

THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Ruby Gropas | *Research Fellow, ELIAMEP*



SUMMARY

The EU has long endorsed international discourse on migration as a ‘tool’ for development that aims at harnessing remittances and diasporas to maximise their positive impacts on development and poverty reduction. At the same time however, the external dimension of the EU’s migration policy has essentially been framed by a securitarian approach and a move towards minimum standards on internationally codified human-rights, especially regarding family reunification. The changing global environment and the EU’s radically changed neighbourhood have made it amply clear that this approach needs to be adapted to the new realities. The division of competencies between the Community and the Member States on migration issues does not allow the EU to deliver on the declared pledge for a coherent and comprehensive approach to development and migration. It is time for a paradigm shift that will reshuffle priorities to make room for a rights-based, and not only a security-based, approach to migration, and one that will sit more comfortably on the migration-development nexus.

This Policy Paper is part of a series entitled “[How can Europeans address their demographic challenge through a comprehensive migration strategy?](#)” which also includes contributions by Hans Martens (EPC, Brussels); Sergio Carrera (CEPS, Brussels), Joanna Parkin (CEPS, Brussels) and Leonhard den Hertog (for CEPS, Brussels); Carmen González (Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid), Roderick Parkes (for SWP, Berlin), Alicia Sorroza (Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid) and Andreas Ette (for SWP, Berlin); and Thanos Maroukis (Eliamep, Athens) and Anna Triandafyllidou (Eliamep, Athens).

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Carnegie Europe, CCEIA, CER, CEPS, demosEUROPA, ECFR, EGMONT, EPC, Real Instituto Elcano, Eliamep, Europeum, FRIDE, IAI, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, SIEPS, SWP.

Four other series of Policy Papers deal with key challenges on defence, EU neighbourhood, strategic resources and economic policy. The final report presenting the key recommendations of the think tanks will be published in March 2013, under the direction of Elvire Fabry (*Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, Paris*).

Introduction

Although migration has always been a core element in EU relations with most developing countries, and especially the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), development cooperation has only been directly linked with migration policies in EU discourse since 2000. This has been reflected in EU policies since the adoption of the Global Approach to Migration in 2005, the European Consensus on Development in 2006, the EU Position for the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, and in the more recent Global Approach to Migration and Mobility. Through these documents and declarations, the EU has consistently reiterated the importance of human rights for sustainable development and the need for a “genuine” partnership with non-EU countries aimed at addressing migration and mobility in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

Even though the positive migration-development nexus has been acknowledged, little has actually been done to maximise the gains from migration for both sending and receiving countries. The focus has been on circular migration and mobility packages in order to facilitate legal migration (which has been a core concern and priority on the EU side) and to mitigate eventual brain drain challenges on the side of the third countries, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa. The EU and its Member States have concentrated mainly on trying to curb labour migration and in particular to combat irregular migration. As such, EU Member States have focused on reinforcing stricter border controls, strengthening Frontex and readmission agreements, while in parallel also addressing the ‘root causes of flight’ - in other words, poverty, violence and instability in the source regions. Migration thus essentially continues to be approached from a security-driven and rather Eurocentric mind frame.

The changing global environment and radical changes in the EU’s immediate neighbourhood have made it amply clear, for a while now, that this approach needs to be adapted to new realities. It is time for a paradigm shift in the external dimension of EU migration policy, to:

- reshuffle priorities and make room for a rights-based, and not only a security-based, approach to migration;
- establish a policy that sits more comfortably on the migration-development nexus.

1. The background, in brief

The EU has supported, endorsed and contributed to the international discourse on the migration-development nexus, which considers migration as a ‘tool’ for development and aims at harnessing remittances and diasporas in order to maximise their positive impacts on development and poverty reduction. At the same time however, the external dimension of EU migration policy has essentially been framed by a securitarian approach aimed at limiting the access of unwanted third-country nationals to the Schengen area, increasing border control and restricting visa and asylum policies. There is also a move towards the adoption of minimum standards on some internationally codified human-rights, especially regarding family reunification.

Over the past two decades, the academic and political communities have been trying to shift the focus from the challenges that migration presents to the opportunities it offers. Significant resources have been invested in exploring the positive results migration may have for countries of origin. The importance of remittances and the crucial role of migrants and diaspora communities as agents of development and innovation have been underlined (most notably through the work of the World Bank and the International Organization for Migrations (IOM) on this subject). Remittances have contributed to reducing poverty and in some instances triggering development. According to World Bank data, in 2011 officially recorded remittances to developing countries reached \$372 billion and the inflow is expected to increase at a steady pace of 7-8% in the next two years, contrary to all other sources of funding (Foreign direct investment (FDI), Official development

assistance (ODA), etc.). The challenge has been to formulate appropriate policies that will facilitate the leveraging of remittances for development. Studies have shown that policies aimed at channelling remittances to specific investments have had limited success. On the contrary, what seems more effective is to improve the overall investment climate in the country of origin and to encourage the use of banking channels (thereby enabling savings, investment and even access to credit based on remittance history). The role of the diaspora has also been at the core of much policy interest as the overall development potential of migrants can reach significant levels, involving areas such as business creation, trade links, investments, remittances, skills circulation, exchange of experiences and even impacts on social and cultural roles of men and women in the home society. Here too, the more favourable the political, social and economic conditions in the country of origin, the more likely diasporas will invest, start businesses, transfer finances and eventually maybe also return.

The ACP countries, especially Africa, have been at the heart of EU development cooperation policies. Migration unavoidably emerged as a general dimension since the Lomé accords, but only as regards legally working migrants and the ACP countries' responsibilities to prevent illegal migration. With the Cotonou Convention and the 2000 Cairo Declaration, migration was incorporated into political dialogue (Art.8, Par.3) but overall, the focus was on illegal migration and the development challenges that countries of origins faced. The ways in which migration could contribute to development eventually made their way into the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its relations with African countries. Indeed, the migration-development nexus was reflected in the 2005 EU Strategy for Africa, but to a minor degree. A year later, in 2006, the shift became more evident as the Tripoli Declaration offered a joint approach on migration and development between the EU and the African continent. This was followed by the 7th Partnership on Migration, Development and Employment in the First Action Plan (2008-2010). There have been numerous opportunities since to take initiatives aimed at enhancing the development impact of migration, but the results have been extremely limited and, for many, disappointing.

As part of EU efforts to support the Millennium Development Goals, particularly since 2010, migration has been identified as one of the five core areas of the Policy Coherence for Development Work Programme.¹ This agenda recognises the need to include development cooperation objectives in non-development policies, minimise contradictions, and build synergies between policies (in areas other than development cooperation) that have an impact on developing countries. There is a general move towards partnerships that characterises the EU's external affairs particularly with its Eastern and Southern neighbours and a stated commitment to make cooperation on migration mutually beneficial.

“ALTHOUGH THE INSTRUMENTS AND THE DISCOURSE ARE THERE, IN PRACTICE, THE ‘MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL’ DIMENSION HAS NOT BEEN MADE TANGIBLE”

Institutionally, these dimensions have been further consolidated through the work of the EU's High Representative for External Affairs and Security Policy in the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity that was published in May 2012.² In this revision of the ENP, the EU proposes Comprehensive Dialogues leading to Mobility Partnerships aimed at: strengthening cooperation on migration and mobility and human rights protection, reinforcing local Schengen cooperation, and implementing the EU Visa Code. These Mobility Partnerships offer a framework for political dialogue and operational cooperation between the EU and the partner countries

concerned. Indeed, visa liberalisation has already improved between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Cape Verde, while Mobility Partnerships have been established with Cape Verde, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia – admittedly rather easy cases all around.³

Although the instruments and the discourse are there, in practice, the ‘mutually beneficial’ dimension has not been made tangible. The EU thus has been consistently criticised for talking about ‘dialogues’ and ‘partnerships’ when in reality it engages more in a ‘paternalistic monologue’ and a conditionality-driven relationship

1. European Commission, *Policy Coherence for Development Work Programme 2010- 2013*, Staff working document, SEC(2010) 421 final, 21.4.2010.

2. European Commission/High Representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity: Report on activities in 2011 and Roadmap for future action*, Staff working document, SWD(2012) 121 final, 15.2.2012.

3. European Union, “EU bolsters its support to reformers in its Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods”, Press release, 15.5.2012.

with migration-sending or transit-migration countries. In effect, it has increasingly linked development aid to encouraging migrant return and readmission agreements, and most of its partnerships and relations with its neighbours include, as a condition, commitments to curb irregular migration pathways. This shift towards making aid conditional upon cooperation in illegal migration, along with the failure of the EU and the ACP to reach an agreement on migration in the revised Cotonou agreement in June 2010, suggests a gap between EU discourse and EU action towards the goal of 'making migration work for development'.

The EU's external migration policy falls short of expectations and much more importantly, it falls very short of being able to offer an effective global approach to migration or a coherent approach to development.

This has been made amply clear over the past year. The EU Commission recognised both that the EU was not fully equipped to help the Member States (such as Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus) most exposed to massive migratory movements provoked by the political developments in North Africa⁴ and that Europe had failed to respond to the humanitarian situation and address the needs of the fleeing refugees. The migration pressures that have resulted from the Arab Spring, and the tense political situation provoked by the unravelling Eurozone crisis, with many EU Member States entering their fifth consecutive year of economic recession, are indeed providing new stress tests for the EU in its foreign policy making and in its migration policies.

2. Current challenges for the external dimension of EU migration policy

Against this background, the 2011 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) has been presented by the EU as an attempt at framing a 'migrant-centred' approach which maximises the development impact of migration and mobility while also responding to European internal labour needs and preventing irregular migration. The GAMM thus aims to serve as the EU's overarching framework for external migration policy. As such, it has quite a challenging task ahead, as it is largely based on non-binding political declarations and involves reconciling opposing objectives and often conflicting priorities. The GAMM has been received with significant scepticism or even cynicism as it remains firmly set within a security driven approach, and, most importantly, does not specify what it offers partners in return. If there is no incentive or meaningful benefit for the other countries, why would they engage in the partnerships and agreements the EU is offering through the GAMM?

There are undoubtedly many positive developments in this field, and migration features at all levels of the EU's political and technical dialogue with third countries as well as in all its multilateral or bilateral cooperation and association agreements. The challenge at present is whether the legal and institutional framework in place, the reinvigorated GAMM, and the EU High Representative will be able to make a difference and effectively transform an area which has so far been restricted by a 'security-driven' mind set. Overall, issues of migration and mobility have been managed by Justice and Home Affairs officials, thus favouring migration control and containment issues (ranging from policing and border control to readmission agreements) over labour migration issues and rights protection schemes. This has even been the case in the Mobility Partnerships where traditional EU policy goals (readmission, improved border control and countering irregular migration) continue to take precedence over labour migration or similar opportunities for partner countries. The main difference is that these are just 'packaged' better in a more inclusive and partnership-driven discourse. Tellingly, efforts at launching dialogue on migration, mobility and security with Morocco and Tunisia have faced notable hurdles, while Egypt has turned down the EU offer for a Mobility Partnership, thus revealing a divergence of interests between the partners.

If indeed there is an interest to seek synergies and pursue a truly global approach to migration and mobility within the broader objectives of EU foreign policy and development cooperation policy, then the EU needs

4. European Commission, *Communication on migration, COM(2011) 248 final*, 4.5.2011.

to show its partners that it does want to engage in a mutually beneficial partnership on matters relating to migration and also assume its role as a cooperation partner. This manifestly requires taking into consideration the changes that have occurred in the neighbourhood and defining policy goals which also respond to local demands. This is in part acknowledged in the GAMM's "principle of differentiation" by which the EU will seek closer cooperation with partners that share interests with and are ready to make mutual commitments with the EU and its Member States.

“THE EU NEEDS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION CHANGES OCCURRING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND DEFINE POLICY GOALS WHICH RESPOND TO LOCAL DEMANDS”

The realities on the ground at present are rather challenging. European politicians are being called to respond in ambitious and even audacious ways to the protracted internal crisis the EU is facing, and the global and regional tectonic shifts that are fundamentally and rapidly changing its international environment. How they address migration and development issues will unquestionably affect the EU's global role going forward. For decades, the EU has been the world's largest donor of official development aid, and it has demonstrated a consistent commitment to supporting the efforts of developing countries to fight poverty and pursue inclusive and sustainable growth. In its declarations, the EU and its Member States have underlined their pledge to adopt a coherent and comprehensive approach to both its development policies and its migration policies. The strategy has been outlined but the division of competencies between the Community and Member States on migration issues does not allow the EU to deliver on it.

3. Proposals

The following points are therefore put forward:

- Examine institutional arrangements in terms of who actually sets the agenda and steers the Dialogues on Migration, Mobility and Security and on EU development policy, and encourage the more active involvement of the High Representative and the EEAS in both.
- Address the causes leading to irregular migration and irregular status while supporting legal migration channels. Recommending the establishment of more legal avenues for labour mobility in low-wage sectors and increasing regular channels for non-EU citizens to access less-skilled and lower-paid jobs outside of circular and temporary migration schemes could address the problem of overstaying. Moreover, partner countries could become more interested in the Dialogues and Mobility Partnerships if concrete measures are offered such as the recognition of qualifications and the portability of social security rights.
- Focus more on targeted funding for vocational training in countries of origin to improve the skills level of the labour force.
- Explore ways to move from a conditionality approach where mobility 'carrots' are offered in return for measures aimed at fighting irregular migration, to one where reforms are encouraged in the field of human rights standards.
- Ensure that cooperation with third countries on irregular migration and implementation of pre-frontier border controls does not undermine access to asylum and other human rights obligations.
- Reiterate the importance of international labour standards for all and position them at the core of EU migration policy in order to actively support the link between development, migration and decent work.

- Recognise that migration patterns are increasingly circular and settlement is more temporary than permanent; once this is factored into migration policies it will be easier to seek synergies with development potential in the countries of origin.
- Use development cooperation to improve the general investment climate in countries of origin through anti-corruption initiatives and the building of well-functioning institutions. This will encourage remittances and diaspora investment which are crucial for the development potential of countries of origin.
- Engage more dynamically in a constructive dialogue on how migrants – and especially diaspora communities – can unleash development potential in their countries of origin. A tool such as the GFMD can be useful in identifying innovative actors and best practices.
- Finally, use the opportunity that will be presented at the UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2013 to affirm the EU's commitment to linking migration policies and development in all aspects of its external relations.

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