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## Background Note Workshop 1

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## **Workshop 1: EU's Migration Policy in 2017 and beyond**

Europe continues to face mounting humanitarian, socio-economic and security challenges. This is in part the result of the inflow of third country nationals, but is also the result of the inter-linked criminal portfolio of human smuggling networks operating within and across borders.

When looking at the developments close to our region incorporating the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas, the figures depict a continuous tragic story. In an attempt to reach a stable, peaceful and prosperous Europe, men, women and children embark on rugged and untrustworthy embarkations. In most cases these are overcrowded and transport migrants in dangerous and inhumane conditions. Furthermore, migrants entrust their lives to smugglers who throughout the journey extort, abuse, torture and in some cases trade migrants as commodities.

The European Union continues to place migration at the centre of its agenda. In the 2016 State of the Union address, President Juncker included migration as one of the 10 priorities and emphasised the centrality of stepping up European action to first and foremost provide humanitarian assistance and save lives. Furthermore, policy needs to enable migrants and refugees to stay closer to home and promote the development of third countries' capability to address the root causes leading to irregular migration. More specifically the State of the Union proposes: the swift operationalisation of the European Border and Coast Guard, implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, stepping up relocation of refugees from Greece and Italy, continued resettlement from Turkey to the EU (including protection of unaccompanied minors), swift adoption by the co-legislators of the proposals to reform the common European asylum system (including the reform of the Dublin mechanism), implementation of the new migration partnership framework with third countries, follow-up to the

European agenda for migration and the implementation of a new resettlement framework.

The new Migration Partnership Framework is of particular importance as it shifts policy from a management by crisis approach towards a more systematic, legal and regulated system. The cardinal aspect of a new migration policy is based on sustained dialogue and prolonged cooperation with third-countries, particularly, with priority countries of origin and transit. The main objective is to develop win-win relationships with the European Union's partners and together address shared challenges of migration and development. In the form of 'compacts', these political frameworks aim to develop a durable and favourable partnership with third countries. Some of the short term measures include; the strengthening of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, with a total amount allocated of EUR2.38 billion and a pledge contribution of EUR2.4 billion for Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. From a long term perspective the European Innovations Partnership will mobilise up to EUR44 billion of investments.

The 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration held together with African and European partners, agreed on a sixteen priority action plan focusing on: addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, enhancing cooperation on legal migration and mobility, reinforcing the protection of migrants and asylum seekers, preventing and fighting irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and working more closely to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration. More recently, on 3 February 2017, members of the European Council agreed on a Malta Declaration addressing the Central Mediterranean Route. The Declaration proposed to strengthen cooperation with Libya and increase collective efforts to provide the necessary training and exchange of expertise in the fields of border control and coastguard training. Furthermore, it reaffirmed the importance to disrupt the business model of smugglers through information campaigns with

migrants and provide support for the economic and social development of local communities. The Declaration also proposed the development of adequate reception centres in host and transit countries and continued support for bilateral cooperation between European Member States and Libya.

Cooperation and dialogue with third countries is deemed as pivotal to ensure durable and long-term policy measures to address migration. Nonetheless, cooperation with third countries is sometimes overshadowed with human rights abuses and inhumane treatment of migrants.

The EU-Turkey agreement, although functioning in practice, and therefore moving from a 10,000 daily crossing in October 2015 to 100 crossings in 2017, continues to raise questions with regards to the level of human rights and freedoms enjoyed by migrants in Turkey.

More recently, the EU's cooperation with Libya, especially in terms of providing Libyan coastguard and border control officers with the necessary equipment to deter, detect and apprehend smuggled migrants and the setting up of reception centres in the country received considerable criticism and raised doubts on the level of human rights standards governing the operability of such cooperation. In a press release by the *International Organisation for Migration* published on 11 April 2017, the Director of Operation and Emergency, Mr Mohammed Abdiker described Libya as a 'vale of tears', with a 'migrant slave market' operating and trading people in Tripoli to be bought, sold and discarded when they have no more value for the smugglers. These and other reports highlight that instability in Libya seriously jeopardizes the implementation of a well-structured migration policy and raises questions on the EU's commitment to safeguard migrants' human rights.