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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Council Conclusions on Migration in EU Development Cooperation

At its meeting on 12 December 2014, the Council (Foreign Affairs/Development) adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

Migration in EU Development Cooperation

Council Conclusions

Introduction

1. The Council recalls its Conclusions on the 2013 High level Dialogue on Migration and Development and on broadening the development-migration nexus. Implementation of the specific commitments contained in these Conclusions should be further taken forward. The significance of migration in the context of development cooperation and the resulting need to address migration comprehensively also through a development angle still have to be fully taken into account.
2. While reaffirming the commitment to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights, the Council acknowledges the urgency that arises from conflicts and crises throughout the world and the resulting unprecedented challenges related to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) as well as to host communities and countries. It also highlights that most refugees and IDPs are currently living in protracted situations and recalls its commitment to the implementation of the international protection framework, in particular the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
3. The Council recalls the progress recently made, notably in relation to the 2013 UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, as well as to the 2014 Global Forum on Migration and Development. In this context, the Council welcomes the inclusion of migration in the Commission Communication “A decent life for all: from vision to collective action” as well as in the outcome document of the Open Working Group. Well managed migration and human mobility should be recognized in the post-2015 agenda as potential development enablers.

4. Maximising the positive impact of well managed migration on development is an important policy priority for the EU, as demonstrated by its dual policy framework in this area. The nexus between migration and development is one of the thematic priorities of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, which provides the overarching framework for the EU external migration policy, and is also integrated into the EU development policy framework, of which the Agenda for Change is the latest building block.
5. The Council recalls the significance of migration as one of the five priority areas under the EU's commitments on Policy Coherence for Development. The Council reaffirms that, in order to enhance the development potential of migration, policy coherence should be pursued within a wide range of internal and external policy areas, including policies in partner countries. In particular, there is a need for a more systematic incorporation of the development dimension in migration policies. The Council also recalls that enhanced coherence and coordination is required between the external dimension of migration policy and the development and external affairs agendas in order to better address the challenges and opportunities presented by migration.
6. The Council recalls the significant contribution that development cooperation can provide to responding to political and economic instability and addressing human rights' violations, fragility, conflict, environment vulnerability, unemployment and extreme poverty, which can be root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement.

Taking full account of the opportunities and challenges of migration in EU development cooperation

7. Migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon with numerous inter-linkages with other areas of intervention - such as employment, health, education, social protection, climate change. Against this background, the Council recommends a more systematic incorporation of migration in the dialogue with partner countries and regions as well as into the programming of development cooperation, both at EU and MS levels, and into national and regional development strategies, wherever relevant.
8. The Council calls upon the Commission, in close cooperation with the EEAS, to provide guidance on how to incorporate and strengthen the migration dimension in both policy dialogue and programming. It underlines the need for continued efforts to strengthen the evidence base by improving migration related data collection and analysis, including on the impact of migration on development, and to reinforce the capacity to use acquired knowledge in policy formulation and implementation.
9. Ensuring effective migration governance and respect of the human rights of migrants is a shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination. In this regard, the Council emphasizes the importance of capacity building initiatives to support our partner countries in dealing with the challenges and opportunities of migration, in particular in the field of diaspora engagement, promotion of legal migration, prevention of irregular migration, fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, including by combating criminal networks, readmission and reintegration of returnees. The Council calls for fostering awareness raising programmes on these issues.

10. Given the importance of South-South migration and low- and middle-income countries as destination countries, the Council underlines the need to pursue dialogue, cooperation and partnerships with and among these countries to build awareness of the impact of migration on economic development, in particular in the context of regional labour mobility, support the definition of integration policies and intercultural dialogue, strengthen mechanisms to address vulnerabilities of migrants, especially women and children. Special focus should be put on the fight against racism and xenophobia.
11. The Council recalls the different forms of contribution, not only economic, but also through transfer of knowledge, experience and technology, as well as in the framework of national reconciliation processes, that diaspora members can offer for the development of their countries of origin. We underline the need to reinforce the capacity of the relevant institutional stakeholders in partner countries, including local authorities, to engage with diaspora and to channel its contribution in line with the national development priorities.
12. Migrants drive development of countries of origin and destination in numerous ways. For example, migrants can play a significant role as entrepreneurs and job creators. In this context it is crucial to stress that good governance and a conducive business environment are key elements for promoting diaspora entrepreneurship and investment. Accompanying measures to foster skills circulation and circular migration may also contribute to economic development.
13. While the efforts undertaken at EU level to decrease the cost of remittance transfers should be maintained, more attention needs to be paid to enhancing transparency and competition in the remittances market and to promoting a widespread use of financial services. Policy dialogue with relevant authorities of partner countries can play an essential role in promoting the necessary reforms of the relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks and thereby maximising the development impact of remittances.

14. The Council underscores that reducing the economic and social costs associated with migration can have a significant impact on development. In this regard, while the attention on remittances needs to be maintained, other costs related to migration and mobility, such as skills shortages due to emigration and labor migrants recruitment costs, have to be equally addressed.

Ensuring a coordinated development cooperation approach to refugees and IDPs

15. Strengthening the link between humanitarian assistance and development, including through the implementation of the resilience agenda, is crucial in ensuring a coherent and comprehensive EU approach to forced displacement, which also encompasses appropriate funding responses. In that context, the Council acknowledges that refugees, IDPs and other persons in need of international protection, especially in situations of protracted displacement, present significant challenges as well as potential opportunities for host countries and host communities. These should be addressed through long-term development planning from the early stage of a crisis, thus complementing the humanitarian approach.
16. Refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as migrants in a vulnerable situation, are at heightened risk of being subjected to various forms of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence. The Council emphasises the importance of preventing and reducing such violence, ensuring that survivors of such violence are able to access support services and supporting partner countries in this endeavour.

17. The Council acknowledges the great efforts of host countries and host communities in regions neighbouring conflict areas when accommodating refugees and other migrants. The capacity of partner countries to address the multiple challenges related to refugees and IDPs and to make better use of potential opportunities, including by providing local integration opportunities and access to means of self-reliance, should be significantly reinforced through targeted interventions. The Council welcomes the work of the Commission, in close collaboration with the EEAS, and asks to define a specific strategy to step up commitments in this area, including through elaborating a coherent and coordinated development approach towards refugees and IDP issues and ensuring appropriate funding responses.

The Way Forward

18. The Council calls upon the Commission to ensure that the importance of migration as both an opportunity and a challenge for development is fully taken into account at EU level by integrating the migration dimension into EU development policy and cooperation wherever relevant and by ensuring appropriate funding responses. EU action on migration and development should comprehensively address the full range of positive and negative impacts of migration on sustainable and inclusive economic, social and environmental development in countries of origin and destination.
19. The Council therefore invites the Commission to provide further policy orientations and operational guidance with a focus on all the areas outlined above by adopting a Communication by the end of 2015.