

Resolution 1611 (2008)¹

Immigration from sub-Saharan Africa

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Africa is the continent most affected by migration. Allowing for the inaccuracy of the statistics, every year some 2 to 4 million people migrate legally or illegally from Sub-Saharan Africa to within or outside Africa. The figure is increasing in relation to internal migration, which is made more difficult by the armed conflicts which currently affect 24 African countries, either directly or indirectly, and the closure of borders by some of them. At the same time, brain drain, the attractiveness of the west and the existence in some countries of a large diaspora (pull factors) are combining with the difficulty in finding properly paid employment and a feeling that Africa is stuck in an endless crisis (push factors) to further increase this migration, in spite of the risks involved for those concerned.

2. Deporting Sub-Saharan migrants is often difficult or impossible because of their refusal to indicate their real countries of origin, the lack of readmission agreements when their countries are known, the efforts of associations defending undocumented migrants to prevent their being deported by air, or the physical resistance of migrants who seek to stir up disorder among the other passengers, and even to damage the aircraft used, with the assistance of people waiting for them at the airport.

3. These migratory flows increase the numbers of migrants already settled in the host countries and, combined with the many children born there, form an increasingly visible community of African origin, whose size sometimes triggers xenophobic reactions.

4. The motivations of these migrants, whether economic, family-related, social or political, are extremely varied and are becoming more so. As states have different legislation, in spite of the gradual harmonisation of European policies, migrants naturally choose the countries which will benefit them the most and involve the lowest risk, particularly of being deported. This “shopping around” is adding to the shifting nature of migration processes and also contributing to the feminisation of migration.

5. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that Europe is therefore facing several challenges in terms of controlling irregular migration and managing informal economic activity, which existed before the mass arrival of Sub-Saharan immigrants, but has been boosted by their presence and which, paradoxically, helps them to integrate into their host countries. At the same time, Europe may benefit from the arrival of a younger population likely to reduce the impact of the unfavourable demographic trends currently affecting it.

6. However, in spite of legislation against racism and discrimination, European states are not all able to guarantee that all migrants settling in their countries will be fairly treated in terms of access to health care, education, decent housing and declared employment which is adequately paid.

7. The Assembly considers that, bearing in mind the specific nature of Sub-Saharan migration, and in order to enable every country to take decisions in full knowledge of the facts, it is vital to focus on four main strands: accurate knowledge of migratory flows; dealing with specific migratory movements; gradual harmonisation of European legislation; aid for Africa and the strengthening of the ties between host countries and countries of origin.

1. *Assembly debate* on 18 April 2008 (18th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11526](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Jean-Guy Branger). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 18 April 2008 (18th Sitting).



8. Therefore, the Assembly calls on member states:

8.1. in terms of knowledge and comprehensive management of migratory flows, to:

8.1.1. set up national and regional migration observatories;

8.1.2. keep local settlement registers so as to monitor the integration and movements of the migrants in order to take in or assist population groups often experiencing great difficulty;

8.1.3. make deportation more secure by using closely-supervised international charter flights, with guarantees of prior judicial procedures and the establishment of contractual procedures with the countries agreeing to readmit the persons concerned, while ensuring respect for their human rights;

8.2. in terms of dealing with specific migratory movements, to:

8.2.1. offer an alternative to political asylum for migrants who were not persecuted by the authorities but by another ethnic group in their country, or by armed groups operating unlawfully;

8.2.2. organise personalised supervision of migrant students, in co-operation with their countries of origin and the consulates or embassies in those countries, so as to smooth the path of academic success for some and the return home or entry into employment of others;

8.2.3. adopt binding legislative measures to deal with the migration of pregnant women and prevent unlawful procedures concerning migration for the purposes of paternity or adoption;

8.2.4. facilitate cultural migration by issuing appropriate visas;

8.3. in terms of the harmonisation of European legislation, to:

8.3.1. co-operate in harmonising legislation on family reunification;

8.3.2. co-operate in harmonising legislation on medical assistance for irregular migrants;

8.3.3. co-operate in harmonising legislation on learning the language of the host country;

8.3.4. co-operate in harmonising legislation on admitting the children of irregular migrants to schools.

9. In order to expand aid to Sub-Saharan Africa and ties between countries of origin and host countries, the Assembly calls on member states to:

9.1. develop public awareness of Africa, particularly through encouraging twinning arrangements, and facilitate decentralised co-operation projects;

9.2. develop a central register of specialists in the various African languages who are capable of conversing with nationals of countries of origin when they have difficulties communicating with the authorities;

9.3. provide financial incentives for legal remittances to countries of origin by bearing part of the cost;

9.4. encourage the transfer of know-how by members of diasporas to their countries of origin by introducing simplified visa procedures and a system for making up some of the earnings lost by those who travel for that purpose;

9.5. take the necessary measures with regard to respecting the religious traditions and cultural practices of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa;

9.6. impose penalties on practices that violate human rights, such as female circumcision and all forms of genital mutilation;

9.7. establish or strengthen positive discrimination measures for Sub-Saharan immigrants, in particular in the fields of education, housing and health;

9.8. mobilise the maximum amount of resources to curb or halt the pandemics which are crippling growth in the infected regions of Sub-Saharan Africa.

10. With a view to gradually bringing the procedures applicable to migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa into line with those for other migrants, the Assembly reminds member states of the need to comply with the following provisions that:

10.1. all migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa are provided with a document specifying their rights and duties;

- 10.2. they are provided with the services of an interpreter in their own language;
- 10.3. conditions in transit and detention centres are made more humane;
- 10.4. in such centres, proper differentiation between categories of migrants is ensured in the processing of flows of migrants and asylum seekers;
- 10.5. host countries seek to conclude readmission agreements and expand assistance for the return home of persons not granted asylum;
- 10.6. the countries concerned step up efforts to combat smuggling networks and impose stricter penalties on them;
- 10.7. the countries concerned step up controls and impose stricter penalties on the underground labour market.