

**AFTER THE 'MIGRATION CRISIS'**  
How Europe works to keep Africans in Africa





# After the ‘migration crisis’

How Europe works to keep Africans in Africa

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# Introduction



Migration from Africa to Europe has, since [the long summer of migration](#) in 2015, been at the top of the European political agenda. As right-wing parties have gained at the ballot box through their anti-migration rhetoric, the priority for most policymakers has been to look tough and – above all – to prevent such an experience from ever happening again.

To this end, the European Union (EU) and individual EU member states have devoted large amounts of resources to trying to keep people in Africa. One usually speaks of carrots and sticks, but given the sheer scale and variety of interventions it might be more appropriate to speak of bushels of the former and bundles of the latter. As this feature demonstrates in great detail, an awful lot of activity has been going on.

Being based in Europe, we are generally only exposed to European accounts of what is happening and why it is happening when it comes to migration. In order to break through our own filter bubble, we set out to explore the question of migration from a more African perspective. This feature is the result of that endeavour.

In the pages accompanying this introduction, you will find seventeen voices from Europe and Africa that we have set into virtual conversation with each other. Their responses are cleaned and condensed versions of the telephone interviews we had with them, and all participants approved their final texts prior to publication as accurate reflections of their ideas. Our primary motivation in speaking to them was to try to understand what this onslaught of migration-related intervention looks like and feels like on both sides of the Mediterranean.

What projects have been happening, and how have they affected African communities? How have African states balanced European demands with domestic pressures and priorities? How do African policymakers and citizens even understand migration? What are their own migration agendas? And how can Europe and Africa reset the conversation

on migration to the benefit of all? These are just a few of the many questions we asked our participants, and time and time again their answers surprised us and brought nuance to what is all too often a one-sided conversation. Producing this feature has been an enormous learning experience for us, and we warmly encourage you to explore its many pages in the hope that it will be for you too.

### Is there a migrant crisis?

According to [the Pew Research Centre](#), in 2017 there were somewhere between 3.9 and 4.8 million unauthorised immigrants living in the member states of the European Union and European Free Trade Area, up from 3.0-3.7 million in 2014. According to [Eurostat](#), around half a million migrants registered for asylum in EU member states in 2014. In both 2015 and 2016 the number was almost three times that amount (1.2 million per year).

This spike led to what is often referred to in the destination countries as the ‘migrant crisis’. The numbers involved, however, scarcely amounted to a crisis. As Pew points out, unauthorised immigrants still amount to less than 1% of the 500 million people living in the 27 EU member states, four EFTA member states and the UK. It is also important to note that new arrivals have dropped significantly since 2015, with just over 600,000 people entering the EU irregularly in 2019 according to [Frontex](#), the agency that controls the borders of the European Schengen Area.

For Europe, the impact of the spike in 2015 was primarily political. Reflecting the polarisation of public opinion within and between countries, European governments and politicians adopted divergent responses. Angela Merkel’s Germany initially adopted an open-door approach and accepted nearly one million migrants, mostly refugees from the Syrian conflict, as part of a ‘culture of welcoming’ policy. After less than a year, the policy was reversed in the face of electoral advances by the populist right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Right-wing parties in other member states also grasped the opportunity to recruit new sup-

porters. Their rhetoric exacerbated and, to an extent, defined these migration flows as a crisis.

Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic rejected the EU Commission's co-hosting metric – a proposal for all member states to accept a proportional share of asylum seekers – and closed their borders to migrants. Centrist politicians in other countries, recognising that their electoral majorities were at risk, pushed for the EU to produce a fast and visible response. The first result was the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement. This promised Turkey €6 billion in financial assistance and a more liberal visa regime for its citizens if Turkey successfully restricted the flow of people – mainly from Syria and Afghanistan but also the Horn of Africa – into Greece.

2016, three months after the agreement with Turkey.

Describing migratory pressure from Africa as the “new normal”, the EU Commission announced a revival of bilateral partnerships with third countries in the form of “compacts”. The African countries prioritised were Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Ethiopia. The [framework](#) governing these compacts called for increased collaboration and promised support for UN plans to develop alternative routes into legal migration. However, it was once again clear that the EU's pre-eminent concern was “breaking the business model of the people smugglers”. As many of our contributors argue, this emphasis on countering migrant smuggling, human trafficking and ‘irregular’ migration has not only led to the increased securitisation of migration, but

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## Securitisation permeates migrant journeys made from Africa to Europe, from point of departure to well after arriving in the destination country.

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To limit the number of migrants using the Mediterranean's most dangerous route from Libya to southern Europe, the EU Commission and individual EU member states – notably Italy and Malta – sought to further externalise the securitisation of Europe's borders into Africa. From now on responsibility for managing migration would be shared with countries of origin and transit. To this end, in late 2015, a summit was organised in the Maltese capital of Valletta to get European and African states onto the same page. The subsequent Valletta Action Plan detailed priority areas including addressing the root causes of irregular migration and the protection of refugees. However, for the EU negotiators, the overarching concern was the suppression of unauthorised migration. A concrete framework was finalised in June

reoriented and subordinated development funding to migration governance and management as well.

### **The securitisation of the Mediterranean**

Securitisation permeates migrant journeys made from Africa to Europe, from point of departure to well after arriving in the destination country. Often driven to migrate by the absence of physical or human security in their home countries, migrants face securitised borders as well as state and non-state actors seeking to exploit their vulnerability along land and sea routes. And on arrival, migrants face an increasingly fragmented security environment: sometimes detained, sometimes encouraged to move on, and often at risk of exploitation and abuse.

If African migration to Europe has long been opposed on economic and cultural grounds, more recently it has been assimilated into the rhetoric of insecurity by situating it as a driver of such diverse 'globalised' threats as terrorism, organised crime and the spread of disease. That migrants are characterised as security threats is ironic given that many are themselves fleeing insecurity. So too is the fact that the security measures supposedly imposed to counter the 'threat' further undermine migrant's security and wellbeing.

Whilst the EU strategy to reduce migration uses both hard and soft power, precedence is given to the former. The EU has spent vast sums of money upgrading the security infrastructure of transit states as well as its own high-tech assets in the sea, air and space. In the central Mediterranean, search and rescue (SAR) – promoted as a priority in the partnership framework – is secondary to countering migrant smuggling. This is demonstrated by the EU's refusal to help pay to continue Italy's Mare Nostrum operation in 2014, which *did* prioritise SAR and which saved well in excess of [100,000 migrants](#) before it was shut down. It was replaced by the Frontex-led Operation Triton. With less funding than its predecessor and fewer air and sea assets, the number of migrants drowning whilst attempting the crossing increased from an estimated [four in every thousand crossings to 24 in every thousand](#). Triton was re-named Operation Themis in 2018. Its new mandate – in conformity with the Italian government's hard line against irregular migration – removed the automatic authorisation to disembark rescued migrants in Italian ports.

Alongside Triton, EUNAVFOR Med – also known as Operation Sophia – was established in 2015 under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy to disrupt migrant smuggling from North Africa to southern Europe. SAR was not part of [its mandate](#), although between 2015 and 2018 its assets [rescued 49,000 people](#). During almost the same period vessels operated by humanitarian NGOs [saved over 100,000 migrants](#). Critics of Sophia, including a UK House of Lords [report](#), argued that its profile and objective was

incompatible with SAR and that rescuing migrants in international waters "incentivises" smugglers to send migrants to sea in unseaworthy vessels.

Italy withdrew its political support for Sophia earlier this year, and as a result it was replaced by EU-NAVFOR Med Irini on 1 April 2020. Irini's mandate is primarily to implement the UN arms embargo on Libya, although it continues to be tasked with disrupting the business model of migrant smuggling as well as training the Libyan Coast Guard. SAR is not explicitly mentioned in the council decision establishing Irini, but its assets are required by maritime law to come to the aid of vessels in distress. However, in an explicit concession to the incentivisation argument, its vessels have been deliberately stationed away from the routes most commonly taken by the boats transporting migrants.

With the effective withdrawal of EU and member state assets from pro-active SAR in the central Mediterranean, and the ambivalent activities of the Libyan Coast Guard, rescue at sea has been left to humanitarian organisations and private commercial vessels. Both have a [clear duty under international law](#) to assist persons in danger at sea. Nevertheless, [as Sandra Hammamy explains](#), EU member states have sought to restrict these SAR actions by prosecuting humanitarian actors and by confiscating rescue vessels.

### **The hostile takeover of development aid**

Alongside security measures, the EU has also sought to repurpose development aid to tackle the root causes of migration. Job creation programmes are, unsurprisingly, a prime example of this sort of work. Yet, whilst this sort of aid can be beneficial to the countries receiving it, the [partnership framework](#) makes clear who the EU hopes will benefit most from its largess: "A mix of positive and negative incentives will be integrated into the EU's development and trade policies to reward those countries willing to cooperate effectively with the EU on migration management and ensure there are consequences for those who refuse". Development is now a tool of European border control.



The primary mechanism for this work is the [EU Emergency Trust for Africa](#) (EUTF). As of May 2020, 225 programmes have received funding from the EUTF in 26 countries across three regions: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. Most of these are either strongly security related, such as capacity raising for local police forces, or attempt to promote “economic and employment opportunities”. The Youth Empowerment Project based in The Gambia, [which this feature highlights](#), is a high-profile example of the latter. So far the YEP has supported around 250 youth-led start-ups with the equivalent of \$1,000 in seed money each. A minority of projects under the EUTF also engage in areas like food and water security, education, and conflict prevention.

The EUTF has received more than €4.7 billion in pledges to date. Although this exceeds previous levels of EU development aid to the continent, it falls well short of the estimated €27 billion sent home in remittances each year by African migrants living and working in Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the EUTF has yet to have a major impact on African migration.

The EUTF is premised on a misguided understanding of both the drivers of migration from Africa and the relationship between migration and development. This is a point that our contributors repeatedly emphasise. For the fact is, migration within and outside the continent is marked by mixed motivations. A [recent UNDP study](#) found that often the decision to migrate is based less on immediate poverty than ‘choice-lessness’ – the absence of, or severe limits to, life opportunities. When it [asked](#) over 3000 African migrants in Europe why they had left, only 36% cited conflict or human rights abuses. The rest of the sample cited economic betterment or related aspirational rationales as their main motivation for migrating. They weren’t so much moving away as moving toward.

### **Active or passive agents? African actors and the migration question**

How then have African states, regional agencies,

and civil society balanced the aspirations of citizens, their own economic and political priorities, and the demands of the EU?

Those who were asked this question as part of this project provided a two-pronged answer. A first reaction was to highlight Europe’s role in creating many of the conditions that lead to migration – be it through colonialism, the violent exploitation of African labour and natural resources, or through military interventions and support for states suspected of human rights violations.

A second reaction was to emphasise the divergence between European and African perceptions of, and approaches to, migration. While European actors have pushed a rhetoric of migration and refugee ‘crisis’ and chosen to securitise migration, their African counterparts have stressed the importance of migration as a lever for development and argued for [legal pathways for regular mobility](#), as well as the need for a humanitarian response to irregular migration.

This African approach to migration is underscored in numerous statements and policy and legal documents. It stems partly from the African culture of human solidarity and partly from Africa’s long history of migratory flows, and thus from the cultural and social bonds that link many African communities within and across countries. It also reflects Africa’s empirical realities. On a continent where artificial colonial borders often bisect traditional ethnic homelands, communities in countries of origin and transit often rely on hosting and transporting migrants – usually not understood as a criminal activity – to generate employment and income. In these circumstances, it is believed that enhancing border security alone can only temporarily restrict migrant flows and might, in fact, lead to unintended consequences.

Despite this apparent common belief in the transformational potential of migration, however, African actors have adopted different attitudes toward European migration rhetoric and pressure. Countries such as Ethiopia have strategically used the negoti-

ation capital stemming from their position as “aid donor darling” to advance their domestic migration and development agendas. But others have struggled to balance demands from Europe with those emanating from their citizenry. Mali, for example, has strongly pushed back against Europe’s demands to readmit migrants forcibly returned to the country because of the pressure coming from civil society. This is also the case of Niger, Europe’s presumed “migration laboratory”. Despite being a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which allows the free movement of people within its borders, Niger has criminalised migration-related economic activity under pressure from the EU. This approach has been widely criticised by Nigeriens, who contest what they see as their government’s subservience to European interests.

### **Covid-19 and the future of unauthorised migration from Africa**

The UN Commission for Africa has estimated that between 300,000 and 3.3 million Africans could die as a result of coronavirus before the end of 2020. The impact on the economy could result in 27 million being pushed into extreme poverty. There is also growing evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic is changing attitudes of state and non-state actors, as well as the wider population, in countries along the three main migration routes. A report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime finds that communities in southern Libya are calling on the groups controlling the border to intercept migrant transport. Those involved in moving migrants across Algeria’s southern border are apparently voluntarily limiting their activities. The report speculates that whilst there is currently fear of contagion in the region and a ‘stigma’ against human movement, increased unemployment and Covid-19 outbreaks are likely to compel many to migrate in the near future.

A further immediate impact of the pandemic has been the official closure of Italian, Maltese and Libyan ports to humanitarian rescue vessels, with all three states declaring that their ports no longer constitute ‘safe places’ of disembarkation. With all

other rescue vessels confined to port, by early-April only the German NGO Sea-Eye’s *Alan Kurdi* was patrolling the central Mediterranean. After making two rescues off the Libyan coast, the vessel had 150 rescued migrants on board but was unable to dock. With no port willing to allow the rescued migrants to disembark, twelve days passed before the Italian authorities transferred the rescued migrants to a passenger ferry for quarantine. The *Alan Kurdi* was later confiscated for technical irregularities, according to the Italian authorities. Sea-Eye and other humanitarian rescue organisations perceive this latest confiscation as a further attempt to stifle non-state SAR in the Mediterranean. This took place at a time when the Italian government announced a six-month amnesty for African migrants working as agricultural labourers in an effort to prevent a large part of the country’s harvest being lost.

It is too early to predict the overall impact of Covid-19 on migration from Africa to Europe. However, given the stark disparity in wealth, and hence life chances for those living on the two continents, the fundamental conditions will persist. So, whilst the externalisation of border security into Africa and the perilous situation in Libya have contributed to reducing flows since 2017, this is liable to be temporary. For the EU, the political dilemma caused by unauthorised migration not only from Africa, but also Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere, is likely to deepen. The pandemic seems to have further loosened cohesion within the EU’s institutions, already under pressure following the fallout from the financial crisis. The electorates in many parts of the EU are turning away from the mainstream liberalism of Europe’s traditional governing parties – and the EU itself – to populist parties that are markedly nationalistic and anti-migrant.

These trends are likely to continue unless the EU and mainstream parties find a way to reset the conversation on migration, embrace its benefits as well as its challenges, and make good on their promises on legal pathways so that people stop dying high-profile and needless deaths on the Mediterranean.

# Meet the round table



## **Aderanti Adepoju**

Aderanti Adepoju is Emeritus Professor of Demography and Founder of the Network of Migration Research on Africa. He has published numerous scientific articles and books on Africa's international migration and regional integration.



## **Debbie Ariyo**

Debbie Ariyo is CEO of AFRUCA – Safeguarding Children, a UK charity supporting victims of child trafficking from Africa to the UK. She is also Chair of the UK BME Anti-Slavery Network.



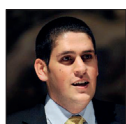
## **Bram Frouws**

Bram Frouws is the Head of the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) in Geneva and previously worked for five years in the Horn of Africa on migration research projects for various organisations.



## **Benjamin Etzold**

Benjamin Etzold is a social geographer and migration scholar working at the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). He currently leads a large EU-funded project on the “Transnational Figurations of Displacement” (TRAFIG).



## **Jean-Pierre Gauci**

Jean-Pierre Gauci is Arthur Watts Senior Research Fellow in Public International Law and Director of Teaching and Training at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (UK) and Director of The People for Change Foundation (Malta).



## **Sandra Hammamy**

Sandra Hammamy is a political scientist and lecturer at Justus-Liebig-Universität in Gießen, Germany. She has been a member of Sea-Watch since the beginning in 2015, and has joined many search and rescue missions in the central Mediterranean.



## **Olawale Ismail**

Olawale Ismail is a Senior Research Fellow/Lecturer at the African Leadership Centre, King's College London. He works actively and has an extensive publication record on peace, security and development in Africa.



## **Marta Llonch**

Marta Llonch is an immigration lawyer in Barcelona. She has researched EU migration policies, volunteered as a lawyer in the Greek refugee camps, and participated in migration-related development projects in the Horn of Africa.



**Noemi Magugliani**

Noemi Magugliani is an Irish Research Council Scholar and a Doctoral Fellow at the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University of Ireland Galway. She is also a legal officer at the Global Legal Action Network working on ‘migration and border violence’.

**Monica Massari**

Monica Massari is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Milan. Since the early 2000s her research has focused on Euro-Mediterranean migration and new forms of racism and discrimination in Europe.

**Ottilia Anna Maunganidze**

Ottilia Anna Maunganidze is an international law expert, legal analyst and strategist working on promoting a peaceful, just and prosperous Africa. She is the Head of Special Projects at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa.

**Aimée-Noël Mbiyozo**

Aimée-Noël Mbiyozo is a migration expert and Senior Research Consultant at the Institute for Security Studies. Her research covers a broad range of migration-related issues in high-flow regions including Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

**Charles Obila**

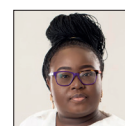
Charles Obila is a Migration Officer at the Intergovernmental Agency on Development (IGAD) secretariat in Djibouti. He previously worked with the IOM Regional Office in Nairobi. He holds a masters in demography from the University of Nairobi.

**Baboucarr Sallah**

Baboucarr Sallah is a technical adviser and operations officer at the International Trade Centre in Banjul, The Gambia. He holds an MSc in International Finance and Economic Development from Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland.

**Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny**

Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny is the Afrobarometer regional communications coordinator for anglophone West Africa, based at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana).

**Eva Magdalena Stambøl**

Eva Magdalena Stambøl is Doctoral Researcher in Criminology at Aalborg University. Her research explores security cooperation and the role of crime control in the EU's relations with West Africa and the wider southern neighbourhood.

**Fekadu Adugna Tufa**

Fekadu Adugna Tufa (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Fekadu's research interests include refugees, migration and identity studies.





# Euro-African migration



# The many faces of African migration

## How has migration from Africa changed over the last decades?



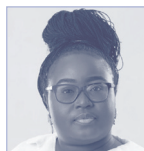
Aderanti Adepoju

Migration from Africa has been conceptualised in various ways: as a drag on development, as rural to urban movements, as intra-regional movements, as a consequence of poverty and as an outcome of individual decision-making processes. Yet, all these are mostly fallacies.

First, migration is not an outcome of poverty. In Africa, people migrated over long distances unhindered by artificial boundaries both before and shortly after independence. It was the post-independence search for sovereignty that introduced concepts like ‘international migration’ and prompted governments to securitise national borders and jealously guard the limited employment opportunities available in their various countries. Second, migration is not always the result of independent decision-making processes but rather an outcome of community-based decision-making processes. Families and communities often pool resources to sponsor a migrant or migrants in the hope that these migrants will maintain close links with and ultimately benefit the families and communities left behind. This is the case even in the poorest countries of the Sahel.

Third, the money that the African diaspora sends back as remittances has now overtaken overseas development assistance. An [estimated](#) \$60 billion was remitted yearly between 2012 and 2016. This is more than official development assistance to the continent as well as a more stable source of financing than foreign direct investment. These remittances first came in trickles, but the trickles were very important. They were used to invest in housing, agricultural activity and services that local authorities are supposed to provide, such as roads, potable water and better educational systems. They weren’t, as many economists have led us to believe, used for conspicuous consumption.

## Why do many Africans migrate and where do they want to go?



Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny

Afrobarometer is an independent, pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans’ experiences and evaluations of quality of life, governance, and democracy. Our main goal is to ensure that the voices and opinions of African citizens feed into policymaking. In our seventh round of surveys, which were conducted between late 2016 and late 2018 in 34 African countries, we asked participants about migration. There had been reports of young Africans dying on the Mediterranean and in the Sahel desert while attempting to get to Europe, and we at Afrobarometer sought to better understand these media stories.

Some of these stories were not entirely false, but there were also several myths that were debunked by our data. Take the profile of African migrants, who are often described as poor people desperate to leave the continent. In fact, the data tells us that the non-poor are as likely to consider migrating as the poor are. The majority are young, between 18 and 35, and they mainly want to migrate to find better jobs or escape poverty. Other reasons – cited by far fewer potential migrants – include pursuing business opportunities, or to further their education.

A second myth relates to the destination of migrants. There is a widespread perception that all African migrants want to go to North America or Europe. But the most preferred destination for potential migrants is another country within Africa: 29% cite another country within their region, while 7% look elsewhere on the continent. In practice, the International Organization for Migration reports that more than 80% of Africa’s migration involves moving within the continent. Among potential migrants, Europe (27%) and North America (22%) are the second and third most preferred destinations. Australia, the Middle East, and Asia and Central/South America attract much less interest.

Southern Africans are most likely to prefer intra-African migration, albeit with wide country variations. For instance, in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Malawi, more than two-thirds of potential migrants said that they would rather stay in Southern Africa. Yet in Mauritius, less than one in twenty want to stay within Africa.

In contrast, West Africans are more likely to want to go to Europe or North America than potential migrants in other regions, although here, too, numbers vary by country. Large majorities of potential migrants from Cape Verde, The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Ghana indicated a preference for Europe or North America. But in Burkina Faso and Niger about 60%-80% of potential migrants stated they wanted to stay within Africa. North Africa shows the strongest preference for Europe. Less than 1% of Moroccan potential migrants, for instance, said they would want to stay in Africa.

## Where do African migrants go when they don't go to Europe?



Charles Obila

The route that has received the most attention lately is, of course, the Mediterranean route to Europe that goes through Sudan, Egypt and Libya. However, if you look at statistics, you will see that migration is a regional phenomenon. The majority of African migrants migrate within the African continent. They largely move to neighbouring countries.

In the IGAD region, over two-thirds of migrants are hosted in other countries within the region. For those who migrate out of the region, the majority of them migrate to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. They transit through Djibouti and cross over the Gulf to Yemen. A significant number also head towards South Africa, but because they cross over land reliable data for that route are scarce.

Migration flows towards the Middle East have

grown while flows towards Libya and across the Mediterranean have declined. This is in part due to Europe's policy responses and in part due to the collapse of the Libyan government and the rise of migrant detentions. Perhaps I should qualify this: we don't actually know whether less people are travelling to Libya. We only know that the number of people crossing the Mediterranean has declined. My take is that flows to Libya have continued to grow or perhaps have declined marginally, we just don't see this because more and more people are being detained.

In any case, what makes Gulf countries more appealing to African migrants and refugees than European countries is access to work. We hear stories of people who have travelled to Gulf countries and gotten jobs almost immediately, while in Europe access to work is only granted to regular migrants. Irregular migrants are closed off from everything. This partly explains why many of those travelling to the Gulf are young, unskilled and uneducated. They're able to find work in the informal sector there, for example in domestic work, looking after livestock or poultry production. More recently, we have seen an increasing number of unaccompanied minors travelling to the Gulf. The data suggests that they currently amount to approximately 20% of the total number of Africans travelling to the region. This is a situation that we are closely monitoring.

### **The Horn of Africa is one of the main areas of origin for African migrants and refugees. Why is that?**

The countries belonging to IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) in the East and Horn of Africa regions all have long histories of mobility. We had a long history of trade including the Saharan movements, Arab traders along the Indian Ocean coastline, and Portuguese settlers in East Africa long before the 1889 Berlin Conference organised Europe's imperial ambitions in Africa. People from the region have also long travelled to Mecca for pilgrimage. Additionally, we have cultures and communities transcending national boundaries across the region. In recent times, however, conflict and insecurity

have driven large migration flows in and out of the East and Horn of Africa regions. Conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan, the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, and the Ugandan government's conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army have all led to the death, suffering, and displacement. South Sudan's civil war, for example, created around 1.9 million refugees and over two million internally displaced persons between 2013 and 2015. Secondary mobility, especially for the youth, is high in refugee camps as people move to urban areas in search of opportunities.

Beyond this, climate change and natural disasters are increasingly driving people out of their homes and communities. IGAD is one of the African regions most affected by drought. IGAD was originally named the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development when it was created in 1986, and its purpose was to coordinate efforts to combat droughts and other natural disasters in the region. Droughts now occur every two years. We've worked hard to improve both our response and the resilience of communities, but these natural disasters have intensified and are driving more and more people across borders.

So people are moving for many reasons. It's not only displacement, it's not only migration – it's a mix of drivers and people with different protection needs. This has given rise to the phenomenon of mixed migration, which is now a permanent feature of migration dynamics in the region. You cannot really differentiate one 'type' of flow from another.

## What has changed since the so-called migration crisis of 2015?



Aderanti Adepoju

The year 2015 was presented as a crisis of migration due to the unprecedented and spectacular deluge of migrants into Europe. The majority of these migrants were from the war-ravaged societies of

Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. Only a minority were from Africa.

Several dynamics explain the migratory flows from Africa to Europe at the time. Some are connected to demographic trends. While it's true that many African migrants were running from conflicts in Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Sahel region, others were simply restless and unemployed youth. They wrongfully believed the hype about life in Europe and were prepared to bear any risk to get to their preferred destinations there.

There were political dynamics at play too, especially the destabilisation and collapse of Libya. Before its collapse, Libya had free healthcare, free education and high employment levels. It was also resource-rich and human resource-poor, so it welcomed other Africans and non-Africans who came there to work. The breakdown of social norms of governance that followed Qaddafi's demise in 2011 created a vacuum that allowed previously suppressed tribal groups to spring up and take control of migration routes. This has had catastrophic consequences for migrants.

The European response to these dynamics was neither appropriate nor effective. Europe subcontracted the defence of its borders to Mediterranean countries such as Morocco and Libya, even though the latter has long stopped being a functional state. At the same time, several countries failed to adhere to the principle of burden sharing and refused to absorb or even give temporary shelter to new arrivals. Countries like Greece, Italy and Spain complained of course, but in a context where right-wing political parties were instrumentalising migration these states' actions were, to an extent, understandable.



# The EU's relationship with migration

## How does the EU approach mobility for non-citizens?



Benjamin Etzold

With the initiation of the Schengen agreement in 1985, a significant filter has been built into the European Union's approach to mobility. The dismantling of borders inside the Schengen Area and the facilitation of free movement for EU citizens stand against the tighter control of external borders and intensified controls of the mobility of migrants from outside the EU. Free mobility is a fundamental achievement that has proven vital for European societies and economies. Yet, it is an exclusive right

managed to shift responsibility for receiving asylum seekers to the margins of Europe, where situations have now been allowed to escalate.

The current conditions we see in the Greek island hotspot of Moria on Lesbos are a result of the decisions taken back then. It is a place where there should be rapid asylum procedures, but many displaced people have been contained in this camp for two or three years. Politicians suggest that people are eventually relocated out of hotspots like Moria to central parts of Europe, but the numbers are so minimal that you can't say the system really works.

It doesn't even reliably work for family reunification. There are plenty of stories of Syrian fathers who

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**“Secondary movement is demonised by European policy makers, but as a matter of fact existential threats do not simply end once someone arrives on the continent.”**

— Benjamin Etzold

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to which refugees and other migrants from outside Europe do not have the same access. They are thus often forced to immobility, either at 'their places' on the outside or in the marginal places inside the EU to which they have been allocated. Movements that disregard this logic are illegalised and demonised.

The Dublin system, which determines which member state is responsible for a particular asylum seeker, is a central cornerstone of this policy. When it was first negotiated, the goal of powerful central states like Germany was to keep asylum seekers away from Western Europe, away from the core states of the European Union. They successfully

have lived in Germany for years now, yet their wives and children are still in Turkey, Jordan or even on a Greek island. Frequently this is by design. Germany temporarily suspended family reunification between March 2016 and August 2018 for people who were only granted subsidiary protection. For recognised refugees family reunification was much easier. Many wives and children have come to Germany over the past few years to reunite with their husbands and fathers. The situation has been very different for people with subsidiary protection. There have been many cases of people with subsidiary protection choosing to leave Europe for a precarious life in Turkey because family reunification was blocked.

Attempts to contain secondary movement within Europe – i.e. when a migrant or refugee moves between EU countries – are also an effect of the approach taken by the Dublin system. Secondary movement is demonised by European policy makers, but as a matter of fact existential threats do not simply end once someone arrives on the continent. There are very good reasons why someone would want to move on from Italy, where refugees hardly have access to social welfare, and come to Germany, where the long-term perspectives to restart a life after displacement seem much better. Yet if their fingerprints have been registered in Italy, they'll be sent back there once they try to apply for asylum in Germany. This is then often the moment when they say, 'If they're not going to let me apply for asylum, then I will go underground and live in an illegalised situation', in which they are exposed to poverty, mistreatment and precarious work.

There are a lot of younger people from West Africa living working in Germany. Some have been in Europe for so long that they now also enjoy the right to free movement within Europe, but they cannot obtain residency in Germany. They frequently have to go back to Italy to renew their residence status even though they have worked for years in Germany. Most people have no idea this is happening, but attempting to control and contain secondary movements is a trend. The whole question about free movement in Europe is both cynical and ironic. Who's free movement? European citizens have the right to move, but a lot of people in Europe do not have the right to move freely. What I also want to highlight is that displacement and migration often lead to the creation of people whose lives are no longer bound by either national or local borders. They think and act transnationally. Many of them embrace mobility and lead a highly flexible life across several places and countries. Others have settled at a new home – not necessarily at the places that policies foresaw for them – yet maintain multiple connections within Europe and all across the world. Policy often disregards this transnational way of life and migrants' own mobility choices. It instead tries to forcibly contain people in certain places. Immobilising migrants, however, not only

impairs human freedoms and rights while disregarding suffering. It also hinders people to live in dignity and to develop their potential – for themselves and for the European society.

## What drives the securitisation of migration policy in Europe?



Bram Frouws

Several things are driving this trend at once. One is a certain category of politicians who know how to capitalise on a constant sense of chaos. I can't imagine anything worse for politicians like Matteo

Salvini or Viktor Orban than migration ceasing to be a problem. They need it to remain a highly salient and problematic issue in order to gain votes. What's worse, the radicalisation of migration policies has proved to be a real slippery slope. Things that would have been unimaginable only five or ten years ago are happening now. And not just in Europe. The United States, Australia and other developed countries in the Global North are all driving the securitisation of migration by introducing increasingly restrictive measures to reduce flows.

## Malta, Italy, Germany and France agreed to redistribute some refugees among themselves. Is this progress?



Jean-Pierre Gauci

It's a clear example of putting a plaster on a problem and ignoring whatever's going on underneath. It highlights the emergency-driven nature of Europe's response to migration to date. The agreement,

which was signed in late September last year, basically says that people will disembark in Malta and Italy and then be relocated to Germany and France (and a

few other countries which later joined the scheme). Some might see that as progress. But it essentially circumvents attempts to create EU-wide solidarity by creating a small coalition of the willing, which in turn makes it easier for other countries to get away with lagging behind and not showing any solidarity at all. That's the sort of short-sightedness that is reflected in the broader migration dynamics and the relationship between the EU and African states. It is also a view of migration from a single angle, and one that ignores the rights of migrants, and the values that should underpin all EU measures.

Solidarity in Europe has become conditional upon whatever is happening in a particular member state

or at a particular point in time. The issues that informed this development is also worrying regarding people being left out at sea with disembarkation being denied because States do not want to be responsible for the asylum claims. This is one of many reasons why we should overhaul the Dublin system, which is what governs where people can apply for asylum in Europe. The Dublin system doesn't work. It results in human rights violations and is unfair to border states. However, instead of radically revising the Dublin system, we now have four countries trying to find a workaround between them. It's [solidarity a la carte](#). It is a short-term solution to a problem that is neither sustainable nor durable.



# FOCUS: Search and rescue

## What is the situation for private actors rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean?



Sandra Hammamy

Once a rescue takes place, then a dirty game begins about assigning a port of safety for where the migrants will be taken. According to law, this used to be the responsibility of the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Rome, which is responsible for the search and rescue area off the Libyan coast. In keeping with the Geneva Convention, the port of safety should be a place where rescued migrants are not detained and can claim asylum. This would mean a European not a Libyan port. However, since the start of 2019, rescue vessels are being ordered to take rescued migrants back to Tripoli or other Libyan ports as ports of safety. Rescue NGOs do not consider these ports safe and will not return migrants to Libya. Returning migrants to Libya contravenes human rights law. It is against the Geneva Convention and against the principle of non-refoulement.

In August 2019, I was on board the Spanish NGO rescue ship Open Arms when 150 rescued migrants were held on board for 19 days. This happened to several rescue ships last fall as governments refused to provide a port of safety on their territory. This was also the situation in which Sea-Watch found itself in June 2019. There were about 50 rescued migrants on board. They were desperate, sleeping on the open deck in bad weather conditions and with not enough food. Some were threatening suicide. After Captain Carola Rackete decided to enter Lampedusa harbour without permission the ship was confiscated as expected. This had happened to Sea-Watch twice before, and those times the ship was returned after two or three weeks. But in this case the authorities held on to the ship for much longer.

## Do you think has there been a change in policy towards migrant rescues since the Democratic Party replaced the Northern League in the Italian government?

The change of government in Italy has meant that ports closed by the previous government have been reopened to NGO rescue ships and rescued migrants, but otherwise little has changed. Luciana Lamorgese, the new minister of the interior, has proposed a code of conduct for NGO vessels. For me, this is ridiculous because there is already a legal framework – international law, maritime law, the Geneva Convention, the Human Rights Convention. There is an existing legal framework to which we have always adhered.

Italy tried this before in 2017, around the same time it started training the so-called Libyan coast guard to perform rescues and return the survivors to Libya. It did this despite evidence that the Libyans were opening fire on NGO ships, shooting at migrants, and ignoring distress calls. The wording of the code of conduct presented to NGOs then, it seems to me, was intended to give the impression to the public that NGOs are breaking the law. For example, the proposed code required NGOs to stop using light signals to smugglers on shore, even though nobody had been doing this. The code also required NGOs to cease turning off the automatic identification system, though NGOs never turn it off! This proposed code of conduct was a political gesture for the consumption of the media and to influence public opinion.

The number of migrants attempting the crossing is supposedly decreasing, but we don't know that for sure. There are many fewer rescue ships in the central





Mediterranean, which means that we have much less information about the crossing than we did before. It is also the case that migrants are being returned to Libya by the Libyan coast guard. All this gives the impression that numbers have decreased, but we don't have the full story.

**Do the various NGOs involved in migrant rescues actively collaborate? What is the relationship between the NGOs and other actors operating in the area?**

Yes, both in operations and advocacy as well as on the legal level. There is always a lot of crew sharing, and some financial solidarity as well. For example, Sea-Watch funded the last operation of Sea Eye, a rescue ship run by a completely different NGO, whilst Sea-Watch was impounded. The links are so close between the rescue ships that collectively we call them a 'civil fleet'. It is important to have rescue ships saving people from drowning. It is not important which organisation's name is on the ship.

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**“Frontex has been progressively retreating from its presumed humanitarian mission.”**

— Noemi Magugliani

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Since 2016 a meeting called Shared Awareness and Deconfliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) has been held twice yearly at the EU Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED) HQ in Rome. This conference brings together all actors operating in the Mediterranean to deconflict and coordinate their activities. EUNAVFOR MED warships in 2016 accepted migrants from rescue ships and transported them to European ports. Commercial vessels sometimes respond to distress calls and sometimes ignore them. And while the arrest and prosecution of captains such as Sea-Watch's Carola make the

headlines, there are other captains from commercial vessels such as fishing trawlers who are being wrongly arrested and prosecuted for assisting smuggling. There are a lot of commercial vessels avoiding search and rescue areas because they know that if they become involved in a rescue it will be time-consuming and costly. However, the majority of captains I meet are clear that it is an obligation for any seafarer to try to rescue any vessel in distress.

## How has Frontex's role in the Mediterranean region changed?



Noemi Magugliani

Frontex's role has become extremely important as the new EU [regulations](#) governing the agency's activities have taken effect in December 2019. This new legal framework increases Frontex's presence in specific border crossings, and expands its authority and role under which it operates. Frontex is and remains a border security agency. It has coupled this security mission with a search and rescue (SAR) and a humanitarian rhetoric, for instance in the context of Operation Triton and Operation Themis. Frontex claims to be bound by international maritime law and international human rights law, with the term 'fundamental rights' used more than 200 times in its 2019 regulations. Yet Frontex has been progressively retreating from its presumed humanitarian mission. While the reach of its missions has expanded, their availability and capacity to conduct SAR has significantly weakened.

Two other particularly problematic areas that emerged in the process of adopting these new regulations, are immigration-related decision-making and data protection. According to the earlier drafts, Frontex was to provide technical and operational assistance to Member States in the return process, *including the preparation of return decisions*, identification of third country nationals and other pre-return and return-related activities of the Member States. The wording 'including the preparation of

return decisions’ was eliminated from the text, and the new regulations now specify that Frontex will provide assistance at all stages of the return process without entering into the merits of return decisions. This suggests a worrying move to increased Frontex’s responsibilities and authority in making decision on the return of an individual.

The danger is that this new layer of complexity would serve to absolve individual member states of their responsibility for how immigration control is carried out in Europe. So while Frontex might be operating with the consent of member states, it is far from clear whether and to what extent these states can be held responsible for Frontex’s actions. It is also unclear if Frontex will be bound by specific criteria on monitoring and accountability, and whether the catch would be that such criteria will be set by Frontex itself. The complaint mechanisms foreseen by Article 111 of the new regulations remains weak and does not constitute an effective legal remedy.

As for data protection, Frontex is allowed to share the personal data it collects with EU member states and EU agencies. This raises a number of questions, among which is the level of consent that needs to be granted before the data is collected, and whether the information collected could also be shared with non-EU actors? These questions not only remain unanswered, but are little entertained by the relevant institutions.

To add to this complexity, and focussing on the situation in the Mediterranean, the EU has been gradually withdrawing its vessels from sea to conduct rescue, and switching to the use of aircraft and [drones](#) to assist in surveillance. These changes and additional layers serve to distance the EU and Member States from legal responsibility for the serious abuses of rights, as justification for the refusal to assume political responsibility over the lives of those concerned.

So what happens if, say, a Frontex aircraft spots a boat leaving the Libyan waters or a boat in distress in the high seas in the self-declared Libyan SAR zone and communicates this information to the relevant Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC)

– most likely the Italian and the Libyan MRCCs? Does that communication trigger responsibility for conducting a rescue operation? Would the people on board the boat fall under an EU member state’s jurisdiction? Would the Libyan Coastguard, or a private actor if the Libyan coast guard is unable or unwilling to perform the rescue, be called upon to intervene? If the interception and return of individuals from the high seas, and in violation of the *non-refoulement* principle, is initiated by Frontex, coordinated by a member state’s MRCC, and implemented by the Libyan coast guard, would Frontex be responsible?

Conducting operations under such a framework means SAR is not completed until people are disembarked in a ‘place of safety’. It is different from simply being out of immediate danger. Just because a person has set foot on land does not mean that they are in a place of safety, and despite both the EU and the Italian government have multiple times argued that Libya is a safe country, domestic courts and international organisations have found that it is not. In April 2020, the Libyan GNA itself declared its ports unsafe due to fighting around Tripoli, roughly at the same time when the Italian and the Maltese governments also declared their ports unsafe due to the coronavirus pandemic. Some have [argued](#) that the decision to declare EU ports unsafe due to the pandemic is an excuse by member states to, once again, evade their responsibilities under international law to respond to boats in distress at sea – which would represent a *continuum* of previous attempts of disengagement. For what concerns Libya, on the other hand, both before and during the pandemic, the argument that it is a safe country has always been, in light of the well-known conditions in the country, a political statement more than anything else, aimed at allowing practices of externalisation of border control to continue.

### **Are there any legal avenues that can be used to prevent European governments from treating Libya as a place of safety?**

Italy’s domestic courts have ruled several times that Libya is not a safe country. Unfortunately, these decisions have had little or no impact on the political

behaviour of the government. What the Italian government systematically contested, besides the argument that Libya was – and still is – not a safe country, was the fact that, in their view, when individuals are returned to Libya by actors that are not Italian state actors (e.g. Italian warships as in the case of *Hirsi Jaama and Ors v Italy*), Italy does not exercise jurisdiction on such individuals – and is therefore not responsible under international law in the case of violations of, *inter alia*, human rights law.

As the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), representing an individual whose journey from Libya was intercepted by a Panamanian merchant vessel, directed to do so by the Italian MRCC *on behalf of* the Libyan coast guard, we have filed an individual [complaint](#) at the UN Human Rights Committee that contests these claims. We chose to bring this case to the UN Human Rights Committee, and not to the European Court of Human Rights, because this Committee is a trailblazer in establishing a new basis for its jurisdiction that can be triggered from the extraterritorial or transnational impact of a government decision. In the Committee's 2018 [General Comment 36](#) on the right to life, it states in paragraph 63 that:

a State party has an obligation to respect and to ensure the rights under article 6 of all persons who are within its territory and all persons subject to its jurisdiction, that is, all persons over whose enjoyment of the right to life it exercises power or effective control. This includes persons located outside any territory effectively controlled by the State, whose right to life is nonetheless impacted by its military or other activities in a direct and reasonably foreseeable manner.

We have structured our complaint around what we understand as a 'third model' of impacts. We have linked the abuses of our claimant's rights to the EU and Italy's decisions and their resultant use of "[privatised pushbacks](#)": when EU coastal states engage commercial ships to return refugees and other persons in need of protection to unsafe locations. In our claimant's case, the EUNAVFOR MED Opera-

tion Sophia - the EU's anti-smuggling operation in the Mediterranean – passed information to the Libyan and Italian coast guards to facilitate the interception and pull back of the migrants' boat to Libya. However, as the Libyan coast guards were unable to undertake this mission, the Italian coast guard requested that the nearby Nivin vessel intercept the boat 'on behalf of the Libyan coast guard', who later assumed coordination of the operation through an [Italian Navy ship moored in Tripoli](#) acting as a communications hub for the Libyan coastguard. In sum, the pushback occurred through the Nivin and in collaboration with the Libyan coast guard.

The complaint argues that Italy and the EU both had decisive influence on the Libyan coastguard because they fund, train, and equip it. Without their support the Libyan coastguard would not exist, and would not be able to execute the identification of migrant boats and their interception and return by other vessels. This decisive influence and dependency substantiates our claim of 'impact', which brings individuals on migrant boats under Italian jurisdiction and makes Italian state actors legally accountable for them. The involvement of third parties does not absolve Italy of its responsibility. Nor is it less responsible due to its involvement in *refoulement* by proxy, rather than direct *refoulement*. The actions of Italian state actors and EU institutions continue to have a direct and reasonably foreseeable impact on the rights of people trying to leave Libya – whether that is their right to life or their right to leave any country.

The legal premise of this argument is novel: It is the first case to test the Committee's commitment in General Comment 36 to a more encompassing remedial approach to responsibility and jurisdiction in transnational settings. It is also the first case to challenge 'privatised pushbacks', the latest damaging manifestation of European migration policies. The organic development of international human rights law in this direction, we believe, demands that our specific case and the broader implications of the violative practice behind it are given redress.



# Development: a tool of migration control

## How has development work changed since 2015?



Marta Llonch

The so-called refugee crisis in 2015 reframed the narrative around migration to Europe. Migration was no longer a phenomenon that had to be managed but a crisis that needed to be solved. Political discourse in Europe at the time made it seem as if there was an avalanche of migrants coming from Africa. It highlighted population growth and presented this movement as an unstoppable invasion.

Within this context of paranoia European leaders called the Valletta Summit in late 2015. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was born there, as were other measures designed to enrol departure and transit countries into the effort to counter this perceived crisis. This was set up a bit like a political framework for cooperation with these countries, but in fact it was an EU migration agenda that was imposed on African states. It took little account of African interests and was designed to externalise the EU migration agenda.

The focus on migration has reshaped development work in Africa. Migration is no longer part of development programming but a centrepiece. For example, traditional development programmes like income creation or rural development – some of which have been implemented for a long time – must now have a migration component because that's how you get funding.

Take a job creation programme in a rural area. In order to get it funded, we will argue that it addresses the root causes of migration by creating jobs. This will reduce the rate of immigration. But it's well known that such programmes, for a variety of reasons, usually encourage migration rather than discourage it. The justification no longer holds water even though such programmes remain core to development work. It's just one example of how European phobia is diverting development aid in service of this EU migration agenda.

For the same reasons NGOs that never used to have anything to do with this have suddenly started speaking in the language of migration.





## Should the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa be considered a development programme?



Bram Frouws

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is more balanced on paper than in practice. On paper it combines elements of development, managing legal and safe migration, and addressing root causes with elements to reduce irregular migration. But in practice it's bent towards migration governance, migration management, reducing irregular migration, and reducing migrant smuggling.

It's also not new money. The trust fund's money all comes out of the European development fund, so it was already allocated to development. It has now simply been relabelled as a trust fund for addressing the root causes of migration. One can be pragmatic about that and say, 'if it leads to properly designed, effective, and well-functioning development projects then who cares how it is labelled'.

For me this is problematic. The issue is that money will increasingly go towards countries of relevance from a migration point of view, yet important countries of origin or transit are not always where development is most needed. For example, the development money that used to go to low-income countries like Malawi now goes to middle-income countries like Tunisia. This is because the former is not as important from a migration point of view as the latter. That's a big issue.

## Is the EU's focus on migration at least leading to effective programming?



Jean-Pierre Gauci

The answer to this will depend on how one defines effectiveness. As my colleague Idel Hanley has put it, these programmes frame migration – rather than the causes of forced displacement, the loss of life or human rights violations – as the 'problem' to be addressed. Any assessment of effectiveness is therefore starting from the wrong premise. The EU's primary goal is to stop people from coming in, and the main way it does that is through its relationship with Libya, Turkey, and other places. A few things are worth noting here. First, these agreements have themselves been in violation of international law including the principle of non-refoulement. Second, they've made Europe vulnerable to 'threats' by regimes in these states.

There's also the European Union Emergency Trust Funds, which, cynically, pays other countries to stop people from departing to Europe. It doesn't really matter if a country does that by improving economic prospects and thereby reducing the need for people to leave, or by closing their border. To an extent it is up to them, as long as it results in people not coming to Europe. There is a significant focus within the funded programmes on measures to stop onward migration towards Europe.

I find this problematic. We're not necessarily funding what we think a country needs to sustainably enhance the livelihoods of its nationals, but rather what we think they need to do to stop people from leaving. In some cases these two overlap – if you have better employment prospects in countries that are relatively safe, then migration might also reduce (although this is not a linear relationship). In other areas, like border management, these factors obviously don't relate. It often feels as if the EU has gone in two seemingly opposite directions at the same time. One seeks to deal with the root causes of migration while the other tries to stop people arriving now. I think initiatives that help make countries of origin safe and developed are critically important. However, they must focus on issues of under-development, insecurity and conflict rather than curbing

migration as their main goal. Of course, this is not something that will be done within a few years. In the meantime, Europe (and other regions) must abide by their obligations including non-refoulement and the right to asylum.

Some of the measures that have been implemented do not, in my view, reflect the reality of the situation. Take awareness campaigns. There was a large one in Niger recently about the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean by boat. But do we really think that anyone believes this is safe and that somehow being told it's unsafe will stop people from wanting to leave? These measures assume a lack of knowledge of risks and 'willingness' or agency to migrate, both of which are inaccurate. Other measures, such as the return of people – including, for instance, victims of trafficking from Libya to other states of origin, without adequate access to assessment of protection claims – raise very serious concerns about the EU's (and its member states') adherence to their international obligations and their responsibility, albeit indirectly, for violations of human rights.

The programming that has been taking place is about externalising migration control. This has implications in terms of framing it as an 'over there

problem' and in terms of shifting responsibility (although not absolving EU member states completely) to other countries. This is the wrong priority and the wrong frame of mind if we want effective humanitarian and development programming.

Moreover, programming that takes 'migration' as the problem rather than the root causes of displacement (human rights violations, conflict, under-development, climate change) or indeed the loss of lives will result in the wrong things being prioritised. That sort of short-term thinking will never address the real root causes of displacement, just as long-term thinking will never create instant results. Addressing root causes will not reduce arrivals now. Maybe in ten or fifteen years, but not now. That is where the contradiction lies. To have any sort of lasting results we need to think about long-term development solutions. But because that won't have an immediate effect, many politicians prioritise blocking people from coming in instead (not least in response to short term political / vote-related priorities).

On this question, another issue that is worth mentioning is the way programmes and projects are monitored and evaluated. Adherence to and promotion of human rights standards ought to be included in the measurement of success of programmes and projects in this field.



# Is Europe out of ideas on migration?

## Is securitisation the only policy idea on the board, or can more progressive thinking be found in certain parts of Europe?



Bram Frouws

To be honest, no. And that's a missed opportunity. If you think about the meaning of the word 'crisis' in Greek, it could have been a turning point. It was a chance to make significant changes in the way we approach migration. But that didn't happen. Instead what happened was the introduction of measures, policies, and actions to quickly regain control of the situation.

To an extent that is understandable. What happened in 2015 was quite extreme in terms of numbers. Suddenly more than a million people came to Europe through irregular means, so you can see why people felt that extreme measures were needed to get the situation under control. But once it was under control, and it is under control right now, it should be completely manageable for a rich continent like Europe to deal with the low number of new arrivals while introducing smart and more rational migration policies. Yet it still all seems very piecemeal, very ad hoc. The fact that people still live under terrible conditions in camps on the Greek islands shows that we haven't made progress on implementing a more progressive approach for migration.

To be a bit more positive, I do think that this will have to change in the near future. The populations of many European countries are aging rapidly and there will be shortages in certain sectors of the labour market. The demand for migrant labour will be unavoidable and policies will need to address that. So at some point countries will need to invest in legal migration channels. Some are doing it already, even in eastern Europe where we see a lot of anti-immigration rhetoric. The number of work permits issued by countries like Hungary is breaking records at the

moment. They're primarily going to people from Ukraine and Belarus, but also to people from countries further away like Vietnam. It seems that, as long as they're not from the Middle East, labour migrants can come to these countries – because they're needed. So we can imagine that, as this pressure increases, we'll end up in a situation of global competition for labour migrants. Europe will have to compete against emerging economies like China, Brazil or Russia to attract labour to their shores. That will create a push for more progressive policies.

It's also always important to remember that irregular migration is actually a relatively small phenomenon when compared with the total scale of global human mobility. Many people assume that the number of irregular and regular migrants in the world is roughly the same, but that's very far from the truth. The number of irregular migrants is, and has always been, small.

## Is the European Union running out of solutions?



Jean-Pierre Gauci

I don't think Europe is running out of ideas. I think Europe is running out of the will to seriously look at those ideas. We are in a phase where the governments are avoiding engaging with real solutions that are in line with Europe's values and international obligations. Instead, they are seeking short term solutions and part of that comes from the fact that, too often, solutions to migration issues have been left to individual states with no real 'European solutions' being taken forward. It also comes from the wrong premise of what the problem is that states are trying to solve.

This is, in part, related to Europe going from crisis to crisis: from the financial crisis to the so-called 'migration crisis' and now the crisis relating to Covid-19 and the economic crisis that's likely to follow. These various crises have, I think, eroded the con-

fidence in the underlying premise of the European Union, which is of solidarity and seeking shared solutions. This is coupled with populist governments (whether overtly so or otherwise) being in power in various European countries. Europe isn't in a strong place at the moment and Brexit furthers that fear. We are seeing regressive measures being taken, not only as regards migration, but also more generally in various European countries with Hungary being a prime example.

However, the ideas, none of which are rocket science, are there. They have been there. They include equitable long-term development assistance, equitable responsibility sharing in Europe, active engagement with diaspora communities, empow-

ering migrant communities to contribute to European economies etc. But these measures need the political will, funding and resourcing to be taken forward. This is where I think Europe is stuck at the moment.

Beyond states, ideas and solutions will also come from within the European Union member states. We have seen individuals and communities providing solutions (for example through contributing to [legal pathways to protection](#)), and NGOs and other civil society organisations also proposing ideas for how to move things forward. Europe must reach out to its citizens through NGOs and other communities, as well as to its [cities, large and small](#).







Carrots and sticks:  
how the EU tries to  
keep Africans in Africa

# Sticks: preventing mobility through security and policing

## Is there a link between migration and security?



Olawale Ismail

The link is not straight forward. It's complex. This is another area where there has been unnecessary panic from Europe and the West. Historically, cross-border movement has been part and parcel of life in Africa. People have moved for centuries. The partitioning of Africa after the Berlin Conference in 1885 left ethnic groups spread over artificial borders. In these circumstances it is better to rely on identity rather than nationality – nationality is embedded in boundaries whereas identity goes beyond boundaries. People tap into identity networks when there are crises. Whether these crises are refugee flows, food shortages, climate change, flooding, natural disasters, or fiscal emergencies, identity networks are important coping mechanisms.

It is only recently that migration has been seen as a big issue. This first started when Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda moved to Sudan. Then, in the last decade or so, the international community – or rather the major powers – relocated their national security boundaries to Africa. So, after 9/11, with the West proactively pursuing terrorists, migration in Africa became securitised. Only in the last 20 years or so do you find the phrase 'porous borders' being used, because up until then it was not particularly significant that African borders were porous.

Faced with the perceived threat of trans-border terrorism, the Americans and the EU demanded stronger borders. I'm not denying bad guys cross borders, but I am arguing that the policy narrative that migration is a threat to peace and security, to stability, has been imported into Africa. So, when you look at the xenophobic violence towards migrants in South Africa, you can see how, as in the US and Europe, migration has become a part of national politics. Governments are scapegoating migrants to distract from their failure to uphold part of the social contract, or to provide security for their citizens.

## How does the EU try to contain 'irregular' migration in the Sahel?



Eva Magdalena Stambøl

EU aid to Africa, and to the Sahel region in particular, has become incrementally re-directed from development to security. Notably, it is channeled towards a type of assistance that criminologists have referred to as 'penal aid,' namely aid to fix the 'flawed penalty' of 'fragile states' so as to make them more effective in countering transnational security threats.

This trend was accelerated by the so-called 'migration crisis' of 2015 and the establishment of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) – the aim of which is to mainstream migration management in all EU external action. Most of the EUTF's now €4.7 billion in funding goes to development-oriented projects such as job creation in areas from which migrants travelling to Europe originate. Yet a substantial amount of funds is also channeled towards security objectives – namely, fighting 'irregular migration,' 'human trafficking,' and 'migrant smuggling.'

According to the EU, 'irregular migration' refers to the movement of persons to a new place of residence or transit that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. In international law, 'migrant smuggling' is defined as assisting a migrant to enter a country irregularly in exchange for financial or material benefit. The scope of the crime of 'migrant smuggling' has been expanding within Europe, and it now encompasses activities that aid migrants *without* any benefit in return. Although the definition of migrant smuggling in domestic law varies across member states, the offence can incorporate what would usually be defined as humanitarian action. 'Human trafficking,' on the other hand, essentially refers to the exploitation, including coercion or the use of force, of a person for purposes such as prostitution or slavery. It is a violent crime against a person – not a state – and there are no require-



ments to cross a border. Trafficking and smuggling are distinct crimes and distinct phenomena in real life. However, EU projects in Africa tend to conflate these three phenomena. There is now a substantial number of EU projects across Africa that seek to combat this 'triangle' of mobile illegalities simultaneously. For instance, the cross-regional, multi-country project 'GLO.ACT' received €11 million from the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument to assist countries to transpose the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime's protocols on migrant smuggling and human trafficking into national laws and the development of national crime policies. This project also has a component on helping victims of trafficking.

Another cross-country project is the West African Police Information System, implemented by INTERPOL to help West African countries develop digital criminal databases and intelligence sharing between national police agencies as well as with European counterparts. Similarly, Frontex is involved through the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Commu-

nity, gathering intelligence and doing risk analyses of how migration-related crimes evolve. Additionally, numerous projects are implemented at country level. For example, a €30 million project has embedded EU judicial experts inside Niger's Ministry of Justice to help with countering organised crime, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. In the same country, a €11.5 million project funds Spanish and French police officers to support their Nigerien counterparts in investigations. EU member states have even created 'security development agencies' specialised in training and assisting internal security actors. One such outfit is France's semi-private agency Civipol, which manages €143 million in EU contracts mainly in Francophone West Africa. These are just some examples of a growing trend whereby EU aid is used to fight crime in Africa.

Also, EU Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, which traditionally dealt with state-building and security sector reform, are increasingly geared towards enhancing African states' capabilities to fight 'crimes of mobility.' The most visible of these,



and the only mission with an executive mandate, was the naval mission EUNAVFOR Sophia in the Mediterranean. This was tasked with breaking the business model of smugglers by destroying vessels, intercepting smugglers, and training the Libyan coast guard. This mission's mandate ended on 31 March 2020. Yet, CSDP missions with mandates to train and reform the police forces in Niger and Mali are now progressively training border guards, equipping the security infrastructure of borders, and aiding the investigation of 'migrant smugglers' and 'human traffickers'.

These missions also engage at the ministerial level, assisting in the revision of penal codes and drafting security policies and action plans in the Ministries of Interior and Justice. This is specifically the case for EUCAP Niger, which has an antenna in Agadez, a town through which hundreds of thousands of migrants have passed on their way to Algeria, Libya and Europe. Agadez is now the battleground for the Nigerien government's fight against migrant smugglers.

Looking at the types of projects funded by EU aid, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a rather security-oriented approach to irregular mobility driven by internal EU motives. While there are projects to assist victims of human trafficking, these seem outnumbered by those designed to enhance police and intelligence capabilities. In the case of the Sahel, there also seems to be less EU engagement in building transparency and accountability in the justice and security sectors, and minimal involvement in the prison sector – where the alleged smugglers, traffickers, and sometimes irregular migrants, end up.

## How has the Libyan crisis affected migration policy?



Monica Massari

Not as much as you might think. While the European Union has had to adapt some of its policies and practices in light of the crisis in Libya, its overall approach to

African migrants transiting through Libya has not substantially changed.

The EU and particularly Italy, Libya's main partner within the Mediterranean region, have sought to externalise their southern borders into Libya since the early 2000s. This method of deterring arrivals from Africa has been pursued at very high human cost. It has increasingly infringed on migrants and asylum seekers' rights and led to an unprecedented loss of life. The smuggling and trafficking industry, in comparison with the Gaddafi era, is now completely out of control. Currently in Libya there appear to be more than 500,000 migrants and refugees [in need of humanitarian assistance](#). Of these over 20,000 are allegedly confined in [detention centres](#) where they face severe abuse, torture and even execution.

Despite all of this the EU and some member states, such as Italy, have continued to use Libya as its border guard. Indeed, in some ways they have doubled down on that approach. Declaring that their actions are rooted in a desire to save lives and counter human trafficking, they have recently converted their *push-back* policy of migrants intercepted in the Mediterranean into a *pull-back* practice. As one [UN report](#) explained, pull-backs are design to “physically prevent migrants from leaving the territory of their State of origin or a transit State [...], or to forcibly return them to that territory, before they can reach the jurisdiction of their destination State [...]”.

In the current context of statelessness and lack of institutional responsibility, the externalisation of migration border controls has not only shaped and boosted Libya's criminal economy of violence, but also caused transnational displacement and forced migration in itself. The closure of sea routes and the increased number of interceptions at sea have led to a dramatic growth in the number of migrants and asylum seekers currently detained in both official and illegal detention centres. As a reward for their political support, [members of armed groups and criminal gangs](#) have been appointed by Libyan institutions to manage most of these centres or hired

as officers in the coast guard – which is trained, equipped and financed by the EU and the Italian government. As such, European policy on smuggling and trafficking acts as an economic incentive for everyone involved – legally or illegally – in migrant-related security activities.

The hardening and militarisation of borders have also made the services of smugglers and a wide array of *passeeur* and facilitators indispensable. Routes are becoming increasingly fatal and migrants' only chance for survival is to rely on them. Paradoxically, all the forces arrayed to prevent these migrants from making their journeys – external border controls, interceptions, detentions, deportations, etc. – do not achieve their goal of keeping migrants in their countries of origin, nor to stop them in Libya. There is plenty of evidence that these practices cause [further displacement](#), and in doing so they dramatically increase the already high human, civil and moral costs of current Euro-African border control policies.

## How do states use statelessness to deter migration?



Aimée-Noël  
Mbiyozo

Statelessness means not being considered a citizen of any sovereign state. In Africa, there is an overlap between statelessness and an even larger undocumented population, since many face severe restrictions in accessing documentation whether or not their citizenship is contested.

You're starting to see statehood and nationality being instrumentalised against people. People are more documented than they've ever been. There's a drive for people to carry ID documents, including

in places where historically ID wasn't carried – such as by nomads living in desert areas. Often bureaucratic obstacles to obtaining formal documentation are as problematic as the denial of citizenship. People often discover that their nationality is contested when they first apply for identity documents. South Africa, for example, has been using restrictions to try to reduce migration flows from neighbouring countries. This policy shift reflects deepening political and social xenophobia within South Africa. I argue in a [briefing paper on statelessness in southern Africa](#) that South African politicians – mirroring populist politicians in Europe – are using exclusion as a political tool. Promising to remove foreigners wins political favour and votes.

Whilst South Africa has quite progressive immigration laws, the administration of those laws is restrictive. Migrants in South Africa struggle to access their rights and administrators create barriers to frustrate irregular migrants. Currently, the registration by migrants of children born in South Africa is being targeted. Existing laws only allow for modified birth certificates where one parent does not have valid proof of identification. And children of at least one South African parent have been denied birth certificates and citizenship for a lack of documentation.

In 2018, the Department of Home Affairs called for the replacement of birth certificates for children of foreign parents with 'birth confirmations.' The proposals would put the burden on foreigners living in South Africa to register their child's birth at the diplomatic mission of their own country of origin. Yet refugees and asylum seekers cannot easily approach embassies without jeopardising their status or exposing themselves to actual harm. And embassies often charge unaffordable fees for identity documents. This is a deliberate policy to sanction parents for irregular migration and deter others.

# Carrots: preventing mobility by improving livelihoods

**The EU's strategy is to trade development assistance for secure borders within Africa.**

**Can this strategy work?**



Otilia Anna  
Maunganidze

By externalising the securitisation of migration, the EU is essentially extending its borders, and the problems that come with them. A good example is in West Africa. Free movement exists within the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This means there's no financial incentive to smuggle someone between Benin and Nigeria, for example, because people can move themselves. Meanwhile, attempts to secure Niger's northern border with Libya and Algeria, which are not part of ECOWAS, have created big business for smugglers.

European policymakers need to take the realities of African migration into account and understand that externalising its borders will not reduce migrant numbers. It just criminalises the migrant journey and makes it more dangerous. That's not ideal. Europe needs labour, and that labour should be allowed to migrate to Europe by legal means. The securitised approach also means that Europe is less likely to receive the kind of migrants it needs.

Please don't get me wrong – there is nothing necessarily wrong with Europe wanting to protect its territorial integrity. Not at all. The issue comes in when the protection of that territorial integrity stretches into other territories. Europe's borders end at the edge of continental Europe and not on the African continent. They definitely don't divide Niger from Libya, and by attempting to extend its reach Europe inadvertently contributes to instability in Africa. The situation in Libya is a case in

point. The extent of human rights violations against migrants in the country would not be as great if the EU had not co-opted the Libyan coast guard – if we can call them that – into managing migration on its behalf. This short-term policy will have long-term consequences. If we don't address these issues in a sustainable way then it will be more difficult to rebuild the Libyan state and advance security and stability in the Sahel and North Africa.

There are ways the EU can encourage safe, orderly migration while discouraging the criminalisation of migration. It's a careful balance that needs to be struck, but that would be more sustainable and have a better impact on stability, security and development than current approaches.

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**“Europe's borders end at the edge of continental Europe and not on the African continent.”**

— Otilia Anna Maunganidze

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In terms of the development quid pro quo, Niger is a good example. The Nigerien state collaborates with the EU in some areas, but Nigerien society isn't necessarily involved in the processes nor do they agree with this approach. As such, there is a disconnect between the state, which is meant to serve the people, and the population. Likewise, the Rwandan government has agreed to act as a third-party return country – where non-Rwandans are being repatriated to Rwanda from Europe. Questions have been raised as to whether Rwanda allows this out of altruism or because of the political mileage this generates with Europe.

## Will development assistance effectively lower migration?



Olawale Ismail

I will try to give you an African perspective on migration. I want to undercut some of the assumptions about migration into Europe that are not grounded in Africa's empirical realities. Migration from

Africa to Europe – it has less to do with 'underlying drivers' than with the choices made by individuals. The choice to try for Europe or to stay in Africa. Until you understand that you're not going to effectively address migration into Europe from Africa.

The rationales behind the EU's strategy are misguided. For example, the assumption that people migrate because they are poor. This is not necessarily the case. Take Nigeria. Nigerians who have been detained in Libya are mainly from southern Nigeria, where there is much less poverty than in the north. Also, there has been serious insecurity in the north over the past ten years, but again you struggle to find refugees from the north travelling to Libya. If migration was caused by poverty then this would be different.

This can be explained by the simple fact that migration isn't cheap. Talking to migrants who made the journey, the trip from Nigeria initially costs on average about \$2,000. The migrants need to pay for transport and they need to pay to be smuggled across the border into Libya. Many of them have to send home again for money after crossing the border because they were shaken down somewhere en-route. So, the cost goes up to \$4,000. That's a lot of money for an ordinary Nigerian. And it is why the wealthier southern Nigerians make the trip and not the poorer northerners. There is a minimum income or asset threshold that is necessary to migrate. If you don't have the money, you can't make the journey.

We've seen the EU intervene to try to secure the borders between African states, including by pro-

viding funding and equipment to ill-defined militias in Libya. And we've seen what the outcome of that has been. Some of those militia are actually part of criminal networks. Most specialise in smuggling or, for a fee, they'll take bribes to let migrants through. There have also been some cases of migrants being detained and sold into slavery. We've seen all of it. We've seen the unintended consequences of poorly thought-out intervention. The EU needs to do something, or at least look like it's doing something.

African states may accept money for training border guards or for biometric fingerprint scanning at borders. Yet, whilst states are happy to accept funding, it doesn't fundamentally alter their policies. That has always been the reality of bilateral, or even multilateral, engagement in Africa. And it's important to note that while criticism of the EU is often muted, Africa leaders do speak up against the EU's strategy in Africa. For example, there was robust pushback at the African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan in 2017, where African leaders accused the EU of funding the Libyan detention centres at the heart of a scandal in which detained migrants were being sold as slaves. Yet even when leaders articulate positions on migration that more authentically reflect the African reality, the EU sticks to its own particular assumptions about the issue.

No matter how much the EU pumps into African countries to mitigate migration flows, I doubt it will be enough. It's not going to be a game changer. Because, you cannot stop migration. It is a fact of life. Also, migration cannot be isolated from broader national realities. Most migrants are in their late teens and twenties. Nobody wakes up and decides to go to Europe. There are effective social networks that enable migration, sell the vision, inform people how to go about it, explain the costs and how to raise the money and all of that. EU-funded entrepreneurial skills training for a few hundred people a year is not going to outweigh the influence of these networks.



## Do African states buy into the EU strategy or do they treat it instrumentally?



Charles Obila

Well, there could be an element of opportunism as it is difficult to turn down funding when it is offered. That said, it is not as clear as black and white. Over the recent past, there has been a growing momentum towards integration. In 2018 the Continental Free Trade Areas and the Continental Free Movement of Persons Protocol were adopted by the AU summit. While the CFTA has been ratified by 28 states and is now in force, the Free Movement Protocol is lagging behind with just four ratifications: Mali, Benin, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Príncipe. This could in part be because

of the influence of the migration crisis narrative or perhaps there is less political will in Africa for free movement of people than free trade.

The EU also prefers dealing with specific states or specific Regional Economic Communities (RECs) rather than the continent as a whole. If you look at the projects funded by the EU Trust Fund, you'll see that countries of strategic interest to the EU in ECOWAS, MENA and IGAD are benefitting the most. Countries in the East African Community and SADC receive almost nothing. Yet, some countries are increasingly hesitant about accepting EU funding. My understanding is that a number of West African states are more and more disappointed with how the EU is delivering its side of the bargain. Majority of African countries for example have refused to sign agreements on return and readmissions despite funding incentives.



# FOCUS: The Youth Empowerment Project



Baboucarr Sallah

I am part of the team at the [Youth Empowerment Project](#) (YEP) in The Gambia. Overall, YEP is working on improving employability and self-employment opportunities for youth through entrepreneurship and skills development; increasing employment opportunities along selected value chains and promoting the concept “Tekki Fii – Make it here”: Make it in The Gambia.

Regarding entrepreneurship, we’re supporting quite a wide range of enterprises: agro-processing, retail, tourism, creative industries, information and communications technology. We’re also trying to support young people to develop marketable skills. At the end of the day, trainees will have to either decide whether to join the labour market as employees or start their own business.

In terms of supporting young entrepreneurs who are new to running their own business, one approach is to use the [Empretec](#) model. Empretec is the capacity-building programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) that supports the inclusive growth of micro, small and medium sized enterprises. Participants attend workshops to develop basic business skills such as book-keeping. The experience is also intended to motivate young entrepreneurs and build self-confidence.

Alongside skills training, the YEP offers material help to Gambian businesses. The Access to Finance initiative works with businesses at all stages. Our mini-grant scheme, implemented by The National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions of The Gambia (NACCUG), has so far supported more than 250 start-ups with the equivalent of \$1,000 in seed money each. Support is not provided as cash, but in the form of materials and equipment.

We also offer technical guidance and support, and we monitor these new businesses so that we can intervene if there are any problems. One sector that has particularly benefitted is poultry farming. We

have 45 or 50 entrepreneurs involved in poultry farming, and most of them doing well.

I can give you [the example of one recipient of funding, also called Baboucarr](#). He started off as a migrant on the ‘backway’, the overland route to the coast. He had a traumatic journey that lasted over two years, and at one point he was held hostage in Libya until his family sold their property to pay his ransom. On return to The Gambia, he set up a small poultry business with just 85 chicks. He successfully applied for a mini-grant through the YEP and submitted invoices for 300 chickens, feeding equipment and chicken feed amounting to about \$850. The NACCUG, partnering with ITC, bought the goods and supplied them to Baboucarr. His business now has nine employees and made \$1,300 in profit in its first year.

As well as the mini-grant scheme, there is a mini-loan scheme implemented by the Social Development Fund (SDF). This is aimed at growing existing businesses. Collateral requirements are less stringent than the private sector and interest rates are about half those charged by the banks. Loans need to be paid back within a year.

A third finance mechanism is called the Gambian Angels Investment Network (GAIN). This is aimed at established businesses too large to receive mini-grants or mini-loans. The idea is to connect these businesses with so-called ‘angels’, who are wealthy Gambian investors looking for high-potential businesses in which to invest.

The initiative was set up by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the African Business Angel Network and the Gambian Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA). GAIN follows in the footsteps of similar initiatives in Mali, Benin and Senegal. Its initial target is to bring together between ten and fifteen local and diaspora-based investors to fund between eight and twelve early and growth-stage start-ups. GAIN has received support from the YEP, but will eventually become self-sustaining.

### What is the profile of the YEP's intended beneficiaries?

Only a few of the technical training programmes require degree-level education. Many of the young entrepreneurs don't have basic education, and some don't speak or write English. So, most of our training programmes are delivered in local languages or in basic English. Also, we aim to support businesses throughout the country rather than just in the coastal areas. There is huge potential in the rural areas.

In terms of education, there is a complimentary project, the Tekki-Fii or 'Make it in The Gambia' project. Like the YEP, this is funded by the EU Trust Fund. Between them the projects will receive about €13 million between 2019 and February 2021. The project is aimed at those aged between 15-35 and not in employment, education, or skills training. It especially targets returning migrants and those thinking of migrating. It wants to change the perception of young people from seeing their future abroad to seeing their future in The Gambia.

Importantly, following assessment, the training can lead to a Gambia Skills Qualification Framework certificate accredited by the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority. Tekki Fii also actively tries to link training with getting a job. 'Enter the Labour Market' workshops are held alongside

skills training to improve communication and interpersonal skills. The idea of the certificates and ELM workshops is to motivate the trainees to find a job or become self-employed. The target is for 1,200 trainees to complete the ELM workshops by the end of the Tekki-Fii project in 2021. It is funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and implemented by the ITC, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr (IMVF) and the Belgian Development Agency, Enabel. The project builds on existing EU-funded initiatives such as the YEP and the EU-IOM [Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration](#).

The main reason returnees give for migrating is the search for better opportunities abroad. So, the YEP is looking to unleash the potential of youth without them leaving the country through risky routes. Give them a real alternative to the risky overland and oversea journey. Migration is by choice, and we cannot stop people from migrating. But we have an obligation to make sure that, before they migrate, young people are aware of the opportunities at home. Whether they explore these opportunities is up to them. But, from what I have seen through the YEP's advocacy work, young people have changed their perception towards risky migration and are, instead, trying out opportunities here.



# Do such programmes achieve the EU's goals?

## Why have migrant numbers dropped if, as you argue, EU policy has not been successful?



Olawale Ismail

First, awareness and education. I think campaigns such as the one by CNN on slavery has penetrated to the grassroots. A lot more people who didn't understand the perils of the journey are now aware.

Second, the security situation in Libya. This has become a lot worse in terms of the fighting, killings, slavery, detention, etc. Third, states have increased their border security. This is partly a result of EU pressure I would think, but it also has to do with limiting the movement of jihadi terrorists, some of whom are also involved in human trafficking.

Also, people *are* still migrating. I think there has been a switch from migration to Europe to intra-African migration. People are still leaving The Gambia, Nigeria, etc. But since the journey to Europe has become a lot more dangerous, a lot more expensive, and the chances of success have gone way down, people are migrating to other African countries.

## Is the EU's strategy sustainable?



Bram Frouws

We have seen a decrease in north-bound migration from sub-Saharan Africa towards Europe. That's a clear trend. We're also seeing more involuntarily immobile migrants who have become stranded

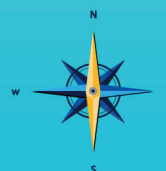
in certain places. For example, people who have arrived in Libya but are not able to leave. It's unclear whether the flows towards North Africa have really reduced or have just become less visible because we don't see them arriving in Europe anymore. Eritreans are still leaving Eritrea and refugee camps in Ethiopia in large numbers, but we don't see them arriving in Italy anymore. Where exactly are they along the route through Sudan and southern Lib-

ya? On the West African side, we've clearly seen a big decrease in flows through Niger, especially through places like Agadez. In 2015 an anti-smuggling law was introduced which basically criminalised migrant smugglers and put a lot of them out of business. Their vehicles were confiscated and many were put in jail. This really had an impact on irregular migration flows. The numbers have gone down, but whether that has translated into reduced numbers entering Libya is less clear. All we really know is that EU pressure on countries like Niger has reduced or at least diverted the flow of people that was passing through them.

As demonstrated in last year's [Mixed Migration Review](#), the securitisation of migration is present at every step of the journey. It's ironic that while insecurity helps drive migration, migrants face securitised conditions all the way to their destination. This might have some short-term gains in terms of reduced numbers of migrants. But I think in the longer term these gains will come at the cost of more instability, which will itself lead to more irregular migration. This is what we see in a place like Niger. Disrupting the smuggling business around Agadez has stranded people in the country and increased tensions between migrants and host communities. Former smugglers are out of business, they're unemployed. They are potentially susceptible to recruitment into the jihadist groups active in that area. I think all in all, this is really a vicious cycle that shows that a blanket securitised approach to migration is not going to work. Interestingly, a [report by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee](#) came to the same conclusion.

In short, I think there is an imbalance between the various actors involved the migration issue. Whilst there is a need for a comprehensive approach, at present the conversation is circular. African countries say, 'we'd like more legal migration channels, more work visas for the EU'. The EU says, 'we're not offering those unless you accept returns and failed asylum seekers'. And the Africans respond, 'well, we won't take returns unless we get more legal migration'. Someone needs to break the cycle.





African policy:  
balancing cooperation  
and resistance

# African responses to the EU's agenda

## What is Africa's overall position on migration?



Aderanti Adepoju

Politics in Africa is a thorny issue and migration is not always at the top of the agenda for a number of reasons. Some countries in the Sahel see migration as a relief to the pressures of the labour market. Other countries like Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire do not have adequate statistics and cannot provide planners with up-to-date information on migration flows. I have also found the responses of African states to vary along the lines of the old colonial regimes. In Francophone countries, for example, the migration issue is largely influenced by France. This is true when it comes to their philosophy, technical capacity and policy-making. That is why you find that migration from Francophone West Africa is almost uniformly routed towards France.

More generally, African states have adopted a *laissez-faire* approach to migration. This was evident in the attitudes of the African officials attending the Euro-African Dialogue on Development and Migration, as well as in the failure of African states to develop a comprehensive migration policy. Nigeria first devised a migration policy in 2007, but only ratified it in 2015. It was only then that other countries like Rwanda, Ghana, Liberia, Uganda and South Africa started to develop their own migration policies and programmes.

The problem with many of these policies is the lack of sustainability and ownership by African states. Indeed, many of these programmes were funded by the EU through the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The same goes for the meetings organised to discuss this issue. As a result, we tend to get policies that are Eurocentric and emphasise the destination point of view of migration, whereas Africa should be focusing on the country-of-origin perspective of migration. This is what is needed for migration to become a win-win process.

## The term 'migration crisis' is common in Europe. Do

## African states see it this way?



Charles Obila

There are two sides to it. I think the creation of the narrative around the 'crisis' does not correspond with the African understanding of migration. This is because African migration is more regional than between continents. The International Labour Organisation estimates that over 80% of African migration occurs within the African continent. This is highest in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, which has had the longest history of free mobility as a result of the Free Movement of Persons Protocol adopted back in 1979. It's also true for the IGAD states in the East and Horn regions of Africa.

In 2015, there were many pockets of conflict across the globe and in Africa as well. So, the 'crisis' itself was largely defined in Eurocentric terms. As numbers were increasing in the Mediterranean, countries in the East and Horn of Africa were responding to regional conflicts and related disasters. For example, Uganda registered almost a million refugees in 2015. And that is just one country. Ethiopia saw large increases in refugee flows from South Sudan. The same for Kenya. States could not close their doors. And no country in the IGAD region did close their doors to refugees from South Sudan or Somalia. Those borders have remained largely open. I know Kenya threatened to close Dadaab refugee camp in 2016. But even then, a solution was found where only those who were willing to return were helped to return. So, both in their perception of migration flows and their response, states in the IGAD region were not part of this narrative of 'crisis'.

If anything, more countries in the region have revised their refugee management policies to provide refugees with more opportunities for inclusion particularly in education, livelihoods and health.

We do not see migration as a crisis. In fact, in IGAD we're currently negotiating a protocol on free movement of persons that is intended to promote the circulation of people within the region. Why? Because if you go into the border areas between IGAD countries, basically the same ethnic communities are living on both sides of the border. Mobility is a permanent feature of cross-border community life and trade volumes are high in those areas. Is there a 'security' crisis? Yes, there are some security challenges. But I would not call it a threat to the national sovereignty of IGAD member states. I think for us, mobility and migration will still remain a permanent feature.

### **What is IGAD's position on the European response to the supposed crisis?**

We have to go back to the African Union-European Union continental dialogue of 2015. The 2015 Valletta Summit adopted the Joint Valletta Action Plan and established the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to operationalise it. The action plan identified five priority domains: development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration; promoting regular channels for migration; protection and asylum; preventing irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking; and return and admission. However, if you listen carefully to the dialogue, I think the summit was fundamentally divided. The African group was keen on expanding regular pathways for migration while the EU was keen on addressing irregular migration flows, trafficking and smuggling – mainly through securitisation and development support.

In terms of support for development, research indicates that up to a certain level of development migration tends to increase. So, there is a fundamental misconception on the part of the EU that supporting development will lead to less migration. I also think that we should not aim to do away with migration, but rather deal with the challenges associated with irregular migration. In my opinion, the best way to address irregular migration is to expand

channels for regular migration. If migrants have the means, but don't have expanded pathways for regular migration, they will find smugglers to facilitate their movement.

When it comes to securitisation, of course, a lot of EU money has been spent to address irregular migration. If you go to the [trust fund's website](#), you'll find that the Horn and West Africa are the largest recipients of funding. However, it's unclear how effective some of this programming has been. For example, border security has been emphasised and guards have been trained to more rigorously check documents at the border. Some people have been arrested because they were not carrying the proper documentation, but most of the time they have turned out to be from states with free movement or labour movement bilateral agreements. In other words, they were travelling legally, they just didn't have the right papers. This is quite common. I can give you the example of Kenya and Ethiopia, which have a bilateral agreement dating back to the 1970s. Ethiopians trying to cross into Kenya are now being arrested because they don't have the correct documentation, and not because they've committed any offence. So on the one hand you can say that the trainings have had their intended effect: border guards are now performing their jobs to a higher standard. But on the other hand, you can rightly ask if this money has been well spent if the majority of people getting caught turn out to be false positives. People's legal rights are being infringed upon because the training programme didn't adequately account for the documentation issue.

We are seeing this more and more: migrants are ending up in detention because they don't have the right documentation. And this comes down to incompetent bureaucracy in African states. Mobility frameworks are negotiated but then don't function properly. So, in my view some securitisation measures are misplaced. They need to offer real security, not create barriers to beneficial labour mobility.



## How have governments and civil society in the Sahel responded to the EU strategy?



Eva Magdalena Stambøl

Migration is a contested issue in Africa-EU relations. African governments do not tend to have much interest in stopping migrants from travelling to Europe beyond attracting EU aid monies conditioned upon it. On the contrary, remittances from the diasporas in Europe are crucial for these states and generally bring in far more revenue than development aid does. Travelling mi-

The willingness to actually implement projects and to change the penal sector, however, varies greatly. It seems to depend on whether the project aims at a comprehensive restructuring and reforming of criminal justice institutions or merely the enhancement of security and intelligence capabilities and equipment to fight crime. While the former is notoriously difficult, and state apparatuses often 'lack willingness' to transform, support for enhancing security capacities is often welcomed. It also seems that EU aid and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions are increasingly geared towards the latter: building border security and short term, *ad hoc* capabilities to more effectively fight crime. A sort of 'state-building lite'.

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“The EU’s re-direction of aid may contribute to creating African ‘security states’ – entrenching elites in power by bolstering their internal security capabilities”

— Eva Magdalena Stambøl

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grants also spend money and create livelihood opportunities for local communities along the routes. Moreover, intra-African migration has been a long-standing and vital strategy of survival, especially in the semi-desert and semi-nomadic region of the Sahel. This divergence in interests is perhaps most explicit in the negotiations around readmitting expelled migrants. Some African countries have outright refused to cooperate – as doing so would make governments very unpopular at home.

It is, however, a bit different when it comes to [penal aid](#), which seems to be much more welcome to African governments. In fact, aid for internal security always comes at the request of the beneficiary.

African states are not just passive recipients of EU aid, nor are they forced into becoming the EU’s border guards – although that task tends to come with a financial benefit and the EU increasingly relies on conditionality to make African governments cooperate. Some state leaders actively seek out security assistance to build their state’s internal security capacity and thus their ability to govern territory and populations. This aid inevitably ends up serving state leaders’ interests whether aligned with that of a majority of their constituencies or not. [Researchers](#) have noted that in countries such as Niger, police and security forces have not only taken bribes from and harassed traveling migrants, but they have also been used to crack down on civil



society and political opposition. Some civil society members have been repeatedly arrested and falsely accused of terrorism and coup attempts. This adds to the critique of the EU's longstanding strengthening of the security capacities of governments with questionable human rights track records.

It should also be noted that civil society organisations in Niger and Mali are very much opposed to the criminalisation of mobility, which has been crucial to the region for centuries. They accuse their governments of being more accountable to the EU as a donor than to their own populations. Niger's

crackdown on migrant smugglers, for example, violated the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement – to which Niger is a party – as most of the migrants are from other ECOWAS countries and should in principle be able to travel freely. This, civil society claims, shows how pleasing EU security interests is prioritised by their governments over respecting regional legal frameworks.

To sum up, an increasing amount of EU funding is channeled towards penal aid. This is aimed at strengthening the short-term and *ad hoc* capabilities of African states to more effectively fight



‘crimes of mobility’, and includes intelligence-led policing, risk assessments and border management infrastructure. Conversely, less aid seems to be channeled to the victims of trafficking or to building an accountable criminal justice chain that is responsive to human rights. This is a trend that should be carefully monitored, as there is a risk that the EU’s re-direction of aid may contribute to creating African ‘security states’ – entrenching elites in power by bolstering their internal security capabilities rather than protecting human rights of populations, migrants and victims of trafficking.

## How do you interpret Africa’s response to the EU’s strategy?



Bram Frouws

Migration is seen as less of a problem in Africa. There’s a strong culture of migration. I think originally, it was seen as a way of contributing to development. The idea of migration as a security threat is more recent, a response to European pressure and, to an extent, increased global concerns about the security implications of migration. This has changed the perception of migration, certainly in some African countries. For example, in Kenya, Somali refugees suffer recriminations as a result of al-Shabaab terrorism. And South Africa has witnessed a rise in virulent anti-migration and anti-foreigner sentiment at the grassroots level.

I think there are also African politicians following the money. Some leaders and policy makers recognise that there is money to be made out of migration. There is the danger of a slippery slope as far as ‘migration diplomacy’ is concerned with refugees and migrants used as bargaining chips to attract donor funding. Qaddafi was a good example. He threatened to ‘turn Europe black’ if the EU or Italy did not increase financial assistance to Libya. The EU strategy based on development funding in return for enhanced securitisation provides an incentive for African leaders to talk up the migration

issue in the expectation of receiving a share of the trust fund’s financial assistance.

## How do African NGOs address the challenge of mass migration?



Debbie Ariyo

My charity AFRUCA works with victims of human trafficking from Africa to the UK. Over the past nineteen years the charity has supported over 500 children and young people trafficked for different purposes including domestic slavery and sex trafficking. Even though we work with victims trafficked from different parts of Africa, the majority of our users have been trafficked from Nigeria. This has enabled us to build up a strong expertise in UK-Nigeria human trafficking intervention. In addition to our direct victim support services, AFRUCA conducts nation-wide community education programmes focusing on specific areas of human trafficking and exploitation. Based on our long-term involvement in the UK anti-trafficking sector, and in recognition of the relative lack of involvement of many affected diaspora communities in helping to address human trafficking, we established BASNET – the UK Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Anti-Slavery Network to help improve diaspora engagement in UK anti-trafficking work.

My experiences of delivering an array of services at AFRUCA over the years and the impact we have made demonstrate that efforts to tackle human trafficking and mass migration at the source in Africa would achieve a lot more success if local NGOs were at the forefront of this work. The reasons are not far-fetched. Just like AFRUCA in the UK, local anti-trafficking NGOs in Africa have considerable knowledge and understanding of the local issues at play. Those leading the NGOs might have related personal stories motivating them and driving their interventions rather than pecuniary gain. In particular, the general desire for change driven by the negative images of Nigerian women as victims of sex trafficking on the

streets of Europe is a key motivating factor for many anti-trafficking NGOs in Nigeria. Despite this, the capacity of local NGOs to tackle both subjects is very much reduced due to a lack of financial support from the government as well as a lack of capacity.

In particular, there is very little funding available for local NGOs to help address the human aspects of mass migration to European countries. The EU-IOM [Assisted Voluntary Return Programme](#) provides moderate support for migrants from countries like Nigeria and Senegal rescued from the detention camps in Libya. But aside from this, the bulk of European funding directed at African countries is to address human trafficking and not migration as a whole. In Nigeria, NGOs are usually given short-term funding for anti-trafficking work, often as sub-contractors to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the anti-trafficking agency in Nigeria partly funded by the EU. Their task is generally limited to providing shelters for victims or to conducting community awareness programmes. Experts have questioned why an intermediary is necessary for this, when money could be paid directly to those performing the role on the ground.

These constraints have limited the capacity of local NGOs to tackle human trafficking and irregular migration. They also put NGOs in a difficult position, as in order to attract income they must contend with a top-down approach to address issues that may or may not be priorities for the beneficiaries. Sometimes local organisations must compete amongst themselves for service delivery contracts from international organisations, thereby fostering competition rather than collaboration and partnership. There is a similar approach in the UK as well – some agencies seeking to ‘engage’ with diaspora organisations like AFRUCA on anti-trafficking matters come to us with a top-down way of doing things. These agencies impose their views upon us while ignoring the ideas we or other partners put forward. They often insist on doing things their way even when it is clear to partner organisations that the intervention will not work. Such an approach to community en-

gagement is of course counter-productive. Rather than helping to address the subject of human trafficking, they actually alienate the communities who are essential to creating the change we seek.

Despite these challenges, some NGOs continue to offer certain services such as public education programmes, shelters for victims, employment and vocational training programmes, counselling and psychosocial support as well as policy advocacy. They can claim some success in helping to raise awareness of the dangers associated with mass migration and human trafficking, as well in pushing for government action.

### **How does European intervention affect African NGOs’ anti-trafficking work?**

Within Africa itself, Europe’s anti-trafficking and anti-migration interventions are at best intertwined or focused mainly on ‘fighting human trafficking’. Significant funds are going to countries like Niger or Nigeria where many of the victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in European countries either originate or transit. Yet the bulk of these programmes are focused on short-term interventions, such as awareness raising or small scale, low-skill training programmes like hair dressing or soap, bead or hat making. This is the sort of thing offered in the NAPTIP shelters in Nigeria. Such programmes do not systematically tackle the root causes of irregular migration and human trafficking or provide returning victims with long-term support and sustainable employment options.

In [Niger](#), a transit country to Libya, the EU Emergency Trust Fund has provided millions of euros in funding to the government to help stop the flow of migrants. Unsurprisingly, the Nigerien government recently enacted a law forbidding anyone from facilitating the movement of migrants into or out of the country. But they haven’t been trying to encourage other sorts of economic activities in its place. Investments in social re-integration programmes for those formerly in the ‘migration business’ are grossly inadequate in comparison to the huge incomes previously derived from transporting mass numbers of migrants to Libya. Un-



less attractive alternatives are created it is unlikely this new policy will prove sustainable.

Local NGOs in Nigeria have questioned why the EU's intervention on human trafficking has centred solely on addressing sex trafficking, while other forms of trafficking and exploitation like domestic slavery and forced labour prevalent across Nigeria are ignored. In the UK, for example, while government statistics on human trafficking from Nigeria show a high number of victims of domestic slavery, UK/EU intervention in Nigeria has never sought to address this issue – despite the advocacy work by AFRUCA and other diaspora organisations. Again

this demonstrates that the opinions of small local or diaspora NGOs do not matter when the donor agency has its own agenda to fulfil.

At present, while it might seem that the EU's top-down intervention to address human trafficking and mass migration in Africa is working, based on the reduced number of migrants to Europe via Libya, there is no evidence at all that these changes are sustainable. The root causes of human trafficking are not being addressed and the important role of local NGOs is being ignored. Both are necessary for real progress to be made.





# The role of regional economic communities

## What role, if any, have regional economic communities played in the development of an African migration policy?



Aderanti Adepoju

There are eight regional economic organisations, but of these ECOWAS has been the most proactive in the area of migration management. ECOWAS was established in 1975.

Four years later its member states adopted the first protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment.

ECOWAS has recorded several achievements. It has created a borderless area and galvanised intra-regional commerce and trade, in spite of occasional hiccups such as the recent [closure of Nigeria's land borders](#). Today, intra-regional trade in West Africa has been enhanced and citizens from the region can travel to neighbouring countries with a uniform ECOWAS passport. There is now also the proposed ECO, which is the region's single currency. A third potential area of achievement would be the harmonised accreditation of diplomas, which would facilitate the exchange of students and render them more marketable in neighbouring countries.

The EU and particularly France have tried to undermine these efforts. I could provide numerous examples to prove this point. When I lived in Senegal many years ago, there was a vibrant trade exchange between Nigerians and Senegalese women until France encouraged Senegal to stop buying Nigerian products. Senegal believed at the time that Nigeria was having undue influence in the region and abided by France's request. When I was president of the Union for African Population Studies, I observed that French diplomats would often stay in the hotel where we held our meetings and subtly influence the position of our Francophone colleagues.

Others point to Morocco's membership of ECOWAS and Egypt's membership of COMESA as further evidence of France's hidden agenda. These countries have almost no geographical, historical, economic or cultural ties with the regions concerned and many suspect that the only possible reason behind their membership is for them to serve as a foot in the door for Paris. In fact, such is France's hold on Francophone Africa that the former AU Ambassador to the U.S., Dr Arikana Chihombori-Quao, gave [a speech](#) in which she criticised France's "continued colonialism." She was eventually [removed](#) from her post.

IGAD in the Horn and Eastern regions of Africa is still at a very primitive stage of free movement of persons, and SADC in the south only agreed to a Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in 2005 after many years of negotiation. The problem here is one of lack of foresight by the African leadership. To illustrate, if Zambia and Zimbabwe had foreseen that their economies could one day collapse, they would not have vigorously opposed free movement of persons when it was first proposed in 1995. Zambia only ratified the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of the Movement of Persons in 2013. Unfortunately, most of our political leaders think only short-term.

## What has IGAD done to try to manage migration in the region?



Charles Obila

IGAD followed in the steps of the African Union, which in 2006 adopted a Migration Policy Framework and recommended that regional economic communities and national governments formulate regional and national policy frameworks. In 2012, IGAD therefore adopted the [IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework](#), a comprehensive document that identified twelve broad priorities that speak to the migration dynamics of the region.

These range from irregular and labour migration to forced displacement, climate change, pastoral mobility, returns and readmission. In 2014, IGAD also adopted the [Migration Action Plan 2015-2020](#) to operationalise the policy framework. This plan is under review in light of new realities and the region's changing migration dynamics.

IGAD is the only regional economic community to have adopted a regional policy framework and adapted it to regional realities. This is largely due to the fact that our leaders were accustomed to dealing with drought- and conflict-related displacement and so, unlike in other regions, they did not need to be convinced of the relevance of this policy. The IGAD Protocol on Free Movement of Persons is vital in promoting freer mobility, particularly labour migration across East and the Horn of Africa.

In terms of the impact of our policy response, I would say that there are things that we have done well, such as setting up a migration governance architecture. IGAD has established several mechanisms to facilitate interactions between member states, between member states and the IGAD secretariat, and between member states and our development partners. These include coordination

platforms, such as National Coordination Mechanisms (NCM), the Regional Migration Coordination Committee (RMCC), and the Regional Consultative Processes on migration (RCP). Member states use these mechanisms to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned from different approaches to migration management.

Furthermore, IGAD, in collaboration with other actors such as IOM and GIZ, is currently supporting governments to develop national migration strategies and national plans to implement the [Global Compact for Migration](#). We also work with groups known as intermediate sectoral committees, which include national agents of change and which are crucial in pushing for policy developments and improvements at the national level.

Unfortunately, the implementation of key regional commitments requires a lot of resources and time. This is further exacerbated by the fact that majority of our programmes are dependent on donor funding, and in some instances our priorities and donor priorities may not align. For instance diaspora engagement and remittances remain largely underfunded.

# FOCUS: Returning migrants



Aimée-Noël  
Mbiyozo

Returns are complex. They can be individual or *en masse*. And they can be voluntary, compulsory or forced. The African Union is taking a firm line against forced returns, insisting that African states can't accept returns unless migrants want to return voluntarily. For African states it's a human rights issue as well as a logistical and financial issue. And then there are the political costs. Take the example of Mali. Its government did agree to take forced returns and paid a hefty political price. It ended up reversing that policy because there was a domestic backlash from Malians largely positive about the benefits of migration and often unaware of the distinction between regular and irregular migration. I think that reflects the importance of migration to communities as well as a grassroots perception that elites are taking big pay-offs from Europe to take people back against their will. There is a price to be paid for that politically.

The return of migrants to their country of origin is part of the EU policy towards African migration, alongside increased development assistance. Rising populism has led to European politicians, parties and pressure groups demanding that migrants be returned to where they came from if they are not granted the right to remain in Europe. Fear-mongering about the number of migrant arrivals has underpinned the recent electoral success of populist parties. However, with the number of migrants arriving in Europe declining since 2015, populists need to come up with new issues to bolster their political base. One issue that populists are currently focusing on is returns. The issue is being raised in fora you wouldn't expect. In trade discussions that have nothing to do with migration, you're seeing European politicians raising the issue of returns.

You also see the returns issue linked with activities funded by the EU Trust Fund. The EU are, essentially, leveraging development assistance. They're calling these activities 'projects' but they are really an anti-migration strategy. The price tag is huge. The EU often incorporates returns into a broader package of securitisation measures required as a quid pro quo for increased development assistance. I think at the end of the day, a lot of these measures are very short-term. They also reflect short-term thinking. Forced returns involve substantial due process, logistical and financial elements, so European states should carefully consider the costs and benefits of expanding return programmes and turning them into formal policy. There have been some – I'm going to call them unofficial – agreements on returns. A few people have been returned through them, but not nearly enough to have an impact.

It seems that African states, especially West African states, are resisting returns. As I point out in a [report on returning migrants from Europe](#), returns to Africa from the EU are low in comparison to other parts of the world. In 2017, only 5% of all returns were to Africa. And while the return rate – the number of returns ordered divided by the number of actual returns – is 36% for all returns from Europe, it is just 9% for returns to Africa. This reflects resistance to Europe's return policy from African states, together with the practical difficulties of accurately identifying African migrants' nationalities. Difficulties in making an accurate identification are exacerbated by migrants not declaring their nationality on arrival. In 2015, 17% of asylum seekers arriving in Europe were categorised as from an 'unknown country'. That makes it hard to send them back. I see this as a resilience strategy.





# The future of African migration



# Migration as a way of life

## Will free movement across Africa happen?



Otilia Anna  
Maunganidze

Going back over 40 years, there has been an ambition on the part of some African states – resisted by others – to establish freedom of movement for both goods and people within the continent. ECOWAS led the way at the regional level and proved that these freedoms did not lead to neighbouring countries being flooded by either competing goods or people. Today, the ISS estimates that of the African Union's 55 member states, 42 are in some form of freedom of movement arrangement – although some of these arrangements are limited to a specific time period.

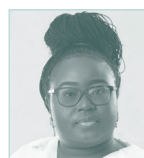
Given that Africa is much larger than Europe – with twice as many countries and around 65% more people – the dynamics are different. As such, internal migration should be settled within regions before it is rolled out across the continent. And this should be in three phases: first free movement, then work rights, then settlement. How long this process will take depends on political will. Already, this is the plan of action for the AU in implementing the free movement protocol and the African continental free trade area.

In ECOWAS, there is already evidence of political will, but less so in southern Africa. Most countries in southern Africa follow a political system that requires parliamentary approval for major constitutional changes. In the farming region of Western Cape, for example, there are concerns about migrant workers from Lesotho willing to work for less than locals. It wouldn't be that simple though. Research undertaken by the African Centre for Migration & Society at the University of Witwatersrand at part of the Migrating for Work Research Consortium (MiWORC) indicates that migrant labour is a complex phenomenon. For example, there seems to be more foreign migrant labour in the service industry (such as in retail, hospitality,

maintenance, accounting and law), construction and manufacturing than in mining, farming and similar sectors.

What is clear is that migration impacts all aspects of the host society regardless of whether it is regularised or not. The current Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates this clearly, and as a [recent ISS report](#) argues, it is essential that non-nationals are included in the country's response. Prevention, testing and treatment should be available to all.

## How does Afrobarometer engage African leaders and what does it recommend?



Josephine Appiah-  
Nyamekye Sanny

We share our data with African leaders and civil society organisations. These findings on migration provide better context and are especially useful for policy makers who seek to address the challenges of international migration. Last year, for example, we launched the [Pan-Africa Profile Report on Migration](#) in Kenya in collaboration with the IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa and the European Union Delegation to Kenya. Our findings featured prominently in the [2019 Mo Ibrahim Forum Report](#) and have been cited in a number of publications, including a research [paper](#) that we jointly published with the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. I believe that this work goes a long way in changing narratives on African migration.

Above all else, we believe that the data we collect on the causes, forms and patterns of migration are critical in identifying key areas that need to be tackled. One is the issue of brain drain. Our data indicates that the two most important groups that are critical to Africa's development – the youth and the highly educated – are those most likely to migrate. Second, we need to critically examine the reasons why people want to migrate. The reasons we hear

are strikingly similar to what we are told when we ask people to identify the most important challenges that their governments should prioritise. Unemployment ranked among the most important driving factors of migration. Similarly, when you look at how Africans assess the performance of their governments, employment is one of those areas where African governments are consistently rated poorly. African governments must make conscious efforts to grow their economies and expand opportunities for gainful employment and secure livelihoods in their countries. Development agencies and host countries can also help create enabling environments in Africa for the youth so they are not tempted to go seeking greener pastures elsewhere. For example, we could aim at creating development hubs in each region that can provide quality jobs and good educational systems for the youth.

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## “A long-term solution would be intra-African circulation of labour.”

— Aderanti Adepoju

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That said, migration is not all bad, and it is important to highlight the positive dimensions as well. We asked our survey participants about remittances, for example, and we found that 21% are relying on remittances from relatives living abroad. Moreover, there is great support for free movement on the continent. Overall, 56% of our respondents stated that they should have the right to move freely to another country within the region, for work or business. This support is highest in the ECOWAS region, which has the longest experience with free movement, and in Central Africa. Even in Southern Africa, 51% of respondents support free movement. African leaders should consider acting on citizens' call for the removal of barriers to intra-African migration in order to foster intra-regional trade.

## How can perceptions of African migrants be changed?



Aderanti Adepoju

If you think about migration in marketing terms, Africa is selling but Europe isn't buying. That's not to say that migrants aren't needed in Europe. They are. Its populations are shrinking, and without migrants to fill gaps in the labour market future growth will not be guaranteed. But they aren't exactly welcome.

From an African perspective, do we have a strategy to market what we have? Europe needs migrants while Africa has an oversupply of potential migrants – people who are ready and able and willing to migrate and take wages at any cost. Why aren't the two sides negotiating labour migration like you would in a normal market? Couldn't there be a mechanism that would allow both sides to have self-reinforcing strategies? This isn't happening right now because while the demand side is strong, the labour supply chain is extremely weak.

In my view, African countries need to do three things to improve their position. First they must alter their demographics by implementing strategies to minimise rapid population growth. Right now African countries have very young populations and changing that will be fundamental. Second, they must seek to upgrade nationals' skills so that labour migrants will have more to sell. Highly skilled professionals can be marketed internationally, whereas unskilled migrants that will do anything at any time can always be dislodged at will. Third, they must create multilateral agreements to manage migration flows between countries. That has already been done on a bilateral basis, but I'm not sure it's the best way. What about multilateral agreements between the European Union and, say, ECOWAS, or SADC or even the African Union? That could be one way of ensuring that the supply of migrants matches the demand in terms of both skills and volume.



It would also be a way of tackling brain drain within Africa. Migration takes a hard knock on Africa's human capacity and human capacity building. It takes a lot of national resources to train highly skilled professionals, especially in the most sought after professions like medicine. There is currently an apparent overproduction of medical personnel in Africa and Europe is skimming off that excess. Meanwhile, Africa imports doctors from elsewhere.

It's not the correct way to do it, but the problem is that we don't have policies that optimally utilise what we already have. For example, locally trained doctors in Zimbabwe don't generally want to work in rural areas. They'd rather stay in the cities like Harare. And the government, instead of creating proactive policies to encourage them to go, instead said, 'let's go to Cuba and bring in doctors who cannot speak a word of the Zimbabwean language'. That's where the dilemma is. Our nations take short-term solutions to long-term problems.

A long-term solution would be intra-African circulation of labour. We speak similar languages from Kenya to South Africa and from Ghana to Nigeria, and there's no reason doctors from Nigeria or Kenya can't go to South Africa, or the other way around. Such a system could address so many of Africa's skilled labour shortages. If you look at the recommendations from the World Health Organisation, not a single African country has reached the threshold for number of doctors per population. So why do we say we have an oversupply of doctors? We don't, really. They are just poorly distributed. That's true of many other parts of the economy. We have poor distribution between sectors of the economy, between sectors of the population, and between urban and rural areas. It's a problem of infrastructure deficits. It's a problem of incentives. It's a problem of management. It's bad management.

## Will the Global Compact on Migration help or hinder African migration?



Bram Frouws

From an African perspective, I think that the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) can play an important role in the governance of African migration – perhaps naively so. It is a nice document that provides a comprehensive overview of what can and should be done to deal with migration. At the same time I appreciate that it is broad and politically sensitive, and so I understand why there are doubts about its global uptake. Already, we see some states adopting a pick-and-choose approach to the GCM whereby they apply the elements they agree with and disregard others. Other states are simply avoiding any mention of it in policy documents and official statements.

This is not the case in Africa, though. African countries were proactive throughout the GCM negotiations. They've developed an [action plan](#) for the implementation of the GCM, and regional bodies like IGAD are pushing for the implementation of the GCM as well. It would be great to see African states continue to be as proactive and progressive on this as they have been, rather than see them follow on the heels of Europe's securitisation agenda. They must continue to embrace migration as an issue that is as old as humanity and that, in many ways, contributes to economic growth and development in their countries and beyond.

# FOCUS: Ethiopia and the jobs compact



Fekadu Adugna Tufa

The Ethiopian government has its own political and economic agenda to facilitate, regularise, and if possible formalise migration to different countries, particularly the Middle East. According to some sources, Ethiopia, a country with a population of around 110 million, has over 14 million unemployed people. It also suffers from shortages of foreign currency. Increasing migration to the Middle East would alleviate both of these problems. Citizens would get jobs, they would channel foreign currency back to their family, and at the end of the day the country would benefit.

Many Ethiopians already aspire to go to the Gulf and are heading in that direction. In 2018 and again in 2019 we saw a ridiculously high number of Ethiopians arriving in Yemen. The Ethiopian government wants to create a migration regulatory framework for the Middle East to give this movement more structure. As part of this it recently created a new policy to license migration facilitators. Over 400 agencies have received their licenses so far. The government has also started developing a training infrastructure for domestic workers and drivers, the two main sectors occupied by Ethiopians in Gulf countries.

The government is also changing its approach regarding the people who have come to Ethiopia as refugees. One way they're doing this is through the Ethiopian Jobs Compact, which reserves a portion of the jobs it seeks to create for refugee workers. Seen from a refugee's perspective the government's new approach is very positive. I just got back from a refugee camp in northern Ethiopia and you can already see its impact. Refugees have been issued with ID cards, for instance, which will allow them to move around more freely and even access banks. They also got access to telecommunications system, which they didn't have before. The refugees are now waiting for further steps to happen like the issuance of work permits or driving licenses. Both of these would make it far easier for them to get jobs.

How many ultimately get jobs, however, remains an open question. How many refugees can the Ethiopian labour market absorb when millions of citizens are also unemployed? Gambella, one of the states within Ethiopia, has more refugees in it than citizens. How can all those refugees possibly integrate? The job market has problems, there is a shortage of land for those who want to go into agriculture, etc. It's not an easy situation.

# Towards a place of mutual respect

## Is Europe slowly changing its stance to migration?



Bram Frouws

I am not confident that Europe will change its stance on the securitisation of migration, not even in the face of heavy criticism. There are a few instances where the EU has somewhat backed off from this policy. In our latest annual [Mixed Migration Review](#), for example, we documented how it was forced to suspend cooperation with the Sudanese government after growing reports that the Rapid Support Forces, its allies in the fight against irregular migration in Sudan, were involved in a violent crackdown of Sudanese citizens. However, I don't see this happening elsewhere. I mean, the EU has been heavily criticised for turning a blind eye to the illegal arrests and detention of African migrants by the EU-funded Libyan coastguard. Yet, that's continuing and I don't anticipate that there will be a fundamental change of strategy. On the contrary, we see more extreme ideas and measures being adopted at the national and continental levels.

## What will it take to reset attitudes on migration?



Ottilia Anna Maunganidze

European Union policy seems to have gone down a blind alley at the moment, and in many ways it seems to have taken African heads of state with it. Demographic pressure in Africa isn't going to slow down and neither will demographic pressure in Europe. Europe is getting older and it will need migration to cope with that fact. So as long as Africa remains young, and as long as Europe continues to age, the two continents will have no choice but to come together in more critically constructive engagement. Take a country like Germany. Its median age is 47. Some communities have peak employment and some communities are

shrinking, yet there are still jobs to do that aren't getting done. Germany needs to be honest with itself about its need for labour. Whether it comes from Africa or Asia or somewhere else is secondary. The point is, the need is there.

The good news is that I think we're getting to a point where we can have an honest conversation about our different needs: the need for labour in Europe, the need for more regular pathways to get there, and the need to address the key drivers of displacement on the African continent. Migration, it goes without saying, will not end. It may not continue at the same level in the future but it will certainly continue. Our shared goal must be to ensure that the movement taking place is free. It shouldn't be forced, or forced to be elicited. That is the shared challenge.

## What could prompt European governments to view migration in a more positive light?



Jean-Pierre Gauci

A lot of countries say that they need workers, including low-skilled workers. And, while not all refugees are low-skilled, non-recognition of qualifications results in many of them only being able to seek low-skilled work in Europe. There is a need for a greater acknowledgement of beneficiaries of international protection as a tool towards addressing labour shortages in Europe, but also other demographic concerns in many European countries. [Research I did for the European Committee of the Regions](#) recently clearly highlighted the fact that migration (coupled with effective integration) can help overcome demographic challenges in small cities and rural areas.

I see the argument for not letting the refugee system get too mixed up with the labour markets. We need that system to protect people that should be protected. However, there is a need to think cre-

actively about how Europe can meet multiple objectives concurrently. Improving access to labour markets will provide further spaces for interaction, support integration and enhance the contribution of migrants to their host states. It will also allow refugees and other protected persons to live in dignity whilst addressing the dependency on welfare systems. If done well, win-win solutions can be found which both respect the rights of beneficiaries of protection and help address some of the challenges facing Europe today. The right to work is already established in both international and European law

for beneficiaries of protection; however, this must be made effective.

Moreover, there is a clear need to communicate the benefits of migration to Europeans and to do so in an honest way. This is critical to ensure trust but is difficult at a time when populism and migrant-blaming is a considerably more attractive politically. It is only through changing the rhetoric and framing of migration to a positive attribute that the political demands and thus political will and prioritisation will also begin to change.



