



PRESS RELEASE

A Joint Endeavour: Shaping Migration from Africa to Europe

In its Annual Report 2020, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) focuses for the first time on Africa. The African Union/European Union Africa Summits, the G20 Compact with Africa investor conference and the African Union's Agenda 2063 show the increasing importance of Africa in world politics. On migration policy as in other areas, Germany and Europe must work more closely with Africa. In its eleventh Annual Report, the SVR analyses migration movements within Africa and from Africa to Europe and Germany. The Report describes the conditions under which migration within Africa and from Africa to other parts of the world takes place, and the consequences of such migration. It discusses German and European policy in relation to migration from Africa and offers long-term policy recommendations that will still be valid once the COVID-19 global crisis has passed.

Berlin, 5 May 2020. For many people, the phrase 'migration from Africa to Europe' conjures up just one image: a group of desperate people, risking their lives in inflatable boats to attempt the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean to the Italian coast. But in reality, migration within and from Africa is far more diverse, encompassing very different countries of origin, destination and transit. "From media reports, one might imagine that the main reason for migration is forced displacement. But other factors can also play a role, such as employment and education (for example, the migration of students and highly-qualified workers), marriage or family reasons, along with circular migration movements – mainly within the African continent, but to a more limited extent, internationally," says Professor Dr. Petra Bendel, Chairperson of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). 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. "In Germany and Europe, we know too little about migration in and out of Africa. But we can only begin to shape migration jointly once we have a solid foundation of knowledge based on comprehensive data. The SVR has a role to play in building this foundation," says Prof. Dr. Bendel, explaining in more detail the reasons why the SVR has chosen Africa for this year's Annual Report.

Currently, the EU puts a huge amount of money and effort into preventing irregular migration from Africa. "But a successful migration policy cannot consist merely of controlling borders," continues Prof. Dr. Bendel. The SVR therefore supports the idea that Germany should actively work together with other EU member states to develop new forms of cooperation with African states. "The German presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2020 should be used for this purpose. The German government should also ensure that African states are aware of and benefit from the new Skilled Worker Immigration Act [*Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz, FEG*]. But we also need to find ways of opening up access to those who do not have an academic or vocational qualification."

The SVR proposes the introduction of temporary working visas in return for a 'deposit' as a new, regular migration pathway to Europe. Under certain conditions, migrants from Africa 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 and they would receive a temporary residence permit allowing them to work. Provided they leave the country again by the date specified in the permit, their financial deposit would be returned to them. "This kind of visa would allow workers, even those without formal qualifications, to immigrate to Europe in a managed way, and would thus help to lower irregular migration levels. It would also offer a means of working in partnership with African states," says



Professor Panu Poutvaara, Ph.D., a member of the SVR and economics expert. "The intention behind these temporary – but not necessarily one-off – stays is also to build on the opportunities that migration offers for supporting development in the worker's country of origin. Once their visas expire, migrants would be expected to return to their home country and use their savings and new contacts to set up their own company, enter the labour market or invest in agriculture. This could initiate circular migration processes from which all parties benefit, and thus in turn contribute to joint development work."

Protecting refugees: Secure funding, experiment with new models, expand resettlement programmes. Some African states, such as Uganda, the Sudan and Ethiopia, are among the most important receiving countries for refugees worldwide. But the humanitarian organisations who are tasked with looking after refugees in those countries face serious funding problems. The European Union should therefore increase funding for humanitarian refugee aid, and EU member states should expand their resettlement contingency budgets. In view of the situation in transit countries like Libya and in and around the Mediterranean, the SVR would like to see new government-sponsored maritime search and rescue missions managed and coordinated at European level. Many refugees and migrants are currently brought to detention centres in Libya. "These must be closed and their inmates must be evacuated. 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," says SVR Chairperson Prof. Dr. Bendel. "At the same time, work must continue on a permanent agreement regarding allocation of refugees within the EU."

Promoting long-term, sustainable forms of cooperation in the areas of migration and return. "A return policy is an essential element of a comprehensive migration policy," says Deputy SVR Chairperson Professor Dr. Daniel Thym. "But the EU's explicitly formulated, legitimate aims of improving border protection and controlling migration effectively can only be achieved in partnership with African governments. Often, people with no legal status who are required to leave Europe cannot be deported, mainly because their respective countries of origin are unwilling to work with EU countries on this issue. Here it is essential that we find solutions that take the legitimate interests of these countries into consideration. Readmission agreements with African states are needed in order to pave the way for migrants to work in Europe on a temporary basis. This is the idea behind the SVR's temporary working visa model." Too little is known at present about the efficacy of existing reintegration programmes which encourage migrants to return to Africa voluntarily. The SVR recommends that these programmes should be systematically evaluated and better aligned with other services. A sustainable return policy must take greater account of the lived experience of migrants, with a more long-term approach to the planning of reintegration programmes.

Prognoses relating to future migration movements are unreliable. Realistically and objectively, demographic developments in Europe and Africa are very different. "Population numbers in Europe are stagnating, or, in some countries and regions, even diminishing, while in Africa they are growing," says Prof. Dr. Bendel. "But 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 prediction that Europe is likely to experience an uncontrollable wave of immigration from Africa in the near future does not hold up to scientific scrutiny based on the data we possess today." The SVR recommends that during Germany's forthcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union, a network of researchers should be set up to examine migration movements in and out of Africa, with the task of systematising and expanding existing forecasting techniques and research findings.

The report's core messages can be downloaded from the Council's website at: <http://www.svr-migration.de/en/annual-report/>



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About the Expert Council

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration is based on an initiative of the Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation and consists of seven member foundations. In addition to the Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation, these are: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stifterverband and Vodafone Foundation Germany. The Expert Council is an independent and interdisciplinary committee of experts which takes a stand on issues relevant to integration and migration policy and offers practically oriented policy consultation. The results of its work are published in an annual report. The SVR's Annual Report 2020 is being funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community.

The SVR includes nine researchers from different disciplines and research institutes: Prof. Dr. Petra Bendel (Chairperson), Prof. Dr. Daniel Thym (Deputy Chairperson), Prof. Dr. Claudia Diehl, Prof. Dr. Viola B. Georgi, Prof. Dr. Christian Joppke, Prof. Dr. Birgit Leyendecker, Prof. Panu Poutvaara, Ph.D., Prof. Dr. Sieglinde Rosenberger and Prof. Dr. Hans Vorländer.

For more information, go to: www.svr-migration.de/en/