



Brussels, 28.5.2024
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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 28.5.2024

on an exceptional assistance measure regarding Mauritania

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012¹, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to 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 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009², and in particular Article 23(6) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Since April 2023, following the further deterioration of the security context and growing violence against civilians in Mali, Mauritania has welcomed an increased number of refugees and returnees in the Hodh El Chargui border region. Before the arrival of refugees and returnees the area was already characterized by high vulnerability to shocks, with very high levels of food and nutritional insecurity, significant isolation, and a deficit in basic services and infrastructure. This has resulted in increased tensions between host populations and refugees. Given the regional context of instability in the Central Sahel and the risk of spillover in the neighbouring countries, it is crucial to mitigate internal security risks posed by these tensions and to strengthen social cohesion between host communities, returnees, and refugees, in line with the government's regional contingency plan. Moreover, the Government of Mauritania made bold pledges during the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, which the EU committed to support as stated in its Joint Declaration on the EU-Mauritania Migration Partnership signed on March 8, 2024, and which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as the lead of the global refugee response, oversees. The present situation makes it necessary to adopt an exceptional assistance measure regarding Mauritania.
- (2) In order to ensure the implementation of the measure, it is necessary to adopt a financing decision. Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 ('the Financial Regulation') establishes detailed rules on financing decisions.

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

² OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1.

- (3) The planned assistance is to comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures³ adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU.
- (4) The objective of the measure set out in this Decision is to strengthen social cohesion, prevent conflict and maintain peace between host, refugee and returnee communities in the Hodh El Chargui region in order to remedy exceptional and unforeseen situations as referred to in Article 4(4)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (5) In accordance with point (a), (g), (o) and (p) of Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, the activities set out in this Decision will strengthen social cohesion between host, refugee and returnee communities through the consolidation of peaceful cohabitation, conflict prevention and management mechanisms linked to the governance of natural resources and improve sustainable access to basic socio-economic services and sustainable and resilient livelihoods support for those communities.
- (6) The effectiveness of the Union response to the situation referred to in recital (1) depends on the rapid and flexible implementation of an exceptional assistance measure of limited duration in accordance with Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (7) The measure provided for in this Decision is complementary to assistance provided under other Union short-term or long-term external assistance instruments. No fully adequate response can be provided under those instruments to the specific needs being addressed. Therefore, an effective response is required to enable early action in accordance with Article 4(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (8) The measure provided for in this Decision is consistent with the Union strategic policy framework for Mauritania. Synergies and complementarities are expected with other Union interventions, as detailed in point 7 of the Annex.
- (9) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (10) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (11) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the measure, it is appropriate to define changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (12) The European Parliament and the Council have been informed of the exceptional assistance measure to be adopted by this Decision, in accordance with Article 25(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1
The measure

The financing decision for the implementation of the exceptional assistance measure regarding Mauritania, for 2024, as set out in the Annex, is adopted.

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy, the OJ prevails.

The measure shall include the following action: Responding to the increasing arrival of refugees and returnees from Mali in the Hodh El Chargui region – support to conflict prevention and social cohesion.

Article 2
Union contribution

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the measure for 2024 is set at EUR 2 000 000 and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in the budget line 14 02 03 10 of the general budget of the Union.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3
Grants

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in point 6 of the Annex. Grants may be awarded to the body/bodies selected in accordance with point 6 of the Annex.

Article 4
Duration of the measure

The maximum duration of the exceptional assistance measure adopted under this Decision shall be 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

If the implementation of this measure or any of its components is suspended owing to ‘force majeure’ or circumstances beyond the control of the contracting authority and its implementing partner(s), the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this measure.

Article 5
Flexibility clause

Increases or decreases of up to EUR 10 million and not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in the first paragraph of Article 2 or cumulated changes⁴ to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation provided that these changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

⁴ These changes can come from assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing decision.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 28.5.2024

For the Commission
Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
High Representative / Vice-President