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# What the EU can learn from Africa

Many African countries are mainstreaming migration governance for greater coherence and inclusivity. Europe can draw some valuable lessons from this

Popular migration discourses in Europe often question the ability of African states to govern migration effectively. Media images of African migrants squeezed into dingy boats in the Mediterranean constantly reinforce these discourses. However, positive examples of what migration governance should be exist within the continent, and they can provide important lessons for many of the EU Member States. One such example is the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) adopted by countries in the East and Horn of Africa.

NCMs are government-led interagency platforms that bring together different ministries to promote dialogue on migration issues and formulate *holistic* migration policies. They have realised *coherent* and *inclusive* migration governance in the region, and more states in other parts of Africa are now adopting this approach.

The African continent boasts of diverse migration experiences, including but not limited to regular cross-border trade, labour migration, forced migration, seasonal migration and migration for educational purposes. These happen at the domestic, regional and international levels and can be documented or undocumented. Currently, 85 per cent of mobility occurs within the continent, as most African migrants – including refugees – prefer moving to neighbouring countries.

## Ensuring coherent and inclusive migration governance

Against this backdrop, African Union (AU) Heads of State adopted the African Migration Policy Framework in 2006. Its current version is the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan for Action (2018-2030). The framework provides comprehensive and integrated policy guidelines to AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in their endeavours to promote migration and

development. It further provides a guideline on how to address migration challenges on the continent. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a REC in the Horn of Africa comprising eight members (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda), decided to establish NCMs to implement the African Union's framework. The REC also has a Regional Migration Policy Framework guided by the AU's policy framework, and NCMs are also part of this implementation.

*NCMs endeavour to mainstream migration into national development through a whole-of-society and government approach.*

NCMs, as stated earlier, are platforms that foster dialogue on migration-related issues to realise coherent and inclusive migration governance. For instance, Kenya's NCM, spearheaded by the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, includes the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Sports and the Arts, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and, last but not least, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Government agencies like the National Bureau of Statistics and the National Employment Authority are also involved. The NCM also holds consultative workshops with academia, civil society, trade unions, the private sector, church, as well as faith-based organisations, including county assemblies at local governance levels.

More broadly, NCMs in the IGAD region endeavour to mainstream migration into national development through a whole-of-society and government approach. They mobilise resources, offer technical support and directly participate in implementing migration programmes rolled out by different government ministries. As such, it makes it possible for various ministries to know what the others are doing, avoiding duplication of activities and save limited resources.

## Lessons for Europe

It is thus fair to say that European Union Member States have something to learn from IGAD Member States. In most EU countries, the migration docket currently falls solely within the Ministries of Interior or Home Affairs. These ministries often work in silos and formulate migration policies without fully involving other relevant ministries. As a

result, migration policies and overall migration governance take off from a security standpoint first and foremost. Consequently, migration is viewed and governed as a threat to the nation-state.

On the contrary, numerous peer-reviewed studies and reports show that migrants contribute to their destination countries' economic and social development. The EU and its Member States continuously disregard this fact and put more funds into externalisation than into opening regular migration pathways. The union has set aside millions of euros to outsource migration management to countries outside Europe to prevent migration into its territory. This strategy has, however, not been successful, as evidenced by hard-line stands, pushbacks by African border states and the abuse of migrants' human rights within these states. The number of migrants that reached Italy's shores in the summer of 2023, for example, was  at a record high compared to previous years. It is, therefore, imperative for the EU to look at migration differently and develop new approaches to manage it effectively.

***With the migration narrative currently being run by far-right politicians, the time to change tact is now!***

Bringing together all migration stakeholders through one platform is a daunting task — but not an impossible one. IGAD Member States have proven that it is an achievable endeavour. Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti, considered to be on a development trajectory, have had more progress in the implementation of NCMs and provide lessons that could be a starting point for countries in the EU.

NCMs, as highlighted, offer a platform to critically address specific migration issues and challenges and share diverse ways to manage migration in a coordinated manner. NCMs also allow the sharing of migration data across different ministries and agencies to inform policies coherently. For instance, Kenya's NCM has developed and validated Standard Operating Procedures on migration data management by all NCM stakeholders. Different government ministries have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on data sharing, exchange and dissemination. These initiatives have facilitated *informed* dialogue on migration issues within the NCM and further resulted in *inclusive* migration policies.

If accompanied by political goodwill, a similar undertaking can achieve maximum results within EU Member States. The EU Member States have proven that they are able to make great strides, such as with the General Data Protection Regulation, and they have the financial and technical capabilities to implement such a platform. But with the

migration narrative currently being run by far-right politicians, the time to act is now!

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**Felicity Okoth**

Felicity Okoth coordinates the International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER) research network in Bergen, Norway. She is also pursuing a PhD at the department of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. Her research looks at the situated and translocal practices of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Nairobi and how these influence their migration aspirations (return or move to third countries).