



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-CRIS

Institute on Comparative
Regional Integration Studies

Policy Brief

NUMBER 04, 2019

Keywords

Migration Policy, West Africa,
Senegal, Ghana, EU.

Written by ILKE ADAM, FLORIAN
TRAUNER, LEONIE JEGEN and
CHRISTOF ROOS

Edited by Rossella Marino and Rory
Johnson

© United Nations University Institute
on Comparative Regional
Integration Studies, 2019

The views expressed in this
publication are those of the authors
and do not necessarily reflect the
view of the United Nations
University.

West African interests in (EU) migration policy

Executive Summary

The discussion of EU-African cooperation on migration often primarily takes the interests of EU member states into account. However, this Policy Brief takes an in-depth look at Ghana and Senegal, two stable West African democracies. It assesses which types of migration policies these West African states wish to develop, and why that is so. Our findings suggest differentiations ought to be made between different types of West-African interests in migration policy. On the one hand, there are long-standing domestic policy interests such as a closer engagement with the diaspora and the creation of legal migration channels. On the other hand, some newer migration policy interests including stricter border controls have emerged in the context of the growing internationalisation of West African migration policy-making. Each type of policy interest is defended by an increasingly diverse set of national actors, with converging but at times also conflicting interests.

Introduction

Discussing EU-African cooperation on migration most often happens from a Eurocentric perspective, emphasising the EU's interest in curbing irregular migration and addressing the 'root causes of migration'. But what do African states want in the migration field? This Policy Brief takes an in-depth look at Ghana and Senegal, two stable West African democracies with differing degrees of migration cooperation with the EU. It assesses which types of migration policies these West African states wish to develop, and why that is so.

The saliency of the external dimension of EU migration policy has increased since the 'migration crisis' of late 2015 and early 2016. At that moment, the numbers of displaced persons world-wide peaked and the EU experienced its highest inflow of refugees and migrants since WWII (UNHCR, 2018). The EU has developed new policy instruments such as the 'Migration Partnership Framework' (European Commission, 2016) and increased its funding for development and migration-related projects in Africa and elsewhere.

Our contribution builds upon extensive fieldwork conducted in the context of the UNU-CRIS project 'African Migration: Root Causes and Regulatory Dynamics' (AMIREG). Among others, we conducted a total of 87 interviews with African policy-makers, civil society representatives, European and international personnel in Accra, Dakar and Brussels. Our findings suggest differentiations ought to be made between different West-African interests in migration policy. On the one hand, there are some long-standing domestic policy interests such as a closer

engagement with the diaspora. On the other hand, some more recent migration policy interests including stricter border controls have emerged in the context of the growing internationalisation of West-African migration policy-making.

Migration policy-making in Ghana and Senegal

The legal basis of the Senegalese migration framework was established in 1971. It governs the conditions of entry, stay and establishment of foreign nationals in the country (ICMPD, 2015). Senegal's institutional landscape on migration has been described as being 'fragmented'¹. The most important ministries are the Ministry of the Interior, responsible for police and border police, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hosting the Directorate General for Consular Affairs. The latter issues travel documents and is also responsible for the documentation of returnees. Another key player is the Directorate General for Diaspora (DGSE), which is part of the ministry of Foreign Affairs and is in charge of developing policies and programmes for Senegalese living abroad. The DGSE has established numerous 'Bureaus d'Accueil et Orientation' (BAOS) advising Senegalese who live abroad and their families on return options, reintegration prospects and investment opportunities. The Directorate General of Human Capital of the Ministry of Finance coordinated the National Migration Policy (NMP) developed between 2015 and 2018. Several other ministries also deal with migration-related themes, for instance the national anti-trafficking unit of the Ministry of Justice. Since 2005, Senegal has had a harsh anti-smuggling

¹ Interview with IO official, Dakar, 2018.

and trafficking law imposing up to 10-years in prison for human traffickers, smugglers and document forgers (Vives, 2017)².

In Ghana, the main ministries dealing with migration are also the Ministry of the Interior and Foreign Affairs. Within the structures of the Ministry of Interior, the 'Ghana Immigration Service' (GIS) deals with entry, residence and border policies. The migration information centres, part of the GIS, are also responsible for campaigns raising awareness of the possible dangers of irregular migration. The Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoF) is responsible for the issuing of travel documents, as well as issues relating to return and diaspora affairs. Following the 2016 presidential elections, the diaspora affairs bureau was moved from the MoF to the Presidency. The Migration Policy Unit of the Ministry of the Interior was in charge of elaborating the National Migration Policy. This was finalised in 2016, with the financial support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Other domestic actors such as the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana have also contributed to the development of Ghana's migration policy. Currently, a diaspora engagement policy, which has been in the drafting stage since 2011, is under revision. Additionally, the Labour Ministry has the lead for the drafting of a National Labour Migration Strategy launched in 2017 with the support of the ACP-EU migration action.

Ghana and Senegal are both members of the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS), whose free movement protocol they both signed in 1971. Some barriers to free movement remain in Senegal and Ghana, particularly regarding residence rights and access

to public services of intra-ECOWAS migrants (ICMPD, 2015). Notwithstanding, respondents in Senegal and Ghana stated that the ECOWAS Treaty and subsequent protocols set the frame for their migration policy. Safeguarding and working towards its full implementation remains a priority. Next to the ECOWAS framework, the EU – or, more precisely, some member states - have been a relevant source of external influence, notably in Senegal. Following the 'Canary Island crisis' of 2006, when around 30,000 migrants arrived by boat on the archipelago, Spain took the lead in enhancing Senegalese border control capacities and established joint border monitoring operations. Spain incentivised the cooperation with a number of development projects and a legal migration scheme (e.g. Anderson, 2014; Ba, 2007). In the years after 2006, Senegal also signed a number of bilateral migration agreements with other member states in exchange for development aid. In comparison, no EU member states has managed to sign a bilateral readmission agreement with Ghana. Due to its geographical position further away from the migratory route to Europe, migration has not reached a similar level of salience in EU-Ghanaian relations (Van Criekinge, 2009).

Bringing together European and African heads of state, the 2015 Valletta Summit resulted in the creation of an Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) initially funded with €3.2 billion. The EUTF has a twofold aim: firstly, through development cooperation, the EU attempts to address the 'root causes of migration' – and secondly, it aims to incentivise African actors to cooperate more on migration control. In general, European development aid is increasingly being used to serve the EU's migration agenda. This is referred to as the 'diversion of aid' (Oliveira and

² The law is currently under revision.

Zacharenko, 2018; Vives, 2017) or the 'migratisation of development cooperation'³. Acknowledging European interest in cooperating with African states is crucial when attempting to understand African interests, given that many African governments face postcolonial dependencies and rely economically on continued aid-flows (Ayoob, 2002; Williams, 2000).

Domestically-driven policy interests

Migration tends not to be the key priority for politicians in Ghana and Senegal. Socio-economic policies such as the development of the country, employment, education, and health as well as sanitation and infrastructure usually receive more attention. An exception is the issue of forcible returns of emigrants. Having high political salience, readmission negotiations and agreements facilitating forced return are widely debated, notably in the press. Even if migration policies are only partly dealt with as 'high politics', Ghana and Senegal have clear interests in the field. This section starts with the migration policy interests that are (mostly) domestically-driven. These interests mainly focus on intercontinental emigration (to the Global North and the Middle East) and not on interregional migration (within ECOWAS). This may come as a surprise, as West-Africans are known to mainly migrate within the region (ICMPD, 2015). Our respondents did not, however, express the development of regional migration policies as a key policy interest.

Engage with the diaspora: According to our interviews, engagement with the diaspora is a key interest for politicians in both Ghana and Senegal.

The diaspora is seen to contribute to socio-economic development, in particular through financial and social remittances. In both countries, financial remittances from citizens living abroad exceeds official development aid and foreign direct investment (World Bank Group, 2017). The interest in diaspora policies is also related to their right to vote. In Senegal, the diaspora have been able to vote since 1993. In Ghana this is scheduled to take effect as of 2020. Both countries promote the voluntary return of highly-skilled emigrants to achieve skill transfers via returning nationals. In short, engagement seeks to smoothen the flow of remittances and convince elites living abroad to return and apply their skills in their home country. European funding for further development of these diaspora policies constitutes one of the 'currencies' for cooperation on migration deterrence and forcible return (Vives, 2017).

Allow for more legal migration: Unsurprisingly, new channels for legal migration (study and work visas) are key objectives for the governments of Ghana and Senegal. Both countries have young populations that lack employment opportunities. For West Africans, it is often close to impossible to attain a regular travel or work visa for Europe. Student visas are also hard to get. The lack of legal opportunities is considered as a main reason for irregular migration from Senegal and Ghana. In other words, greater access to legal migration is seen as a means to reduce the existing numbers of irregular migrants. The Ghanaian and Senegalese governments are in favour of labour migration schemes for both unskilled and skilled workers. They have expressed their disappointment in what has been achieved with the EU so far. From the EU's perspective, legal migration channels are one 'reward' for

³ Interview with IO official, Dakar, 2018.

cooperation in migration deterrence and the return of unwanted migrants. As Senegal and Ghana are reluctant to cooperate on return, few legal migration channels have been offered. An exception is the circular migration scheme between Senegal and Spain, which led to Senegalese cooperation in the return of unwanted migrants from Spain (2006-2008; Vives, 2017: 11). As for Ghana, the EU Trust Fund for Africa foresees an expansion of the number of scholarships for Ghanaian students and academics and more support for migrant schemes in local enterprises⁴. The creation of a pilot labor referral scheme between Italy and Ghana in 2006 did not materialise.

Avoid forcible returns: The governments' interest in establishing good relations with its diasporas affects its position on the forcible returns of irregular migrants. On this topic EU and West African interests are most divergent. For the EU, the effective return of undocumented migrants in Europe is crucial. It asks African politicians and officials to agree to readmission agreements and assist in the identification of their citizens to be returned. These demands are not easily met by African leaders. From the perspective of the Senegalese and Ghanaian governments, a readmission agreement is likely to harm not only its standing in the diaspora community but also the flow of remittances. Ghana and Senegal are democratic states, implying that party politics and elections come into play. If their governments were to accommodate the EU's demands, opposition parties would not hesitate to mobilise against them. Many families directly or indirectly benefit from remittances. There is also a high risk of returnees ending up unemployed. According

to interviewed local civil society leaders, the governments and international organisations are not equipped to meet the needs of the returnees.

European actors have come to understand that readmission and forced return are perceived as 'going against the interest of the own population'⁵. They hope that a smooth cooperation on other migration issues may facilitate some cooperation on forced return. Given the political sensitivity of the issue, they increasingly consider informal channels of cooperation and non-binding readmission arrangements to be more promising compared to formal agreements. Indeed, some interviewed civil servants and NGOs indicate a certain willingness to cooperate on informal schemes of involuntary return. These may take the form of identification missions or EU-funded projects aimed at persuading detained West African citizens to return 'voluntarily' from Europe.

Protect African migrants 'en route': In recent years, Ghana and Senegal have also developed a stronger interest in protecting their citizens who are either still in the midst of a migratory process or have migrated to the Gulf states. Investigative journalism, notably a CNN documentary on migrant slave auctions in Libya released in 2016, has enhanced public awareness for the widespread human rights violations that African migrants face there. For Ghana, a particular concern has been the situation of their citizens in the Gulf countries. They often work under highly precarious conditions or are victims of human trafficking.

⁴ High Level Dialogue Meeting, 'Joint declaration on Ghana-EU Cooperation on Migration' (Brussels, 16 April 2016).

⁵ Interviews with IO officials, Accra, 2018.

Policy interests deriving from international cooperation

The distinction between domestically-driven and internationally-induced policy interests is often blurred. Yet, making this distinction allows us to highlight how the enduring cooperation with European and international actors – and the manifold funding opportunities such a cooperation entails – has led to West African actors developing some new priorities.

Improving border control capacities: As mentioned earlier, following the ‘Canary Island crisis’ of 2006, the better control of the Senegalese-Spanish maritime border has become a priority for Spanish- and EU-funded capacity-building projects. EU-funded projects like the Seahorse and West Sahel projects use satellite data to control West African borders. Other projects seek to enhance the capacities of law enforcement authorities to prevent and combat human smuggling, enhance capacity and training of immigration offices, detect document fraud and improve the security infrastructure at border control points. The Ghanaian and Senegalese ministries of the interior and law enforcement agencies are the key beneficiaries of this type of support.

Why do Senegalese actors allow for these projects? At first glance, it seems to contradict the wide-spread West-African conception of migration as a benign process bringing benefits to the migrants and the society left behind. It is also at odds with the idea that African borders are arbitrary, since they were drawn at the Berlin conference in 1885, by Europeans who had never set foot in Africa, and divided former African empires and ethnic groups (Ajala, 1983).

Moreover, strengthening national borders seems to conflict with the idea of a ‘borderless West Africa’ within ECOWAS (Apedoju, 2005). Yet, our interviewees justified the need for stricter border control in West Africa for several reasons. Firstly, the deteriorating security situation in the region. In Senegal, Mali was a key concern, while it was Nigerian immigration for Ghanaian actors. Besides the threat of terrorist groups operating in Mali, cross-border crime and human trafficking (for Ghana, in particular towards Arab Gulf states) have become serious domestic security concerns. Secondly, the international funding for border capacity-building has provided certain West African bureaucracies with opportunities to improve their own standing and budgetary resources. In a struggle for administrative power and resources, EU-funded projects bring real economic benefits and symbolise internationalisation and competence. That said, not all West African actors subscribe to more border controls. According to a staff member of an international organisation in West Africa, the ‘governments in the region might find it great that their police officers get some training ... and new pickup trucks, but they don’t really care about these borders’⁶. In other words, improved capacities do not automatically translate in more stringent border controls. Indeed, some interviewees cautioned that the reinforcement of border controls would undermine the objectives of the ECOWAS free movement zone. The governments counter such criticism with the argument that border controls do not impede mobility – they just surveil and regulate movements.

Reintegrating returned emigrants: Even if Ghanaian and Senegalese societal and political actors oppose cooperation on forcible returns,

⁶ Interview with IO official, Dakar, 2018.

they do take place. Moreover, the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) runs large-scale 'assisted voluntary return programmes' targeting West-African migrants apprehended in Libya and elsewhere (see Trauner et al., 2019). These programmes usually have a 'reintegration component' for the returnees. Indeed, the successful reintegration of these citizens in their local communities and labor markets is of interest for West African governments. However, the process has remained contested: How much reintegration support is needed? Who should be in charge of this process? Whereas the EU channels the support through the IOM, Senegalese and Ghanaian actors would like to become responsible for externally-funded reintegration support. Civil society actors argue that the reintegration of returnees can only take place with the help of local communities.

Conclusion

This Policy Brief has shown that the migration-related interests of West African states are diverse and have been evolving, in particular since the EU has become more engaged in the region. Contrary to in many European countries, migration is not among the most salient policy issues in West-Africa. The exception tends to be the question of forcible returns. Yet, the overall relevance of migration policy has clearly increased in recent years. More and more West African bureaucracies deal with it – spurred on by domestic competition for international funding. We differentiate between long-standing and domestically-derived West African interests such as engagement with the diaspora, the promotion of legal emigration channels and the prevention of the forcible return of own citizens. A newer priority is the protection of vulnerable migrants en

route. Moreover, other migration policy interests have emerged in the context of the growing internationalisation of African migration policy-making. They include capacity building on border controls and security infrastructure as well as reintegration support for migrants, who participated in assisted voluntary return programmes.

It is important to highlight that there is not a uniform interest of 'West Africa' in (EU) migration policy. We can distinguish between the interests of three groups: political actors, who need to win elections and care about domestic mobilisation and issue salience; administrative actors, who compete for budgetary resources and institutional standing and tend to hold the most favourable view of EU priorities and funding opportunities; and societal actors, who have diversified interests from a full rejection of the EU's agenda to an embracement of the new opportunities it sometimes brings. Overall, therefore, West African democratic policy-making is characterised by tight political constraints and diversified interests – not only those of international donors but also of empowered administrative entities, the diaspora and an increasingly active citizenry at home (see also Cham and Adam, 2019 on the Gambia).

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the financial support granted by the Institute of European Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (IES) and the United Nations University Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) for the project 'African Migration: Root Causes and Regulatory Dynamics' (AMIREG). During the fieldwork phase, project researcher Leonie Jegen was able to draw upon the support

of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Dakar and Accra. This expedient partnership was enabled by UNODC staff member Dr. Chantal Lacroix. The researchers would like to thank the research assistants Mamadou Faye and Rosina Badwi for their invaluable support, as well as the numerous interviewees for offering their time and invaluable insights.

References

- Adam, Ilke and Florian Trauner. 2019. "Ghana and EU Migration Policy: Studying an African Response to the EU Externalisation Agenda" In Santos, J., Carrera, S. & T. Strik, *Constitutionalising the External Dimensions of EU Migration Policies in Times of Crisis*. Cheltenham - Northampton: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Ajala, Adekunle. 1983. The Nature of African Boundaries. *Africa Spectrum* 18 (2): 177-189.
- Apedoju, Aderanti. 2005. Creating a Borderless West Africa: Constraints and Prospects for Intra-Regional Migration. Lagos: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000139142> Accessed 28 March 2019.
- Ayoob, Mohammed. 2002. Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism. *International Studies Review* 4 (3): 27-48.
- Ba, Cheikh Oumar. 2007. Barça ou barzakh: La migration clandestine sénégalaise vers l'Espagne entre le Sahara Occidental et l'Océan Atlantique. *Textos de Casa Arabe*: 1-22.
- Cham, Omar N. and Ilke Adam. 2019 (forthcoming). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Cooperation on Forced Return in the Gambia. *IMISCOE Conference Paper*. Malmo University, Sweden.
- European Commission. 2016. Communication on Establishing a New Partnership Framework with Third Countries under the European Agenda on Migration. COM (2016) 385 final. [Online] Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0385>. Accessed 28 March 2019.
- Oliveira, Andreia and Elena Zacharenko. 2018. AidWatch 2018. EU Aid: A broken ladder? Concord Europe. [Online] Available at <https://library.concordeurope.org/record/2041>. Accessed 28 March 2019.
- Trauner, Florian, Leonie Jegen, Ilke Adam and Christof Roos. 2019. The International Organization for Migration in West Africa: why its role is getting more contested since Europe's 'migration crisis'. *UNU-CRIS Policy Brief*, 03/2019. [Online] Available at <http://cris.unu.edu/international-organization-migration-west-africa-why-its-role-getting-more-contested>. Accessed 1 April 2019.
- UNHCR (2018) Global Trends: Forced Displacement In 2017. [Online] Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf>. Accessed 27 March 2019.
- Van Crieking, Tine (2009). Power Assymetry between the EU and Africa? A case study on the EU's relation with Senegal and Ghana. PhD thesis: London School of Economics.
- Vengroff, Richard. 2007. "Senegal. A Significant External Electorate." In *Voting from Abroad. The International IDEA Handbook*, 104-108. Stockholm and Mexico City: IDEA and IFE.
- Vives, Luna. 2017. The European Union–West African sea border: Anti-immigration strategies and territoriality. *European and Urban Regional Studies* 24 (2): 209-224.

Williams, David. 2000. Aid and Sovereignty: Quasi-States and the International Financial Institutions. *Review of International Studies* 26 (4): 557-573.

World Bank Group. 2017. Migration and Development Brief 27. Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook. Special Topic: Global Compact on Migration. [Online] Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29777>. Accessed 27 March 2019.



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-CRIS

Institute on Comparative
Regional Integration Studies

The United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) is a research and training institute of the United Nations University whose mission is "to generate policy-relevant knowledge about new forms of governance and cooperation on the regional and global level, about patterns of collective action and decision-making, benefitting from the experience of European integration and the role of the EU as a regional actor in the global community".