



POLICY BRIEF

EU Return Regulation outsources migration problems to Africa

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Recent European Union (EU) migration policies increasingly externalise to Africa problems the EU cannot resolve internally. This is despite over a decade of evidence that externalisation undermines African priorities, reduces African agency and erodes the promise of an equal EU–Africa partnership. The focus is shifting from offshore processing towards expelling migrants who have no right to remain in the EU to third countries they have no connection to. The African Union and African governments should resist these pressures and, at the very least, insist on transparency.

Key findings

- ▶ Since 2015, European Union (EU) migration policies towards Africa have increasingly focused on securitisation and externalisation. Migration has tested EU unity. Where member states have failed to agree on managing it internally, they have turned to external measures to stem migration flows.
- ▶ The EU and its member states have increased pressure on the African Union (AU) and African countries to cooperate on measures to halt or reduce flows, even when these run counter to Africa's own priorities: free movement, free trade and integration.
- ▶ This pressure includes making development aid to African countries conditional on migration management.
- ▶ The 2026 EU Return Regulation reinforces the focus on externalisation and on using non-migration policy tools to pressure third countries into cooperating.
- ▶ Return hubs expand the definition of where migrants can be 'returned' to include third countries that enter into an 'agreement or arrangement' to host them, even if migrants have no connection to those countries and have not agreed to go. The EU and its member states are already courting African countries as potential return hub partners. Africa is particularly exposed to opaque, one-sided deals that can fuel democratic and human rights backsliding, run counter to African priorities and will not reduce long-term migration pressures.

Recommendations

- ▶ The AU and member states should adopt a common position stating that secretive deportation deals erode the rule of law and democratic transparency. The AU should require its member states to fully and publicly disclose third-country deportation agreements and any other migration management agreements.
- ▶ African countries should require full transparency and parliamentary approval on any migration deal, including deportation agreements.
- ▶ African countries should prioritise continental free movement, free trade and regional integration over transactional external migration deals that do not serve Africans.
- ▶ The EU should avoid using external partners to resolve internal problems, particularly where proposed measures do not converge with their partners' priorities. This strips them of agency and undermines the promise of an equal partnership.
- ▶ The EU should not overlook the complexity of migration for short-term 'wins'. It should carefully consider the cost/benefit analysis of externalisation, whether it will exacerbate root causes, degrade bigger goals such as democracy, development and human rights, and compromise its own stated values.
- ▶ The EU should uphold full transparency and consider the risks of providing public funding and diplomatic cover to governments and leaders in the interest of slowing migration or enforcing a relatively small number of returns.

Africa as an arena for migration externalisation

In 2015, external migrant arrivals in the European Union (EU) skyrocketed. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) detected a record 1.82 million irregular crossings, more than double the number of people arriving after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Kosovo war.¹

The arrivals were framed as a 'crisis', and migration has subsequently tested the EU's unity and raised concerns about protecting the Schengen area, ensuring responsibility sharing and improving the implementation of immigration laws. It has deepened divisions, and the Union has struggled to manage a free movement zone coherently while allowing member states to maintain their sovereign rights to determine their own asylum and migration policies.

Far-right parties have seized the opportunity to promote anti-migrant rhetoric to great effect during elections.² Polls have also shown a significant public shift in attitudes. As of 2025, most people in seven Western European countries believed that immigration had been high or too high.³ Even centre-left parties that have historically advocated for more nuanced migration management feel pressure to speak about it as a threat.⁴

Where consensus on internal solutions has been difficult to achieve, member states have focused on external measures to stem migration flows from outside Europe. Over the past decade, the EU and member states have implemented many securitised measures that they present as part of a broader, comprehensive approach to migration. These include fortifying border security, restricting access to asylum, and negotiating deals with third countries on asylum processing, returns and readmissions.⁵

For African countries and the African Union (AU), this has resulted in increased pressure to cooperate on externalised measures to reduce flows and, more recently, the deportation of non-nationals to third countries.

Between July 2025 and September 2026, the United States operated at least 32 deportation flights carrying 392 people to eight African countries and has opaque deportation deals with at least 14 African countries. These are Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central

African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda.⁶ Many of those deported have no connection to these countries and have not consented to moving. These deals are secretive bilateral 'arrangements' that rely on coercive tactics, lack human rights safeguards and challenge international law.⁷

In October 2025, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights issued a resolution criticising the externalisation of migration governance and the extra-regional transfer of migrants to Africa. It called for transparency and urged countries to avoid policies that turn Africa into a 'drop-off zone' and degrade international law.⁸

Free movement, free trade and integration could increase Africa's gross domestic product by 10% by 2043

It is not in Africa's interest to become an arena for other countries and continents to externalise solutions to their internal problems. These arrangements strip African agency, put the promise of true equal partnerships at risk and have lasting negative effects on Africa and Africans.

Free movement, free trade and integration are fundamental to African development and could increase continental gross domestic product by 10% by 2043.⁹ Prioritising migration barriers, increased border security and enforcing deportations run counter to these objectives.¹⁰

Agenda 2063 prioritises integration, including free movement and a borderless continent. The AU and the regional economic communities have various migration policy frameworks that promote free movement and trade and improve migration governance, including the African Continental Free Trade Area, Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (Free Movement Protocol), Migration Policy Framework for Africa and African Common Position on Migration and

Development. Implementation has, however, been slow and fragmented, and integration has not progressed fast enough.¹¹

Africa's fragmented implementation and lack of political will create gaps that allow external actors to impose their own priorities, further undermining implementation.

The EU and European countries have intensified pressure by leveraging non-migration instruments and bilateral agreements to secure some cooperation from countries along migration routes. They have secured cooperation through a series of ad hoc, often secretive, bilateral deals, irrespective of their human rights or democracy records.¹²

These deals outsource migration management and the human rights safeguards and transparency required of a democratic system

These deals outsource migration management and the human rights safeguards and transparency required of a democratic system. As law professor and human rights specialist Marie-Laure Basilien-Gainche told Lighthouse Reports, 'The fact is that European countries do not want to get their hands dirty. They don't want to be held responsible for human rights violations and outsource them to others.'¹³

There is ample evidence of how EU migration funding and policies since 2015 have undermined democracy, the rule of law and development, and led to serious human rights violations in Africa. While some of these measures have succeeded in slowing irregular migration along specific routes in the short-term, they exacerbate long-term drivers. Meanwhile, demand for migration has not diminished and smugglers have proven resilient and able to rapidly adapt and open dangerous and expensive routes.¹⁴

This policy brief focuses on the EU's Return Regulation, including Return Hubs. It argues that the regulation reinforces securitisation, externalisation and the use of non-migration policy tools to secure cooperation from African countries, despite abundant evidence of the risks and harm they cause.



IN 2025, ACHPR URGED COUNTRIES TO AVOID POLICIES THAT TURN AFRICA INTO A 'DROP-OFF ZONE'

From the New Pact to the Return Regulation

In June 2026, the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (New Pact) came into force, the first major EU agreement on migration and asylum in over a decade. It was passed in April 2024 after years of disagreement over how to reform the existing Common European Asylum System in response to calls from frontline states to assist with burden sharing and improve the relocation of migrants within the EU.

It emphasises uniform processes, responsibility sharing of asylum seekers among member states, and the establishment of new governance structures

and coordinating mechanisms. It explicitly calls for embedding migration in international partnerships, formalising conditionality on cooperation to stem flows and accept returns.

The New Pact has four pillars:¹⁵

- Secure external borders through robust screening, a joint database of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, uniform border screening procedures and crisis protocols in the event of instrumentalisation.
- Fast and efficient procedures through clear rules for which country will be handling asylum, guaranteeing migrant rights, standardising refugee criteria and preventing asylum abuse.
- Effective system of solidarity and responsibility through a permanent solidarity framework to support overburdened EU countries with operational and financial support and prevent secondary movements.
- Embed migration in international partnerships and prevent irregular departures by strengthening border management in priority countries, fighting smuggling, strengthening cooperation on readmission and promoting legal pathways through an EU Talent Pool and Talent Partnerships.

On 17 June 2026, two days after the New Pact entered into force, Parliament adopted the 'Regulation establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union' – better known as the 'Return Regulation' (Regulation) with

418 votes in favour, 218 against and 30 abstentions.¹⁶ When the vote passed, some Members of Parliament (MPs) broke out in a chant of 'send them back' while opposing members shouted 'shame on you.'¹⁷

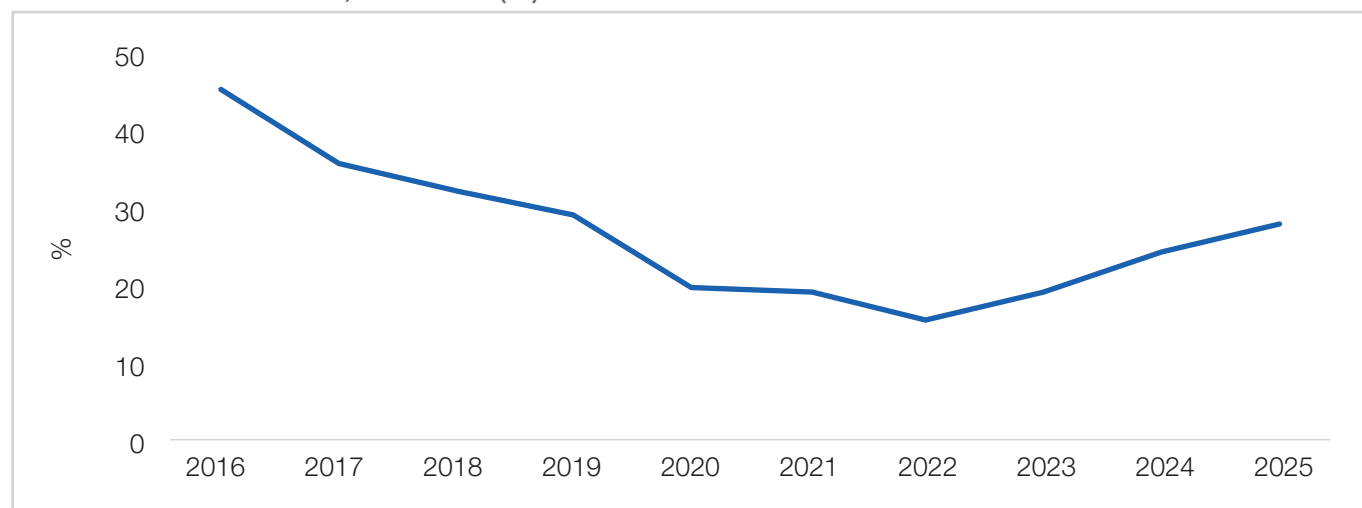
The Regulation replaces the Return Directive, which had been in effect since 2008. It seeks to 'speed up procedures, with full respect for fundamental rights and international law, including the principle of non-refoulement and the prohibition of collective expulsions, while preventing abuses and unauthorised movements within the EU.'¹⁸

The Return Regulation reinforces using non-migration tools to pressure third countries into cooperating

The Regulation was drafted in response to political pressure to demonstrate that member states could enforce their immigration laws, and to help resolve the persistently low return rate of people whose applications to remain in the EU have been rejected. According to the European Commission, the return rate was 28% in 2025 and even lower in prior years.

Return rates are low due to a range of factors. These include administrative and judicial delays, difficulties obtaining documentation, legal constraints on removal, practical obstacles to enforcement, difficulty establishing the country of origin, and non-cooperation by individuals or countries in accepting forced returns.

Chart 1: EU-27+ return rate, 2016–2025 (%)¹⁹



Data source: Eurostat (migr_eiord) and (migr_eirtn), 2026

The key features of the Regulation include:²⁰

- Obligations to issue return decisions for people staying irregularly, even if deportations cannot occur immediately or a home country cannot be established, removing pre-existing provisions to grant residency on humanitarian grounds.
- The European Return Order, which enables – and will eventually require – deportation orders issued by one member state to be enforced by another.
- Increases in migrants’ obligation to cooperate with return orders and tougher penalties.
- Expanded use of entry bans for individuals with return orders to include people who have already left, failed to comply, or not complied fast enough, who can be banned for up to 20 years.
- Expanded rights of authorities to search ‘places of residence or other relevant premises’ of irregular migrants.
- Expanded grounds for detention to include non-cooperation or risk of absconding, effectively making detention the default response, and increasing allowable detention from 18 to 30 months. Detention periods reset in any new country and do not count time spent in other member states.
- Expanded role of Frontex in enforcing and facilitating returns.
- Expanded categories of countries where member states can ‘return’ a person.²¹ Previous conditions limited returns to the habitual country of residence or transit, or a country they agreed to go to. It now includes third countries willing to host them that have entered into an agreement or arrangement with one or more member states.²²

The Regulation formalises the prospect of establishing Return Hubs to hold migrants who don’t have the right to remain in the EU, including families with children

The last feature listed above is particularly consequential. It represents a significant legal change to the previous return framework and enables the subsequent possibility of third-country return arrangements. It formalises the prospect of establishing centres to hold migrants who do not have the right to remain in the EU, including families with children, in what are being called Return Hubs (Hubs).²³

However, the ‘returns’ are in fact expulsions to third countries. Migrants could be detained in transit facilities or remain in the Hubs for up to two years for onward deportation and the Regulation does not provide for comprehensive human rights monitoring.²⁴

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2 years

Supporters of Hubs are calling them innovative solutions to a persistent problem.²⁵ They insist that EU credibility and sovereignty rely on the ability of European countries to enforce their own laws in ordering people to leave their territories. They say sending people to countries they never chose to go to, where they could be detained, would encourage voluntary returns and deter migration in the first place.

Member states pushing forward with Return Hubs maintain that they would be mutually beneficial long-term agreements in full accordance with international and EU law that have a measurable impact on reducing irregular migration. Also, the EU and member states would partner only with countries that uphold 'Europe's shared values and human rights.'²⁶

Africa is disproportionately targeted, although it is the source of a minority of irregular arrivals in Europe

Critics have called the Regulation and Hubs a 'new low' and warned that they are an 'alarming departure from international law, would have severe diplomatic, legal and financial implications for Europe, and are likely to result in a grave pattern of human rights violations, including refoulement and arbitrary detention.'²⁷

Outsourcing internal issues to Africa

The EU and member states have reportedly been searching for cooperation on Hubs in at least 12 countries, nine of which are in Africa: Rwanda, Ghana, Senegal, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Egypt, Uganda and Ethiopia.²⁸ Rwanda said a delegation from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands visited in August 2026 to discuss the issue.²⁹

This continues a long-held trend of disproportionately targeting Africa for externalisation measures, even though Africa is the source of a minority of irregular arrivals, the deals do not benefit African people or countries, and many have caused well-documented harms.³⁰

EU external migration policy has changed significantly over the past two decades and increasingly combined migration and mobility objectives with development, security and broader external relations priorities.

Since 2015, migration management – particularly the prevention of irregular migration, border management, and return and readmission – has assumed greater prominence. This has been accompanied by increased differentiation and a stronger focus on countries considered priorities for migration cooperation, many of them in Africa.

The 2016 Migration Partnership Framework, for example, focused on several priority countries, predominantly in Africa (EUTF). Instruments such as the 2015 EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa combined migration within broader development, resilience, economic opportunities and stability interventions,

9 of 12

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while some EU frameworks have sought to expand legal pathways and skills partnerships. Recent developments in EU external financing and migration policy point towards even stronger use of funding and partnerships to pursue migration-management objectives.

The increased focus on expulsions of non-citizens to third countries represents a shift in priorities from stemming flows to enforcing deportation orders even where returns are complicated. The focus on Africa as an arena for EU externalisation and its consequences, are not new.

Chart 2: Summary of migration externalisation measures

Measure	Description	Examples	Risks
Security and border management	Funding, training, equipment, or technical assistance to reinforce borders and control migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Mauritania, EU and Spain funding has been linked to migrant ‘sweeps’ targeting West Africans for arbitrary arrest, violence, extortion and ‘dumping’ expulsions over the border • In Niger, upgraded border posts and anti-smuggling legislation and criminalised generations-old migration routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrenches militarised border control and securitisation • Slows or inhibits legitimate trade and travel • Human rights violations without oversight • Ignores where enforcement is impractical or undesirable • Contributes to professionalisation of smuggling
Surveillance technologies	Provision of monitoring systems, databases, drones and biometric tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Niger surveillance drones, cameras and biometrics meant for anti-smuggling/borders used against civilians and activists • Frontex drones and airplanes have been used to tip off the Libyan Coast Guard that has been linked to migrant abuses and extortion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy concerns • Risk of profiling • Misuse against people
Return and readmission agreements	Agreements requiring states to accept the return of their nationals or third-country nationals or transit migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2025 - September 2026, the US forged agreements with at least 14 African countries to deport migrants whose claims have been rejected, regardless of their links to the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of refoulement and inadequate safeguards • Lack of transparency and oversight • Migrant ‘dumping’ into countries they have no connection to
Third-country asylum processing	Relocating asylum procedures outside the destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK-Rwanda (failed) scheme aimed to relocate asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing and resettlement • Italy-Albania designed to transport maritime arrivals for processing was blocked by courts and is now being used as a deportation centre for failed asylum seekers • Proposed ‘disembarkation’ platforms that failed in all North African states because they refused to cooperate publicly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of refoulement and inadequate safeguards • Access to protection weakened • Evades legal and rights obligations • Incentivised ‘safe’ country designations that could ignore whether a country is safe and for whom • Risk of instrumentalisation of migration against Europe • Uncertain legal accountability and protection standards

Source: Author

Migration cooperation in non-migration agreements

Based on the premise of ‘root causes’ and development cooperation, the EUTF provided €5 billion to drive activities focused on border control, irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and returns. This included increased spending on equipment, intelligence and surveillance to deter migration.

In 2024, the European Court of Auditors found that the EUTF was ‘not properly focused on priorities,’ spread too thin, failed to address the risks of transferring European funding to human rights abuses and had not succeeded in its goal of addressing the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration.³¹

As a follow-up to the EUTF, the EU launched the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) between 2021 and 2027. The NDICI renewed the EU’s focus on externalisation, border control and cooperation on stemming migration. It combines multiple funding instruments into a single instrument and includes a €79.5 billion budget, with a 10% spending target on migration and forced displacement.

The Regulation emphasises non-binding informal ‘arrangements’ with third countries that bypass parliament

The NDICI included a safeguard intended to preserve the development character of the instrument that mandated that 93% of funding must comply with the Official Development Assistance (ODA) criteria established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to ensure funds are directed to development.

A 2023 Oxfam report, *From Development to Deterrence?*, analysed the ODA eligibility of NDICI-funded migration projects in Libya, Tunisia and Niger. It found that the EU prioritised migration and used development aid to deter it, and that aid was disproportionately targeted towards migration programming – specifically border management and return pathways.³² It found that over one-third (six out of 16) of the migration-related activities analysed

potentially breached ODA eligibility. The total funding allocated to these six activities amounted to €667 million.

It found that migration projects in Libya, Tunisia and Niger contained significant elements that contravened ODA eligibility and prioritised European migration over development. In all three countries, funding went to activities and entities that violated or disregarded human rights, such as border management authorities, coast guards, and police, despite well-documented abuses.³³ Funds and policy had become increasingly difficult to scrutinise because reporting had become wilfully obtuse, failed to provide adequate information on programming or procurement, and the 93% compliance target was nearly impossible to assess.³⁴

The Regulation and New Pact call for expanding the use of non-migration policy tools, such as trade, development, diplomacy and visas, to embed migration, despite documented harms and risks to other objectives.

Is it worth degrading democracy to slow down migration?

Where the EU and member states have struggled to find transparent methods for externalising migration management to Africa, they have secured cooperation through a series of ad hoc, often secretive, bilateral deals with repressive leaders.³⁵ These deals undermine democracy and the rule of law in those countries and contravene Europe’s stated democratic and rights-based values.

The Regulation emphasises the use of bilateral, non-binding informal ‘arrangements’ or ‘agreements’ with third countries that do not require the transparency that formal agreements do. The choice to use informal arrangements bypasses the parliamentary approval and oversight and accountability mechanisms required of formal agreements.³⁶ Shifting to informal agreements removes transparency requirements for both parties, meaning democratic oversight is impossible for African and European constituents alike.

In 2025, Statewatch published a paper circulated by the Polish presidency of the Council of the EU urging member states to frame the Regulation in a ‘flexible way’ to accommodate different host countries and ‘prevent judicial scrutiny that could put the implementation of this innovative solution at risk.’³⁷ This indicates that the lack

of transparency built into the informal structure was intentional to avoid full transparency that could embolden legal challenges.

There is ample evidence of the myriad ways in which EU agreements and funding have contributed to violations of international law and the degradation of democracy in Africa. The list below is only a small number of examples:

- Since 2015, the EU has allocated over €700 million to programmes affiliated with Libya through multiple funding rounds and instruments, including €465 million through the EUTF and €220 million through the NDICI. Libya has been called a ‘black hole’ for Sub-Saharan African migrants, where they face extreme violence, including indefinite detention, extortion, torture, sexual violence, conscription and forced labour.³⁸ Mass migrant graves have been discovered, and reports have credibly linked state and non-state actors to human trafficking and other abuses. There is credible evidence that EU funds have been used to commit abuses, including the Libyan Coast Guard, which has ignored distress calls and run extortion schemes.³⁹
- In July 2023, the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding committed the EU to provide Tunisia with €700 million in funding in a ‘migration and development deal.’⁴⁰ The deal was made despite credible evidence that Tunisian President Kaïs Saïed was actively threatening democracy and orchestrating xenophobic expulsion campaigns of Sub-Saharan African migrants. Tunisian security forces have been credibly accused of using external funding to round up African migrants, denying access to humanitarian organisations and violating human rights.⁴¹ In 2024, a leaked report claimed that EU funding for Tunisia put the EU’s reputation at risk.⁴²

EU agreements and funding have contributed to violations of international law and the degradation of democracy in Africa

- In March 2024, the EU launched a €210 million deal with Mauritania to support migration management, fight migrant smuggling, promote security and stability and support host communities. The deal included returns and readmissions of Mauritanians.⁴³ Mauritania has been found to be detaining and deporting Sub-Saharan African migrants, including permit holders, and dumping them across borders in Senegal and Mali, using funding from Spain.⁴⁴
- In March 2024, the EU signed a three-year €7.4 billion strategic partnership with Egypt, including €200 million for migration management.⁴⁵ Human rights organisations warned that the deal would empower President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who has held onto power since taking over in a coup in 2013, and has been accused of crushing opposition and torturing and jailing critics. Egypt has been accused of arbitrary arrests and mistreatment of migrants, rounding up and deporting refugees in police sweeps and violating the non-refoulement principle.⁴⁶

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EU funding has been further credibly blamed for contributing to the expansion of surveillance infrastructure, privatisation of security and border forces and the proliferation of detention in Africa.⁴⁷ Biometrics, drones, walls, security forces and surveillance technology deployed in the interest of stemming migration to Europe have been used to abuse African migrants and deepened divisions between state and non-state actors.

Evidence indicates that EU funding used to train cyber specialists to surveil and extract data related to migration in Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Tunisia was subsequently used against those countries' own citizens.⁴⁸

The EU has bypassed public and parliamentary scrutiny on some of these measures, and they have lacked sufficient human rights safeguards or monitoring mechanisms, thereby obscuring Europe's jurisdiction and responsibilities under international and domestic law.⁴⁹

This contravenes the EU's stated values and decades of democracy and governance programming and funding towards Africa.

The lack of transparency in 'informal arrangements' simultaneously compromises the ability of African voters, taxpayers and institutions to hold their governments accountable. They deprive Africans of the opportunity to know what is being traded in exchange for controlling migration or accepting expelled migrants who have no connection to their countries. They give tacit political and financial support to leaders irrespective of their human rights and governance records and create an environment of impunity for abuses against migrants.

Do returns stop migration?

According to Dr Sonja Wolf of the London School of Economics: 'We know these policies do not work. And yet despite all the research evidence that shows how harmful these policies are to migrants, governments keep on recycling the same approaches because governments want to keep poor migrants – who they perceive as undesirable – out of their jurisdictions.'⁵⁰

EU measures aimed at securitising and externalising migration management have typically worked in the short term but failed to stem migration in the mid- to long terms.⁵¹ Restrictions have contributed to drops in

interceptions; however, demand for migration in the face of powerful drivers such as conflict, instability, climate change and poverty remain unchanged, and smugglers adapt quickly.⁵²

Prioritising externalisation further raises concerns about instrumentalisation – giving vast funding and control to external parties increases the risk that they will use the threat of irregular migration against the EU. There are many doubts that the costs justify the outcomes and the financial costs may be difficult to calculate due to the lack of transparency. The proposed financial framework for 2028–2034 allocates €81 billion to migration funding.⁵³

EU measures to externalise migration management have typically worked only in the short term

To date, there are no examples where enforcing return orders to third countries or building return centres have deterred migration attempts. Supporters have upheld the Albania-Italy deal as a good example. In 2023, Italy established a protocol allowing it to transfer asylum seekers intercepted in international waters to facilities in Albania and process claims under Italian law.

To gain cooperation from Albania, Italy leveraged its historical relationship as a major economic and political partner and Albania's aspirations to join the EU. Italy further agreed to contribute €670 million to fully fund the construction, costs and staffing of the facilities and operate them under Italian jurisdiction. Between October 2024 and January 2025, Italy transferred 74 people from international waters to Albania before multiple Italian courts overturned their detention orders. From March 2025, Italy reoriented its policy to target migrant men with deportation orders. An estimated 500 men had been transferred as of August 2026.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The EU is under significant pressure to manage migration and demonstrate to its constituents that it can maintain the integrity of its borders and enforce its immigration laws. However, the continued focus on externalisation to Africa exposes the latter to negative consequences and

introduces new dimensions in the reception of third-country nationals.

This raises a new series of questions about responsibility, incentives, legal and institutional capacity, accountability, and the implications for Africa's own migration and integration priorities.

In the context of rising global competition, the EU must resist the paternalistic instinct to pass the pressure to resolve internal issues on to Africa. The EU has made sweeping promises to prioritise Africa and to present the EU-Africa partnership as one of equals. Migration externalisation and conditionality run counter to these

promises, elevate European priorities, and diminish African agency. The EU and member states should reflect on the full costs of these measures. Imposing Return Hubs on Africa would degrade democracy and human rights, and compromise the EU's own stated values, without stopping migration pressures.

As external partners look to deepen their externalisation practices and shift their attention to third-country expulsions, the AU and member states should develop a common position on externalisation measures that establishes minimum negotiating terms, requires full transparency and ensures that the terms and conditions serve African interests.

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More than borders

Effects of EU interventions on migration in the Sahel

Alia Fakhry



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Fragmented asylum

Fault lines in regional responses to the Sudanese displacement crisis

Ottilia Anna Maunganidze and Margaret Monyani



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Block by block

Unpuzzling Africa's migration governance landscape

Ottilia Anna Maunganidze and Almée-Noël Mbiyozo



African countries acknowledge the importance of migration for regional integration, development and livelihoods, and govern it through various international, continental, regional and national frameworks. Existing legal instruments underscore the importance of the rule of law and human rights. However, there are gaps in implementation. Aligning countries' varied approaches is crucial to improving African migration governance and in particular, the free movement of people.

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Shifting sands

Migration policy and governance in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt

Margaret Monyani



North Africa's role in global migration needs effective, humane management. This report examines Libya, Tunisia and Egypt's migration policies, highlighting their impact on stability and migrant safety. It emphasises the need for stable governance, socio-economic development and international cooperation. The report offers recommendations for balanced approaches that address security as well as humanitarian needs.

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