

## Dynamics of irregular migration from West Africa to Europe

### *Part 3: Multilateral and National Measures to Address Irregular Migration and Humanitarian Emergencies*

In an attempt to provide a response to the phenomenon of illegal migration, action is being taken by the authorities at several levels, with varying degrees of coordination. We can distinguish from the broadest to the narrowest: commitments made within international organisations, actions implemented in partnership between African and European states and institutions and, finally, the public policies of states.

#### **Multilateral theoretical migration management objectives are not consensual and difficult to implement in practice**

First of all, it must be noted that UN multilateralism is struggling to make effective and concrete progress on migration issues. Recently, an international agreement initially approved by 191 States was welcomed by one part of international public opinion and criticized by the other: the Marrakech Pact, signed on 10 and 11 December 2018 in Morocco, under the aegis of the United Nations. It is a commitment that "establishes a non-legally binding framework for cooperation" that<sup>1</sup> brings together a set of principles and 23 objectives relating to migration conditions such as assistance to lives in danger and the search for missing migrants, the political and economic issues motivating emigration and those linked to the trafficking of migrants, the administrative and diplomatic framework accompanying migration procedures, and return home programmes for migrants. While the principles and objectives thus set out in this pact are commendable, its non-binding character, classic of an international agreement, makes it practically sterile. The withdrawal or refusal to sign on the part of many states with a major influence on the management of international migration flows even makes it possible to describe this pact as "wishful thinking"; among these states are Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia and the United States, while Algeria expressed reservations when it signed.

At the European Union level, there are programmes to manage illegal arrivals of migrants whose effectiveness is clearly questionable. The main difficulties faced by the Union in this area are, on the one hand, the lack of competence attributed to the Union in this field; the Member States have remained competent and sovereign in the field of migration management, which makes it particularly complex to set up a collective programme accepted and applied by all. One example is the EURODAC system, which is supposed to process all asylum applications received throughout the European Union through a single file. This system was set up following the signing of the first EU-wide Dublin agreements in 2003. More recently, the so-called "Dublin III" agreements entered into force in 2013,

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Marrakesh, 10-11 December 2018, Final Document of the Conference. <https://undocs.org/fr/A/CONF.231/3>

allowing prior registration of the application for refugee status from the Member State where the individual entered the Union.

In addition to the differences in the migration reception policies of each European Union member state and the growing ideological opposition between governments, the number of individuals for whom the point of entry into the European Union is Spain, Malta or Italy also makes compliance with this regulatory text complex in practice.

In France, several voices question the effectiveness of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA); this body is responsible for granting the right to asylum or not to applicants who have arrived illegally on French territory. The main criticism levelled at OFPRA is that the majority of unsuccessful applicants nevertheless remain in the country, in an irregular situation<sup>2</sup>.

States through which irregular migrants transit have also established or joined migration management programmes to respond to the phenomenon. In this respect, the Kingdom of Morocco is a key element within the EUROMED IV mechanism, a project launched in the framework of the European agenda on migration in cooperation with some of the States bordering the Mediterranean, namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia<sup>3</sup>. With a budget of just under 7 million euros, its objective, despite a limited budget, is to facilitate cooperation between these states on legal and illegal migration issues, by strengthening the capacity and training of officials in each state concerned to better respond to them. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is in charge of the implementation of this project.

The Kingdom of Morocco is known for its open migration policy, in place since 2013, which consists in promoting the socio-economic integration of migrants on its territory through their regularization. Morocco has thus regularized more than 27,000 migrants through two major campaigns launched as a continuation of this policy of openness, in addition to a specific process of regularization of refugees in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>4</sup>.

### **The "Return Home" programme, a government assistance to migrants in great difficulty**

The Ivorian government, with the support of Ivorian civil society organisations and funding from the European institutions, is encouraging, through a programme supervised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the "return home" of migrants, mainly for those who have not reached their desired destination. The assistance provided by the Ivorian government under its return

---

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Hervé LE BRAS, Director of Studies at the EHESS, at the ASCPE round table "Putting migration at the heart of cooperation between the European Union and Africa", 31 January 2019

<sup>3</sup> International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) database, CIDPM in French, 2019

<sup>4</sup> "UNHCR and the French Embassy sign an agreement to improve the integration of refugees in Morocco" [https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2018/02/07/hcr-france-signent-accord-pour-ameliorer-l-insertion-refugies-au-maroc\\_n\\_19176126.html](https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2018/02/07/hcr-france-signent-accord-pour-ameliorer-l-insertion-refugies-au-maroc_n_19176126.html)

programme, which is statistically monitored by the authorities, is mainly requested by Ivorians trying to return from Libya (53%). Next come to a lesser extent Niger (21%), Morocco (16%) and Tunisia (10%)<sup>5</sup>. In 70% of the cases, the motivations for migrants to return home are the insecurity felt during the journey and at the stage where it has ended, and refoulement or arrest by the local authorities<sup>6</sup>. The dangerousness of the journey and the control exercised by the authorities of the states through which the migration routes pass can be considered to have increased, since in the previous year these motives concerned only a small majority of migrants (58%).

This programme is part of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for the "Protection and Reintegration of Migrants in West Africa"<sup>7</sup> and is funded by the European Union and the Netherlands. Over the whole year 2017, more than 1800 individuals benefited from this program. IOM Libya chartered 7 flights during 2017 to repatriate just over 1,200 of them to Abidjan, where they were taken care of by IOM Côte d'Ivoire accompanied by the Ivorian Ministries of African Integration and External Ivorians, Solidarity, Women and Child Protection. This programme includes, on arrival on Ivorian soil, accommodation for three to four days, as well as the allocation of a food kit and a financial assistance allowance. Since the programme had been in place for less than two years, it was still too early to say whether it would be effective in the long term, particularly in terms of reintegrating migrants into their societies of origin.

---

<sup>5</sup> All the figures quoted can be consulted in the IOM Côte d'Ivoire report "*UN Migration, Rapport de profilage des migrants Ivoiriens, Mai 2017-Mai 2018*", International Organization for Migration - Côte d'Ivoire. These data were obtained by IOM Côte d'Ivoire teams from migrants benefiting from the voluntary return programme from Tripoli (Libya) who were able to attend the Africa World Institute - Côte d'Ivoire team at Abidjan airport.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Internal note of the IAM Côte d'Ivoire reporting on voluntary return operations of migrants from Tripoli, 2018

## **Bibliography**

- ASCPE "Putting migration at the heart of cooperation between the European Union and Africa", seminar report of the EU-Africa Platform of the Association,
- (2019) International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) website database.
- KIRWIN Matthew, ANDERSON Jessica, « Identifying the factors driving west african migration », West African Papers No 17, Sahel Research Group, Center for African Studies, University of Florida, Sahel and West Africa Club, OCDE, Juillet 2018.
- UNESCO, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS, European Union "Irregular migration from West Africa to Europe: What challenges for ECOWAS countries? "Proceedings of the Regional Symposium 12, 13 and 14 March 2019
- (2017). Faces and roads. Irregular migration from Côte d'Ivoire. *Contemporary Africa*, 263-264(3), 255-257. doi:10.3917/afco.263.0255. Interview with Ibrahim Sy Savané by Marie Miran Guyon.
- (2017) NAKAYAMA Yumi, « Migration governance: Migration within and from Africa », African Studies Center-Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (ASC-TUFS).
- (2018) IOM - UN Migration, "Rapport de profilage des migrants Ivoiriens, Mai 2017-May 2018", International Organization for Migration - Côte d'Ivoire.
- (2017) PISON Gilles, " *Tous les pays du Monde* ", Populations et Sociétés N° 547, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques
- (2013) SCHOUMAKER Bruno (UCL), FLAHAUX Marie-Laurence (UCL), SCHANS Djamila (Maastricht University), BEAUCHEMIN Cris (INED), MAZZUCATO Valentina (Maastricht University), SAKHO Papa (Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar), « *Changing Patterns of African Migration : A Comparative Analysis* », Migrations Between Africa and Europe (MAFE), MAFE Working Paper 18
- (2015) ZEINO-MAHMALAT Ellinor, "Morocco as a Migratory Crossroads and Host Country: What Challenges for the Future? "Centre Jacques Berque