



Global Compact on Migration

Action Plan 2022

Belgium

1. Methodology

On the 19th of December 2018, the General Assembly of the United-Nations formally adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in its resolution 73/195 by a vote of 152 States in favour (including Belgium), 5 against and 12 abstentions.

The GCM is referred to in the 2020 federal government's coalition agreement and in different policy notes the Belgian State Secretary for asylum and migration presented to the Federal Parliament. The government aspires to translate the GCM into concrete actions and has elaborated this action plan to guide those actions.

The current Action Plan builds on the regional review of the GCM which took place in 2020. At that time, Belgium submitted a state of play regarding the implementation of the 23 objectives under the GCM. The Belgian voluntary contribution reiterates the particular institutional context of Belgium and the distribution of competences between the different policy levels. Belgium is a federal state with competences divided between the federal level and regional level (Communities and Regions). This equally reflects in the organization of the Migration and Asylum policy, with different levels and actors independently wielding powers. There is no central government body exclusively competent for migration. The main departments on Migration and Asylum, as well as the most relevant law (Aliens Act of 15 December 1980) are a federal competence. Integration is primarily the responsibility of the Communities whilst working permits for foreigners are delivered by the Regions.

In this Action Plan, Belgium **focuses on six GCM objectives, translated into 5 goals**. The goals are of specific national relevance and whereby tangible results can and should be obtained. The deliverables identified will be prioritized in policy-making, without precluding progress being made related to other objectives. The GCM's objectives should contribute to a better management of migration worldwide and promote safe, orderly and regular migration. For the translation of general objectives into concrete goals, Belgium strives to not only mention national actions but also broaden the scope to a more **global approach**.

The Action Plan was prepared by government actors representing different ministries as well as the political level, and presented to civil society actors for consultation.

2. Policy and enabling environment

The topic of migration is complex and multi-dimensional. There are many synergies to be identified between the GCM and other international conventions, arrangements and agreements, human rights instruments, humanitarian principles and ongoing migration processes and partnerships. The interactions with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals** stand out. Especially SDG 10 that aims to "reduce inequality within and among countries", can be easily linked to national, regional, and international migration policies. The GCM itself emanates from objective 10.7 on orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including the implementation of planned



and well-managed migration policies. Good governance is an overarching and cross-cutting guiding principle in Belgian migration policy and regulation.

Further SDG's which are closely linked to the Belgian migration policy are those linked to labour migration (SDG 8.7 and 8.8), as also reflected in the 6th objective of the GCM (to "facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work"). Another pertinent addition is the fight against migrant smuggling, which is the 9th objective of the GCM, closely linked to objectives 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 of the SDG's. Ultimately, this Action Plan's focus on objective and data-driven policies – objective 1 of the GCM – relates to SDG 17.18 referring to the availability of high-quality, timely, and reliable data.

Different policy levels in Belgium have made **progress in migration policies**. On the Federal level, an important legislative reform is being carried out which will result in a Migration Code in order to simplify and clarify the complex set of immigration legislation currently in force. To booster interaction between the different policy levels, an Inter-ministerial Conference on Migration and Integration (IMC) was created. This body aims to harmonize policies of federal and regional entities and to ensure a coherent approach toward migration and integration at all levels. The first meeting of the conference took place in the latter part of 2021.

3. Action Plan

3.1. Introduction

Belgium will focus on the following GCM objectives:

1. To collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies (*objective 1*);
2. To facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work (*objective 6*);
3. To strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants, and to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration (*objective 9 and 10*);
4. To work together to facilitate safe and dignified return and enable sustainable reintegration (*objective 21*);
5. To strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration (*objective 23*).

For each of these goals, a brief state of play will be presented, followed by a list of points for improvement. Finally, concrete actions and implementation measures will be identified.

3.2. Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies

3.2.1. State of play

Asylum and Migration is undoubtedly a sensitive topic which occasionally even stirs up emotions. It is an absolute priority of the Belgian government to improve the **access to complete and correct data**. Access to information both by the government and citizens supports an evidence-based and



transparent migration policy and debunks myths and fake news. It also facilitates government control and accountability.

Belgium is till date committed to the collection of data and information on migration, with a **number of actors** being involved. It has an independent Federal Migration Centre (Myria) that is mandated to collect data and to inform the authorities about the nature and extent of migratory flows. Likewise, Belgian federated entities collect administrative and statistical data on migrants. In addition, the Interfederal Equal Opportunities Centre UNIA and the National Employment Office (RVA/ONEM) analyse the situation of migrants in terms of employment, work, and social conditions. Statbel (the national Institute of Statistics) published for the first time the effective population living in Belgium according to their origins and birth countries. The government also ordered a study to the National Bank that revealed the positive impact of immigration flows on GDP over the past five years. Several Belgian universities and specialized centres conduct high quality academic research on migration and contribute to a broader understanding on a scientific approach through migration education. In early 2022, the Belgian development agency Enabel and Belgium's Federal Migration Centre Myria signed an agreement to strengthen their collaboration. The Belgian Immigration Office (DVZ/OE) manages a public website that contains legal and practical information on regular migration. The Immigration Office also develops an *eMigration* tool and a statistical module offering new and more analytical opportunities. At the regional level, several statistical monitoring mechanisms exist, such as the Flemish Migration and Integration monitor, Statistiek-Vlaanderen, local integration follow-up systems, as well as communal and city monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, the Flemish Integration and Citizenship Agency has an extensive website with information on immigration regulations and procedures.

In a relatively new approach to migration, Belgian government actors accepted that the **whole chain of immigration and integration** must be deeply rooted in an overall policy and considered in context. The idea is to gather more knowledge over a longer period of time from the moment the migrant enters the territory to their independent accessibility and participation in society. The steps taken in between equally count. In this integrated "chain approach", different chain partners contribute to an evidence-based policy.

On the **international level**, via the EU Trust Fund and the new NDICI-Global Europe, Belgium supports several programs in countries of origin, in order to establish or enhance civil registration systems, which contribute to better data. Belgium participates actively in the European Migration Network (EMN), an EU network of migration and asylum experts who work together to provide objective, comparable policy-relevant information and knowledge on emerging issues relating to Asylum and Migration in Europe.

3.2.2. Points for improvement

An impressive set of data and information is made available today. Nevertheless, there are still **blind spots**, especially regarding the different forms of migration and their evolution, causes, and consequences of migration. One lacuna is the lack of gender specific data generally and on specific issues such as gender-specific violence occurring on migration routes. Civil society also regularly points out the lack of transparency and accuracy in the data concerning detention and return policy. Importantly, no official data are available on the number of irregular migrants in Belgium. NGOs estimate there are around 100,000 to 150,000 undocumented migrants present in Belgium,



nonetheless the government was never able to confirm this number, which certainly complicates targeted actions to reach this group. Moreover, data are not always easy to consult in one or two (national) languages solely and, as result, **access to information is sometimes limited**. More transparency and better structuring of information should help remedy this.

Due to the Belgian state structure, many actors are involved in collecting data at different levels of government. This results in **data being scattered** over various databases and the dissemination of resources. The centralization of migration data and a more comprehensive and evidence-based analysis to inform policies and to ensure accurate information to the public remains a challenge. The coordination and exchange of information between involved stakeholders remains equally challenging.

While having adequate and reliable data is vital and a crucial element for implementing evidence-based policies, it is certainly not sufficient. The added value of data collection and the dissemination also lies in the **in-depth analysis of those data**: to inform concrete actions in the strengthening of science-based policy, especially in a domain as sensitive as migration.

3.2.3. Action

Belgium aspires to further develop its facts-based migration policy. In addition, it aims to ensure:

- A harmonisation of data collection methods between actors for local, national, regional, and global migration with a specific focus on collecting gender-specific data;
- An improved cooperation between different federal and regional actors, combined with necessary financial investments;
- The development of a website dedicated to facts and data on migration in Belgium, including sections on “fact checks”, the most important figures, decisions, legislative amendments, general and explanatory information regarding asylum and migration;
- The further development of the chain approach by targeting and aligning chain partners and policies, with a view of developing an evidence-based policy;
- Provide government support for research and analyses on migration related topics and into the reasons of forced migration, by academia, civil society and independent actors;
- The collection of information and research on the link between migration and development, as well as the realisation of studies and research on the impact of or through migration on sustainable development.

3.3. [Objective 6: Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work](#)

3.3.1. State of play

Migrants, particularly those in irregular situations, are vulnerable to being **economically and socially exploited** during their migration journey or upon arriving at their destination. In Belgium, specialised police units identify possible risk factors for labour exploitation. These units regularly investigate new sectors and conduct monthly inspections of high-risk sectors.

For regular migrants, discrimination in the Belgian labour market also remains a reality. Fair and ethical recruitment contributes to the **fight against poverty**. The Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue and Unia have jointly developed the ‘Socio-economic Monitoring’ to analyse



individual's positions in the labour market according to their origin. The monitoring aims to help improve the situation of migrants and their access to decent work and to combat discrimination. Similar initiatives exist at other government levels.

Fedasil, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, prepares asylum seekers for their future, whether it is in Belgium or elsewhere. **Activation** plays an important role in this, and it is the current government's objective to assist asylum seekers in maximizing their competences, resulting in major gains for asylum seekers and society in both short and long term. It is after all in the interest of both the general society and asylum seekers themselves to start working or follow training as soon as possible after their arrival in Belgium. This ensures the integration or, if a right of residence is denied, allows the asylum seeker to return to the country of origin with a set of specific skills and experiences.

Several **civil society organizations**, among which Fairwork Belgium, defend the rights of migrant workers regardless of their status through a low-threshold helpdesk and individual counseling. At the employers side, VOKA (Employers network in Flanders) strives for better matching between recruiting companies and highly skilled recognized refugees providing training for companies, on "Working with refugees, how do you do that?". In the same vein, the project "Employer Tailored Chain Cooperation" (ETCC) tries to bring applicants for international protection and job-seekers into contact with each other. The project runs in 7 European countries, including Belgium. Other interesting examples include the "Duo for a job" project in which job-seeking young people between 18 and 30 with a migration background are matched with people over 50 who support them in their search for work. "Your Global Future" is a project that provides entrepreneurship training for applicants for international protection. There is a federal research project on improving the labour market position of people with a migration background in Belgium, called IMMILAB. The project aims to understand the mechanisms behind the persisting underperformance of immigrants and their descendants in the Belgian labour market. It studies labour market trajectories of immigrants from individual, household, and firm perspectives.

Regarding the facilitation of **labour migration**, important steps were taken in 2021 to establish a digital and transparent procedure. In June 2021, the electronic platform 'Working in Belgium' was launched that enables the processing of a single permit. Not only does this electronic platform offer a digital and more transparent procedure, it reduced the processing times at the Immigration Office. The Belgian Immigration Office also collaborates with the National Social Security Office and the regional authorities on the further development of the other functionalities of this digital platform. In order to facilitate the contribution of legally residing foreigners to the labour market, applications for a single permit during any other legal residence in Belgium are made more widely possible than is the case today. Finally, in 2021, the Federal Government approved legislation allowing foreign students who graduate in Belgium to have more time to find a job. Before this policy change, students had to return to their country of origin at the end of their studies, unless they had found a job in Belgium after pursuing their education. With this proposal, students get a tenure of one year to do so.

Different government actors – both at regional and federal levels – have developed policies that focus on **(mental) well-being in the workplace**. Focus is on a preventive policy combined with innovative technologies that lighten the work easier (e.g. using robots or AI) and increased training opportunities. This approach will also be targeted to specific vulnerable groups, including migrant workers. Its primary aim is to encourage unemployed to step up their job search, to allow greater access to jobs, and to ensure their well-being at the workplace. The Flemish Region negotiated "sector covenants" with 38 sectors, of which one of the main action points is the fight against discrimination and for



inclusion. In addition, new regulations for foreign (non-EU) self-employed persons entered into force on 1 January 2022, aiming to attract innovative entrepreneurs from third States.

Finally, several **pilot projects on circular and legal migration with African countries** (North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa) were launched, combining private sector and recruitment agencies in the participating countries to explore the opportunities of labour mobility and skills enhancement through circular migration. Examples include the PALIM project (Pilot Project Addressing Labour Shortages Through Innovative Labour Migration Models) which provides training courses in Morocco and circular labour market places in Belgium for a number of Moroccan youngsters, the THAMM project “Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa”, both executed by Enabel, or IOM’s MATCH project in collaboration with Senegal, Nigeria and Belgian stakeholders).

3.3.2. Points for improvement

Putting the fight against economic exploitation high on the political agenda requires **a more coherent and resolute approach**. Economic exploitation manifests itself in various ways. Employers’ organisations, the social inspectorate, the police, the judiciary, lawmakers, unions, and civil society each have a role to play. Both at the national and EU level, more can be done to ensure that workers get equal pay for equal work in the same place. The fight against social dumping and social justice needs to continue.

Since employment policies in Belgium are largely a competence of the regional entities but cases are known across the country, it is essential that the three Regions as well as private sector actors collaborate on this topic. An **interregional dialogue** should therefore be promoted. It would also be interesting to develop more partnerships to improve working conditions and to work closely with recruiters and employers to enable them to work in optimal conditions. Ensuring a rapid entry of migrants into the labour market, with personalised pathways that allow for mutual learning, remains another challenge.

3.3.3. Action

In order to combat work-related exploitation, the following actions will guide the Belgian policy

- The establishment of measures to allow for the swift entry of migrants on the labour market, if possible with tailor-made pathways, combining language learning and employment;
- The Strengthening of social inspection services and the possibility for victims to file a complaint with the inspectorate;
- Informing and empowering employers and employers’ organisations;
- The organization of more and more targeted workplace inspections;
- Embracing the principle of equal pay by guaranteeing that legal migrants are treated on an equal footing with all other workers in the same sector. They should be able to benefit from fair and equitable recruitment and decent working conditions;
- Combating the exploitation of irregular migrant workers by eliminating impunity and the establishment of clear standards and procedures to inform victims of their rights, offer protection schemes, and to enable safe access to victim support and justice mechanisms;
- Enabling workers to report their experiences of labour exploitation and offering them sufficient protection and the right to an effective remedy;



- Further investing in the activation of asylum seekers and providing opportunities for further personal and professional development, regardless of the outcome of the procedure.

3.4. [Objective 9 and 10](#): Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants and prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration

3.4.1. State of play

Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants endanger the lives and security of migrants, and in particular of the most vulnerable people. Human trafficking and human smuggling are a multibillion-dollar business with international ramifications, while taking advantage of the weak position of victims.

In Belgium, the fight against smuggling and trafficking is coordinated by an **Interdepartmental Coordination Unit** that operates in a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together Departments responsible for justice, home affairs, foreign affairs, prosecutors and magistrates, the federal police, social inspection services, and the Immigration Office. Belgium has adopted specific legislation and specialized magistrates are appointed for all judicial districts for trafficking in human beings and human smuggling. There is also a **Specialized Human Trafficking Unit** of the Federal Judicial Police. National Action Plans on the fight against human trafficking and the fight against human smuggling for 2021-2025 were adopted in June 2021 by the Inter-departmental Coordination Unit. Police, immigration officers, and guardians receive training to detect human smuggling and trafficking to raise awareness.

Through different campaigns and dedicated courses, staff working in detention and reception centres is made aware of and given the tools to detect **potential victims**. When the service providers identify a possible victim, they contact the department within the Immigration Office dealing with vulnerable persons. A manual for staff working in migration centres is being prepared, to provide them with even better guidelines and procedures on how to deal with victims.

Staff in asylum reception centres is trained in picking up on signals, informing people, and referring victims to specialised centres. Belgium provides, under certain conditions, **legal and administrative support** as well as **psychological, medical** and social follow-up to victims of human trafficking. Three **centers** (vzw Payoke, Pag-asa, Surya) provide reception and psychological and medical assistance. These centers are authorized to submit applications for residence documents in the framework of the special status 'victim of human trafficking' for those cooperating with legal investigations. There is a thorough cooperation between police services and personnel of the specialized reception centres.

To **dissuade people using the services of smugglers**, the Belgian Immigration Office organizes prevention and information campaigns on legal pathways in countries of origin, via social media, and in Belgium. Belgium further contributes to alternative and legal pathways schemes for migration including labour mobility regimes, family reunification, student visas, and resettlement programmes.

In the context of ERRIN, Fedasil is actively supporting the CADRE project developing a curriculum for **return counsellors**. Fedasil contributed to the Prospect project, in which it developed a specialised support package for the reintegration of victims of trafficking. This pilot project actively sought participation of frontline workers in EU and Nigeria, including Nigerian government instances.



Belgium supports **transnational judicial and police investigations**. The Federal Judicial Police is involved in the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), more specifically in the European action plans on Facilitated Illegal Immigration and Trafficking in Human Beings. In this context, international information is shared between the Belgian investigation units and European partners, be it other Member States or European agencies (EUROPOL, FRONTEX and EUROJUST). The Federal Police supports and coordinates Operational Task Force (OTF), Joint Investigation Team (JIT) and Joint Action Days (JAD) projects. In the framework of EMPACT, Belgium assumes a leadership role in developing **collaboration with partner countries**.

Belgium has ratified the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** and its three protocols, including the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. It is an active member of the different working groups of the UNTOC and was in 2019 a contributor to the trust fund for victims of trafficking of human beings.

3.4.2. Points for improvement

The detection and prosecution of perpetrators and networks must be further pursued. An important area for improvement is to **step up international cooperation** on the fight against smuggling and trafficking. To stop irregular migration to the UK via Belgium, Belgium has been engaged in operations with neighbouring countries, a cooperation model that can be further extended to improve international cooperation. A transnational response to smuggling equally requires intensifying cooperation with countries of origin and transit, for instance by improving police cooperation and by exchanging information on criminal networks and perpetrators, and addressing the root causes of smuggling and trafficking.

Another goal is to ensure that the fight against human trafficking does not target the victims or organizations and citizens who work to help migrants. Those victims are a salient source of information and a one-sided focus on removing them from Belgian territory can be counterproductive for the **criminal law approach** to human trafficking.

National actions also can be further expanded. The Federal Government will examine how the status and functioning of specialized centres can be optimised and strengthened.

3.4.3. Action

Transnational and national actions should focus on those enabling migrant trafficking and smuggling and the business model that lies behind transnational networks. The following actions are envisaged:

- To deliver adequate support to transnational judicial and police investigations into smuggling networks. Sufficient time and (human) resources should go to the criminal prosecution of human traffickers;
- To establish genuine partnerships with countries of origin to combat human trafficking and smuggling;
- To support international training modules for frontline actors and in countries of origin on human smuggling and trafficking, with additional focus on specialized care for victims. In the training Fedasil provides to return counsellors and frontline actors, it will develop a module for counselling victims of trafficking;



- To develop a policy aimed at strengthening the protection of those that could become future victims of human smuggling and trafficking, paying attention to capacity building and strengthening different forms of protection (protection in the region and legal pathways for migration);
- To further implement dedicated action plans against human trafficking and human smuggling;
- In the context of EMPACT, to further assume a leading role in reaching out to third state partners to define, together with EUROPOL and FRONTEX, how to improve or strengthen the collaboration between the EU Member States and third countries.

3.5. [Objective 21](#): Work together to facilitate safe and dignified return and enable sustainable reintegration

3.5.1. State of play

Not all migrants who come to Belgium will receive a permanent right of residence. Those who do not obtain a residence status will be asked to return. The Belgian government invests in programmes to inform, guide, coach, and assist the returnees to return and to reintegrate into their country of origin. An example of such programmes is the **The Fedasil-Reach out-project** that aims at increasing knowledge about voluntary or assisted return among “unreachable” groups - stranded migrants and migrants in transit. Through the project cities are encouraged to develop a comprehensive approach to counselling people who find themselves “outside” any procedures or outside official reception facilities. As such, the project contributed to the development of a sustainable community of practice on issues of counselling and return for undocumented migrants.

Belgium has clear legislation on voluntary/assisted and forced return. A government assisted return is favoured whenever possible. However, a forced return is possible when the person concerned refuses to comply with an order to leave the Belgian territory. In June 2021, Belgium created a department within the Immigration Office to implement and promote alternatives to detention in such cases.

The Belgian Immigration Office is responsible for the return of migrants in an irregular situation. There are bilateral, multilateral, and EU agreements with countries of origin for the identification and return of their nationals. In addition, Belgium invests in the active diplomatic outreach to countries of origin and in the development of partnerships and programmes that support the return of nationals. Sustainable migration dialogues are being promoted as a tool to ensure the safe, legal, and orderly movement of people between countries.

Both the Immigration Office and Fedasil are involved in assisting those wanting to voluntarily return to the country of origin. Government actors cooperate with public and private international partners such as IOM and Caritas International to provide support to people who wish to return to their country of origin. There is a robust path, network, and a (financial and administrative) support system for voluntary return and reintegration. The voluntary return and reintegration program is easily accessible for a broad target group. Children are one such target group for which a specific approach was developed. Key principles in the Belgian approach are the informed choice, the reversibility of a decision, feasibility and accessibility, and support to vulnerable persons.

In third countries, Enabel invests in designing comprehensive reintegration approaches in accordance with the return programs implemented by Fedasil, IOM and other stakeholders. Enabel develops a **long-term reintegration approach** based on reskilling and creating economic opportunities. Examples



can be drawn from the PARERBA project in Senegal or other projects in Guinea, Niger and Gambia that received EUTF funding.

3.5.2. Points for improvement

Notwithstanding the significant efforts already undertaken, through diplomatic contacts, official visits, and technical and expert negotiations, the results of return policies remain suboptimal. Distinctly, differences in priorities and interests remain at the heart of the implementation of return policies. Partnerships and the continued development of real collaborations with countries of origin, through the finding of shared interests remain key for return and for reintegration.

Today, the reluctance of some countries of origin that **do not comply with their legal obligation to cooperate on the identification of nationals and the issuance of travel documents** for the safe and dignified return and readmission of persons who do not have the legal right to stay on another state's territory, results all too often in the prolongation of detention in the receiving state or a protracted situation of irregularity. Significantly more could be achieved when governments would work together towards the common goal of having a safe, legal, and orderly movement of people between countries. On an individual level, more could be done in terms of the monitoring and follow-up of those that have returned in order to ensure a sustainable reintegration.

3.5.3. Action

Facilitating the safe and dignified return and readmission of migrants to their country of origin requires more international cooperation, both between government actors and with and between private partners. The following actions will contribute to this goal:

- The fostering of institutional contacts that result in conclusive and enforceable agreements on the technicalities of the identification procedure and return modalities;
- The cooperation with countries of origin and transit to establish reliable and efficient means of identification such as through the addition of biometric identifiers in population registries, and by digitalizing civil registry systems, with full respect for the right to privacy and protection of personal data;
- The establishment of a Quality Monitoring & Evaluation Framework to follow up on beneficiaries of reintegration support in terms of health care, justice, education, and housing, including the digitalisation of the caseload (e.g. via the RIAT tool) working with the local embassy and IOM;
- The extension of the pilot project approach to help migrants to acquire competences that could be useful in the country of origin and that facilitate reintegration and search for international cooperation on this topic;
- To nationally draft a law on a safe and dignified return policy, giving priority to an assisted return with intensive coaching as a first resort and detention as a last resort;
- To assure the necessary funds and extend the cooperation with EU member states to enhance reintegration assistance, both financially and qualitatively;
- To cooperate internationally to support and assist in capacity building for service providers of reintegration assistance.
- Establish a framework in which to ensure that resources for migration and reintegration are better streamlined with resources for development cooperation (referral systems);



3.6. [Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration](#)

3.6.1. State of play

Belgium is committed to increase international and regional cooperation to accelerate the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The implementation of the GCM is an integral part of this goal, as it will improve the economic and social situation of those aspiring to migrate or having migrated.

The EU and its member states have already invested in their relations with third states, and continue to further build on this experience, as it is showcased in the proposed **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** presented by the European Commission on 23 September 2020. Rightfully so, cooperation with third countries is marked an essential element of any coherent and efficient migration policy. In the new Pact, the external dimension thus receives considerable attention, among others in a section dedicated to “working with our international partners”. Numerous references to international cooperation can also be found throughout its other parts.

Within the EU, Belgium consistently advocates for a **sustainable reform of the common asylum and migration system**. Recently, Belgium strengthened its cooperation with Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the context of the Dublin Regulation procedure. It has for a clear policy objective the better administrative management and faster processing of applications for readmission, which will also lead to a better information management.

Belgium is an active participant in European and international platforms that promote the principles of the Global Compact on Migration.

- Belgium participates in various global and regional migration dialogues (Rabat, Budapest, Prague and Khartoum Process) and platforms (Global Forum on Migration and Development, International Dialogue on Migration of IOM, Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC)...).
- Belgium is represented at numerous European consultative forums and formal political consultation processes (External Migration Working Party , SCIFA, Mocadem, Coordination Group on Migration...)
- Belgium contributes to the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan, through the EUTF, since its launch in 2015.
- Belgium also contributes to two Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) that were initiated in 2021 concerning the Central Mediterranean and the Atlantic and Western Mediterranean Route. The main objective of both TEIs is to ensure that migration towards the EU from those routes is safe, regular, and orderly.
- Belgium focuses its development actions on the least developed countries of Africa and tries to tackle the underlying root causes of forced migration. Belgium has numerous operational projects with European and other countries to exchange experience and knowledge and to provide support in migration management, to promote development opportunities of migration in countries of origin, transit, and destination.
- Belgium has concluded many agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with countries of origin on migration management.



- A strategy on “Migration and Development” has been approved in November 2021 by the minister of Development Cooperation and is being implemented through action plans by participating stakeholders.

The migration and development programs financed by Belgium are implemented by a variety of actors, including Enabel, Belgian Investment Company for Developing countries (BIO), international organizations such as IOM, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), NGOs, and civil society associations.

3.6.2. Points for improvement

While there is no lack of international fora to debate and cooperate on migration, there is a **lack of focus and concrete results**. To effectively implement the GCM on the global level, more targeted action is required through partnerships. Likewise, **sustaining the impact of development cooperation** and embedding it in a long-term perspective remains challenging. Another challenge lies in the interagency alignment of budget flows for migration related interventions and development cooperation.

Despite the experience gathered, both by Belgium and the EU, there is an outstanding need to develop genuine partnerships between countries of origin, transit, and destination. In the current EU migration context, the development of partnerships with third countries is prominent on the agenda. Although this is a positive development, these partnerships could be improved by **focusing more clearly on the priorities of the countries of transit and origin**. This requires a more active engagement with those countries and an analysis of their needs. Ideally, the existing relations are transformed into partnerships in a much broader context, aiming for long term results and providing larger investments.

3.6.3. Action

Actions in this domain should focus on tangible results and the development of concrete projects and agreements:

- To conclude mutually beneficial, tailored, and transparent partnerships that develop targeted solutions to migration policy issues of common interest and address opportunities and challenges of migration in accordance with the GCM;
- To deliver technical assistance to other states, in line with national priorities, policies, action plans, and migration management strategies;
- To establish and/or improve –using the expertise of Belgium’s development agency Enabel and in line with the EU’s Talent Partnership principles – mobility schemes for legal migration in targeted countries;
- To further develop mechanisms for assessment, certification, validation, and recognition of migrants’ skills and qualifications;
- To develop cooperation between multiple relevant stakeholders in the field of legal migration and mobility, in particular in job placement and the matching of employers and labour migrants;
- To develop an operational partnership between actors in development and migration management on the alignment of priorities, action plans and strategies;
- To develop a more coherent national and European policy around the protection of people in a broad sense, while strengthening the socio-economic fabric ties of migrants



and their communities. This could be done by substantially raising the contributions of projects and organizations that direct relief and works programmes.

- To further implement the strategy on migration and development as a political and operational framework for the Belgian development cooperation working on migration and human mobility.

4. Implementation and follow-up

This Action Plan will be executed by the different Belgian policy levels and actors, under the comprehensive coordination of the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. In order to allow for sufficient interactions and information sharing, the newly created Inter-ministerial Conference on Migration and Integration will discuss progress made. Belgium will brief the International Migration Review Forum and share updates on its website. Moreover, Belgium strives to submit review papers and to participate in regional review conferences.