

102 DE, ES, NL, SK and UA.

to address the humanitarian and migration challenges across the Americas. The PALM scheme initially struggled with employer reluctance but, over time, higher return rates and improved worker productivity demonstrated the value of long-term engagement. Japan's EPAs revealed early scepticism from employers and a need for government subsidies, but growing demand for skilled care workers underscored the importance of addressing labour shortages through international cooperation.

6.4. Measuring the impact of migration diplomacy instruments

Seven countries¹⁰³ report efforts to measure results and impacts following the application of migration diplomacy instruments.

Austria reports that its migration diplomacy efforts have shown positive impacts in the short period since agreements were concluded in 2023. These impacts include improved cooperation on voluntary and forced returns, and the establishment of regular dialogues on broader migration subjects with countries such as India, Morocco and Iraq. Although the long-term impacts of these agreements are yet to be observed, the immediate effects during the negotiation process underscore for Austria the effectiveness of its strategic approach to migration diplomacy.

France reports that its long-standing migration diplomacy with Senegal illustrates the positive impacts of well-coordinated programmes and co-development. Initiatives like the *Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives de Solidarité pour le Développement* (PAISD),¹⁰⁴ supported by substantial financial and technical resources, have made it possible to link projects to national and sectoral policies by aligning diaspora initiatives with the Senegal Emerging Plan to maximise their impact and facilitate collaboration. Impact can be seen in reduced regional disparities and socio-economic development through investments in various sectors. The PAISD has also professionalised local project management and enhanced digital access in remote regions, illustrating the multifaceted potentials of comprehensive migration diplomacy.

Georgia's TLM agreements show the importance of diplomatic tools at different stages. The initial technical development and piloting of TLM schemes required diplomatic engagement to establish partnerships and test migration possibilities. Subsequent stages focused on formal agreements, necessitating strong diplomatic coordination. This process has allowed Georgia to replicate TLM

agreements with other countries, adapting to different national contexts and interests.

In Spain, the impact of migration diplomacy efforts has been seen in the successful short-term reintegration in countries of origin of immigrants through extensive networking among key social, civil society entities, and international partners.

The Netherlands highlights that the impact of migration diplomacy efforts is difficult to measure, given the many variables and the time needed to create evaluation processes. For example, expanding legal pathways for migration with certain third countries may enhance cooperation in other migration areas, but this cannot be directly observed or measured.

Overall, these examples underscore the potential for migration diplomacy instruments in achieving both immediate and longer-term benefits in managing global migration challenges, while also highlighting the importance of evaluations.

6.5. Key insights and future outlook

The exploration of migration diplomacy in this EMN-OECD inform reveals some of the ways countries use diplomatic tools and strategies to manage international migration, highlighting both successes and challenges. Key success factors include political stability, coordination, leveraging support, and robust legal frameworks, all of which have led to effective migration agreements and partnerships in some countries. These efforts have tangible outcomes, such as improved cooperation on voluntary returns, expanded visa-free travel for citizens, and enhanced migration management systems. However, challenges such as external crises, political instability in partner countries, and internal coordination complexities underscore the ongoing difficulties in implementing and sustaining these agreements.

Several areas could be explored in the future to further deepen our understanding of migration diplomacy, such as examining the long-term impacts of migration diplomacy agreements (particularly regarding sustainable development and regional stability) and the role of conditionality in shaping migration outcomes. Developing more sophisticated methods to evaluate the impact of migration diplomacy instruments could help to refine strategies and ensure that diplomatic efforts are aligned with national interests and international cooperation objectives.

¹⁰³ AT, DE, ES, FR, NL and GE, UA.

¹⁰⁴ PAISD, <https://www.paisd.sn/>, last accessed on 26 July 2024.



For more information

EMN website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

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Czech Republic www.emncz.eu/

Estonia www.emn.ee/

Finland emn.fi/en/

France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2

Germany www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html

Greece <https://migration.gov.gr/emn/>

Hungary www.emnhungary.hu/en

Ireland www.emn.ie/

Italy www.emnitalyncp.it/

Latvia www.emn.lv

Lithuania www.emn.lt/

Luxembourg emnluxembourg.uni.lu/

Malta emn.gov.mt/

The Netherlands www.emnnetherlands.nl/

Poland www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network

Portugal rem.sef.pt/en/

Romania www.mai.gov.ro/

Spain www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home

Slovak Republic www.emn.sk/en

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Serbia kirs.gov.rs/eng