

**The impact of EU  
external migration policies on  
sustainable development:**  
A review of the evidence from  
West, North and the Horn of Africa

Exploring the policy coherence of  
EU migration efforts in Africa



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# Key messages

1

The effects of the European Union's (EU) external migration policies in African countries are complex. While the EU has improved its efforts to align migration and development objectives, there are still gaps that limit achieving Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). These gaps in policy coherence depend on the context of the partnership between the EU and African countries but also reflect the overall prioritisation of securitisation and migration control at the expense of a more holistic and balanced migration governance.

2

EU external migration policies may contribute to sustainable development in partner countries when there are coherent national development strategies and structures to steer the cooperation. However, EU external migration policies, through supporting the implementation of restrictive migration practices and control measures, may contribute to human rights violations of local citizens and transit migrants. In West Africa, this tendency is evident in more difficult and longer crossing times for regional traders and in the criminalisation of regional migration.

3

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) are essential frameworks which should be implemented by the EU to ensure that its migration policies and practices are aligned with broader development goals to address inequality, poverty, stability within regions and to increase the opportunities for legal migration.

4

African and European policymakers need to adopt mechanisms for streamlining PCSD, assigning responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance with these indicators so that policy documents align with practice. European policymakers also need to strengthen awareness and implementation of the existing PCD framework to minimise the negative effects that EU external migration policies have on African countries.

5

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the negative effects of incoherent migration policies and practices, but the disruptions created by the pandemic also present an opportunity to rebuild better migration cooperation aimed at tackling inequality.

6

European and African countries should promote positive narratives on migration, highlighting the benefits of migration to contribute to development, through promoting coherent and comprehensive responses to international migration. These responses should build on the transformative principles of the Agenda 2030 that foster participation, respect human rights, gender equality and achieve the balance between economic, social and environmental sustainable development.

# The EU's external migration policies in Africa<sup>1</sup>

Recent measures aimed at externalising European migration policies in Africa are characterised by a widening geographic scope and increasing intensity. The external dimension of the EU's migration policy aims to strengthen migration cooperation with third countries primarily to reduce the arrival of irregular migrants in Europe through restrictive border control measures in countries of origin (and transit) and facilitating returns of irregular migrants to their countries of origin. The present European Commission has emphasised the importance of this external dimension of the EU's migration policy. The mission letters of Commissioners Urpilainen, Johannsson and HRVP Borrell, stressed the need for 'stronger cooperation with countries of origin and transit', ensuring 'the coherence of the external and internal dimensions of migration' (Von der

Leyen 2019 a, b, c). More recently, Vice-President and the Commissioner responsible for promoting the European way of life, Margaritis Schinas, described the external dimension of the EU's migration policy as a fundamental aspect - 'the first floor' - in the building of the EU's Common Migration Policy (Politico 2020).



<sup>1</sup> In the framework of MIND, an ongoing 3-year awareness raising project on migration and development funded by the European Commission, Caritas Europa researched extensively the role of EU external (migration) policies in the context of European international development cooperation. See, in particular, Kadyshva et al. (2019).

These external aspects of the European Union's (EU) migration policy are contained in the 2015 European Agenda on Migration (EAM) (EC 2015), the 2016 Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration (EC 2016), the joint Valletta Action Plan (EC 2016) and subsequent frameworks.<sup>2</sup> The EU is required to consider the impact of these external aspects, which form an integral part of its policies, on development objectives of third countries.<sup>3</sup> Formal and non-formal cooperation with third countries are based on these frameworks. More so, the EU used long standing and new funding instruments to promote these external policies, either directly or indirectly through the use of conditionalities. These instruments include the European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the European Development Fund (EDF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and more recently the External Investment Plan. The envisaged New Pact on Migration & Asylum will equally include a strong focus on the external dimension (Kipp, Knapp and Meier 2020). EU Member States are expected to push for more cooperation with third countries, especially African countries, to support their migration objectives (Neidhardt and Sundberg 2020).

In Africa, this focus of the EU's external migration policies has led to mixed results in countries and regions of origin and transit. The EU's external migration policies aim to address the 'root causes' of migration, while promoting sustainable development in countries of origin and transit (EC 2015). On paper, the EU has improved its alignment of migration and sustainable development objectives in migration cooperation. In Morocco and Ethiopia, migration cooperation with the EU contributes to economic development, building resilient communities and improving governance.

At the same time, these external migration policies still strongly focus on securitising and militarising migration practices of state and non-state actors, while couched in humanitarian and protectionist terms. In the Sahel region, the G5 Sahel, a counterterrorism taskforce and mechanism for coordinating regional security, implements border control measures in order to reduce the prevalence of terrorism in the region. Such measures increasingly prevent the free movement of persons in West Africa, thus showing a clear disregard for the rights of migrants and citizens enshrined in regional and national laws (Premium Times 2020). In addition, development assistance (ODA) is increasingly instrumentalised towards achieving the EU's migration objectives of containing migrants and enforcing mobility restrictions through the use of conditionalities and a 'more for more' or 'less for less' approach (Kipp 2018; Landau 2019).

The tension in migration cooperation of European and African countries exists around the pressure to adopt a rights-based, long-term approach towards migration and sustainable development. Instead, a lop-sided approach which focuses on narrow and short-term measures of strengthening border control and reducing migrant arrivals in Europe has so far prevailed. Such measures contribute to weakening the protection of the human rights of transit migrants and citizens, and risk limiting democratic accountability and aggravating repression in partnership countries. This is evident in cases where the EU or its Member States cooperate with regimes that have a disregard for human rights and democratic institutions (Koch et al. 2018). The focus on securitisation measures also risks diversifying migration routes, pushing migrants to take more dangerous alternatives, and may contribute to creating a favourable environment for human smugglers (Tubiana et al. 2018). Given the challenges of aligning migration and sustainable development in practice, this policy brief draws on Agenda 2030, the SDG framework and selected SDGs to analyse the impact of European external migration policies on sustainable development of countries of origin and transit.



<sup>2</sup> Including the European External Investment Plan (EC 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Article 208 of the present EU Treaty defines the overall objective of European development cooperation as follows: "The Union's development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries."



Migration and sustainable development, particularly migration for economic development, are a priority for African states. At the African Union (AU) level, several frameworks<sup>4</sup> outline the priorities of African countries to include promoting peace, security and stability, circular and labour mobility, protecting the human rights of migrants, free movement of persons, remittance policies, diaspora relations, and responsible return. Cross-cutting themes such as health, environment, trade and access to social services and protection are also considered in the broader conception of migration and development (ACMPD 2006). The European Consensus on Development acknowledges the need to harness the positive aspects of migration (EC 2017). The consensus, which defines the shared vision and action framework for development also emphasises the positive contribution which well-managed migration can make to inclusive growth and sustainable development. It highlights the cross-cutting nature of migration and provides for a coordinated, holistic and structured approach to migration (EC 2019d). In addition, the consensus includes migration as one of the key areas (together with trade, finance, environment and climate change, food security and security) to which Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) applies, with the overall objective of ensuring that EU migration policies do not have a negative impact on the sustainable development of countries outside of the EU. To its turn, PCD is seen as an important tool for the EU to contribute to the global framework of PCSD, developed in the context of the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.<sup>5</sup>

Migration, and the opportunities it presents, should be acknowledged and integrated with the efforts to achieve the transformative principles of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals (Hunter et al. 2019). Although these African, European and global frameworks seek to promote Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), in practice, the alignment between migration cooperation and sustainable development objectives is limited. The EU, beyond measures to reduce the transfer costs of remittances and pilot schemes for legal migration, has done little to include other African priorities in its discussions on policy formulation. AU measures aimed at addressing migration and development have equally concentrated more on labour mobility, remittances and diaspora engagement. African countries on their part have leveraged these externalisation measures to fulfil their own domestic and political interests (Bisong 2019). They have used available funding from cooperation and aid conditionalities to address pressing domestic needs in job creation and support provision of social services. More so, EU cooperation has assisted these countries in promoting their foreign policy objectives and promoting legitimacy both domestically and internationally. While EU and African states protect their interests through migration cooperation, migrants including refugees and asylum seekers are usually more vulnerable and are left exposed.

<sup>4</sup> The 2006 African Common position on Migration and Development, the 2018 revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa, the 2018 Common African Position on the Global Compact for Migration, the AU Agenda 2063.

<sup>5</sup> Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a legal obligation in EU treaties (see fn 2), while Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) stems from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development (FFD).

## BOX 1: PCD AND PCSD IN MIGRATION COOPERATION

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a legal obligation for the EU and its Member States and there are established mechanisms within EU institutions for monitoring compliance and mainstreaming this approach. PCD, as a framework for integrated policy making, is effective when it focuses on a set of key issues on which the impact of policy can be assessed and measured. Beyond checklists and ex-ante impact assessments, the EU should further promote PCD compliant external migration policies. These policies must equally integrate human rights, gender, poverty and legitimate migration aspirations.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is an additional avenue to achieve coherence in EU migration, foreign and security policies (among others) along with development objectives. This multi-layered framework is based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on financing for development (FfD). Unlike PCD, an EU instrument enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, PCSD is a global tool (not legally binding) that calls on all countries to identify and rectify inconsistencies in their existing policies with a possible harmful impact on sustainable development, both domestically and abroad. PCSD is in practice difficult to operationalise and implement, since it adopts a vertical, horizontal and multilateral coherence approach in identifying and rectifying these inconsistencies. Herein lies the ambiguity in mainstreaming this approach. Hence, it is possible for governments to unfortunately undermine certain dimensions of sustainable development while still claiming to serve PCSD.

Given its more specific focus and legal force, PCD can support PCSD objectives when it comes to achieving larger scale and long term development objectives in partner countries (EC 2019d). The EU's experience of PCD can moreover contribute to achieving PCSD in developing countries. EU and African countries should consider including migration as a high impact theme under PCSD and establish systems (based on PCD tools) that promote coherence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges in migration cooperation between European and African countries. Lack of coherent migration policies have exposed migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to more risks and precarity during this pandemic. European and African governments have implemented excessively restrictive measures aimed at reducing the number of irregular arrivals in their countries. These problematic measures have resulted in more migrant deaths and vulnerability during the period of the pandemic (Wallis 2020; Schlein 2020; IOM 2020a). But, the pandemic also offers an opportunity to address these shortcomings and to redesign more focused, long term and inclusive policies that are beneficial to countries of origin, transit and migrants. This new design should promote a long-term sustainable approach that aligns migration with sustainable development and stresses the importance of strengthening and operationalising policy coherence for (sustainable) development in migration. While migration (if well-handled) can contribute to attaining the SDGs, structural changes in current migration policy and cooperation are nevertheless needed to achieve this.



# Externalisation of EU migration policies and how this impacts sustainable development: evidence from three regions

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge migration as a “multidimensional reality” that is of “major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination” (2030 Agenda, article 29) (Adger et al. 2019). Migration is reflected in the objectives, targets and indicators of the SDGs (IOM 2017). The SDGs signify the framework through which policymakers in Europe and Africa engage in development cooperation. Therefore, the relationship between the external dimension of the EU’s migration policies should align with Agenda 2030 and the SDG framework (EC 2019a). In practice, however, the EU’s external migration policies have so far focused more on securitisation, border management and control measures, leaving limited tools to deal with the broader aspects of migration and development (Faure et al. 2015). At the EU level, migration and development have been increasingly framed around the objective of addressing the root causes of migration in countries and regions of origin (EPRS 2019). Growing political interest has led to a proliferation of programmes and projects in this field, resulting in similar initiatives being funded by European states in African partner countries and in a complex and sometimes opaque funding architecture (Vermeulen 2020).

The selected case studies analyse the impact of the EU’s external migration policies on sustainable development in countries and regions of origin and transit. The countries and regions reflect the diverse partnerships between the EU and African countries of origin and transit. Morocco, Ethiopia and West Africa were selected based on the varying length of established cooperation on migration with the EU, the amount of funding received for migration cooperation through various instruments and the number of arrivals in Europe from these countries of origin or transit.

For the EU, it is an important obligation that development cooperation including migration cooperation contributes

to achieving long term development objectives in partner countries. In order to achieve these objectives, migration cooperation can be aligned with addressing the economic, environmental and political challenges faced in countries of origin and transit that may contribute to outward migration. Therefore, opportunities to create local employment should not only focus on the number of jobs created, but in the creation of decent and well remunerated jobs (SDG 8). Migrants should equally be able to send remittances back to their families at fair transfer rates (SDG 8). Migration and development can also contribute to peace, justice and building strong institutions (SDG 16) in regions and countries of transit and origin. In Ethiopia, migration cooperation with the EU has contributed to achieving these development objectives. In Morocco, migration cooperation with the EU has contributed to reducing inequality (SDG 10) through providing equitable access to social services for both migrants and citizens. More so, opportunities for labour migrants to access employment opportunities are created through pilot schemes for legal pathways to regular migration (SDG 10.7.c). In general, these measures aim to contribute to poverty reduction (SDG 1).

More so, in partner countries where ODA has been instrumentalised, migration cooperation is less likely to be aligned with development objectives. In West Africa, where support measures at the regional level aimed at promoting regional mobility are contradicted by bilateral programmes aimed at containing migratory movements within the region (Bisong 2019). Both national and regional measures are funded by the EU, which makes it even more confusing for stakeholders. While these measures aim to achieve stability in the region, the focus on securitisation and militarisation does not include measures to stem the increasing conflict, which leads to displacement in the Horn and West African countries.

# MOROCCO: linking migration, foreign and development policies

Migration cooperation between the EU and Morocco yields mixed results when assessed against sustainable development objectives. On the one hand, this partnership mainly focuses on reducing the number of arrivals of irregular migrants – including of Moroccan nationals – to Europe through the Western Mediterranean route, with the EU moreover de facto delegating border control tasks to its southern neighbour. The nature of this partnership, instrumentalised by the EU and Moroccan government for their own domestic interests, has made the position of Sub-Saharan transit migrants particularly precarious and has led to human rights violations. On the other, this cooperation has also helped Morocco achieve national development objectives through funding and technical assistance in areas such as capacity building and skills training, provision of services in its economically disadvantaged regions, integration of migrants and asylum seekers, increase in trade and investment through job creation opportunities and diaspora engagement. These objectives are aligned with the priorities of the Moroccan government contained in the National Strategy for Integration and Asylum and the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

Morocco currently hosts a growing number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. These include refugees,<sup>6</sup> asylum seekers and a growing number of migrants seeking to transit to the EU using irregular routes. While most Moroccans migrate to Europe using legal channels, an increasing number of Moroccans – undocumented – are being intercepted by the authorities along with other nationals.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that one in three migrants entering Europe irregularly in 2019, who were intercepted along the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), were Moroccan (Wallis 2019). Given its unique geopolitical position, the government seeks to play an important role in bridging European and African interests in migration cooperation. Thus, Morocco hosted the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at Marrakesh in 2018 and is responsible for promoting the African Agenda on Migration at the African Union.

Morocco's strong control of its external borders (including curtailing onward travel to Europe) and its focus on dismantling migrant trafficking and smuggling networks have resonated with its European partners.<sup>8</sup> But these measures are also aligned with Morocco's own domestic and foreign policy interests of reducing irregular migration from Sub-Saharan African countries, and the costs of implementing them are passed on to the EU (ODI 2020). Joint border patrols and surveillance conducted by authorities from Moroccan and European countries in the Mediterranean and at the border of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, resulted in migrant deportations to detention centres in Morocco and the Canary Islands (Peregil and Martin 2020). However, cooperation on returns may become more strained as increasing numbers of Moroccan nationals are returned and there is low political and social interest in voluntary returns. The Moroccan government frequently uses these migrant interceptions as a bargaining chip to receive more funding from its European partners and to foster cooperation on addressing the challenges related to increased irregular migration into the country (Koundouno 2018).<sup>9</sup> In December 2019, the EU allocated an additional 101.7 million Euros towards combatting irregular migration and human trafficking in Morocco.<sup>10</sup>

'Hot returns' continue in Morocco based on cooperation between Spanish and Moroccan authorities. These returns constitute summary deportations of migrants at the Ceuta and Melilla border without being given a chance to explain their circumstances. Migrants, including asylum seekers, are directly deported without an individual examination at the border or the opportunity to apply for a procedure. This practice supported by European countries through cooperation with third countries blocks the possibility of those in need of protection from accessing it. This is contrary to international, European law which guarantees effective access to asylum procedures and the principle of non-refoulement.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Morocco hosts an increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees, but it has not adopted its envisaged asylum regulation which aims to grant enhanced protection to migrants and asylum seekers within the country. The process, supported by international partners, has been stalled for many reasons. One of them is the possibility of Morocco being designated a 'safe third country' for returns by the EU. Moroccan authorities fear that this may lead to a legal basis for returning migrants or asylum seekers to Morocco from European countries.

<sup>7</sup> The Moroccan Ministry of Interior indicated that it prevented almost 74,000 attempts at irregular migration in 2019 and broke up 208 human trafficking groups. There is a spike in migrant arrivals on the Canary Islands, as migrants face more restrictions in accessing Ceuta and Melilla (Peregil and Martin 2020; TMP 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Joint border control missions are undertaken with officials from Spain, Italy, Germany and Belgium. The main political objective of this cooperation has been to limit the number of irregular migrants transiting through Morocco towards Europe (Maccanico 2018).

<sup>9</sup> There are also no accurate figures on the number of persons returned or pushed back into Moroccan territory based on the failed attempts to enter Spain through Ceuta or by crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>10</sup> This is in response to the increasing number of arrivals through the WMR in 2018 (EC 2019b).

<sup>11</sup> The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has recently approved the practice of 'hot returns' in the case of ND & NT. As a result, the legality in EU law is still being contested (Hruschka 2020; ECHR 2020).

This cooperation has negative impacts on transit migrants from other countries who are subjected to racialised controls and police brutality, and Morocco is known to use the EU's financial support on migration cooperation to implement racialised border control measures, targeted at migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (Owen-Jones 2019). These migrants are forcefully removed by police authorities from towns in the North of the country – close to the border with Spain and the coast – to southern towns, regardless of their status, their family ties or the reasons why they were located in these towns. Such border control and management measures clearly infringe upon human rights and reinforce discrimination against migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. There are also racialised controls and checks of migrants using public transportation towards towns in the north of the country. Transportation companies have clearly stated that they will not carry migrants who are travelling to some towns in the North of the country. They have also asked migrants to show their legal residence status before boarding the vehicles. These measures are mostly targeted at migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries, who are generally perceived as irregular,

regardless of their reasons for being in the country – e.g. study, family reunification, labour mobility or asylum status. These measures, funded through European migration cooperation, are aimed at discouraging further movements and are esteemed by the government for reducing the number of migrants transiting to Europe.

Morocco also leverages its migration cooperation with the EU to promote cooperation on visa facilitation measures, increasing quotas for work visas and exploring legal pathways to mobility (Teevan 2019). Migration cooperation is also aimed at job creation and promoting the legal migration channels for labour mobility (see Box 2). These create limited opportunities accessible to few Moroccans only. However, within the society, there are tensions as a result of the high unemployment and social discontent due to difficulties in the economic situation. Morocco uses its migration cooperation to access cooperation on trade and investment with the EU, which is a significant trading partner (EC 2019). This includes increasing agricultural trade and opportunities for seasonal labour as well as promoting investment opportunities within the country.

## BOX 2: ENHANCING LEGAL MIGRATION OPPORTUNITIES AND ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in Morocco has been at 22% for the last three years. As a result, the government is under constant pressure to create more jobs and stimulate economic growth in the domestic economy. So far, the government's response does not appear to be enough as economic difficulties, rising inflation and underemployment continue to fuel emigration of Moroccans (Kabani 2019). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may result in more economic difficulties for the country with the possibility of reduced exports and remittances and a temporary suspension of tourism, resulting in significant loss of revenues (UNDP, UNECA and WB 2020). Through migration cooperation with the EU, Morocco has negotiated legal migration pilot schemes which contribute to reducing the pressure the government faces with unemployment. There are currently ongoing mobility partnerships with Germany, Spain and Belgium. These employment schemes and skills acquisition contribute to achieving SDG 8 (Decent work) through providing work and entrepreneurship opportunities for migrants and citizens. Furthermore, these measures contribute to SDG 10 (reducing inequality) through providing access to social services such as health and education for migrants including refugees. More specifically the legal migration schemes contribute to achieving SDG

10.7.c on regular migration and SDG 1 on reducing poverty.

The EU-funded PALIM project is an example of migration cooperation between Morocco and Belgium. The PALIM project aims to address ICT labour shortages Belgium and Morocco by offering legal channels for migration through employment. The main stakeholders include the Flemish Region in collaboration with the Regional Ministry of Employment and its specific regional policy on local economic development; and in Morocco, the Moroccan employment agency (ANAPEC), the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM) and the Moroccan Association of ICT Employers (APEBI). PALIM aims to develop cooperation between Morocco and Belgium through promoting professional skills for young ICT graduates. In the first phase, 60 Moroccan graduates will be trained in Morocco. Half of the trainees will receive coaching to find employment in Morocco, while the other half will be coached to find employment in Flanders. This is also aimed at meeting the local demand for ICT professionals in Morocco where an estimated 30,000 IT professionals are needed but training is not sufficiently aligned with labour market needs (Enabel 2019).

# ETHIOPIA: partnership with a development focus

Ethiopia is a country of origin for migrants headed to the Middle East, North America, Southern Africa and Europe. Although migration through regular channels occurs, it is usually beyond the reach of poorer migrants and requires considerable resources, unattainable for most. Therefore, most migrants travel shorter distances within the region or the Middle East by means of irregular channels (Adunga 2019). Political and economic challenges, civil unrest, ethnic tensions, drought and recent locust crisis have resulted in a large displacement of communities within the country. Ethiopia, as a result of its open-door policy, currently hosts more than 900,000 refugees. This is one of the largest refugee populations in Africa, with close to 60% under 18 years of age. The EU identifies Ethiopia as a key country of origin and transit of migrants from the Horn of Africa (EC 2016).<sup>12</sup> The cooperation between Ethiopia and the EU is focused on reducing onward migration of refugees from Ethiopia towards the EU, supporting Ethiopia in the protection of refugees through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and cooperation on returns. Ethiopia equally plays an important role in the Khartoum process, a regional dialogue between the EU and states in the Horn of Africa region.

Migration cooperation between Ethiopia and the EU focuses on enhancing development. Protection measures are generally in line with the principles of development aid (Concord 2018, EPRS 2019). Such measures also include border control and migration management, in addition to creating economic and employment opportunities for refugees and host communities. In addition, they contribute to building resilient communities and enhancing the delivery

of social services by the government and community-based organisations. These measures support Ethiopia in addressing the long-term development and protection needs of refugees and their host communities, as well as in tackling root causes of instability and internal displacement. However, most measures target large migrant sending regions that are more developed and do not address the challenges faced by the less developed regions of the country.



<sup>12</sup> The number of migrants from Ethiopia to the EU remains, however, quite low. Irregular migration from Ethiopia is largely towards the Gulf and Middle East countries. Ethiopia signed a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility with the EU in November 2015 and a 'Joint declaration towards an EU-Ethiopian strategic engagement' adopted in July 2016. Ethiopia is one of the priority countries for a compact under the new partnership framework with third countries in the field of migration management (CE 2016). Migration cooperation is funded under the EUTF with about 270 million Euros (EUTF 2020) and the European External Investment Plan through a partnership for jobs.

### BOX 3: CREATING DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

It is estimated that 1.8 million jobs are at risk in Ethiopia in addition to the livelihoods of several million informal workers and farmers, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Disruptions in air travel and the collapse of international demand in export products like coffee have already begun to affect the Ethiopian economy (WB 2020). These impacts, in addition to the rising social discontent and displacement, may lead to intensified conflict within the country. Thus, sparking further displacement and possible emigration. Youth unemployment is a challenge in Ethiopia. Although the official unemployment rate is 4.5%, about three million young people enter the labour force every year in Ethiopia (ILO 2020).

Under the EUTF, 37,000 people have been assisted to develop income generating activities and another 10,000 people have been trained in technical and vocational skills. In addition, the 'Job Compact' as part of the European External Investment Plan is estimated to create 100,000 jobs (EUTF 2018). So far, 13,000 jobs have been created under the EUTF. However, the quality and remuneration of the jobs that have been created is questionable. Ethiopian industrial park workers, specifically those in the garment sector, are among the lowest paid in the world, earning 26 USD per month. This has already led to very high worker turn-over (Abebe and Tadasse 2019). Issues such as in-work poverty remain pervasive, with a high proportion of Ethiopian households earning less than what is necessary to survive, despite having a

job. Thus, important challenges persist to improve working conditions, in particular in a context where low wages are often presented as a selling point for foreign companies to invest in Ethiopia. Low wage jobs that encourage working poverty will not lead to sustainable development nor fulfil the development strategy of the Government of Ethiopia. To address this challenge of low wages, the government needs to enact a minimum wage policy. The government equally needs to adopt more comprehensive labour reforms, which include safe working conditions and employment conditions to ensure that decent jobs are created through the implementation of these projects.

The EUTF funded projects and the Job compact under the EIP are mostly in line with aid effectiveness. They continue earlier development activities with a positive impact in one of the most neglected regions dealing with development aspects of migration and reinforce protection policies for refugees (EPRS 2019). They contribute to achieving SDG 10 through intervention measures aimed at reducing inequality. They are also linked to SDG 8 (decent work), though several measures still need to be undertaken to ensure that the opportunities created meet the requirements for decent work. These measures also contribute to poverty eradication in the country through the acquisition of skills and measures to support start-up businesses.

Migration cooperation promotes economic opportunities for migration-prone communities, refugees and their host communities in order to address the 'root causes of migration'. This objective of creating employment and economic opportunities is in line with the national employment strategy (NEPS 2016), which acknowledges the need to create decent youth employment opportunities in order to promote stability in the country (see Box 3). While some of the target communities are in dire need of development assistance, most projects focus on more developed areas because of the potential migrant population, thus ignoring more impoverished communities. Consequently, this diversion of funds could contribute to undermining development impacts in the country. For example, the Somali and Afar regions see less migration development projects, although these are the most impoverished regions in the country.

In general, conditionalities through a 'less for less' or 'more for more' approach is not observed in migration cooperation with Ethiopia. Though cooperation on returns are low, the European Commission President in her visit to Ethiopia in December 2019 made additional commitments to support job creation and infrastructure development in Ethiopia (Euractiv 2019). This less intense manner of cooperation with Ethiopia may be linked to its geographical distance from Europe, and the fact that migrants from the region may need to transit through several other countries where cooperation is more intense before arriving in Europe.

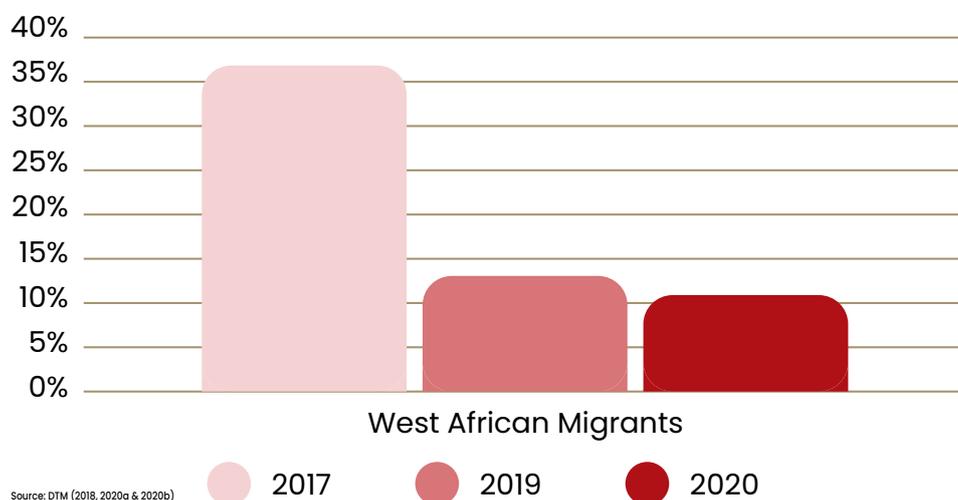
# WEST AFRICA (ECOWAS): stuck in the past

Promoting regional free movement of persons through regional and continental frameworks is key to the long-term development and economic growth of West African countries. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a 15-member organisation aimed at promoting regional and economic integration, with a population of about 425 million people. Its free movement protocol provides long-term opportunities of economic integration, the benefits of which are directly felt by ordinary citizens. Prior to 2015, migration cooperation between the EU and ECOWAS focused on promoting intra-regional mobility and implementing protocols on the free movement of persons. Since 2015, the EU has instrumentalised ODA to promote the implementation of its external migration policies in West Africa (see box 4). This contributes to undermining free movement and mobility in the region which is strongly linked to livelihoods not only for border communities but for a large portion of West Africans (DW 2019). Despite the focus of EU migration cooperation on irregular migration from West Africa, most migration occurs within the region under the framework of the ECOWAS free movement protocols. But, bilateral cooperation between the EU and West African countries has resulted in more restrictions to mobility both within countries and intra-regionally (Bisong 2019; Zanker et al. 2020; Dicko 2018).

Migration cooperation between West African states and the EU is characterised by intensive support to migration management and border control measures, such as

joint surveillance and patrol missions. Criminalisation, militarisation and securitisation of migration in West African countries have resulted in several checks and controls on national and intra-regional travel. These measures are a consequence of the pressure by European states to control migration flows within and outside the region. West African countries have adopted laws that criminalise the smuggling of migrants. In practice, the implementation of these laws varies across states with the most stringent being in Niger, where the law has been used as the basis for heavily regulating the transportation industry in border towns. Consequently, such measures disrupt the free movement of persons for trade, agriculture and cultural reasons that have existed in the region (EPRS 2019). Migration routes are deemed a security threat in the region and are linked to smuggling of arms and illicit goods, thus, posing a security threat to these countries (Interpol 2019). More checks have been introduced along intra-regional travel routes heading northwards, for example between Ghana and Burkina Faso (Suuk 2019); Nigeria and Niger; Cote d'Ivoire and Mali (Gourley 2019). The increased patrol of border agencies and anti-terrorist police contribute to increasing the cost of trading for legitimate businesses and small traders that regularly use these routes. In fact, the number of checkpoints installed in the region for migration purposes contributes to increasing corruption (Idrissa 2018; Frouws and Brenner 2019). These measures jointly limit the free movement of ECOWAS citizens within the ECOWAS space and contribute to infringement of human rights contained in national and regional laws.

Graph 1: Irregular arrivals of West African migrants to Europe<sup>13</sup>



Source: DTM (2018, 2020a & 2020b)

<sup>13</sup> \*arrivals from January – March 2020.

This cooperation has effectively contributed to fuelling the negative narratives about regional migration thus undermining the essence of the free movement protocols. Although it contributes to most livelihoods in the region, migration has been portrayed negatively as something dangerous, linked to criminal activity. For example, 42 Nigerians were deported from Niger for “illegal entry into the republic of Niger en route to Europe”, and brought to court in Nigeria (Premium Times 2020). This narrative is reinforced through capacity building measures implemented by international organisations funded through the EUTF. The positive aspects of migration are downplayed. Furthermore, the potential of migration to contribute to poverty reduction and regional development is glossed over (Kaysheva et al. 2019; Gnes 2019). This fixation on irregular migration equally overlooks the effects of trade, agricultural and fisheries policies of the EU in sustaining the negative balance of trade between West African and European countries, thus contributing to inequality in the region (Staes and Sargentini 2018).

Migration cooperation has also resulted in increased collaboration between West African countries and

FRONTEX on measures ranging from border control to returns and readmissions (Moser et al. 2020). However, returns of irregular migrants by the EU to West African countries have been met with strong resistance from returnees, domestic populations and the diaspora (Zanker and Altrogge 2019; Monella and Creta 2020). West African governments seldom cooperate with European countries on returns as this jeopardises their political mandate and can spur domestic protests by both returnees and domestic populations dependent on remittances from migrants. The focus on securitisation is evident in the funding allocated to these measures through the EUTF: 49.7 million Euros to support security forces and 46.1 million Euros to support community-based peacebuilding. In contrast, less funding is allocated to projects that focus on governance reforms (18.1m Euros). In addition, there is limited funding for promoting regular migration either through scholarship schemes such as the Erasmus+ Scholarships (10 million Euros) (EUTF 2020b) or legal pathways to migration projects such as IOM MATCH, which is funded bilaterally by EU countries and under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (IOM 2020c).



#### BOX 4: INSTRUMENTALISING ODA FOR MIGRATION OBJECTIVES

In West Africa, the EU has redefined successful development to include tackling the root causes of migration (Landau 2019). This is measured in the reduction of arrivals of irregular migrants from the region in Europe (see graph 1 above). Migration cooperation within the region is also characterised by conditionalities, using a mix of positive and negative incentives to ensure the compliance of states.<sup>14</sup> For example, migration cooperation is used as a basis for renewing trade preferences under the Generalised System of Preferences plus (GSP+) scheme (EC 2017). Visa facilitation measures are also linked to the cooperation of states on returns and readmissions of their citizens (Bisong 2020). Also, Gambia, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire received additional funds after agreeing to cooperate with the EU on readmissions (Tulli and Shilhav 2020).

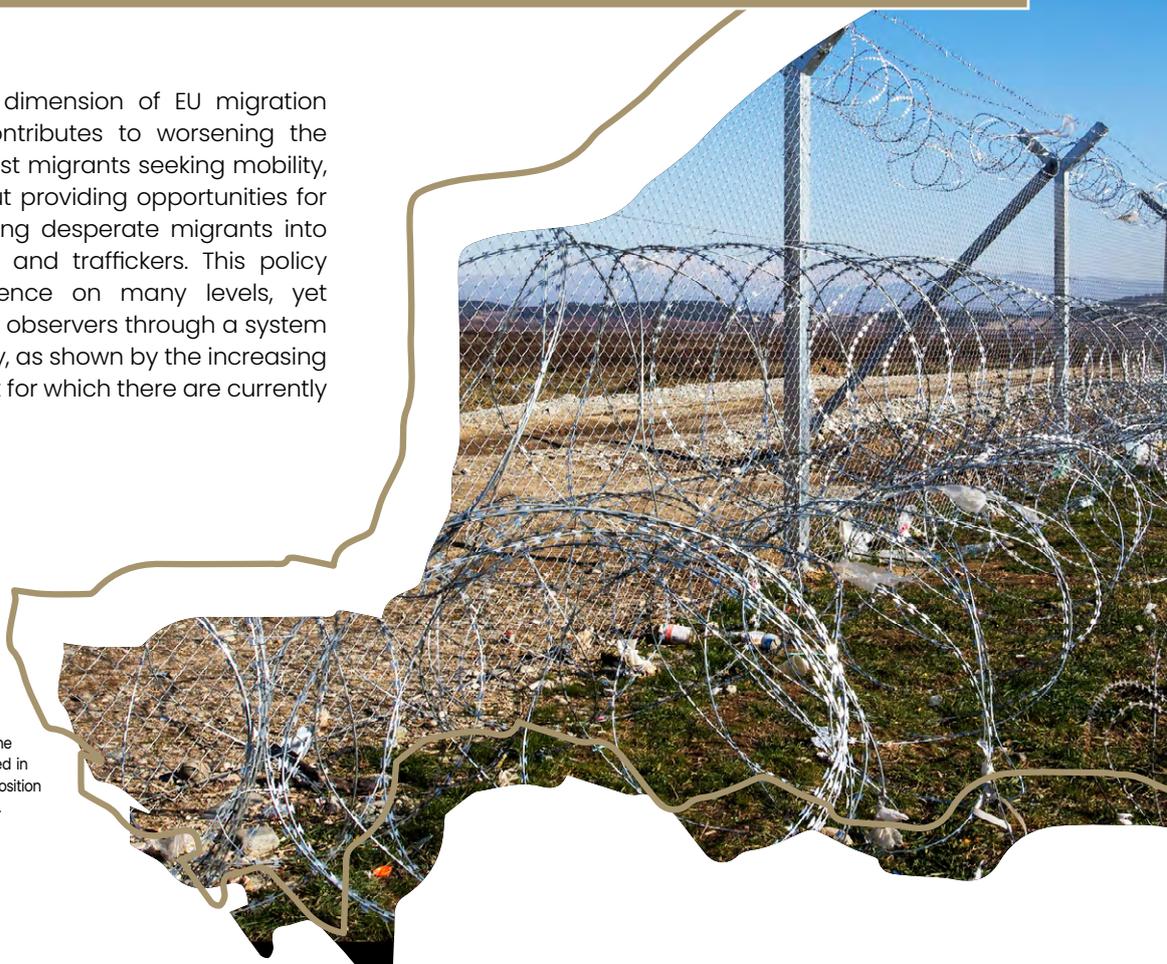
The Sahel - Lake Chad window of the EUTF where ECOWAS and its Member States are located implements more of a regional approach in migration cooperation. Since 2015, the EU has invested over 439 million Euros in regional projects. This is the largest geographical investment in the entire EUTF for Africa (Tulli and Shilhav 2020). The window equally has the highest amount of funding for peace and security measures, which supports security efforts in the G5 Sahel countries (Oxfam 2020). However, within the region, there is no clear indication of how migration cooperation is funded between regional and bilateral donors; also, there is no indication about where

overlaps exist and through what mechanisms these funds can be accounted for (Vermeulen et al. 2019b).

The EU has instrumentalised ODA for migration objectives in West Africa (Vermeulen et al. 2019b). Funding allocated through the EDF for development has been repurposed through the EUTF to address the root causes of migration in several West African countries. An example of how this is achieved is the focus on integrated border management strategies in West Africa, which should contribute to development in the region. But in practice, these border management strategies focus more on security and control than on facilitating the openness of the borders. With the support from the EUTF, these measures aim to increase the use of national biometric identity cards and passports, through establishing civil registries in several countries in the region. They also seek to establish biometric profiling of international and regional passengers (Zandonini 2019b). This intervention aims to link the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) used by most ECOWAS countries for border management with international alert lists (Zandonini 2019b). Furthermore, international agencies support the capacity building of border agencies in identification and recognition of document fraud in the use of travel documents. This is in a region where most of the daily border crossings occur without formal travel documents.

In summary, the external dimension of EU migration policies in West Africa contributes to worsening the violence perpetrated against migrants seeking mobility, and closing borders without providing opportunities for legal migration, thus pushing desperate migrants into the services of smugglers and traffickers. This policy incoherence enables violence on many levels, yet remains obscure to outside observers through a system of reneging on responsibility, as shown by the increasing deaths in the Sahara desert for which there are currently no monitoring systems.

<sup>14</sup> Migration cooperation is funded primarily through the EUTF and the EDF. ECOWAS was one of the regional organisations that participated in the Joint Valletta Summit in 2015 and has a position on the board of the steering group of the EUTF.



# Promoting migration and sustainable development between European and African countries

Migration can be both a challenge and an opportunity. Migration in a sustainable development framework can stimulate local economies, create decent jobs, promote democracy, governance and the rule of law in societies, as well as support actions that foster food security in countries and regions of transit and origin. However, these measures are given less focus, whereas priority is placed on border control measures. Although EU migration policies are framed in the language of sustainable development and the interventions are aligned with SDG indicators and targets, in practice, they have a limited effect in achieving Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and do not sufficiently consider the EU's own Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). In this context, African and European policymakers need to emphasise the rights-based approach to EU external migration policies in order to promote PCSD. Policymakers also need to push for coherence of migration objectives with long-term development objectives.

Migration is a key intervening tool in facilitating sustainable development and offers an opportunity to mitigate deepening global

inequalities (SDG10), especially those that have been further revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these cannot be addressed only by migration policies. Part of the 'failure' of migration policies results from the failure of other policies to address structural and global inequalities, which underlie and contribute to the development of society and migration included. Therefore, PCSD is necessary especially in migration and related policy areas. These linkages should not only be used to leverage negative conditionalities, but to also achieve coherence in tackling structural inequalities. EU agricultural and fishing policies should be reviewed to understand their impact on African countries, and whether or not they will impact these sectors negatively, thus, creating further pressure to migrate within or outside the region. Furthermore, linking negative conditionalities to trade policies may result in more difficult economic situations for African countries. There should be opportunities to promote trade between European and African countries, and create export markets for the goods and services produced through intervention measures. Also, investment in African countries should create decent work opportunities for Africans on the continent (like the Job Compact in Ethiopia).



The current European Commission is working on a legislative proposal – the New Pact on Migration & Asylum – that aims to overhaul existing migration policies and achieve a compromise position on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). It is currently envisaged that the proposal will include both mandatory and flexible responsibility for states. But European countries, as a result of a lack of solidarity with one another, have focused more on the external dimension of migration while de-prioritising internal aspects. This is especially true as it relates to the CEAS and the integration of third country nationals within the EU. This proposal presents an opportunity for the EU to concretely align migration and sustainable development objectives, through focusing on the longer-term perspectives. The Commission has proposed a mix of flexible resources for the external dimension of the EU policies under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). However, the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) currently contains wording which is linked to conditionality and a ‘performance-based approach’ for cooperating with third countries (Knoll and Veron 2019). Given the impact of EU financial support in migration cooperation, it is important that the MFF should contain measures that will ensure accountability and transparency in spending and implementing migration related projects. While flexibility is needed, it should not be at the expense of human rights and good governance, through fostering migration cooperation with third countries that do not respect human rights (Privacy International 2019).

Post-COVID-19 migration cooperation may see some changes, both positive and negative, as countries focus on economic recovery. Economies with productive sectors which are reliant on migrant workers may benefit from less restrictive migration policies (COE-EDP 2020). On the one hand, the pandemic may change the perception of migrant essential workers in Europe, thus increasing the need to have a positive discourse on migration. The long term impact of COVID-19 on migration patterns still remains unclear (see Box 5). If anything, it has reinforced the existence of inequalities, when it comes to access and opportunities available to African migrants seeking to gain entry to Europe. In the short term, within Europe, there is an increasing appreciation for migrant workers, including African migrants, who have contributed to saving economies and lives during the lockdown measures. It is still unclear if this appreciation will translate into more acceptance of migrants through liberal entry policies, in addition to the current move towards regularisation in some countries. However, in a bid to protect domestic jobs, European societies may be a bit more reluctant to accept migrants; this may result in incentivising governments to have more restrictive migration cooperation with African countries. More so, restrictive migration measures which have been implemented as part of the lockdown measures may be retained by some countries, thus prompting more externalisation measures.

## BOX 5: MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a reduction in mobility, increasing civil unrest, increasing unemployment and highlighted the inequalities which migrants are exposed to in the various communities where they find themselves. Migrants including refugees, particularly those who live in urban areas and in crowded accommodation, and who are dependent on daily wages, have been hit by the COVID-19 related lockdown measures imposed in these areas. Furthermore, the prevalence of informal work in the area exacerbates the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on job losses, decreases in earnings and difficulties for individuals to provide for their basic needs during and after the lockdown measures (Balde et al. 2020). Without money, migrants are at risk of homelessness and malnutrition because of their inability to pay their rents or buy food. Furthermore, migrants including refugees have limited access to health care services. In Morocco for example, the provision of healthcare to migrants is linked to their registration in the state-owned health insurance system – RAMED. However, undocumented and irregular migrants do not have access to RAMED and are thus excluded from health services (Haden 2020).

African governments have undertaken some measures to assist migrants in their countries and in destination countries during the pandemic. For example, the government of Morocco has offered access to COVID-19 tests, but many migrants are unable to go for testing because they lack Personal Protective Equipment. The Government of Ethiopia with the support of international organisations has organised evacuation flights for migrants (both migrant workers and irregular migrants) stuck in different countries, mostly in the Middle East and Gulf countries (IOM 2020a). International organisations have also assisted returning migrants in quarantine and providing immediate welfare support pending reintegration (UN 2020). However, the limited

responses of states have been complemented by the diaspora in assisting migrants in distress. Ethiopian migrants abroad have been equally hit hard by the pandemic and diaspora organisations are stepping in to provide food and accommodation assistance to migrants in need (see Lebanon; Abdu 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, migration across West Africa and the Horn of Africa has dwindled due to the lockdown measures imposed by all states in the region (MMC 2020). While these strict measures have not stopped the movement of migrants transiting irregularly (IOM 2020b), they have resulted in migrant workers and asylum seekers being stuck across the region (MMC 2020b; Zandonini 2020). Female and young migrants in particular are in a more vulnerable situation, exposed to more violence and abuse. Female migrant workers were also negatively affected by the pandemic and lockdown measures. Some of these workers used their savings to survive the lockdown period and are thus unable to return to their communities of destination or origin as these measures are easing.

Coupled with falling commodity prices globally, the predicted fall in remittances as a result of COVID-19 will severely affect African economies that are dependent on remittance inflows for development and survival. In Nigeria, remittances have a significant impact on economic growth – they contribute about 6.1% of GDP and are seven times higher than ODA flows (PWC 2020). In the Gambia, the reduction in remittances will directly affect over 60% of households dependent on remittances at the micro level and external reserves at the macro level. These negative economic impacts as a result of the pandemic may put more outward migration pressure on the West African region, which currently faces high unemployment rates (of about 20%), increasing displacement as a result of conflicts, and a possible food crisis (FAO 2020).

The ongoing post-Cotonou Agreement negotiations, the discussions around the EU-Africa summit and the EU strategy for Africa as well as the development of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum offer opportunities for achieving coherence not only in migration policies but also in other related development policies that affect society in general, including migration. This year, the discussion on the future of the EUTF will take place. While there have been various evaluations on the impact

and implementation of the EUTF, it has been shown to contribute to sustainable development where the project planning processes are done in line with development principles and with the input of domestic actors (OXFAM 2020). In this context, a renewed focus on the EU's own instrument of PCD may help consider and mitigate the negative impacts of various policies, including migration, on the sustainable development of third countries.

# Recommendations<sup>15</sup>

European and African migration cooperation should focus on the following immediate, medium and long-term measures to address the present challenges as a result of the global pandemic and also design or refocus the cooperation on issues of importance to both parties, especially for the African countries.

We therefore call on the EU institutions and its Member States to:

1

Improve Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development between migration and other policy areas. The EU's approach to Policy Coherence for Development can be used as a tool to achieve Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in migration cooperation. Aligning trade, investment, agriculture, fisheries and migration policies of European and African partners can moreover contribute to better development outcomes for countries of origin and transit. While opportunities exist through the European External Investment Plan for promoting job creation and employment opportunities in African countries, the quality of jobs created still remains a key obstacle to achieving development objectives, evident for example in Ethiopia.

2

Design the post COVID-19 economic recovery: African countries are prioritising post COVID-19 economic recovery strategies in order to mitigate the adverse socio-economic effects and aftershocks. European countries should work within the leadership structure provided by African states while supporting their economic recovery by facilitating remittance flows, providing Official Development Assistance (ODA), debt service suspension or waivers and other measures. The short-term focus on implementing restrictive migration measures needs to be downplayed and the focus should be shifted to support human capital and welfare, such as health, education and strengthening social policies. Facilitating remittance flows from Europe to African countries will assist communities and households to cope with economic difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and assist with the post-COVID economic recovery. In the medium and long run, measures aimed at renegotiating trade policies and the inclusion of African countries in value chains with a view to facilitating job creation and stability on the continent will contribute to having a positive effect on migration and development.

3

Address structural inequality through bilateral/ continental level cooperation. African and European policymakers should better align the Joint Europe Africa Strategy, and the post-Cotonou negotiations to be able to address structural concerns such as inequality, lack of good governance, corruption and insecurity in most African countries. Cooperation between countries can be aimed at supporting regional and continental initiatives and institutions to play a stronger monitoring and enforcement role. These include supporting institutional reforms at REC and AU levels, addressing the shrinking space for civil society and diaspora engagement in these discussions. In addition, the EU should provide institutional support to end illicit financial flows from African countries. These illicit flows contribute to inequality and loss of funds that could hamper the achievement of the SDGs.

<sup>15</sup> These recommendations reflect and build upon the networks' existing recommendations and positions on migration and development, which can be found on Caritas Europa's website policy section, and in particular in its European Common Home publication (Kadysheva et al. 2019). This brief was also discussed extensively with EC policy makers, academics, CSO representatives and migrants during the CE/FES podium discussion: "Exploring the impact of EU migration policies on sustainable development in Africa. Is Policy Coherence for Development the way forward?" on 23 September 2020.

4

Encourage more labour mobility schemes. The COVID pandemic has revealed the importance of migrant workers in European countries. This will help in restarting the discussions on labour mobility between Africa and Europe beyond highly skilled migrants. It will also begin an honest discussion about facilitating channels for labour migration. The EUTF has a pillar which deals with facilitating legal pathways for migrants. However, only few schemes have been implemented (primarily in the IT sector and mostly in North and West African countries, i.e. Nigeria, Morocco and Senegal). Therefore, subsequent efforts should focus on facilitating legal pathways for migrants.

5

Rethink returns, readmissions and reintegration processes. This should ensure that the conditions to which migrants are returned are not worse than or do not exacerbate the inequalities which they face in their host communities. Hot returns, practiced by states with EU financial support, should be discouraged, as this may expose returnees to more vulnerable conditions. In supporting the return of displaced communities or migrants, it is also important to ensure to avoid exacerbating conflicts between returned migrants and their host communities. However, for this to happen, African countries need to have a system to reintegrate not only returned (irregular) migrants but also returned migrant workers. More so, the EU and its Member States should not make the promotion of new labour mobility schemes conditional on the ability to conduct effective returns, since the two issues are not connected.

6

Promote transparency in migration cooperation with third countries and the protection of human rights. The EU and its institutions should not ignore the human rights implications of working with undemocratic governments that have a record of using violence and committing abuses against migrants to discourage their movements. This is important if the EU seeks to play a role in supporting good governance, democratic principles between African states and institutions. In addition, parliamentary oversight of commitments and ongoing cooperation arrangements with third countries can promote transparency in practices and cooperation with African states. When it comes to supporting capacity building initiatives for African countries on refugee reception, these should not come at the expense of refugees' right to seek asylum in Europe. There should be an increased involvement of civil society organisations in African and European countries in monitoring the implementation of migration policies and their adherence to human rights frameworks.

7

Preserve the primary objectives of international development cooperation. European Official Development Assistance (ODA) should be used to tackle the root causes of poverty and the drivers of forced displacement (rather than curbing migration flows), should be allocated to countries based on actual recipients' needs and development strategies (rather than on the EU's migration policy objectives), and should refrain from including conditionalities on migration management, readmission and return. Besides running against the primary objective of poverty eradication, pressure on third countries to cooperate on migration control via these means is likely to backfire and create further mistrust among development partners.

8

Facilitate regional mobility. Most migrants move within their region. Therefore, facilitating regional labour mobility will result in improved livelihoods for entire households. Especially in the context of West Africa, where migration can be linked to improved livelihoods. These discussions should also promote African priorities on migration cooperation within the continent especially through supporting the implementation of the AU and regional free movement schemes. Migration practices that obstruct regular forms of migration in the region should be avoided. ECOWAS citizens should be able to move freely within the region according to the existing regulations. Migrants should not be arrested based on their supposed intentions to travel to Europe through irregular channels.

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