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## Giving fresh impetus to Germany's collaboration with Africa on migration

Cooperation between Germany and African countries on migration policy is characterized by a wide range of challenges. At the same time, it has a new and promising dynamic that must be leveraged.

In political terms, Africa is becoming more and more important for Germany. For example, its Federal Government has stated that it has “recognized the significance and potential of our neighboring continent and is striving for a deeper partnership.” German politicians have never travelled to African countries as often as they have in recent years. One of the key reasons behind this is the issue of migration, as the so-called “displacement crisis” has heralded a new era in terms of foreign policies on Africa and migration.

The issue is also becoming increasingly charged due to demographic developments on the African continent and the shortage of skilled workers in Germany. Against this background, cooperation in a spirit of

partnership will play a crucial role in efforts to tackle the current migration policy challenges – i.e., the lack of prospects for young people in Africa and the importance of multilateral cooperation – but also to address them profitably from a market economy perspective.

However, cooperation with African states has to date been characterized by strong asymmetries and diverging interests that cannot be easily reconciled. In recent years, the migration debate in Europe has been dominated by a defensive attitude, and the potentially cooperative relationship with African states has tended to deteriorate. Both sides perceive instruments and actors as being at odds with each other.

Migration and (forced) return, in particular, often become mere bargaining chips. The solution can only be found in a collaboration on migration that is based on partnership between Germany (within the framework of the EU) and African states.

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### African migration: myths and facts

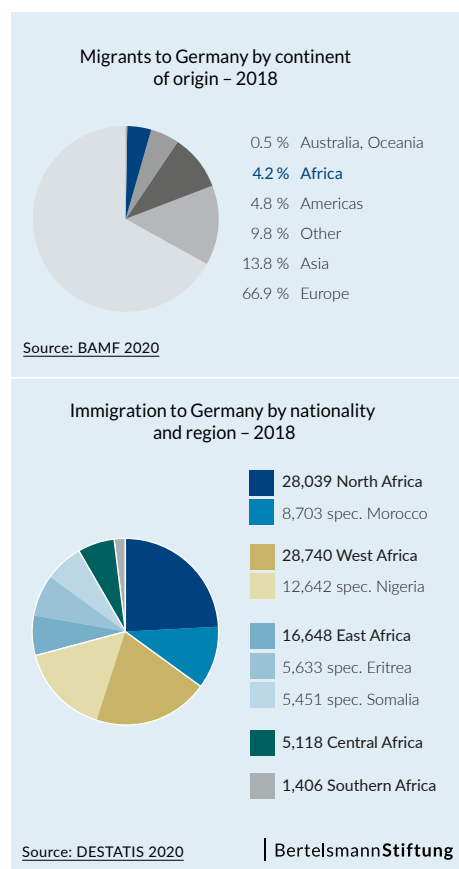
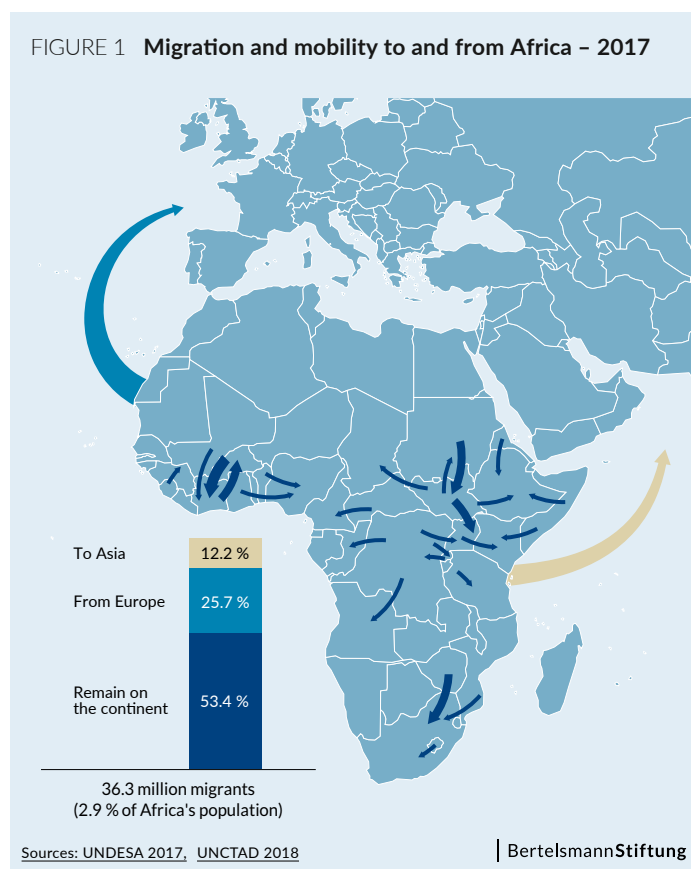
Despite the growth records on the so-called “continent of opportunities” and a stronger self-confidence of the African Union (AU), such as with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) project, the public debate and German policy are marked by certain misperceptions.

For example, the predicted population growth – albeit regionally immense, but at very different levels of intensity – cannot automatically be translated into increasing migration to Europe (Angenendt et al. 2017). United Nations (UN) statistics speak of an increase from the current 970 million to around 2.2 billion people in 2050. The number of Africans immigrating to Germany has fallen sharply in recent years, thereby almost reaching the level from before the displacement crisis. The same applies to initial applications for asylum, which in any case already accounted for only a small proportion (11.4 percent) of all applications (BAMF 2020). African migration only constitutes 14.1 percent of global migration, which is much smaller than the share of migration in or out of Asia and Europe. Roughly 70 percent of all sub-Saharan migrants remain on the conti-

nent (MIF 2019), and only about a quarter of African emigrants have Europe as a migration destination. Migration and mobility (especially within regions) are part of the normal course of life and often self-evident survival strategies. The vast majority of “mobile” people are those migrating from the countryside to the city, regional refugees or internally displaced persons (approx. 17 million). So-called irregular migration to Europe – i.e., without an entry permit – is more of the exception than the rule in this context.

Decreasing migration figures from non-EU states are reducing the domestic political pressure in Germany. Meanwhile, given the shortage of skilled workers (which is not a result of short-term economic developments), Germany is attempting to enhance its status as an attractive destination country for third countries in order to maintain its economic prosperity. In purely numerical terms, the high youth-unemployment rate in many African countries represents an important source of potential labor for the German market. However, there is a large skills gap between African and European countries, even among the best-qualified people, who are already coming to Europe today due to a lack of qualified job opportunities at home.

FIGURE 1 Migration and mobility to and from Africa – 2017



## German Migration Policy in Africa – Framework and Objectives

For a long time, Germany’s policies on Africa were primarily geared toward development and economic cooperation. The displacement crisis has changed this, and it is increasingly being considered crucial to prevent flight and migration. This has led Germany to give its Africa policies a stronger focus on security policy, especially in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa. As a result, beginning in 2015, Germany has expanded its institutional resources and strategically repositioned itself in terms of migration policy.

### Expansion of ministerial resources for migration and Africa

The relevant ministries – especially the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI), and the Federal Foreign Office (AA) – have employed additional resources to create thematic units on flight, migration and return and to develop expertise on migration. However, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Economics (BMWi) and the Ministry of Finance (BMF), have also intensified their activities related to Africa and migration. The Federal Foreign Office (AA) plays the role of the central coordinator both internally and externally, including vis-à-vis the EU. In addition, a network of diplomats dedicated to specific issues has been established in Africa.

Individual German states, such as Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia, are also active in Africa. In addition, municipalities are engaged in foreign policy in the form of town twin/sister city programs. A large number of civil society and economic actors, including migrants, as well as political foundations are pursuing their own or joint strategies for Africa.

### The Federal Government’s approach

In view of this federal diversity, a coherent German foreign policy on Africa and migration is difficult for African and sometimes European partner governments to discern. The revised version of the Federal Government’s Africa Policy Guidelines (March 2019) states for the first time that “managing and shaping migration, tackling the causes of refugee movements [and] supporting refugees” are collectively one of the five core objectives and thereby part of a comprehensive Africa policy. The Federal Government’s comprehensive Strategy for Migration and Development (AA, BMI and BMZ 2016) focuses on 1) causes of flight and irregular migration, 2) the protection of refugees, 3) legal migration and migration management, and 4) return and reintegration. In doing so, it is following Switzerland’s “whole-of-government” approach.

TABLE 1 Selected Programs of German and European External Migration Policy in Africa

BMZ/GIZ	<u>Tackling the root causes of displacement, stabilising host regions, supporting refugees</u>
BMZ/GIZ and BMI	<u>Migration for Development Programme, i.a. Returning to New Opportunities</u>
GIZ/International Services	<u>Sustainable Recruitment of Nurses (Triple Win)</u>
BMZ/GIZ/EUTF	<u>Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in Africa</u>
BMZ/GIZ/EUTF	<u>Better Migration Management</u>
BMZ/GIZ	<u>Partnership-based Approaches to Development-Oriented Training and Labour Migration (Partnerschaftliche Ansätze für entwicklungsorientierte Ausbildungs- und Arbeitsmigration – PAM)</u>
EU	<u>Migration Partnership Framework</u>
EUTF/ILO*	<u>Towards Free Movement and Transhumance in the IGAD region</u>
ECOWAS/EU/IOM/ILO/ICMPD	<u>FMM West Africa (Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa)</u>
EUTF/IOM** EUTF/AA	<u>Border Management ECOWAS, e.g. Strengthening the Sustainable Management of the Consequences of Migration Flows (Niger); Support Programme for Integrated Border Management in Burkina Faso</u>
EU/ICMPD	<u>Mobility Partnership Facility</u>

\*ILO: International Labour Organization; \*\*IOM: International Organization for Migration

According to statements by government representatives, interdepartmental implementation in Germany has been more successful than department-specific implementation. Nevertheless, individual policy approaches stand in the way of others, are one-sided or have shortcomings in terms of coordination. The current shift toward the dominant paradigm of combating the causes of flight is most evident at the BMZ. The special initiative “Tackling the Root Causes of displacement, stabilising host regions, supporting refugees” is by far the largest of four new BMZ initiatives aimed at mitigating the causes of flight and migration. However, their application in crisis regions is at odds with the desire to reduce the causes of displacement in a sustainable and structural manner, as the aim in these cases is often to rapidly curb irregular migration. By failing to differentiate between acute and structural causes of flight, policymakers run the risk of spending too much development policy funding on combating migration (Kipp and Koch 2018).

One part of the special initiative is, for example, the “Returning to New Opportunities” project in the “Migration for Development” (PME) program, which focuses on voluntary, assisted return and reintegration. The associated migration information centers in selected African countries are also supposed to provide formal advice on legal migration routes, but they are hardly ever used for this purpose and thereby represent a rather restrictive approach. As a result, the local populations take a critical view of them.

In 2017, dubbed the “German Africa Year,” a new dimension of development cooperation was introduced that involved the (private) sector and aimed to sustainably improve economic conditions in African countries and, above all, to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in making investments. The central strategy document is the Compact with Africa (CwA) of the Ministry of Finance, which was initiated within the framework of the Germany’s G20 presidency and the BMZ’s Marshall Plan with Africa (MPA). These initiatives also support the view that changing conditions in African countries will reduce the incentives for flight and migration (see Kappel 2019).

In addition, Germany has become Europe’s pioneer in innovative individual initiatives on legal migration (SVR 2019) and increasingly also in Africa. Examples include the „Triple Win“ project for the recruitment of nursing staff (since 2013 in Tunisia) of GIZ, Germany’s association for international cooperation; the regional project „Towards a Holistic

### Marshall Plan with Africa and Compact with Africa

The MPA implements the CwA with so-called reform partnerships in selected “particularly reform-oriented” countries (so far Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal). Since 2019, it has been accompanied by the BMZ special initiative for “training and employment,” which aims to create 100,000 jobs and 30,000 training positions in the coming years. In contrast to the MPA, the CwA does not aim at economic and social transformation in order to create sustainable jobs, but instead focuses especially on infrastructure improvements.

Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa“ (since 2019 within the framework of the EU Emergency Trust Fund, EUTF); and the BMZ’s new “Partnership-based Approaches to Development-Oriented Training and Labour Migration (PAM)” program, which is currently conducting an analysis of potential in Nigeria, among other things.

Since March 1, 2020, the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG) has improved regular migration routes. However, access to the labor market for low- and medium-skilled workers remains limited, and it is difficult to secure recognition of educational and professional qualifications attained abroad, although there are plans to improve this. Standards in African countries are currently hardly compatible with those in Germany.

### Germany within the EU context

Although Germany is engaging in more bilateral action in Africa, it is primarily active in external migration policy within the framework of the EU. Since 1999, decisions have been made in the EU’s High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration, and implemented in external migration dialogues, regional processes, and mobility and migration partnerships (Kipp and Koch 2018).

In contrast to the United Nations Global Compact for Migration, the European Migration Agenda (May 2015) defines migration as a problem. The subsequent Valletta Process (since November 2015) is meant to address solutions together with African states that will receive funding from the EUTF and can be deployed flexibly and without the monitoring function of the European Parliament.

The Valletta Action Plan and the strategy for implementing the EUTF include agreements among EU member states, such as ones to improve legal migration and mobility, which is in the interest of African states. However, what is done in practice is at odds with the objectives. In this case, a short-term focus is placed on policies to curb irregular migration, including through job-creation measures; while 90 percent of these measures are funded by the long-term-oriented European Development Fund (European Commission 2019). Germany is by far the largest bilateral donor, supplying €225 million, followed by Italy, supplying €123 million (EUTF 2020).

The European Partnership Framework, which was created in the course of the new Migration Agenda and the Valletta Process, particularly pursues a highly restrictive approach by linking development with migration and making “fast and operational returns” the “paramount priority” (European Commission 2016). Five central African countries of transit and origin of irregular migration to the EU (Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) were identified as priority countries.

#### The EU Migration Partnership Framework

As a complement to the mobility partnerships (MPs) that have existed since 2005 but have hardly been implemented – including with Cape Verde, Morocco and Tunisia – EU migration partnerships are meant to enable more binding cooperation on migration policy between the EU and African states. However, the focus on return and migration control has made some countries (e.g., Mali and Ethiopia) skeptical and unwilling to cooperate. More and more informal agreements are being concluded now, which is an explicit priority of the partnership’s framework. Granted, this is making it possible to address the issue of deportations in return states, which is unpopular in Africa. But it is also increasing popular distrust of “backroom deals” (Zanker et al. 2019). Not much has been happening with the EU Migration Partnership Framework for two years now, which is partly due to its asymmetrical architecture designed according to European interests. It is questionable whether such agreements can be broadened to also include the necessary concessions to African states.

Driven by a split in public opinion on migration, this fundamental imbalance between restricting, controlling and being open to migration also has a source in EU member states’ sovereign right to legal migration: While some countries want to prevent migration altogether, others want to attract professionals with specific skills. For example, some projects aim to promote regional mobility within Africa, but limit it via restrictive components, such as (voluntary) return and border security at the same time.

Examples are the EUTF’s Towards Free Movement and Transhumance in the IGAD Region project (Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda) or the Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration (FMM) project in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as opposed to the regional EUTF programs on border security and “migrant smuggling” that are being supported by Germany. In the meantime, the first initiatives on legal migration to Europe are emerging, such as within the framework of the Mobility Partnership Facility.

Overall, the current EU frameworks of the Global Approach for Migration and Mobility (GAM/M), and especially the mobility partnerships, are giving the EU more room for maneuver in the area of legal migration, although so far only on paper (SVR 2019).

## Migration Policy within the African Union

The topic of migration has various facets for African states when it comes to cooperation with the EU. In West Africa, for example, socioeconomic aspects – such as country development, employment, education, health, sanitation and infrastructure – have a much higher priority than migration policy (Adam et al. 2019). An exception is often the issue of forced return, especially in West and East Africa. Negotiations, but also individual returns, especially in larger groups, are sometimes sharply attacked in the media and are often accompanied by protests (Zanker et al. 2019).



With its Agenda 2063 (2013), the African Union is breaking new ground in intercontinental mobility and development. The Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an important project in this context, and it aims to expand its own market and stimulate trade and joint value creation through mutual market opening and the harmonization of standards. To date, however, there have been numerous intra-continental barriers and hurdles. Moreover, most African states, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, only have a very weak foreign trade position, with most of them continuing to serve as suppliers of raw materials. Many are driving structural change with industrial concepts, and some, such as Kenya and Rwanda, are experiencing strong growth. In this case, regional economic integration will be essential. The Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, adopted in January 2018, even provides for an African passport. While the AfCFTA has been signed by all 55 African states (except Eritrea) and ratified by 28, the protocol so far has only 32 signatures and four ratifications (AU 2020). It remains to be seen how Germany and the EU can and will support these approaches.

In May 2018, the AU published a Migration Policy Framework for Africa (AU 2018), which emphasizes the areas of diaspora engagement, internal migration, and migration and trade. The approach pursues a positive mobility and migration concept that ties in with the AU's AfCFTA projects and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons. Germany, one of the most important donors to the AU, supports this work. Many African countries have introduced migration policies in recent years, although these policies also contain restrictive components due to European migration interests.

## Challenges of Cooperation in Migration Partnerships

The EU collaborative partnership with Africa got its official start with the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (2007) and, in terms of migration policy, with the Dialogue on Migration and Mobility. Today, however, there can be no talk of achieving the political objective of a partnership on an equal footing. Instead, the current migration cooperation between the EU, Germany and African states has repeatedly been criticized as being one-sided and as domestic policy by other means (Castillejo 2017). In contrast, in many African states, migration is an individual and social development strategy.

The rhetoric of European governments and EU representatives directed toward African states and the AU is surprisingly similar, even if their objectives differ. In particular, the EU's restrictive practice differs greatly from its partly management-oriented discourse (Zanker 2019). Although the term "partnership" does appear repeatedly in most documents, instruments like the unequal EU migration partnerships often do not work as a result of African states' refusal to take migrants back. In this respect, they do not represent an improvement over the hardly used EU mobility partnerships. Commitments by African states to EU policy often only pay lip service to them, as there is sometimes little interest in political implementation. However, states like Niger are celebrated as examples of success. African governments are dependent on EU and German funds, such as for capacity-building materials and as additional economic and development aid. On the other hand, some countries that are transition and increasingly also destination countries, such as Morocco, are clearly pursuing their own interests when it comes to border security (Koch et al. 2018).

Nevertheless, European states and Germany are dependent on cooperation with African states to implement their policies. For African states, this creates new scope for action in an asymmetrical relationship. Migration policy has thus become an instrument of power. A large number of migration summits, regional processes and dialogue forums enable a kind of "venue shopping" in which some African governments can more or less choose topics and cooperation partners. At the same time, this is a result of unilateral action by EU states, with parts of the EU either blocking or slowing down decision-making.

## The Way Forward

The dominance of the restrictive approach to migration in Europe in recent years has tended to exacerbate what could be a relationship of partnership with African states. At the same time, however, productive cooperation is becoming increasingly important to both sides. Germany and Europe need Africa for multilateral cooperation, as the latter is a growing market and because the lack of prospects for its young population will partly translate into migration and flight, and thereby affect the former more directly. The following factors will be essential for bringing about a cooperation based on migration partnership that is worthy of the name:

### Reciprocity instead of one-sidedness

Asymmetries, inequalities and conflicting interests must be recognized as such and, as far as possible, resolved via fair compromises so that a “might makes right” situation does not emerge. It must be clear that the ability of African actors to interact with European actors on migration policy depends on their having the ability to use the instruments offered by Europe and Germany in their own interest (Koch et al. 2018). Decisive for cooperation on migration policy will be 1) the role of migration (national, regional, intra- or extra-continental), 2) the economic embedding of migration and remittances, and 3) an interest in designing and implementing policies.

Instead of concluding new agreements, existing instruments should be used, especially in the area of legal migration. Germany and the EU will remain non-credible actors as long as they do not fulfill their promises to cooperate on migration on an equal footing. Established relations, including bilateral ones, are crucial for successful cooperation. Germany can build on many years of experience with negotiating development and economic policies – solely because of its dense network of German missions abroad, which has now been augmented by the migration information centers. German and European actors should be aware of their own limited role and opportunities to act independently in Africa.

Any work on the African continent can only take place in close cooperation with actors on the ground and at all levels. The transnational social and economic relations of the diaspora (known as the “sixth region” of Africa) should be used for this purpose – through active networking with business, politics and civil society. Transit and destination countries should be more closely integrated into the process of policy- and decision-making, and the advantages of bilateral cooperation should be taken into consideration. African regional organizations (e.g., ECOWAS, IGAD) also play an important role in migration management. Nevertheless, in view of conflicting interests within the EU on policies of deterrence, restriction and selective opening, there will continue to be conflicting objectives.

### The central role of migration and mobility

The promotion of regular immigration opportunities – over and above the narrative of reducing the root causes of flight – will be key for enabling respectful cooperation and political agreements on commitments, even if there is little evidence to date that legal migration reduces irregular entry into Europe (Bither and Ziebarth 2019). Beyond the concentration on skilled professionals, fair and profitable migration opportunities should be created for parts of the African population. In this case, the FEG can serve as a foundation for the expansion of regular access routes:

- More research and practical testing should be conducted on the instrument of Global Skill Partnerships, which are a “triple win” in terms of sustainable development, as they also take into account both the educational system and the labor market in the country of origin and in Germany (Clemens et al. 2019).
- In addition to promising legal migration routes, migration information centers should also make them possible in practice. They can be important local and transnational centers for exchange and policy implementation at all levels.
- The focus on mobility within African regions should be strengthened, and the AU and regional organizations should receive support for their integration plans that is not at odds with their own policies.
- Programs such as Erasmus, training scholarships and expert-exchange programs should be expanded in order to foster stronger networks.
- The return of migrants should not be used as a bargaining chip, and deportations should be avoided whenever possible. A soft-touch handling of African sensitivities and the critical public will achieve more than forced concessions.
- Economic and technological cooperation should be deepened, and a broader structural transformation of local societies should be supported. Commitment to less asymmetrical trade relations can contribute to structural development in Africa as well as an orderly migration of skilled workers and trainees.

In the end, cooperation can only come about via a more open visa policy. Meetings of civil society or scholars often fail as a result of restrictive policies on issuing visas – which is the opposite of a collaboration based on partnership.

## Outlook

Africa will play an increasingly important role in this century. It is crucial to enter into a productive exchange at all levels with the actors on this continent, with its diversity and immense potential for transformation and innovation. At the same time, it is urgently necessary to view migration as a positive part of economic development and social change.

Germany's EU Council Presidency, which will begin in July 2020, will make Africa one of its central focuses. This is an opportunity for Germany to make progress on issues that are less focused on restrictions, including regular humanitarian access routes, refugee protection and, above all, legal migration (SVR 2020). Germany can play a pioneering role in these efforts and, together with other European states, usher in a new era of partnership-based and dialogue-oriented migration cooperation.

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