



# Italian and Spanish approaches to external migration management in the Sahel: venues for cooperation and coherence

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## Summary

This paper is the result of a joint project by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (Rome) and the Elcano Royal Institute, promoted by the Italian Embassy in Madrid. It provides a broad view of the evolution of Spanish and Italian external migration policies through a closer examination of their approach towards the Sahel region and in light of the broader EU policy context. The analysis focuses on the historical background, migratory contexts, policy tools, perspectives, interests and strategic preferences of these two key EU Member States. Its aim is to encourage an improved and broadened dialogue between the two countries, ultimately contributing to increased cooperation on external migration policies.

### (1) Introduction

Being located at the external borders of the EU, Italy and Spain face similar challenges in managing migration originating from and transiting through Africa. The patterns and magnitude of the migration flows along the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) –of primary concern to Italy– and along the Western Mediterranean (WMR) and Atlantic Routes (WAR) –of foremost concern for Spain– vary over time and exhibit certain differences. Nevertheless, both countries are interested in relieving migratory pressure through cooperation with origin and transit countries and encouraging the development of coherent and complementary policies at the EU level. Despite similar geostrategic realities and shared challenges, cooperation in the external dimension of migration management between the two countries has so far remained limited.

Migratory pressure on the EU in general, and the EU Member States (EUMS) at its external borders in particular, has been mounting from 2014-15 onwards, gradually leading to a relatively better realisation of the structural, complex and multi-dimensional nature of EU-bound migration. This has highlighted the importance of a comprehensive and concerted approach that not only links migration with action in development, security and the broader scope of foreign policy, but also combines the efforts and assets of EUMS with those of the EU as a whole. The achievement of higher degrees of complementarity and coherence nevertheless remains a challenge. The recent move towards an integrated approach in external migration management has already led to improved communication and increased degrees of operational cooperation between EUMS, as well as between Italy and Spain *in* and *vis-à-vis* countries of origin and transit of common concern. This can offer a window of opportunity for broadening and improving cooperation and for developing functioning mechanisms of communication and coordination between the two countries.

The Sahel is a highly relevant region for better understanding the Italian and Spanish approaches to external migration management, examining the workings of the current collaboration between the two, and exploring future venues for enhanced cooperation. This is the case not only because the Sahel is highly prioritised by both countries but also because it has become one of the main ‘laboratories’ of EUMS cooperation with the recently augmented activism within the EU framework. The Sahel is also a region that shows up the complex inter-linkages between migration and demographic dynamics,

socioeconomic development, human and state (in)security, and political instability, all aspects which partnership mechanisms with third countries should take into account.

## (2) Drivers and patterns of migration in and through the Sahel

The drivers of migration in and through the Sahel are numerous and interconnected. Countries in the Sahel are already over-represented at the bottom of the Human Development Index and half of its population faces poverty and food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The fast demographic growth rate in the Sahel (3% per year) is exerting an increasing pressure on already scarce resources and on the access to basic services and economic opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Given the limited income-generating opportunities in a booming demographic context, migration not only represents a livelihood strategy in itself but the various sectors surrounding transit migration have also become important for the local economies.<sup>4</sup> Climate risks such as flooding and droughts stand out as additional regional challenges today and in the future.<sup>5</sup> Finally, a high degree of insecurity reinforces the socioeconomic challenges, the Sahel being a region ravaged by conflicts, terrorism and activities of organised criminal networks and armed actors such as Boko Haram, Harakat Ansar al-Dine and AQIM.<sup>6</sup>

West Africa, which is the main region of origin for migration flows in and through the Sahel, is the world's sub-region with the largest migrant population.<sup>7</sup> Human mobility in the Sahel takes place at different scales, ie, intra-regional, trans-regional and trans-continental. Considering the rapidly changing nature of migratory movements and the difficulty in obtaining reliable and coherent data on a phenomenon like unauthorised migration, identifying the magnitude, patterns and routes of migratory flows is quite a challenging task. Notwithstanding these limitations, it has long been recognised that most of the mobility in the Sahel is of an intra-regional nature –up to 90% according to some analysts–.<sup>8</sup> Intra-regional mobility mainly comprises seasonal and circular labour migration and has often been a resilience strategy to overcome climatic and economic

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<sup>2</sup> T. Lanzer (2017), 'Sahel – Overview of humanitarian needs and requirements', HNRO Report, p. 4, <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/2017-sahel-overview-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements>.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> F. Molenaar, A.-E. Ursu, J. Meester & A. Hoffmann (2017), *Roadmap for Sustainable Migration Management in Agadez*, CRU report, October, <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/roadmap-sustainable-migration-management-agadez>.

<sup>5</sup> J. Chataigner, J. Guigou & M. Thibon (2016), 'Pour une réponse durable et concertée aux défis du Sahel', *IPEMED Palimpsestes*, nr 15, December, p. 2, [http://www.ipemed.coop/adminlpemed/media/fich\\_article/1501151896\\_ipemed-palimpsestes16sahelbd.pdf](http://www.ipemed.coop/adminlpemed/media/fich_article/1501151896_ipemed-palimpsestes16sahelbd.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> US Department of State (2016), Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016: Africa*, <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272229.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> T. Benattia, F. Armitano, H. Robinson & A. Malakooti (2015), 'Irregular migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean', Altai Consulting for IOM Nigeria, November, <https://fmmwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-altai.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Shimeles (2010), 'Migration patterns, trends and policy issues in Africa', African Development Bank Group WP-119, December, <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Procurement/Project-related-Procurement/WORKING%2019%20word%20document%20AA.PDF>.

challenges.<sup>9</sup> As regards trans-regional mobility, North Africa (particularly Libya and Algeria) has been a traditional destination for labour migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Migration to Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon that first emerged in the 1960s and has increased in the past two decades. Even if only between 10% and 20% of migrants transiting through the Sahel are reported to ultimately cross to Europe, there has been a visible increase in EU-bound migration over the past few years as proved by the doubling of the share of West Africans among the migrants arriving in Italy, from less than 20% in 2014 to more than 40% in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

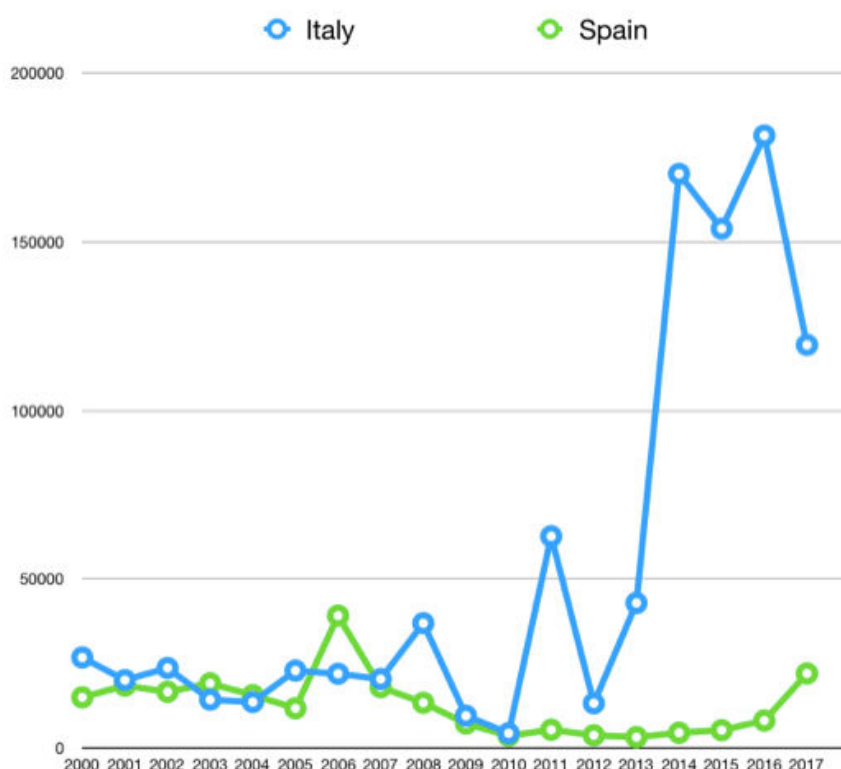
The WMR and the WAR saw a significant spike in irregular crossings in 2006, after which augmented controls and enhanced cooperation, mainly between Spain and West African countries, led to a decrease. Irregular flows in the CMR substantially increased from 2011 onwards until a relative decrease since mid-2017 (see Figure 1). While some countries in the Sahel, such as Senegal, are of concern for European destination countries primarily as countries of origin, others like Niger are significant primarily as countries of transit.

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<sup>9</sup> L. Bastide (2017), 'Mixed migration in West Africa: data, routes and vulnerabilities of people on the move', RMMS West Africa, August, p. 6, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mixed-migration-west-africa-data-routes-and-vulnerabilities-people-move-extended>.

<sup>10</sup> In 2014 nationals from Mali, Nigeria, Gambia and Senegal amounted to 19% of total arrivals. See Ministero dell'Interno (2015), *Dati sull'immigrazione 2014-2015*, <http://www.magistraturademocratica.it/mdem/upu/faticolo/1.DATI%20IMMIGRAZIONE%20MIN.%20INTE%20RNO%202014-2015.pdf>. In 2017 nationals from Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal made up 42% of the total arrivals. See Ministero dell'Interno, *Cruscotto giornaliero*, 31/XII/2017, [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-12-2017.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2017.pdf).

Figure 1. Sea arrivals in Italy and Spain, 2000-17



Source: 2000-14 Interior Ministries of Italy and Spain, 2015-17 UNHCR.

Both the rise in the number of irregular crossings along the CMR and the EU's prioritisation of the Sahel in managing migration were largely the result of Libya's economic and state collapse, which not only impacted on labour migration flows towards North Africa but also led to a change in the security landscape. The situation also fed into the expansion of trafficking networks and a 'liberalisation' of criminal economies, leading to further exploitation of migrants.<sup>11</sup> While migrant deaths in the Mediterranean are highlighted as the primary risks generated by smuggling and trafficking activities, fatalities in the desert and other protection risks encountered during the journeys make the Sahel also highly relevant from a human security and human rights perspective.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> M. Micaleff (2017), 'The human conveyor belt: trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya', Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, March, p. 2, <http://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global-initiative-human-conveyor-belt-human-smuggling-in-libya-march-2017.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> C. Sollitt (2016), 'Forgotten fatalities: the number of migrant deaths before reaching the Mediterranean', RMMS, 27/VI/2016, <http://www.regionalmms.org/FeatureForgottenFatalities.html>; and Bastide (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 16.

(cont.)

### **(3) The Sahel as the playground for renewed EU activism in external migration management**

Before 2014-15 the EU had developed migration-specific cooperation mechanisms within the framework of its Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM).<sup>13</sup> Under the GAMM umbrella, the EU's policy towards Africa was limited to bilateral cooperation mainly with North African transit countries under Mobility Partnerships (MPs), multilateral dialogues of a limited geographical scope (ie, the Rabat Process) and loosely structured talks at the continental level (AU-EU and Africa-EU Migration and Mobility Dialogue).

The MPs were the main policy instruments of the GAMM designed to include the mobility component into migration management. In 2008 the MPs tried to respond to the expectations of third countries<sup>14</sup> that for almost a decade had been actively cooperating with the EU and EUMS in bilateral and multilateral programmes for joint border and irregular migration control.<sup>15</sup> The aim was to include a cooperation approach that set tailor-made temporary labour migration schemes and operationalised trilateral dialogues between the EU, EUMS and third countries of origin and transit. The MPs need to be launched, negotiated and concluded by a group of EUMS together with the Commission. The MPs are further *quid pro quo* tailor-made memorandums, in which the EU commits to development aid, temporary-entry visa facilitation and temporary migration schemes in exchange for partner countries' effective cooperation in the fight against irregular migration and border control. However, the framework did not result in far-reaching outcomes. MPs in the African continent were concluded only with Cape Verde (2008), Morocco (2013) and Tunisia (2014).

With mounting migratory pressure and changing geographies of flows from 2014 onwards, both the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa regained increasing importance for EU external migration policies. EU officials see the launch of the Khartoum Process at the end of 2014 as the first sign of increased EU activism towards the region.<sup>16</sup> Following that, Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility (CAMMs) were concluded with Nigeria and Ethiopia in March and November 2015 respectively.<sup>17</sup>

In the decisive 2015-16 period the EU not only further prioritised external migration management through partnerships but also geared up and diversified its efforts, targeting a wider range of countries in Africa through a series of cooperation initiatives and policy programmes, namely the European Agenda on Migration, the Valletta Action Plan, the

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<sup>13</sup> Previously Global Approach to Migration (GAM), it was renamed GAMM in 2011 in the aftermath of the Arab Spring to emphasise the 'mobility dimension' of the global approach.

<sup>14</sup> J.-P. Cassarino (2009), 'EU Mobility Partnerships: expression of a new compromise', MPI, 15/IX/2009, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-mobility-partnerships-expression-new-compromise>.

<sup>15</sup> Neptune, Seahorse and Hera for the Canary Islands (Spain) and Nautilus for Malta and Italy are examples of such joint programmes.

<sup>16</sup> Interview European Commission DG Home, 21/IX/2017.

<sup>17</sup> CAMMs also fall under the GAMM framework, but were first used in 2015. Unlike the MPs, they are mainly used vis-à-vis third countries not in the neighbourhood of the EU and do not necessarily include the negotiation of visa facilitation and readmission agreements.

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Sahel Action Plan and the New Migration Partnership Framework (MPF). The post-2015 approach has some novelties: (1) the EU has strengthened the connections between different dimensions of its external action, often ‘mainstreaming’ migration into pre-existing development and security efforts while underlining the use of the entire set of EU and EUMS policy instruments to gain leverage vis-à-vis third countries;<sup>18</sup> (2) it has been relying on the increasing use of conditionality, envisaging the development of positive and negative incentives in development and trade policies and linking them to third states’ performance in migration management;<sup>19</sup> and (3) greater emphasis has been put on coordinating and joining the forces (ie, efforts, assets, existing relations and leverage) of the EUMS with those of the EU as a whole.

Partnerships within the MPF, the new cornerstone of the post-2015 EU external migration policy, to some extent mirror the MPs, while having a more far-reaching scope.<sup>20</sup> The partnerships, so far targeting five priority countries, namely Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Ethiopia, encompass tailor-made, bilateral and flexible cooperation mechanisms. They include measures to improve border control (border and police cooperation), step up the fight against smuggling and trafficking networks, increase and improve returns of unauthorised migrants and address the root causes of migration (economic opportunities, migration information awareness, etc.). The MPF aims to overcome the MPs’ shortcomings by addressing migration as a cross-cutting and multidimensional issue, broadening the policy portfolio beyond the traditional realms of foreign policy, home affairs and development aid, and by remedying the coordination deficit among EUMS and between the national-European levels so as to avoid ineffective duplication of efforts.

The European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), created at the Valletta Summit and intended to be a swift and responsive instrument, finances the MPF as well as the overall post-2015 migration policy towards Africa. Even though the EUTF aims at establishing a coordination mechanism between EUMS and the EU, the pledges by EUMS have remained considerably low, reaching only 12.7% of the total.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the EUTF is mainly covered by European Development Fund reserves and previously approved funds, leading civil society to criticise the use of funds originally flagged for development for migration management purposes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> L. Raineri & A. Rossi (2017), ‘The security-migration-development nexus in the Sahel: a reality check’, IAI Working Paper, nr 1726, 25/IX/2017, <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1726.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission (2016), *Communication on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration*, COM(2016) 385, p. 9 & 17, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_external\\_aspects\\_eam\\_towards\\_new\\_migration\\_ompact\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_external_aspects_eam_towards_new_migration_ompact_en.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> E. Collet & A. Ahad (2017), ‘EU migration partnerships: a work in progress’, Transatlantic Council of Migration, December, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/eu-migration-partnerships-work-progress>.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission (2018), *EU Member States & Other Donor Contributions*, 26/II/2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials_en).

<sup>22</sup> O. De Guerry & A. Stocchiero (2018), ‘Partnership or conditionality? Monitoring the Migration Compacts and EU Trust Fund for Africa’, Brussels, Concord Europe, January, <https://wp.me/p76mJt-2u9>; Global Health Advocates (2017), ‘Misplaced trust: diverting EU aid to stop migration’, September, [http://www.ghadvocates.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Misplaced-Trust\\_FINAL-VERSION.pdf](http://www.ghadvocates.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Misplaced-Trust_FINAL-VERSION.pdf).

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It is still relatively early to talk about a tangible positive impact of the post-2015 approach in all five MPF countries and on the entire range of EU-Africa migration management cooperation. Differences of opinion continue to exist between different EUMS and various EU institutions as to the added value of the MPF framework in the existence of the GAMM, the extent to which EU-level efforts contribute to or hamper external migration policies pursued at the EUMS level, and the relative weight that should be given to different policy dimensions (returns, control, development, investment, etc.).<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, it has had a visible positive impact on communication and cooperation between EUMS and between the national-European levels in political, technical and operational terms.<sup>24</sup>

#### **(4) Italy's migration policies in the Sahel: the Niger case study**

##### **(4.1) Broadening the focus: Italy's external migration policies**

Italy's external migration management arrangements had traditionally focused on its immediate neighbours. It concluded several bilateral agreements with Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in the 2000s, focusing on enhancing local police and border control capacities. The political turmoil and institutional breakdown following the Arab uprisings, which caused the collapse of its collaboration with most of these partner countries and contributed to increasing unauthorised migration towards Europe, was a turning point for Italy's approach to Africa. According to officials, Italy started promoting an integrated approach to migration management, which envisages cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination based on the values of partnership and shared responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

The Italian strategy comprises two main elements: (1) the dual focus on solidarity–security that aims to save lives without jeopardising the determined fight against smuggling;<sup>26</sup> and (2) the ‘help them in their own homes’ approach, aimed at preventing rather than containing human mobility.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, Italy focuses on the one hand on control-oriented measures aimed at limiting irregular migration in the short term, such as enhancing local border management capacities, and those aimed at addressing the root causes in the long term, such as development aid, investment and job creation projects. Italy has promoted the idea that this vision, summarised as a proposal to the EU in its Migration Compact document, should also be the core of the EU strategy for external action on migration.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> C. Castillejo (2017), ‘The EU Migration Partnership Framework: time for a rethink?’, DIE Discussion Paper, nr 28/2017, p. 8-10, [https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP\\_28.2017.pdf](https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_28.2017.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the Italian Embassy in Niger, 18/X/2017.

<sup>26</sup> Italian Foreign Ministry (MAECI) (2017), ‘The Italian strategy in the Mediterranean: stabilising the crisis and building a positive agenda for the region’, December, p. 25, <http://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2017/12/med-maeci-eng.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with the Carabinieri Corps, 7/XI/2017.

<sup>28</sup> Italian Government (2016), *Migration Compact: Contribution to an EU Strategy for External Action on* (cont.)

#### (4.2) Niger's augmented importance in migration management

Bilateral cooperation between Italy and Niger dating back to 1986 had largely remained limited to development support. This had not evolved into broader political cooperation, mainly due to systemic political crises in Niger and to Italy's traditional prioritisation of North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The permeability of Libya's borders and the lack of a central state authority that could act as a partner had an impact also on Italy's conception of its immediate neighbourhood and its principal partners: the Sahel turned into a region of immediate interest<sup>29</sup> and Niger into the first possible partner along the CMR.<sup>30</sup>

Italy's efforts focus mainly on enhancing local authorities' capacity to implement more stringent border and inland controls and to combat smuggling and trafficking networks. At the bilateral level, the ratification of the Italy-Niger agreement on security cooperation in 2014 set the basis for training projects targeting local law enforcement authorities.<sup>31</sup> The next step was the opening of the Agadez transit centre providing health support, information and voluntary return assistance, funded by the Italian Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and supported by Niger and the IOM.<sup>32</sup>

In 2016 the IOM recorded an annual number of more than 300,000 migrants moving northwards within Niger, nearly three times the number in 2014.<sup>33</sup> This turned Niger into a crucial ally in migration management, which was further facilitated by its relative political stability and readiness to engage with Europe. The EU and Italy increasingly put pressure on Niger to enforce its 2015 anti-trafficking law, largely informing the law's effective implementation from 2017 onwards.<sup>34</sup> The clampdown by the Niger government led to numerous arrests and seizures of vehicles in 2017, which, according to Italian officials, has played a significant role in the reduction in registered flows towards Libya.<sup>35</sup> As part of the agenda focusing on reducing uncontrolled movement, Italian actors have been expressing support for controls and interceptions inside the ECOWAS free movement area,<sup>36</sup> notwithstanding the ambiguous legal grounds for such measures and their possible negative impact on intra-regional mobility.

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*Migration*, 15/IV/2016, [http://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/immigrazione\\_0.pdf](http://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/immigrazione_0.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Interview with DG Migration Policies MAECI, 8/XI/2017.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with the EU Delegation to Niger, 31/X/2017.

<sup>31</sup> Law nr 113, 1/VIII/2014, *Ratifica ed esecuzione dell'Accordo di cooperazione tra il Governo della Repubblica italiana e il Governo della Repubblica del Niger in materia di sicurezza, fatto a Niamey il 9 febbraio 2010*.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with the Italian Interior Ministry, 20/XII/2017.

<sup>33</sup> IOM, Niger – Flow Monitoring Overview (2016-2017), <http://www.globaldtm.info/niger-flow-monitoring-overview-2016-2017/>. Interview IOM Niger, 31/X/2017.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Political expert, 12/X/2017.

<sup>35</sup> Italian Embassy, Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> DG Migration Policies MAECI, *op. cit.*

(cont.)

While migration was the main trigger to shifting Italy's attention to a region that was historically out of its radar, the result was to set off a new era of political, security and development cooperation.<sup>37</sup> At the overall political level, the opening of the Italian Embassy in early 2017 and the signing of a cooperation agreement on 31 March 2017 are proof of Italy's augmented presence in Niger. The recently approved mission to Niger, foreseeing a €30 million budget for 2018 and the dispatch of 470 soldiers, 130 vehicles and two airplanes,<sup>38</sup> is an indication of Italy's aspiration to augment its security-centred presence on the ground.<sup>39</sup> After signing a bilateral security cooperation agreement in September 2017, Italy, together with Germany and France, pledged reinforced support to the G5 Sahel, a regional force created to combat terrorism and human smuggling, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Italy also contributed to the EUCAP SAHEL Niger with two military officials and a budget of €439,107 for 2017. Finally, Italy also provides training to the police mainly in Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Senegal within the GAR-SI Sahel project.<sup>40</sup>

In Italy's view, the anchoring of its policies to the European dimension provides greater chances of long-term efficacy.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, its actions in Niger foresee a strong interconnection between European and bilateral policies: on the one hand, Italy has strongly stepped up its support to EU programmes in the Sahel, as illustrated by it being the second biggest contributor to the EUTF with €102 million pledged and disbursed,<sup>42</sup> and, on the other hand, Italy's spending in the region is further reinforced by the creation of a €200 million Italian Fund for Africa (IFA). This interconnection is further demonstrated by the fact that 83% of the Italian contribution to the EUTF originates from the IFA.<sup>43</sup> Further, certain projects financed by the EUTF are managed or implemented by the Italian Agency for Development Support (AICS) or the Italian MOI.

Niger clearly emerges as a priority country both under the EUTF, with projects worth €229 million so far approved, and under the IFA, with disbursements totalling 48% of the fund, mainly through the ADJUSEN budget support aimed at enhancing local border control capacities and the IOM-led voluntary returns project.<sup>44</sup> While the IFA mainly finances migration management and return projects, the EUTF balances the overall picture by adding numerous projects focusing on local resilience building.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Italian Parliament (2018), *Autorizzazione e proroga missioni internazionali 2018*, DOC CCL, nr 3, p. 12-13, <http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/dossier/pdf/DI0660.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> The mission has not yet been operationally launched as of June 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Carabinieri Corps, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Interview with DG Europe MAECI, 19/X/2017.

<sup>42</sup> European Commission (2018), *EU MS and other donor contributions*, as of 22/II/2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/donor\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/donor_0.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> DG Europe MAECI, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Risposta del sottosegretario Benedetto Della Vedova all'interrogazione 5-12104 Quartapelle Procopio: Sull'impiego del Fondo per l'Africa di cui all'articolo 1, comma 624, della legge 11 dicembre 2016, n. 232, 13 settembre 2017.

(cont.)

Officials highlight that Italy's strategy in Niger goes far beyond the migration-security realm: Italian development support is currently expanding through numerous projects related to job creation, health care, food security, combating poverty and agricultural development, all identified and agreed upon together with Niger partners.<sup>45</sup> While officials and political actors agree that development and migration control objectives are being pursued in a balanced manner,<sup>46</sup> they also acknowledge that implementation has so far been limited in terms of creating economic alternatives.<sup>47</sup>

When it comes to addressing international protection needs inherent in managing mixed migration flows, Italy has been a strong supporter of the so-called humanitarian evacuation scheme. The scheme has nevertheless so far remained rather limited in scope: 1,342 vulnerable potential refugees have been evacuated from Libya since November 2017, 1,020 to Niger (from where they are supposed to be resettled to EU countries), 312 directly to Italy and 10 to Romania.<sup>48</sup>

#### (4.3) Impact of migration management cooperation and continuing challenges

It is difficult to single out European and Italian policies as the factors leading to changes in migratory movements and the local contexts. Nevertheless, enhanced cooperation between Europe and Niger seems to already have impacted the region in several ways. Available (and limited) statistics show that the number of people transiting through Niger has been decreasing: in the second half of 2017, IOM recorded around 5,500 people per month being on the move northwards. This is a stark decrease compared to the weekly average of between 5,000 and 7,000 detections in 2016.<sup>49</sup> Caution is advisable on the overall reduction in the flows, though, as even if transit movement along established routes seems to have diminished, less visible and consequently more dangerous routes in the desert are currently being preferred.<sup>50</sup> What can be affirmed with certainty is the decrease in arrivals to Italy, with a 34% drop in 2017 compared with 2016.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, this is to be attributed also, if not even mainly, to Italy's reinstated cooperation with Libya.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Italian Embassy, Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Interviews with DG Europe and DG Migration Policies MAECI, EU delegation to Niger, all *op. cit.*; Interview with Italian Prime Minister's office, 20/X/2017; Interview with Member of the Italian Parliament, 31/X/2017; Interview with AICS, 27/XI/2017.

<sup>47</sup> DG Europe MAECI, *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR, Libya Flash Update 21-27/IV/2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63373>.

<sup>49</sup> IOM, Niger – Flow Monitoring Report, December 2017, <http://www.globaldtm.info/niger-flow-monitoring-report-december-2017/>. Note: as the IOM does not operate at night-time and its mobile monitoring teams are not able to cover the whole territory their numbers have to be taken with a grain of salt, as they are merely spot-checks at two main transit points.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with UNHCR Italy, 17/X/2017; Interview with IOM Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee and Migrant Arrivals to Europe in 2017*, 16/II/2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/62023>.

<sup>52</sup> A. Palm (2017), 'The Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding: the baseline of a policy approach aimed at closing all doors to Europe?', EU Migration Law Blog, 2/X/2017.

The effects of stepped up control and efforts against smuggling and trafficking activities on the local economy and stability are challenges in a context where income-generating options are highly limited. In Niger the smuggling industry is one of the most profitable sectors, benefiting the entire economy and being a 'force for stability' through contributing to preventing the eruption of violent conflicts according to some analysts.<sup>53</sup> UNHCR officials and local NGOs caution that these policies might endanger Niger's stability by aggravating the already dire socio-economic conditions in the absence of compensatory measures for creating local income-generating alternatives.<sup>54</sup> Approaching the issue from another angle, IOM representatives stress that these activities are illegal and endanger human beings, and hence must be eradicated.<sup>55</sup>

Italy is well aware of the importance of smuggling for local economies, and thus also of the dissatisfaction that the recent clampdown has generated among local populations.<sup>56</sup> Overall, there is a consensus among Italian and EU officials on the need to create real economic alternatives in the longer term in areas that have traditionally relied upon the migration economy, such as Agadez.<sup>57</sup> Beyond local socioeconomic realities, the EU and Italian pressure on the Niger government to enforce control-oriented measures can have broader implications for politics and state-society relations. In particular, it might put the government in a difficult position where it needs to juggle between being a good partner to Europe, keeping the level of discontent among local populations low and not jeopardising its relations with the military and other actors vested with significant degrees of power.<sup>58</sup>

Policies predominantly focusing on control and prevention are also likely to negatively impact on human security and human rights. Potential development of more risky smuggling methods along more dangerous routes as a response to enhanced control might further endanger migrants' safety and contribute to increased casualties. In contexts like Niger, where a national asylum framework is absent, mainly focusing on control-oriented measures vis-à-vis mixed migration flows might further limit access to international protection, and hence be considerably problematic from an international law perspective. According to UNHCR, difficulties in successfully detecting potential refugees seem to already be evident in Niger.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> P. Tinti & T. Westcott (2016), 'The Niger-Libya corridor: smugglers' perspectives', ISS, <https://issafrica.org/research/papers/the-niger-libya-corridor-smugglers-perspectives>.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with UNHCR Italy, *op. cit.*; Association Tamoudre (2017), *Les élus de la région d'Agadez ont fait entendre leur voix sur le bilan de l'application de la Loi 036/2015, 29/IX/2017*, <http://www.tamoudre.org/developpement/agadez-etat-lieux/>.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with IOM Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Italian Embassy in Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> DG Migration Policies MAECI, *op. cit.*; EU delegation to Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Political expert, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Up to 30% of those transiting through Niger and arriving in Italy have been granted some form of international protection. While some have acquired the status along the route (particularly in Libya), the relatively low number of potential refugees referred to UNCHR by IOM indicates continuing challenges in the identification of those in need of international protection in Niger (interview with UNHCR Italy, *op. cit.*).

(cont.)

Local reactions to European and Italian migration management policies have been varied: while strong cooperation with local bodies has boosted confidence in authorities and security forces, the perception that EUMS are 'obsessed' with curbing irregular migration and ensuring their own security is also widespread.<sup>60</sup> Further, even if the security focus of EU migration policies has been largely aligned with national interests, the Niger authorities highlight the need to address broader security challenges, such as recruitment by terrorist organisations and armed groups. The latter might find fertile ground in economically-challenged local contexts after the curbing of smuggling and trafficking activities, highlighting also the importance of resilience-building targeting local communities.<sup>61</sup>

### **(5) Spain's migration policies in the Sahel**

The external dimension of the migration policy has been a priority for Spain since the beginning of the new century, when irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea, the land frontiers of Ceuta and Melilla, and the Atlantic Ocean became a relevant cause of concern. The vulnerability of the Spanish external common EU borders to irregular immigration, caused by its proximity to Africa, led to an early Spanish advocacy for the Europeanisation of migration policies. In 2005 Spain promoted the creation of the FRONTEX agency and a Spanish official, Gil Arias, was appointed its executive director. Spain has also been a promoter of the European Return Fund in 2007, the signing of European readmission agreements with third countries and the organisation of joint return flights.

The unexpected arrival of 31,700 irregular migrants to the Canary Islands in medium-sized boats during the summer of 2006, mostly departing from the coasts of Senegal and Mauritania, came as a surprise and turned into a cause of deep concern for Spain's public opinion and institutions. It triggered the development of a Spanish cooperation model on migration with West African coastal countries, resulting in the dramatic drop of arrivals to the Canary Islands. In 2007 the number was reduced to 12,000 and since 2010 it has remained below 1,000 (400 in 2017).

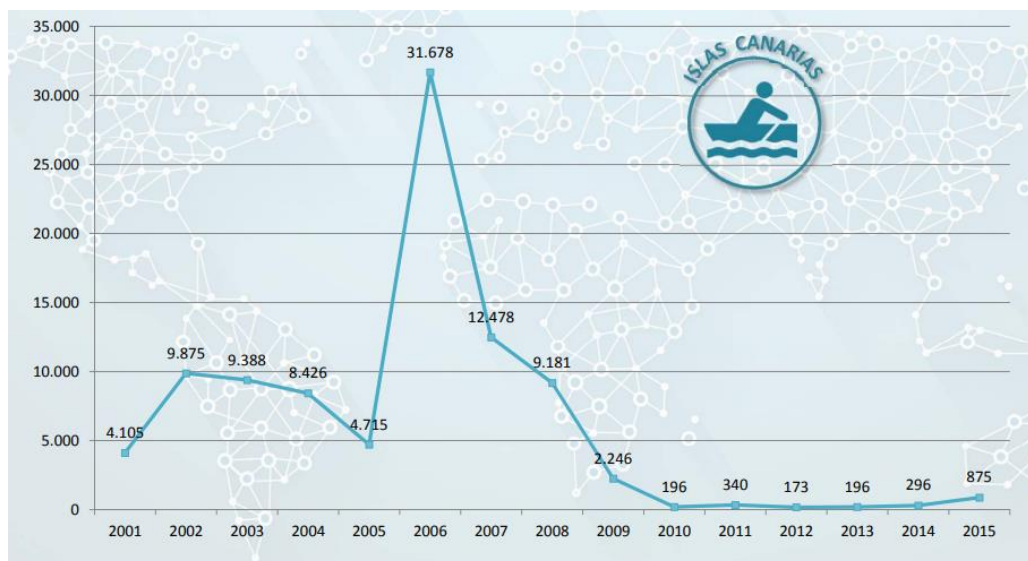
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<sup>60</sup> M. Danda (2018), 'A view from Niger', in *The security-migration-development nexus revised: a perspective from the Sahel*, FEPS-IAI publication, February.

<sup>61</sup> Castillejo (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 19.



Figure 2. Irregular arrivals by boat to the Canary Islands



Source: Spanish Interior Ministry.

Spain's successful experience of cooperation with the Maghreb and West African origin and transit migration countries became a model of 'good practice' that inspired the EU's approach in tackling irregular migration and the GAM and its combination of border controls, readmission, development aid, security cooperation and opening up of legal channels to immigration. Spanish initiatives in the realm of maritime surveillance and bilateral cooperation with African countries regarding State capacity-building have always received the EU's support and funding. The recognition of Spain's experience is also evident in the appointment of a Spanish diplomat, Ángel Losada, as the EU's Special Representative for the Sahel from December 2015.

Over the past 11 years Spain's migration policy in Senegal, as in other Central and West African coastal countries, relied on diplomatic strengthening in the region with the creation of several Embassies and Consulates and the deployment of counsellors and attachés from the Ministry of the Interior. The former were deployed to Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ghana, Cameroon and Niger. The presence of officials of the Civil Guard (*Guardia Civil*) and the National Police (*Policía Nacional*) have proved to be a powerful tool to foster the exchange of information, provide resources and raise operational police capacities, while collectively strengthening ties with counterparts resulting in long-term bonds of trusting relationships.<sup>62</sup> The more traditional economic development cooperation focus was also strengthened in the region after 2006 with the first Spanish 'Plan África 2006-08'.<sup>63</sup> The

<sup>62</sup> The creation of the General Directorate for International Relations and Immigration in the Ministry of Interior (led by a diplomat) has contributed to the work of these Attachés and Officers (deployed in 15 African countries), by giving them a common structure and technical consistency.

<sup>63</sup> 'Plan Africa 2006-2008' presented all development cooperation activities forecasted to be led by Spain in the continent during that period. The Spanish Agency for Cooperation (AECID) was the exercise's leader. Since the creation of a specific Directorate General devoted to Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), this Directorate is in charge of drafting the Plan Africa, whose third edition will be published this year and will include all external Spanish policies related to the continent.



Spanish authorities are currently preparing the 'III Plan África' and mobility and migration are expected to be an important dimension.

Bilateral migration and security arrangements were concluded through the signing of a wide range of agreements with different levels of formalisation and institutionalisation. They provided the legal and political frameworks for migration management cooperation, including the donation of material resources (in Senegal and Mauritania) and the provision of training. Since 2006 Spain has signed Immigration Agreements with Ghana, Mauritania, Niger and Guinea Bissau, and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with seven Sub-Saharan countries: Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia and Mali. These MoUs are the basis for the joint monitoring of territorial waters and for cooperation in maritime search and rescue (SAR) operations.

The lack of historical links between Spain and the Sahel countries has also enabled a politically neutral background, favouring the development of bilateral relations. Except for Equatorial Guinea, Spain has not been a colonial power in this area of Africa, which has allowed the forging of relations from scratch, without mistrust or reluctance.

Spain's approach to bilateral migration cooperation with the Sahel and West African countries is based on pragmatism and flexibility. Readmission and returns are key aspects and one of the main goals of Spanish policy in the area. However, these objectives are never perceived as 'conditions' to cooperate, being considered rather as expected results.<sup>64</sup> In this respect, the Spanish approach strongly emphasises the need for understanding and moving closer to African societies and political systems and their needs.<sup>65</sup> For this reason, contrary to other recent EUMS approaches, Spain has always strongly condemned the imposition of any kind of conditionality. Readmission is not (and is not going to be) a popular policy in countries that receive more funds through remittances than through external aid or foreign investment. In Senegal, for instance, remittances are evaluated by the World Bank as amounting to US\$1.6 billion (in 2016), or 10.4% of its GDP.<sup>66</sup> But even discounting the input of remittances, demographic and labour market arguments will continue to maintain readmission as an unpopular measure in the long term.

Despite Spain having always advocated the Europeanisation of migration policy and having been actively engaged in the GAMM and in the MPs, largely incorporated into its policies and commitments, the Spanish experience in the Sahel and in North Africa shows that bilateral relations with origin and transit countries can often result in more tangible results than those attained at the EU level. Bilateral cooperation agreements can be more flexible –regarding, for instance, readmission– and have a broader scope. They can include the donation of security material, which is not offered by the EU as such help cannot be deemed development assistance according to the OECD

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<sup>64</sup> Interview at the MAEC, 17/XI/2017.

<sup>65</sup> Interviews with Spanish diplomats serving in the Sahel region during and after the Spanish migration crisis.

<sup>66</sup> S. Sagna (2018), 'A view from Senegal', in *The Security-Migration-Development Nexus Revised: A Perspective from the Sahel*, FEPS-IAI publication, February.

Development Assistance Committee (DAC). For these reasons, African countries usually prefer State-to-State bilateral arrangements. Learning from this experience, Spanish authorities advocate a more flexible approach in the European attempts to negotiate agreements with the sending or transit countries, and for a stronger coordination between EU and EUMS external policies in the area in order to avoid unnecessary duplications.

### Case study: Spain's policies in Senegal

Senegal is the world's 35<sup>th</sup> less economically-developed country, with a very young population (the median age is 18.5), a high fertility rate (4.93) and a structural deficit of economic opportunities for young people. In this framework it is not surprising that 37% of the whole population and 51% of those aged between 15 and 24 want to migrate; the US is the preferred (although unreachable) destination country, followed by France and Spain.<sup>67</sup> Considering this framework, the fact that migrants account for only 3.7% of the Senegalese population (500,000 of 15,000,000),<sup>68</sup> half of them living in Italy, France and Spain, is an outcome that can only be understood as a result of the EU and EUMS migration policies.

During the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Senegal was both a country of origin and of transit of irregular migration to Spain. However, the current number of Senegalese migrants in Spain is relatively small (68,000 in 2017, around 1% of the entire immigrant population).<sup>69</sup> They are characterised by a low average educational level and problems related with unemployment and poverty.<sup>70</sup>

Since 2006 Senegal and Mauritania have become the main focus of Spanish foreign policy related with migration in Western Africa. During these 12 years, the following bilateral agreements, practical cooperation tools and EU-financed programmes on migration have been developed between Spain and Senegal:

- a) 'Memorandum of Collaboration on the conditions for commissioning joint patrols in the framework of the fight against illegal immigration by sea through the implementation of the FRONTEX Programme', signed in September 2006 and renewed every 12 months. In the framework of this MoU, Spain has provided Senegal with two 30m patrol boats, an ocean-going vessel and a helicopter. Spanish cooperation includes training and maintenance. The surveillance of Senegalese territorial waters in joint patrols of the Spanish Civil Guard and the

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<sup>67</sup> OECD (2015), 'Connecting with emigrants. A global profile of diasporas', Opinion Survey conducted by Gallup.

<sup>68</sup> IOM data.

<sup>69</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Padrón Municipal, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> A. González & E. Kraus (2012), 'Migrantes senegaleses en Francia, Italia y España', [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_es/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/demografia+y+poblacion/ari8-2012](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/demografia+y+poblacion/ari8-2012).

(cont.)

Senegalese Gendarmerie is the key operative element, discouraging the departure of irregular migrants.<sup>71</sup>

- b) Memorandum of cooperation between the Spanish National Police and Civil Guard and the Senegalese National Gendarmerie, signed on 3 November 2009. The agreement provides for the political and legal basis for cooperation with the Senegalese Gendarmerie in the identification of irregular migrants that arrive in Spain by sea.<sup>72</sup>
- c) Establishment of a legal temporary work channel in the agricultural sector. A bilateral agreement signed in 2007 launched a pilot-programme enabling 749 Senegalese women to work in Spain in the strawberry sector in the province of Huelva (Andalusia) in 2008.<sup>73</sup> The scheme was not successful due to deficiencies in the selection process on the Senegalese side, as many of the women were not qualified to work in the agricultural sector. Additionally, most women over-stayed in Spain and became irregular migrants. For this reason, the programme was not repeated.
- d) Hera Operation. Spain has led this Frontex Operation since its inception in 2006. It is developed every summer in the territorial waters of Senegal with the cooperation of both Senegalese and French security forces. The Spanish Civil Guard contributes an ocean-going vessel, a patrol vessel and the coordination provided by the International Coordination Centre (ICC) in Madrid and the Regional Centre in Las Palmas (Gran Canaria). The Civil Guard's deployment in Senegal's territorial waters (in addition to Mauritania) is permanent (year-round) although Operation Hera covers part of its cost during the summer.<sup>74</sup>
- e) Security cooperation through GAR-SI-Sahel. This project is a geographical extension of a previously successful bilateral cooperation initiative between Spain and Senegal, firstly inspired by a Spanish Civil Guard model created in the 1980s to combat the ETA terrorist group in the countryside, namely, the Rapid Action Groups (GAR). The Civil Guard's peculiarity and specific added value, in comparison with other European security forces, is its mixed nature, combining security competences such as frontier and customs control, law enforcement, intelligence, maritime surveillance, air surveillance, maritime rescue and fiscal issues, which in most countries are split between different security bodies.<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>71</sup> Interview at the MAEC, *op. cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Interview with the Spanish Guardia Civil, Dirección General Fiscal y de Fronteras.

<sup>73</sup> IDRC (2008), *From Temporary Work to Irregular Status: The Transition and Experiences of Senegalese Migrant Women in Spain*, [https://www.iss.nl/sites/corporate/files/PB-07\\_SENEGAL-SPAIN-with\\_credits.pdf](https://www.iss.nl/sites/corporate/files/PB-07_SENEGAL-SPAIN-with_credits.pdf). E. Gualda (2009), 'De polacas a senegalesas: contratos en origen, sustitución étnica y segmentación del mercado agrícola onubense', *Panorama Social*, nr 8, p. 71-84.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with the Spanish Guardia Civil, *op. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> In Italy these competences are distributed between three distinct bodies: the Carabinieri, the Guardia di Finanza and the Guardia Costiera.

comprehensive and versatile police portfolio is particularly fit to tackle conflicts in rural areas.

The GAR-SI-Sahel programme, under Civil Guard leadership and with the participation of Italy, France and Portugal, is deployed in six countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Senegal. It aims to reinforce the capacities of their national security forces in border control, enforcing the rule of law and the fight against transnational criminal groups dealing with terrorism, drugs, arms, the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking in human beings. Specifically, GAR-SI-Senegal comprises 150 Senegalese Gendarmes whose officials receive training during two months in the Spanish *Centro de Adiestramiento Especial* (CAE). During their stay in Spain, Senegalese personnel share their training and daily life with other Sahel country national officials, in a design which favours regional cooperation ties and trust building. Thus, this training period has therefore the potential not only to enhance Euro-African police cooperation but also to foster the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices between African police forces.

- f) The SEAHORSE Atlantic, approved by the European Council of December 2005 and launched one year later, ended in 2010, but the national communication centres still operate and share information. The programme, led by Spain (Ministry of the Interior and operational management by the Civil Guard), brings together Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Gambia and Guinea Bissau to create a network of national satellite communication centres based in each partner country in order to share real-time information (voice, image and data) concerning the location of suspect vessels and coordinating rescue and interception tasks. The Regional Coordination Centre is located in Gran Canaria and is supported by the National Coordination Centre in Madrid.
- g) The Civil Guard also leads the EU-financed programme Blue Sahel (2017-20) devoted to Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Gambia and Cape Verde, focused on strengthening State capacities to fight transnational organised crime. The programme also envisages awareness-raising campaigns regarding the risks of irregular migration, mostly targeting young people.
- h) There is an increasing Spanish presence in Senegal, especially in the cultural area. A Cervantes Institute centre will open in Dakar this year.<sup>76</sup>

## **(6) Coordination and coherence of Italian and Spanish external migration policies**

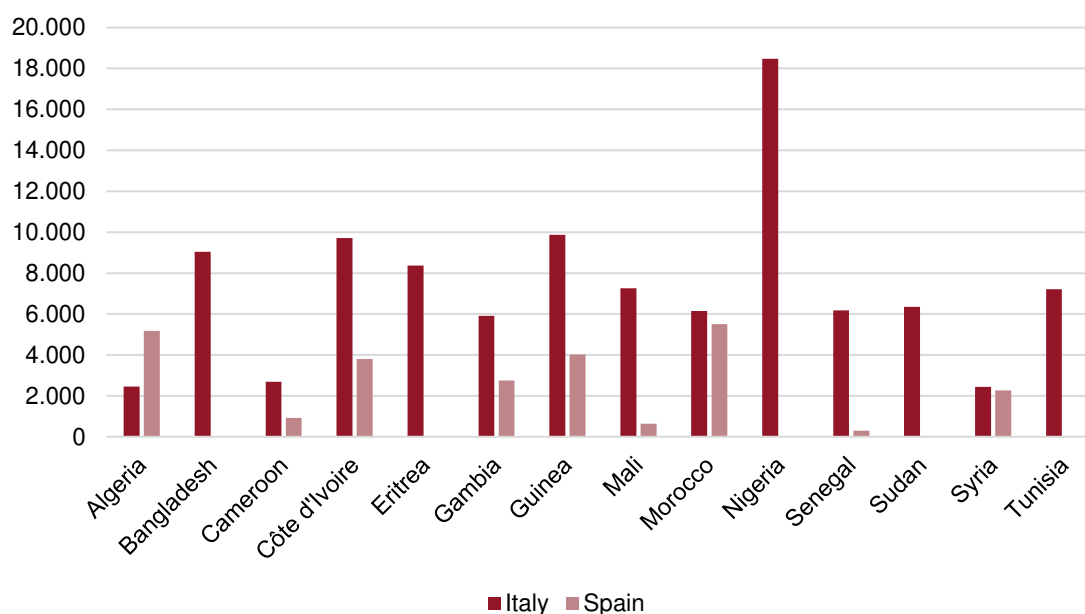
While the primary regions of origin and the principal migration routes connecting Africa to Italy and Spain show differences, migratory movements towards these two destination

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<sup>76</sup> Interview at the MAEC, *op. cit.*

countries are not entirely disconnected. Rapid changes in the magnitude and composition of irregular migration flows make it difficult to talk about consolidated trends. Nevertheless, a look at recent UNHCR data on irregular arrivals to the two countries shows that Italy and Spain share some commonalities in terms of origin countries, such as Algeria, Morocco, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Gambia. However, the relative importance of these nationalities for Italy and Spain differs: Algeria, Morocco and Guinea make up the top three nationalities among all irregular arrivals in Spain, while Nigeria, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire topped the list in Italy (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Countries of origin of irregular migrants arriving in Italy and Spain in 2017-18**



Source: the authors based on UNHCR Mediterranean Situations data. Data for Italy updated as of 28 February 2018 and for Spain as of 31 December 2017. Data on nationalities only reflect those that UNHCR does not include in the 'other' category

While the data suggest a nuanced picture regarding the (dis)connection between the migratory movements in the two countries, the reading of officials on both sides seems to depict a more black and white picture: some Italian officials are convinced that the recent drop in irregular arrivals along the CMR largely led to the increasing numbers of arrivals in Spain, Greece and Romania.<sup>77</sup> Spanish officials and Frontex data signal Moroccans and Algerians as the main nationalities accounting for the 2017 increase in irregular arrivals to Spain, a fact that for the time being does not indicate a transfer effect from the CMR.<sup>78</sup>

Regardless of the differences and similarities, both countries act as the external borders of the EU in a geography where migratory movements are and will remain challenges in

<sup>77</sup> Italian Interior Ministry, *op. cit.*

<sup>78</sup> Guardia Civil and Spanish Ministry of the Interior, all *op. cit.*; similarly Frontex (2018), *Risk Analysis for 2018*, March, p. 8, <https://data.europa.eu/euodp/data/dataset/ra-2018>.

the future. However, cooperation in the external dimension of migration management between the two countries had been limited until mounting migratory pressure towards them, when EU activism has triggered a higher degree of dialogue and collaboration too. Overall, Italy and Spain are both interested in relieving migratory pressures through cooperation with origin and transit countries and encouraging the development of coherent and complementary policies at the EU level.

### (6.1) Past experiences of cooperation: initial multilateralism essays

Spanish and Italian external migration policies cannot be separated from those that started to shape the global and EU responses to the effects of globalisation on international migration at the beginning of the Millennium.<sup>79</sup> At that time, cooperation on migration management was mainly promoted at inter-governmental forums, and Spain and Italy were among those actively pushing for the development of a European external migration agenda. In 2003 the G5 (renamed and upgraded to G6 in 2006), gathered the Interior Ministers of France, Spain, the UK, Italy, Germany and Poland with the aim of boosting EU responses to migratory challenges. Spain and Italy also actively called the EU Council to take concrete steps to counter the increasing numbers of arrivals in Southern Europe. For instance, in September 2006 Spain and Italy co-signed an open letter, together with six other EUMS, to the Presidency of the Council of the EU (Finnish at the time) to call for concrete action to be taken.

In line with this approach, Spain and Italy also actively committed to initiatives aimed at moving from a security-centred approach to a 'more transparent and balanced' one for tackling irregular migration.<sup>80</sup> In 2007 both EUMS joined the MP pilot projects, although differing in policy choices, which can be explained by the differences in the migration patterns the two countries faced and the strategic interests they had. Pragmatism seems to have been the criterion driving the Council and EUMS to open dialogues with those countries.<sup>81</sup> At this first stage, Spain joined the MP with Cape Verde, while Italy engaged with Moldova. Their interests converged in the post-2011 context when the MP negotiations with countries in the MENA region started: both Spain and Italy joined the MPs with Jordan (2011), Morocco (2013) and Tunisia (2014).

An interesting note is the failed MP with Senegal in 2008. The initiative was formally supported by Spain, Italy and France, which were the top EU destination countries for Senegalese immigrants. While both France and Spain already had migration arrangements with Senegal, Italy only had informal and *ad hoc* forms of cooperation. In

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<sup>79</sup> Global Commission on International Migration (2005), *Migration in an interconnected world: new directions for action*, October, [http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy\\_and\\_research/gcim/GCIM\\_Report\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/GCIM_Report_Complete.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Strengthening the Global Approach to Migration: Increasing Coordination, Coherence and Synergies, COM(2008) 611 final*, Brussels.

<sup>81</sup> S. Brocza & K. Paulhart (2015), 'EU mobility partnerships: a smart instrument for the externalization of migration control', *European Journal of Futures Research*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs40309-015-0073-x>.

(cont.)



theory, one would have expected Italy to be keener on concluding an MP and France and Spain to be less enthusiastic about investing additional energy in a multilateral cooperation effort. Nevertheless, Italy, while formally supporting the MP, adopted a more discrete position as the authorities had lower expectations from a multilateral effort, being aware that Senegal clearly preferred bilateral engagement.<sup>82</sup> While France adopted a low-key profile, not seeing much added value in an MP, Spain, despite its already existing extensive and successful bilateral cooperation with Senegal, showed its commitment to multilateralising cooperation, which led the Commission to recognise it as the EUMS that 'pushed the MP forward'.<sup>83</sup> According to the Commission officials this was relatively unusual for two reasons: the traditional EUMS disbelief in the EU's added value vis-à-vis bilateral agreements and the knowledge that the Senegalese authorities preferred to deal bilaterally in migration issues.<sup>84</sup>

Three interesting points can be drawn from this case. First, it confirms the general belief that the MPs tend to establish common platforms to leverage pre-existing EUMS bilateral programmes. The question of the MPs' added value to bilateral partnerships between the EUMS and third countries can in this case be reasonably raised, as it merely brings higher levels of rigidity and formality to pre-existing bilateral arrangements.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, the example indicates that the existence of a public attitude favourable towards common European policies, as is the case in Spain,<sup>86</sup> can favour a more positive and proactive engagement by the EUMS in such EU initiatives.<sup>87</sup> Third, the failed MP with Senegal also demonstrates that the lack of coherence and coordination between the negotiation strategies of the EUMS and the EU might lead to the stalling of negotiations.<sup>88</sup> In short, the MP negotiations with Senegal show the difficulties surrounding the development of external migration agendas at the EU level. They also reveal the difficult balance between bilateral and multilateral policy instruments that have to address complex constellations of actors and interests involved in the interaction between the EU, EUMS and third countries.

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<sup>82</sup> C. Meng-Hsuan & M. Gibert (2012), 'The EU-Senegal Mobility Partnership: from launch to suspension and negotiation failure', *Journal of Contemporary EU Research*, vol. 8, nr 4, p. 420, <http://www.jcer.net/index.php/jcer/article/view/434/380>.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* Brocza & Paulhart (2015), *op. cit.*

<sup>86</sup> C. González-Enríquez (2017), 'The Spanish exception: unemployment, inequality and immigration, but no right-wing populist parties', Working Paper, nr 3/2017, Elcano Royal Institute, 14/II/2017, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/e9e0d7c1-7c71-4335-a2fb-15b219e62c5e/WP3-2017-GonzalezEnriquez-Spanish-Exception-unemployment-inequality-inmigration-no-right-wing-populist-parties.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&cacheid=1487009991261>.

<sup>87</sup> Spanish Interior Ministry, MAEC, Spanish diplomats, all *op.cit.* Interview with the Directorate General of the Guardia Civil, 26/II/2018; interview DG for Africa MAEC, 17/XI/2017.

<sup>88</sup> Chou & Gibert, *op.cit.*

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## (6.2) Cooperation in the post-2015 era: managing a constellation of interactions and frameworks

Overall, cooperation between Spain and Italy in external migration management had been limited to occasional engagements within the EU and intergovernmental regional coordination forums such as the Rabat, Tripoli and Khartoum Processes. After the EU started to reframe its external migration policies from 2015 onwards, Spain and Italy once again engaged actively and had a positive influence on the discussion. In a way, the MPF rationale reflects certain dimensions of both countries' strategies and agendas: the flexible and tailor-made format that aims to take into account the interests and cost-benefit calculations of both sides can be driven from the Spanish bilateral approach and cooperation model developed in the region, particularly in West Africa, whereas the Italian position on framing migration as a cross-cutting policy issue in EU-third country relations has fed into the 'integrated approach' of the MPF.

Even if it is still too early to draw concrete conclusions on the functioning of the MPF and its ability to act as a pattern changer in migration cooperation at the EU level and between EUMS, the progress reports of the Commission present optimistic results in terms of reducing irregular inflows to the EU's shores.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, bilateral agreements between the frontline EUMS and third countries, such as the widely criticised one between Italy and the Libyan authorities, can still be considered the most important asset that contributed to such a result. Cooperation with Niger under the MPF seems to have yielded the most visible results. This might be the case because thorny issues such as returns do not form part of the EU-Niger partnership, economic support is highly valued by a country like Niger that has very limited resources of its own and security-oriented EU assistance matches the priorities and needs of the country's authorities.<sup>90</sup>

In the case of more resourceful origin countries with significantly high inflows of remittances, where return and readmission are a point of divergence between the EU and the corresponding partner, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia or Senegal, progress has not been as visible.<sup>91</sup> In addition, while all MPF pilot countries see the EU as an important actor in terms of financing the broadened scope of migration partnerships, some partners like Nigeria and Ethiopia openly express their preference for bilateral arrangements with EUMS.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, EU diplomatic links and assets might also significantly support EUMS in building their migration cooperation from scratch as was in the case of Italy with Niger. These examples suggest that bilateral, multilateral and EU assets and platforms or a specific combination of them might yield more successful results depending on the particular case in hand.

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<sup>89</sup> European Commission (2017), 'Fifth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration', 6/IX/2017, COM(2017) 471 final.

<sup>90</sup> Castillejo, *op. cit.*, p. 22. On the growing weight of security issues on development assistance see F. Arteaga & A. Pérez (nd), 'Europe Beyond Aid: Europe's Commitment to International Security', <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Europe-Beyond-Aid-security-background-paper.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> Castillejo, *op.cit.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Past experience also advises caution on expectations from an all-EU approach in the long term. The EU's and EUMS' unanimous commitment to recognise migration as a top priority by no means implies that there is a consensus on specific goals or on the necessary means and resources to achieve them. There are considerable differences between EUMS (even among the frontline countries) in willingness, resources, experience, diplomatic presence and influence in the region and in particular partners. In such a wide array of interests and webs of relations, it is likely that the solidarity links of the EU in such an alliance-building process face the risk of being replaced with bilateral or other multilateral frameworks. The fact that the issue of border control was and remains a national competence and that (operational) cooperation stemming from the solidarity principle has been developed in an *ad hoc* and occasional manner is another challenge to promoting deeper synergies between EUMS, and more so at the EU-28 level.

Nevertheless, cooperation sometimes works better in practice than in theory. Joint action, communication and coordination between EUMS on the ground might in fact be the basis for deepening and broadening cooperation while potentially providing an opportunity for taking it from the operational to the higher political level. The post-2015 European framework seems to have contributed to these forms of cooperation positively, both in terms of the joint management of maritime borders and the implementation of projects in partner countries. In the maritime border control dimension, the replication of the SEAHORSE Atlantic in the broader Mediterranean context through the SEAHORSE Mediterranean network is an important political sign for enhanced joint action on border management.

Under the EUTF umbrella, EUMS and their agencies are playing fundamental roles in implementing projects on the ground, often in close coordination with other EUMS or international organisations. Italy and Spain jointly participate in two such projects. The first is PACERSEN,<sup>93</sup> a three-year programme (2017-20) that promotes the creation of rural employment in Senegal through the establishment of village and individual farms (Natangued farms) in regions of high migratory potential with the objective of minimising the push factors for further out-migration. The second project is GAR-SI-SAHEL, where Italy and Spain share the coordination of the local operations in Mali and Mauritania.<sup>94</sup>

Niger has often been presented as the good example of the post-2015 framework in terms of coordination: the Commission Progress Report mentions how '[the] EU and Member States have closely coordinated their action, with a clear division of labour and mutually reinforcing support to help Niger meet its objectives'.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the different EUMS present on the ground have been described as engaging in fruitful cooperation thanks to numerous meetings and exchanges not only between themselves but also with

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<sup>93</sup> More information on the project is available at [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-sn-05\\_18.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-sn-05_18.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> Interview with the GAR-SI-SAHEL Project Coordinator.

<sup>95</sup> European Commission (2017), 'Fourth progress report on the partnership framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration', 13/VI/2017, COM(2017) 350 final, p. 3.

(cont.)

local actors, the EU delegation and international organisations in the country itself.<sup>96</sup> A practical example is the platform of exchange and analysis on migration data created by the EU delegation, which involves all of the actors mentioned above and which aims to provide more comprehensive and integrated data on migratory patterns and composition.<sup>97</sup> For further improvement on coordination and coherence, EU officials advise even higher degrees of transparency and information exchange on bilateral and multilateral projects implemented by different EUMS.<sup>98</sup>

While cooperation has been enhanced and seems to be working better in operational terms, further improvement is still needed in terms of closer political dialogue, which could help to develop a much-needed set of joint strategic aims. The persistence and the magnitude of migratory pressures to which frontline EUMS have been exposed for quite some time can finally create the momentum for renewed and enhanced cooperation of this kind. At the political level, migration has been a central point in several intergovernmental regional and informal bilateral initiatives such as the Southern EUMS summits and the 'EuroMed7'. Initiatives such as the August 2017 Paris Summit that brought together France, Germany, Italy and Spain with relevant African countries can also contribute to building a common understanding between frontline EUMS and other core members like Germany.

Overall, 2017 could possibly be considered a turning point for improved communication and cooperation between Italy and Spain, as shown by strengthened dialogue both at the bilateral level and within the EU framework.<sup>99</sup> At the bilateral level, the September 2017 meeting between the two Interior Ministers opened up a new window of opportunity for cooperation and communication.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, the pace of bilateral dialogue on migration management seems to have relatively slowed down since the autumn, having been overshadowed by domestic developments. Considering that migration continues to be a highly salient issue for both countries it would be good to revive the momentum the political communication between the two countries started to gain.

### (6.3) The way forward: closer dialogue at all levels, mutual learning and promoting coherence internally and within the EU framework

The unpredictability of irregular migration flows towards the EU's shores is well known, and the closeness between the two countries favours a position whereby 'whatever is good for Italy in terms of irregular migration policy, is also good for Spain' and vice versa.<sup>101</sup> This assumption grounds the existing 'mutually supportive position [between

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<sup>96</sup> Italian Embassy in Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>97</sup> EU delegation to Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>98</sup> DG Home, *op. cit.*

<sup>99</sup> Interviews with Italian and Spanish officials from various institutions.

<sup>100</sup> Ministero dell'Interno (2017), 'Italia-Spagna, intesa su contrasto a immigrazione irregolare e lotta al terrorismo', 18/IX/2017, <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/italia-spagna-intesa-contrasto-immigrazione-irregolare-e-lotta-terrorismo>.

<sup>101</sup> MAEC, *op.cit.*

Italy and Spain], without having a single voice' at the EU level in migration policy matters.<sup>102</sup> Further, bearing in mind the primary focus on the fight against irregular migration and stronger development policies that both countries share, they also support the EU vision prioritising the long-term goal of tackling the root causes of migration on the one hand and the short-term objective of reinforcing the stability and resilience of countries of origin and transit on the other.<sup>103</sup>

Both in bilateral terms and in the EU framework, mutual learning could therefore be key to better understanding and managing a challenge that has been confronted by the two frontline countries with different means. Spain has fostered long-lasting and reliable bilateral relationships on migration with transit and origin countries. The Spanish authorities firmly believe that the key for the success of the Spanish 'tailor-made policy set' lies in its flexibility, openness and frank and permanent dialogues with the partner countries, even after the crisis-management mode is long gone.<sup>104</sup> 'To be patient and to listen' is the key for successful negotiations with origin and transit countries that combine positive, strong, durable political and operational commitments that consider migration management and those countries' concerns.<sup>105</sup> Italy, on the other hand, promotes a 'three P's-approach' seeking the objectives of partnership, protection and prosperity in its external migration policies.<sup>106</sup> This is to be sought through a long-term engagement focusing on the security-migration-development nexus in order to fight the root causes of displacement<sup>107</sup> in order to ultimately 'turn massive irregular migration flows into predictable and manageable migration channels'.<sup>108</sup>

Increased cooperation between Italy and Spain could also be developed with the view of later leading the way for multilateral or EU policies. For example, acknowledging the current difficulty of developing and concluding EU Readmission Agreements (EURAs) with third countries, Italian officials have suggested that Readmission Agreements designed, negotiated, and signed jointly by Italy and Spain could in the future be endorsed by a larger number of EUMS and ultimately take the shape of EURAs.<sup>109</sup> In general, stepping up Italian-Spanish coordination on migration policies could be the first

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> EU delegation to Niger, *op. cit.*

<sup>104</sup> MAEC, *op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> Interview with DG for Consular and Migratory Affairs MAEC, 30/X/2017.

<sup>106</sup> Speech by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Angelino Alfano, on occasion of the AVSI event 'Refugees and Migrants. Ideas and Best Practices on Development Cooperation and the Need for Security', New York, 19/IX/2017, [https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala\\_stamp/interventi/discorso-dell-on-ministro-all-evento\\_9.html](https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stamp/interventi/discorso-dell-on-ministro-all-evento_9.html).

<sup>107</sup> J. Massarenti (2017), 'Mario Giro: "La politica europea di sviluppo legata alle migrazioni"', *Vita*, 20/V/2017, <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2017/05/20/mario-giro-la-politica-europea-di-sviluppo-legata-alle-migrazioni/143447>.

<sup>108</sup> Italian Government (2017), *Towards the 2018 Global Compact for a Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. Italian Vision*, [https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/non\\_paper\\_italy.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/non_paper_italy.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> Italian Prime Minister's office, *op. cit.*

(cont.)

step to expanding the scope of political consensus and renewing the partnership between Southern European countries and potentially the broader EU.<sup>110</sup>

Cooperation can also go beyond a focus on return, readmission, border management and more security-oriented measures. For example, legal migration can become another field for bilateral added-value cooperation between the two EUMS, as Spain and Italy share relatively similar labour needs, for instance in the tourism sector. This can even generate multiplying effects: yielding positive results in bilateral cooperation in the longer term while sending positive messages to third countries and their populations.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, taking into consideration that migration flows through and from Africa and the Sahel are of a mixed nature, the dialogue between the two countries could (and ideally should) also be expanded to cover issues such as providing support to the development of local asylum capacities and enhancing refugee resettlement mechanisms and humanitarian channels.

Closer cooperation between EUMS does not mean that multilateralism has to replace efforts and mechanisms of bilateral migration management cooperation with third countries. As highlighted above, the bilateral approach in some cases is more effective than multilateral efforts, particularly from the point of view of the efficient use of political, financial and diplomatic resources. The Spanish authorities have emphasised that EU external policy on migration should always complement existing bilateral agreements and not duplicate efforts or jeopardise good cooperation practices already in place.

While differences of opinion and approaches exist between Italy and Spain, as among the remaining EUMS, the practical cooperative experience in MPF pilot countries seems to start having positive effects on improved dialogue and cooperation. Notwithstanding the differences, the current context provides a platform for improved communication at all levels and is an opportunity for mutual learning, sharing case-specific best practices and finding the right balance between bilateral and multilateral policy instruments, where the alignment of communication plans also plays a crucial role for long-term policy implementation supported by public opinion. To approach migration in the post-2015 era is, therefore, to learn how to engage in more frequent communication and closer political and policy linkages. This poses new challenges to designing migration policies of the EU and the EUMS in coherent ways.

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<sup>110</sup> DG Migration Policies MAECI, *op. cit.*

<sup>111</sup> MAEC, *op. cit.*

## **(7) Conclusions and recommendations**

This paper provides a broad view of the evolution of Spanish and Italian external migration policies through a closer examination of their approach towards the Sahel region and in light of the broader EU policy context. The analysis focuses on the historical background, migratory contexts, policy tools, perspectives, interests and strategic preferences of these two key EUMS. By doing so, it provides food for thought for the concerned institutional actors and the broader range of interested stakeholders. This has the potential to trigger improved and broadened dialogue between the two parties, ultimately contributing to renewed mutual understanding and creating common ground for increased cooperation on external migration policies.

Italy and Spain responded similarly to the migration pressures from the African continent, constructing the external dimension of their migration policies almost from scratch. Their policy responses were initially largely shaped by a sense of urgency and the stress was put on bilateral cooperation initiatives with third countries of origin and transit. In fact, irregular migration to Italy from 2013 onwards was similar in nature (although not in scale) to that towards the Spanish coast in the first years of the millennium. The time gap and the different geographic focus that influenced their diverging strategic alliances can help explain the low degree of political will and effectiveness in political and operational cooperation and information-sharing developed between the two countries until recently.

The situation started to change from 2014-15, as the scale, magnitude and persistence of irregular migration flows have been pushing more than ever for joint EU action as well as cooperation between EUMS. Italy's and Spain's previous experiences have largely shaped the EU's external migration policies in this new era. At the same time, the post-2015 policy framework has already contributed to closer communication as well as to the expansion of joint action and cooperation between EUMS, particularly in third countries.

Italy and Spain share geostrategic challenges and have a common interest in governing migration and mobility between Africa and Europe in an effective and sustainable manner, respectful of human rights and compliant with their international legal obligations. Both experienced the feeling of being 'left alone' within the European framework, partly due to shortcomings negatively affecting the development of a common European external migratory policy.

In this light, and in order to improve both the cooperation and coherence of Spanish and Italian external migration policies, the following recommendations might profitably be borne in mind:

- a) The recently improved dialogue and cooperation between Italy and Spain, particularly at the operational level, should be expanded in order to cover the higher political and decision-making levels, also serving the broader objective of coalition building among EUMS.
- b) EU-level efforts should not duplicate EUMS structures and policies already in place, but complement and strengthen them. At the same time, reforms at the national level must also be carried out in line with EU strategies and be an



opportunity to review national policies from a perspective of coherence and coordination. Overall, the specificities of particular contexts of origin and transit countries should be taken into account in deciding whether to use bilateral or EU tools, or a specific combination of them.

- c) In order to address the multifaceted nature of the migratory challenge, political dialogue on external migration policies should not be limited to the Interior and Foreign Ministries, but include institutions and stakeholders dealing with investment, employment, labour market excesses and shortages, and trade, as well as youth and education policies. In this context, regular dialogue mechanisms between specific pairs of Spanish-Italian institutions and agencies could also be created, such as AICS and AECID.

There are several policy dimensions in which cooperation and coherence between Italian and Spanish policies in the Sahel can be fostered:

#### Labour migration and education

- Circular and temporary labour migration schemes should be put back at the heart of migration cooperation in order to build balanced and long-lasting partnerships, while partially addressing the structural drivers underlying economically-motivated migration. As Spain's past experience with Senegal shows, qualification- and skill-matching is crucial for the success of temporary labour migration schemes. In view of the frequent gaps and misalignments in qualifications and labour market needs, Italy and Spain could:
  - Engage in closer dialogue at the political, technical and scientific levels for mutual learning from past national experiences as well as for identifying similarities in labour market needs (eg, agriculture, services and construction) with a view to designing joint migration schemes.
  - Establish a specific scholarship programme for African countries, to attract students to the qualifications most suitable to the Italian and Spanish labour markets.
  - Design pre-departure training programmes in order to complement labour migration quotas in specific sectors.

#### Development policies

- Bilateral development policies and projects could be expanded and turned into multilateral programmes, along the lines of EUTF cooperation between EUMS and their cooperation agencies.
- Development aid, job creation and investment projects should not selectively target migration-producing regions but, more broadly, local communities and regions.



- As Italy and Spain share a common set of origin countries, such as Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Gambia, some of these countries could be selected as targets for pilot joint-development projects.

#### Security cooperation

- In view of the increasing demand by countries in the Sahel to incorporate the enhancement of local security capacities as well as the provision of tools (material, training) into cooperation, EUMS should ensure that their national missions and training programmes are coordinated with and coherent to EU and other EUMS efforts in the region. Particular attention should be paid to enhancing coherence between policy instruments aiming at local capacity building and security-sector reform falling under different funding mechanisms.
- The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) Niger –where the Spanish and French police forces cooperate with local law enforcement authorities in fighting criminal networks linked to irregular migration– has proved to be a useful tool. Italy and Spain should consider setting up JITs in countries of origin and transit of common interest.

#### International protection and resettlement

- The two countries should engage in closer dialogue about the operability and potential growth of humanitarian evacuation schemes and the resettlement of people in need of international protection in Africa.
- A first step could be to hold trilateral meetings between Spain, Italy and the UNHCR, where ways to enhance local protection capacities as well as the possibility of replicating, broadening and improving the operability of Italy's incipient humanitarian evacuation scheme could be discussed.
- Joint initiatives between state institutions, civil society and private actors (NGOs, churches...) for additional resettlement schemes, as in the case of the humanitarian corridor initiative in Italy, could be discussed in platforms where both kinds of actors from the two countries come together.

## List of institutions interviewed

- Carabinieri Corps
- Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Niger
- DG DEVCO of the European Commission
- DG for the EU of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- DG Home of the European Commission
- DG Home, Migration, European Commission
- DG Migration Policies of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- Director of the Project GAR-SI-SAHEL – Spanish Civil Guard
- Directorate General for International Relations and Migration of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior
- Directorate General for Africa – Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- Directorate General for Development Aid – Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- EU Special Representative for the Sahel, Ambassador Ángel Losada
- IOM Niger country office
- Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Italian Embassy to Niger
- Italian Ministry of the Interior
- Italian Parliament
- Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- Italian Prime Minister's Office
- Spanish Civil Guard
- Spanish diplomats serving in the Sahel region
- Spanish Permanent Representation in Brussels
- Spanish Red Cross, International cooperation unit for West, Central and Southern Africa
- Special Spanish Ambassador for Migration issues – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- UNHCR Italy country office, Protection Unit
- Unit for West Africa of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

## List of acronyms

Central Mediterranean Route (CMR)  
Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility (CAMMs)  
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)  
EU Member States (EUMS)  
EU Readmission Agreements (EURAs)  
European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)  
Global Approach to Migration (GAM)  
Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)  
Italian Fund for Africa (IFA).  
Italian Ministry of the Interior (MOI)  
Joint Investigation Team (JIT)  
Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)  
Mobility Partnerships (MPs)  
New Migration Partnership Framework (MPF)  
Search and Rescue operations (SAR).  
Spanish Agency for Cooperation (AECID, Spanish acronym )  
Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC, Spanish acronym)  
Western Atlantic Route (WAR)  
Western Mediterranean Route (WMR)