

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003012/24
to the Commission
Auke Zijlstra (PfE), Marieke Ehlers (PfE)
(18 December 2024)**

Subject: Special report 17/2024 of the European Court of Auditors: The EU trust fund for Africa (EUTF)

The report states that a disproportionate share of funding was allocated to ‘protection of vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and community stabilisation’ and barely any to returning them to their countries of origin. The Court of Auditors states that, even after seven years, the Commission is still unable to identify and report on the most efficient and effective approaches to reducing migration.

1. What does the Commission intend to do to ensure that EUTF staff actually cooperate when it comes to return and reintegration and how will the Commission deal with staff who refuse to subscribe to the goal of return and reintegration?
2. Is the Commission considering securing the return of migrants through other means than trust funds, such as putting physical external border infrastructure in place or setting up a return fund?
3. When will the Commission take the return of migrants residing in EU Member States seriously and ensure that European funds invested in the countries of origin actually serve the intended purpose, namely the return of the nationals of those countries who no longer have a future in the EU?

Submitted: 18.12.2024

**Answer given by Mr Sikela on behalf of the European Commission
(19 March 2025)**

The Commission is not aware of any reports of non-cooperative behaviour by staff of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa).

EUTF staff are recruited based on job descriptions linked to Trust Funds whose strategy is public. EUTF staff are bound by the obligations and responsibilities enshrined in the Staff Regulations ⁽¹⁾. The right to freedom of expression must be exercised with due respect to the principles of loyalty and impartiality ⁽²⁾.

As reflected in the Council conclusions of 17 October 2024 ⁽³⁾ and in the Political Guidelines of the President of the Commission for 2024-2029 ⁽⁴⁾, migration management is at the centre of the EU’s political agenda.

The Council called for action at all levels to facilitate, increase and speed up returns from the EU, using all relevant policies, instruments and tools. To this end, the Commission is urgently working on a new legislative framework on return.

The EU is developing comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit in which migration, including fostering cooperation on return and readmission, is embedded.

The EU ensures that its interests are fully reflected in the partnerships. The Commission also regularly assesses third countries’ cooperation on readmission and may propose to the Council to adopt restrictive visa measures under Article 25a of the Visa Code ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:01962R0031-20240701>

⁽²⁾ Article 17 of the Staff Regulations.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/2pebcc2/20241017-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009R0810>