

## For an EU-Africa partnership that prioritises migration as a development force

22 October 2021

Ahead of the AU-EU Ministerial meeting of 26 October 2021 and of the 6<sup>th</sup> AU-EU Summit, ACT Alliance EU and Caritas Europa urge the EU to seize the opportunity of the renewed partnership to promote a **rights-based, human-centric, long-term approach to migration, focusing on harnessing its positive aspects, reflecting African countries' priorities, and directing development funds to actions that make clear contributions to sustainable and inclusive development.**

As civil society faith-based networks working in proximity with partners in multiple countries in Africa and closely following the ongoing negotiations on the new EU-Africa strategy, we are concerned that the EU's priorities for the migration pillar seem to be in contradiction with its intention to build a more balanced partnership with African countries, in line with their aspirations.

In our view, the [European Commission/EEAS initial proposal](#) for the new partnership framework and other policy and legislative initiatives such as the post-Cotonou Agreement and the Pact on Asylum and Migration pay insufficient attention to the positive aspects of migration, to the valuable contributions that migrants and diaspora can make to countries of destination and origin, and to possible joint actions that the parties could take to build on migration as a force for development. These are all priorities for African civil society and governments, but barely featured in the EU's proposals for concrete actions in cooperation with African countries. To the contrary, the EU's migration policy towards Africa also disrupts migration patterns between African states that are vital for economic integration and development.

While most African migration to Europe takes place on a regular basis, and while there are multiple pressing needs in the field of migration and mobility requiring increased attention and resources (human rights protection and enhanced support for displaced populations, to name a few), EU priorities focus primarily on reducing irregular migration and increasing return rates. Such approach is at odds with the reality on the ground, with European core values, and with the EU's goal of building a 'true partnership of equals' with third countries. True partners do not impose conditionalities on their counterparts. The EU must not use the Visa-Codex or its funding instruments to force African states to fully cooperate in migration management or return policies. Moreover, while it is often portrayed that a stronger return system would reinforce the credibility of the EU migration and asylum system as a whole, we believe that **the EU's role as a global human rights leader and as a reliable partner for African countries is at stake. This positive image depends instead on the respect for African priorities and on approaching migration through a development lens.**

We thus urge you to envision a new EU-Africa partnership that is guided by the understanding of migration as a natural part of life, as a right and as a powerful tool for development. This is particularly important in the light of the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and of how these call for action centred on reducing poverty and inequalities.

**Development cooperation can greatly contribute to facilitating migration and to enhancing its potential, for all the parties involved.** Dozens of promising initiatives are outlined within the areas of cooperation to be funded by the [Global Europe Instrument \(Annexes II and III\)](#), as well as in the [European Parliament Report on the new EU-Africa Strategy](#) and the recently adopted [European Parliament Own-Initiative Report on New Avenues for Legal Labour Migration](#). They include: build a common understanding of the migration-development nexus including by integrating migrants and civil society's views in the EU-Africa dialogue on migration; facilitate circular migration and mobility; develop measures to counter racism and xenophobia on both continents; improve migrant workers'

rights protection and employment conditions in the EU; harmonise rules and simplify procedures for the recognition of all qualifications, skills and previous learning; push EU Member States to enhance channels for regular migration; expand the scope of talent pool and other mobility schemes to cover all sectors of employment for low-, medium- and highly skilled workers; reduce remittance costs; integrate a gender-equality dimension into migration governance; promote diaspora engagement; encourage Member States to dramatically step up their commitment to increase resettlement and complementary pathways (humanitarian visas, extended family reunification schemes, student scholarships, among others); support the implementation of international commitments at UN level (such as the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration).

**All these important areas of cooperation cannot be neglected. These are the types of action that we envision as the priority focus for the migration pillar of the new EU-Africa partnership framework.**

We urge EU leaders not to miss the opportunity that this renewed partnership provides to build what Europe needs – that is, to go beyond empty promises of partnership and mutual interests, to anchor actions in the respect of human rights and international law, and to have the willingness to discuss clear, concrete and ambitious actions that reflect the positive aspects of migration and that step-up cooperation on safe and legal pathways for migration and mobility.