



A Joint Endeavour: Shaping Migration from Africa to Europe

Annual Report 2020

Eight Core Messages

Africa is one of the key political issues of our time. The African Union/European Union (AU-EU) summits that have taken place in the last years – with another planned for the autumn of 2020 during Germany’s presidency of the Council of the EU – are just one indicator of how high this topic currently sits on the political agenda. Other projects likewise recognise Africa’s increasingly important role in world politics. The third Compact with Africa conference, for example, which promotes private investment in Africa, took place in Berlin in November 2019 at the invitation of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and was initially established under the German G20 presidency. The African Union’s Agenda 2063 is developing a shared vision of how Africa might evolve over the next fifty years. All these projects centre on a continent whose global significance will only increase in the future. The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) has therefore chosen Africa as the focus for its eleventh Annual Report for good reason; especially when it comes to migration, Germany and Europe must learn to work more closely with Africa.

1 Too little is known about the African continent and its diversity

Africa today increasingly attracts global attention. Yet while interest in Africa may have increased exponentially in recent years, knowledge of it has not. One reason for this is a lack of data, not only in the area of migration but generally. Any existing data tend



to be patchy; often, even basic statistics are not available or have been captured inconsistently. It is therefore difficult to get an accurate and detailed picture of the current situation, and predictions about the future are even less reliable. Estimates, early warning systems and prognoses are based on very different assumptions and models, as are ideas of how intra- and intercontinental migration movements might look in the future. The SVR therefore recommends that during Germany's forthcoming presidency of the Council of the EU, a pan-European network of researchers should be set up which draws on African expertise, with the task of systematising and expanding existing forecasting techniques and research findings.

But to generate knowledge about 'Africa' in the singular is problematic, if not impossible. There is no one 'Africa'. It may be possible to talk of an 'African continent' in geographical terms, but politically, socially and culturally there is no such thing. This is no less true when it comes to migration. People come from, go to and pass through numerous regions in Africa; migration to and from the continent, as well as within it, is heterogeneous and diverse. From media reports, one might imagine that the main reason for migration is forced displacement. But there are many other reasons for migration; people may move to find work, to study, to get married or to join their families, and there are also circular migration movements – mainly within Africa, but to a more limited extent between continents. Little attention is paid to the fact that African states are also countries of destination for international migration and that some of them are among the most important receiving countries for refugees. Where possible, the SVR differentiates between regions and forms of migration and warns against statements or policy recommendations that simplify the issue.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter A, B.1.

2 Most migrants remain in Africa; prognoses relating to future migration movements are unreliable

Over half of all African migrants migrate within Africa. Most of them, in fact, even move within their own country or their own region of origin. Only a minority migrates to



Europe – mostly from North African countries – and of this minority, only a small number comes to Germany. For African migrants, Europe, including Germany, is only one possible goal among many, and immigrants from African countries make up less than one per cent of the entire population of Germany.

But realistically and objectively, we must also note that that demographic developments in Europe and Africa are very different. Population numbers in Europe are stagnating, even diminishing in some countries and regions, while in Africa they are growing. Nigeria is a particularly dramatic example. It has by far the largest population of all African countries, and the United Nations (UN) estimates that by 2060, it could have around 500 million inhabitants – as many as the entire European Union. But research shows that demographic statistics in themselves can tell us nothing about future migration movements. There is no straightforward link, or even any linear correlation between population growth and migration. The often-heard prediction that Europe is likely to experience an uncontrollable wave of immigration in the near future does not hold up to scrutiny based on the data we possess today. This is not to say that current demographic developments on the two continents should go unheeded. As a response to the situation, complacency is as misguided as scaremongering; instead, the SVR would like to see a debate based on facts, one that is not afraid to engage with uncomfortable realities yet avoids simplistic messaging.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter A.

3 Migration can be managed (up to a point) – but this requires European and international cooperation

One of the central findings of migration research is that migration cannot be managed by the state alone. This is particularly true of migration from Africa, whether the target of such migration is Europe in general or Germany in particular. Nonetheless, individual states and partnerships of states such as the EU should try to shape the framework conditions for migration in a way that recognises the interests of countries of origin and destination as well as the needs of migrants themselves. This can be done through



national legislation, international agreements and regional and global forums as well as the United Nations Global Compacts for Migration (GCM) and on Refugees (GCR).

In this Annual Report, the SVR looks at important instruments for managing migration movements from Africa to Europe and Germany. Only by working in partnership can Europe and Africa effectively manage current and anticipated future migration movements. To meet this challenge, the SVR believes that efforts must be focused above all on international cooperation, and that this must take place at two levels: first, within the European Union and between EU member states, and second, between the EU (and/or individual member states) and relevant partner countries in Africa. Further, the SVR recommends that Germany and the EU should use international forums to promote the shared management of migration as a joint endeavour, something which can be best achieved through the framework of the Global Compact for Migration. Europe and Germany should continue to argue for a shared global responsibility for refugees while promoting cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination; not just to ensure the provision of emergency relief, but also to improve access to health and education services, develop economies and strengthen democracy and the rule of law.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter C.1.

4 Germany should lead the way on partnership working

Currently, Europe is especially divided on migration policy, asylum issues and the protection of refugees. Discussions have been going on for years about how various directives of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) can be improved to make them more fit for purpose. Another long-standing matter of debate is the question of revising the Dublin Regulation, the basic legislation that regulates European asylum and refugee policies. Although potential reforms to these frameworks are often discussed, very little has actually been achieved. When it comes to migration, the EU member states can only agree on one thing – they want to harden their borders and ‘externalise’ migration issues. In practice, this means a policy of working more closely



with countries of origin and transit to ensure that controls are enforced before migrants even reach the outer borders of the EU, particularly in relation to numerous African states.

But a successful migration policy cannot consist of merely controlling borders. The SVR therefore supports the idea that Germany should actively work together with other EU member states to develop and implement new forms of cooperation with African states. Germany's presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2020 should be used for this purpose. This pioneering approach should help to shift the current narrow focus away from border controls and return and towards a new joined-up policy that also includes regulated, humane access routes and protection for refugees. It is equally important to open up regular migration pathways for those who wish to come to Europe for economic reasons. However, to achieve this, we need new forms of dialogue in migration politics that can offer a framework for political planning and help to create trust. But to make these meaningful, they must then be followed by tangible action, including bilateral partnerships.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapters C.1, C.2.

5 For a 'sustainable' return policy

The EU's explicitly formulated – and legitimate – aims of improving border protection and controlling migration effectively can only be achieved in partnership with African governments. For example, the EU wants to be able to return migrants to their countries of origin if they do not have the right to remain. But deportation often does not work, mainly because the respective countries of origin are unwilling to work with EU countries on this issue. Germany has been increasing its return efforts and has been working together with some countries of origin in Africa to achieve this, especially the Maghreb countries Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

But the efficacy of existing return and reintegration programmes for African countries is currently under-researched. Existing studies have found that financial incentives



alone are seldom enough to persuade migrants to return to their country of origin, although they may make the decision easier. It is just as important to offer migrants help and advice about how they might become reintegrated when they do return. Existing support and advice services such as those offered by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) need to be reviewed and aligned with other services. To improve such programmes, it is essential that the lived experience of migrants and returning migrants plays a greater role in tailoring the offers to their needs.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter C.5.

6 SVR's suggestion for a new, regular way of getting to Europe: a temporary working visa in return for a 'deposit'

The fact that young people in Africa want to migrate to Europe is partly due to the enormous income gap between Europe and Africa and the very different standards of living on each continent. But most Africans wishing to emigrate to Europe have been unable to do so using legal channels. Up to now, they had the choice of either giving up their wish entirely or taking a chance on an expensive, risky and often extremely dangerous attempt to reach Europe by irregular routes. The SVR therefore argues that Europe should open up new, regular migration pathways for migrants which recognise and respect both the desire to emigrate and the right of potential target countries to set their own conditions for those wishing to immigrate to them. The German government should ensure that African states are aware of and can benefit from the recent Skilled Worker Immigration Act (*Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz*). Among its other provisions, this legislation opens up opportunities for people to come to Germany for education and training purposes. To promote these opportunities, local, cooperative projects should be funded and Germany should enter into bilateral agreements with selected countries of origin, for example regarding international education and training partnerships. Germany also needs to find ways of opening up access to those who do not have an academic or vocational qualification, something currently not covered by the Skilled Worker Immigration Act.



For many African migrants, money is their 'golden ticket' to Europe: only those with the funds to pay people smugglers have a chance of getting in. In view of this situation, the SVR suggests a solution that takes into account the interests of the migrants as well as those of their countries of destination and origin. First, rather than paying huge sums to trafficking networks, migrants who meet certain conditions should have the option to pay a 'deposit' to the European state they wish to enter. In return, they would have the right to enter the country with a legal status (thus, from the country of destination's perspective, their entry would be managed), and they would receive a temporary residence permit allowing them to work. Provided that they leave the country again by the date specified in the permit, their financial deposit would be returned to them. Further, after a cooling-off period it would be possible for them to re-enter the country, thus avoiding reproducing the 'guest worker' (*Gastarbeiter*) model. To carry out German pilot projects with African countries of origin, functioning readmission agreements must first be in place. The model could also be limited to a certain number of migrants and be linked to specific eligibility and selection criteria. Second, German employer associations increasingly demand that the labour market should be opened up to foreign workers without formal qualifications. This kind of working visa would represent a response to their demands, and in return, employers could be asked to support such a programme financially. Third, such time-bound – but not necessarily one-off – stays by foreign workers offer an incentive through which migration could help to support development in the worker's country of origin. Once the visa expires, the migrating individual would be expected to return to their home country and use their savings and contacts to set up their own company, enter the labour market or invest in agriculture. The programme would therefore have the explicit aim of also initiating circular migration processes from which all parties benefit, helping to encourage partnership working in the area of development work. Finally, such a model offering workers temporary visas would also signal to African states Germany's (and Europe's) interest in long-term, sustainable forms of cooperation in the areas of migration and return.



A temporary visa would be a way for at least some people in Africa to come to Europe, although of course, it is not a universal remedy. But it would help to improve the current situation and be a way of actively managing migration from Africa to Europe.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapters B.2, C.2. and C.6.

7 Fund protection for refugees, experiment with new financial models, expand resettlement programmes

When it comes to the protection of refugees, financial considerations also play an important role. The humanitarian organisations responsible for protecting and assisting refugees face serious funding difficulties. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is especially affected by this, although other agencies are experiencing similar problems. To increase the funding available, various financial approaches could be considered. The current negotiations in the run-up to the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027, for example, offer an ideal window for the introduction of new or improved funding mechanisms. Additionally, Germany and the EU should successively reduce the earmarking of their financial contributions. Besides securing sufficient funding, the SVR also believes it is vital to ensure the sustainability, predictability and flexibility of investments in this area. New financial models should be tested and tried out.

Another opportunity to improve protection for refugees is offered by agreements known as 'refugee compacts' (which should not be confused with the UN Global Compact on Refugees), designed to support selected countries of first asylum in helping refugees become integrated into society, not only in terms of the economy. A systematic evaluation and review of the approaches used up to now is needed so that the model can be improved where necessary. The EU member states should also commit to a bigger share of the global resettlement intake. The SVR welcomes the pledge given by member states at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in December 2019 to create 30,000 resettlement places for 2020. But this is not enough to cover demand. Further, resettlement should not be linked to migration control, as is currently the case in the



draft regulation for the EU Resettlement Framework. In addition to these points, it would also make sense to open up opportunities for civil society organisations and private individuals to be directly engaged in refugee protection through privately financed resettlement programmes.

In view of the situation in Libya and the Central Mediterranean, the SVR would like to see new government-sponsored maritime search and rescue operations managed and coordinated at European level. But European states should not be the only countries to take responsibility for this task. All countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea must act jointly to ensure that rescued persons are brought to a safe place that meets the standards of international human rights legislation. At present, this is not the case; many refugees and migrants are brought to detention centres in Libya, which have been heavily criticized for violating a number of human rights. These centres must be closed and their inmates evacuated. Germany should accelerate its resettlement processes and consider evacuating people directly from Libya. Further, Germany should continue to support the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in facilitating the return of people who do not require protection to their respective countries of origin. As long as the EU cannot decide how rescued persons should be allocated to the member states, a 'coalition of the willing' should take the lead in admitting refugees. The situation is urgent and as such, requires immediate action. It is important that these measures are followed through consistently and effectively, while work must continue on a permanent agreement regarding allocation.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter C.4.

8 Involve the African diaspora

The African diaspora plays a much greater role than is often believed. By 'African diaspora' is meant the – extremely diverse – group of people who came to Europe and Germany from African countries many years ago and who (still) feel a close connection to their countries of origin. These people play a very important role in accompanying and supporting the integration of new immigrants, in promoting development in their



countries of origin and finally, in the ongoing dialogue with the populations of those countries about the chances and risks involved in migration.

This important work could be expanded through targeted partnership projects; for example, to meet the needs of diaspora organisations working in the areas of development or migration policy which lack the requisite technical, financial or administrative resources and/or specialist skills. In this, the various priorities of integration and development should be considered equally and brought together to create new synergies. But at the same time, it is important not to constrict the freedom and agency of these organisations.

For more information and recommendations, see Chapter C.6.