



PROGRESSIVE MIGRATION GROUP

POSITION PAPER ON THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (2028-2034)

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The Progressive Migration Group (PMG) – a network of African and European experts established by FEPS and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – examines the complex relations between the European Union and African countries of origin and transit. Its goal is to propose innovative policy recommendations for progressive forces at both the EU and national levels. According to the PMG, current EU policy and Euro-African relations are overly focused on reducing irregular migration. While curbing irregular flows and protecting migrants from associated risks are undoubtedly legitimate, urgent goals, a singular focus on deterrence is neither effective nor sustainable. Since 2023, the PMG has consistently promoted rights-based approaches to human mobility, with a specific focus on labor migration. The group advocates for expanding legal pathways through agreements that are not contingent on border control and return cooperation, but are instead grounded in development and anchored in human rights. In this position paper, the PMG highlights how the proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028-2034) impacts migration cooperation and offers recommendations to ensure the next EU budget reflects the priorities of African partners.

NEGOTIATING THE EU'S NEXT BUDGET (MFF 2028-2034) AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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CONTEXT

The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union (EU) will define the EU's external action, development cooperation and migration spending for seven years (from 2028 to 2034). The European Commission has proposed a new Global Europe Instrument with a budget of €200.3 billion for 2028-34, representing a substantial headline increase from the €110 billion allocated to external action in the current MFF.¹ The proposed new Global Europe architecture signals a shift from the current architecture's primary focus on development cooperation, as external financing is increasingly framed as a tool of geopolitics, security and economic strategy. This shift also includes a stronger emphasis on migration management, strategic autonomy and competitiveness, alongside continued – but rebalanced – engagement with partner regions.

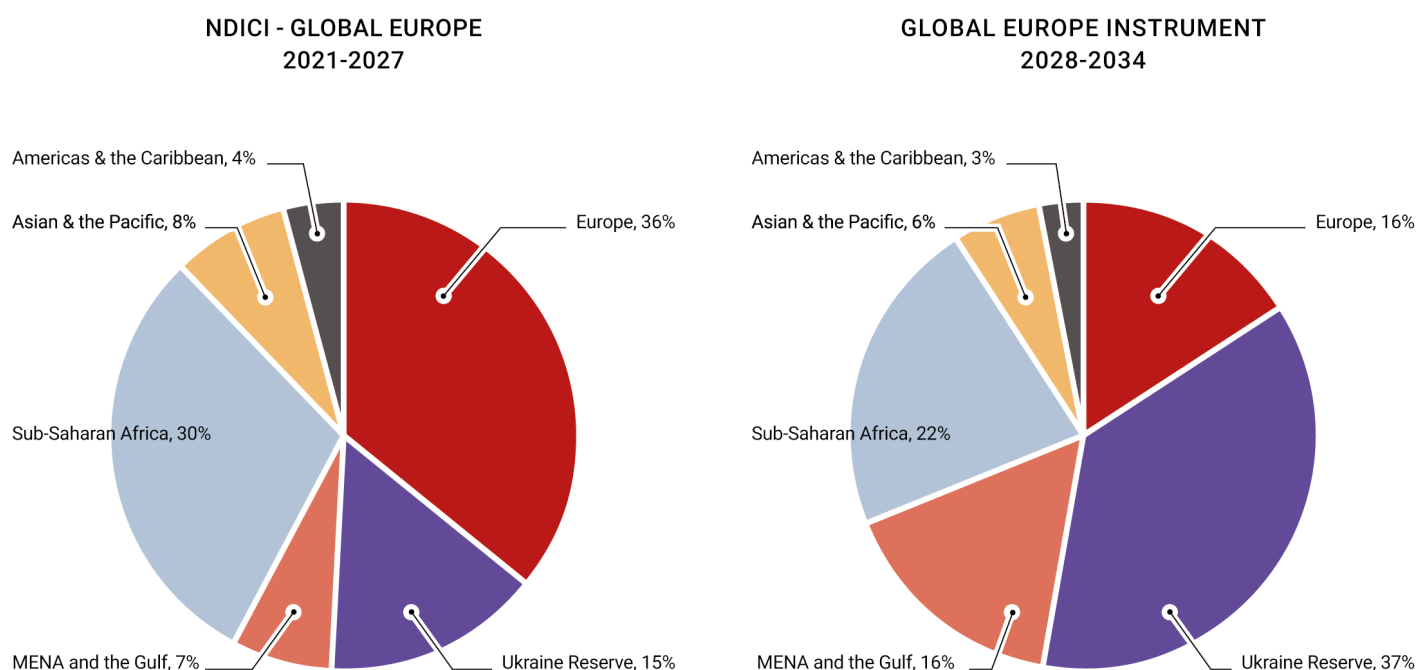
¹ It should be noted that this increase partly reflects the consolidation of previously separate instruments, including humanitarian aid and support for Ukraine, into the new Global Europe architecture. This makes direct comparisons with the previous MFF figures less straightforward. These modalities are due to be presented at the end of May and had not been published at the time of writing.

WHAT IS CHANGING IN THE BUDGET?

Recent analysis highlights several structural shifts with direct relevance for Africa:

- Geopolitical prioritisation. EU external spending is to be more explicitly aligned with domestic and strategic interests (security, migration, supply chains), signalling a departure from a predominantly development-focused model.
- Ukraine and the neighbourhood first. A large share of external resources is likely to be absorbed by Ukraine and the EU's immediate eastern neighbourhood (Western Balkans, Moldova and Georgia), reducing Africa's relative share of funding, even if nominal allocations remain stable or increase. See Figure 1 below.
- More flexibility, less predictability. The consolidation of instruments under Global Europe and the expansion of flexible reserves are expected to increase EU responsiveness – but the risks are less transparency and less predictable funding for partner countries.
- Shift towards financial instruments. Greater reliance on loans, guarantees and blended finance may crowd out grants, particularly affecting countries with limited fiscal space.
- Instrumental engagement with Africa. Africa remains strategically important, but will increasingly be seen through lenses such as migration control, access to critical raw materials and trade in them, and Africa's role as a space of geopolitical competition among major powers.

FIGURE 1: MFF 2021-2027 and MFF 2028-2034 geographical shares in EU external action instruments



Sources: European Commission; and authors' calculations based on data from the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, at current prices. Note: For the MFF 2021-2027, "Europe" includes the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) III and assistance to the "Eastern neighbours", while "MENA and the Gulf" includes assistance to the "Southern neighbours".

Source: Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 2026

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES

These shifts carry significant risks and opportunities:

- **Relative marginalisation.** Africa risks receiving less attention and influence in EU external priorities due to the priority of stability in Ukraine and in the EU neighbourhood. Figure 1 above shows that Sub-Saharan Africa would see a fall in its share of EU funding from 30% under the current Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to 22% under the proposed Global Europe Instrument.
- **Politicisation of aid.** Increased flexibility may lead to funding being more tightly linked to EU priorities, particularly on migration (returns, readmission, border management). There are proposals to include conditionalities linked to migration in the budget (the precise wording is still to be agreed).
- **Reduced ownership.** Less earmarking and more centralised decision-making could weaken partner-country influence over programming.
- **Financing constraints.** The move towards blended finance and guarantees may limit access for lower-income or high-risk countries that depend on grants.
- **Private financing risks.** While the EU's Global Gateway strategy aims to leverage private investment to bridge infrastructure and development gaps, this model risks concentrating resources in more stable and economically attractive contexts. Countries in fragile or conflict-affected situations, or those perceived as high-risk, are likely to be bypassed by private capital, thus deepening existing inequalities in access to financing.

- **Strategic opportunity.** The EU's interest in resources, green transition and supply chains creates openings for African countries to negotiate mutually beneficial investment partnerships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MIGRATION COOPERATION

The most significant budgetary increase in the MFF proposal concerns migration, border management, and internal security. The Commission proposes a total of approximately €81 billion for home affairs, thus tripling funding in comparison with the 2021–2027 period. Its proposal consolidates several funds into a unified funding architecture, alongside EU agency budgets (see Table 1 below). Humanitarian aid will in principle be 'ring-fenced' within this architecture. However, the precise modalities are still to be finalised, as they form part of the Commission's integrated approach to fragile and conflict-affected situations.²

The budget is designed to support full implementation of the Migration and Asylum Pact, which enters into application by mid-2026. In January 2026, the Commission adopted a five-year European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy, further emphasising the pact's priorities.

On the external dimension, the priorities of the external budget include the introduction of migration conditionalities, the increased discretion of the Commission in allocating funding, and trying to resolve the tension of development priorities vs. strategic interests in promoting returns.

TABLE 1: Components of the €81 billion envelope

COMPONENT	PROPOSED ALLOCATION (2028–2034)
Asylum, Migration & Integration (AMIF successor)	€12 billion (up from €10.9bn; +9.6%)
AMIF Thematic Facility	€3.6 billion (within the above)
Border Management & Visa (BMVI successor)	€15.4 billion
BMVI Thematic Facility	€2.5 billion (within the above)
Internal Security (ISF successor)	€6.8 billion
Frontex (EBCGA)	€11.9 billion (budget doubled)
EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA)	€2.28 billion (+80%)
Europol	€3 billion
EU-LISA (IT systems)	€1.9 billion
Other agencies	€6.7 billion
Total Home Affairs	≈€81 billion

Source: Compiled by Yüksel & Bisong (Forthcoming 2026) based on DG HOME, European Migration Network (EMN) Belgium, and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

² These modalities are due to be presented at the end of May and had not been published at the time of writing.

ENTRY POINTS FOR AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ACTION

The MFF negotiations are ongoing, with formal inter-institutional negotiations expected throughout 2026-27 and a final agreement anticipated before 2028. Final legislative adoption is expected by late 2027, allowing the

new framework to enter into force on 1 January 2028. African governments have a narrow but critical window of about 12 to 18 months to influence the current priorities before the framework is set. In addition to this, longer term engagement will need to continue to ensure that the implementation of the MFF in Africa reflects the priorities of African partners.

FIGURE 2: Potential timelines for the MFF negotiations and programming of post-2028 external financial instruments



Source: Sheriff 2026

ENTRY POINT 1: REFRAME THE PARTNERSHIP NARRATIVE

Engage the EU on shared interests such as the green transition, critical raw materials and digital connectivity, but insist these translate into value addition in Africa, not extractive arrangements.

Who to engage: African Union Commission; Regional economic communities (e.g. the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community – SADC, the East African Community – EAC); African ministries of finance, foreign affairs and planning

When to engage: During the active negotiation window, from now until the end of 2026, to shape the architecture and priorities of the budget.

Action: Agree on a concise set of priorities relating to predictable finance, climate, jobs, mobility, and industrialisation; and speak with one coordinated voice in engagements with the EU. Use the African Union – AU-EU framework to reset the partnership narrative.

ENTRY POINT 2: ENGAGE EU MEMBER STATES AND INSTITUTIONS STRATEGICALLY

MFF decisions are driven by European member states. African governments should:

- target key EU capitals (finance, foreign, interior ministries)
- engage the European Parliament to raise concerns about predictability, transparency and conditionality.

When to engage: During the active negotiation window, from now until the end of 2026, to shape the architecture and priorities of the budget.

Action: Use African embassies to influence positions early, emphasising that development investment in Africa aligns with EU long-term stability, migration management and economic interests.



ENTRY POINT 3: SHAPE MIGRATION COOPERATION PROACTIVELY

Shift the agenda from containment to mobility and development by prioritising:

- legal migration pathways and skills partnerships
- youth employment and education
- diaspora engagement and remittances
- rights-based return and reintegration frameworks

Who to engage: EU interior ministries and migration authorities; the International Organization for Migration; other development agencies working on migration.

When to engage: During the negotiations and after their conclusion, as implementation of the new instruments will unfold over the full 2028-34 period.

Action: Promote legal migration pathways, skills partnerships and youth employment. Advocate rights-based migration cooperation. Resist narrow conditionality tied only to border control and returns. Highlight risks of excessive flexibility and migration conditionality.

CONCLUSION

The 2028-34 MFF is an EU internal process with implications for its partners. This negotiation round marks a geopolitical turn in EU external action, with implications for Africa's access to finance, policy space and partnership model. For Africa, this means more politically driven funding and a shift in the terms of engagement. A coordinated and strategic African response, which is focused on predictability, partnership ownership and mutual economic benefit, can help ensure the EU-Africa relationship remains anchored in long-term development, and is not reduced to short-term geopolitical interests.

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The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the views of the respective organisations to which the members of the Progressive Migration Group are affiliated.



ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES (FEPS)

FEPS is the European progressive political foundation and the think tank of the progressive political family at EU level. Our mission is to develop innovative research, policy advice, training and debates to inspire and inform progressive politics and policies across Europe.

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ABOUT THE FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG AFRICAN MIGRATION POLICY CENTER

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung African Migration Policy Center (FES-AMPC) in Addis Ababa, established in 2019, facilitates migration dialogue among AU member states, migration experts and civil society organisations on the African continent. Focusing on four thematic areas, FES AMPC works with African and European stakeholders on EU-Africa dialogue, climate mobility, migration and development, as well as gender and migration.



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