# Balancing Borders

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The European Union's recent migration agreements with Lebanon and Egypt mark significant developments in the bloc's strategy to manage migration flows from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. These deals differ markedly in scale, scope, and the broader political and economic contexts in which they operate.

Both countries are set to receive substantial financial aid from the EU to curb migration. Lebanon will receive €1 billion, with 500 million already approved, to support its struggling economy and reinforce border security, reducing migrant flows to Europe, especially Cyprus and Italy. Meanwhile, Egypt is allocated a larger package of €7.4 billion, justified by its larger population and extensive border control needs. This package includes 5 billion

in concessional loans, 1.8 billion for private investment, and 600 million in grants, supporting economic reforms, renewable energy, trade and security, with 200 million specifically for migration management.

Both agreements emphasise strengthening border controls. Lebanon is allocated 200 million for its security services to combat migrant smuggling and irregular migration. The EU also aims to facilitate the voluntary return of Syrian refugees from Lebanon, a country hosting nearly 780,000 refugees. In Egypt, funds are focused on border management along the Libya border and combating smuggling and trafficking.

Nevertheless, both agreements face notable challenges. In Lebanon, government instability and the current Israel-Hamas War complicate the implementation of aid and border control measures. This instability could lead to delays and inefficiencies, potentially exacerbating the country's current economic and refugee crisis. In Egypt, human rights abuses undermine the trust and cooperation between the EU and Egyptian authorities, thereby complicating efforts to ensure that the funds are used appropriately. Allegations of mistreatment of migrants and political dissenters can jeopardise the broader objectives of the aid package, including fostering regional stability.

In the coming decades, more migrants will come to Europe due to growing regional instability worldwide. However, the EU's pacts with MENA countries seem to be struggling to tackle the problem effectively. The Israel-Hamas war is making it more difficult for MENA countries to meet the pact's targets, particularly Lebanon, with the growing tensions between Hezbollah and Israel. A new approach is needed to control migration. Many agreements have had the ambition to stop migration with restrictive measures, but this is not working. European countries need to adopt a new approach. Instead of investing in border controls, the solution is to make migration sustainable by directing migrants to the countries where they fit best. This will facilitate their integration into the host country while benefiting the country and its people. There are several measures that can be taken to achieve this goal. Firstly, when selecting migrants, countries should analyse their motivation, qualifications, and social networks, and not just their origin. Secondly, the money from the camp can be used to increase the number of jobs and infrastructure to accommodate more migrants. Ultimately, the EU must rethink its migration pacts to focus more on long-term integration and mutual benefits rather than short-term solutions.