

Migration governance in Africa

TOWARDS A COMMON MARKET

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Human mobility and common markets

Common markets differ from free trade areas in that they allow the **free movement of labour and capital**

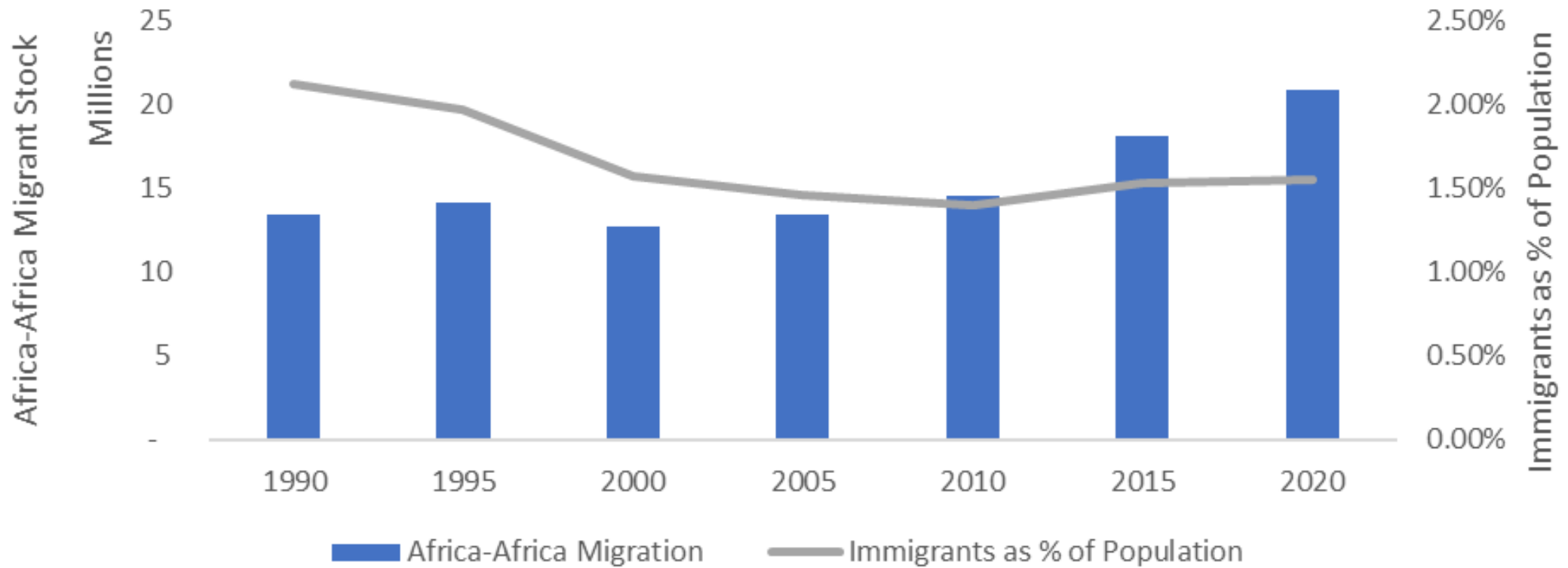
- When considering labour migration (migration for work) we should distinguish between
 - High skilled labour (merchants, professionals, managers)
 - Low skilled labour (e.g. construction, mine and agriculture workers)
- Often mobility of skilled labour is introduced at a relatively early stage of integration
- There are hybrid arrangements with free movement of labour before a common external tariff is introduced

Some basic facts about African migration

- Most Africans who migrate move to other African countries
- Africans are a small minority of migrants to Europe and the OECD, and most Africans migrate through regular channels
- The OECD reports that of the top 20 countries of origin of contemporary migrants to OECD countries, not one is a country in Africa
- Of the top 20 countries of origin of asylum seekers only three were African, and they all had among the fewest applications
- The rate of African migration in general is very low by global standards although Africans have migrated within Africa for millennia

See: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD) **International Migration Outlook (2022)**

Actual Africa-Africa Migration 1990-2020



	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	Growth30 _yrs
<i>Africa-Africa Migration</i>	13 431 488	14 179 992	12 753 079	13 411 177	14 571 247	18 200 172	20 917 565	56%
<i>Africa Population</i>	630 349 685	717 270 112	810 984 232	916 154 285	1 039 304 030	1 182 438 803	1 340 598 113	113%
<i>Immigrants as % of Population</i>	2.13%	1.98%	1.57%	1.46%	1.40%	1.54%	1.56%	

Why freer movement of people in Africa?

The preamble to the African Union Free Movement of Persons protocol sets out the rationale for free movement as follows

...the free movement of persons, capital goods and services will promote integration, Pan-Africanism, enhance science, technology, education, research and foster tourism, facilitate inter-African trade and investment, increase remittances within Africa, promote mobility of labour, create employment, improve the standards of living of the people of Africa and facilitate the mobilization and utilization of the human and material resources of Africa in order to achieve self-reliance and development.

Economic and scientific, but also:

Social—bonds across borders

Cultural—greater sharing and understanding across cultures

Historical, decolonial—putting the balkanization of colonialism behind us

Current state of play in Africa

There are several effective free trade areas in Africa in the Regional Economic Communities (RECS, e.g. ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, COMESA)

Most of the free trade areas have largely **visa-free travel** within

There are many **bilateral and multilateral** visa free arrangements

Some RECs, and some subsets of RECs have **passport-less cross-border travel** within

In some cases, members have committed to allowing for relatively easy **access to work-permits**

Travel for the purposes of work within these RECs is generally **easier for high-skilled people than for low skilled people** (who are sometimes covered by BLAs)

The African Union's continent-wide **Free Movement of Persons Protocol** has been **poorly supported**

There is **more progress in regional, subregional, bilateral and unilateral initiatives**

Africa is moving toward regional integration. There are eight Regional Economic Communities approved by the African Union (AU)

CEN-SAD
(Community of Sahel Saharan States)
28 member countries



COMESA
(Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa)
19 member countries



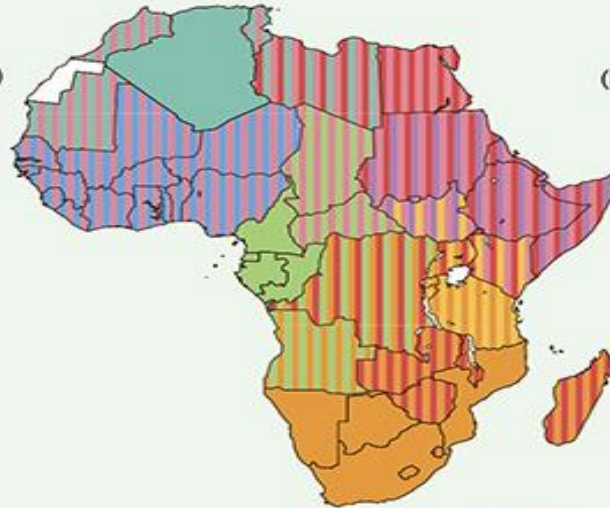
EAC
(East African Community)
6 member countries



ECCAS
(Economic Community of Central African States)
11 member countries



ECOWAS
(Economic Community of West African States)
15 member countries



IGAD
(Inter-governmental Authority on Development)
8 member countries



AMU
(Arab Maghreb Union)
5 member countries



SADC
(Southern African Development Community)
15 member countries

Comparative policies on people mobility

European Union

EEC 1957, the movement of workers was permitted between members states, but this was limited by national rules

In 1968 this was extended to residential and other rights still subject to national regulations

In 1986 the right was extended to the full free movement of persons, increasingly enshrined in European law rather than national law—the Single European Act

Rights of non-EU citizens to work or live in the EU are still largely governed by domestic national laws

The liberal paradox—very high internal benefits and fortress Europe

South America

1970s Andean Pact (CAN)—movement of skilled workers

Revived in 1990s, also MERCOSUR skilled labour and permits for low skilled

Advances in border management, documentation to enter & leave states, and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures for human mobility

2009 Mercosur Residence Agreement regularizes irregular migration after 2-years good work and conduct record

Venezuelan crisis, over 7m refugees, consolidates support for mobility

Unlike EU, arrangements are still intergovernmental

Reflecting on global comparative experience

Each regional history is very different and the circumstances which gave rise to the outcomes are very different too

Progress down a similar linear path towards free movement is unlikely

Precedents provide useful knowledge, but historical paths are not binding on future processes

Serendipity can intervene such as in the Venezuela case

We can probably learn as much for African policy from studying various African experiences, compared with global experiences

Paths towards continental free movement

There are many parallel and simultaneous paths forward

While the AU-FMP still has minimal support, **the spirit and action within Africa is incrementally moving towards openness**

We see many examples of this at various levels: **national, unilateral , bilateral subregional, regional ...**

Perhaps the experience of the EU, ASEAN and especially Mercosur with **free movement for skilled workers leading to deeper integration could be a continental step—synergies with AfCFTA services protocol in particular**

Another way forward could be **arrangements between regional blocs**

In the spirit of Abuja, we should not inhibit the variety of steps forward