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**THE EUROPEAN UNION'S MIGRATION
AND ASYLUM POLICY:
PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN MIGRANTS
IN EUROPE**

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to investigate the European Union (EU) Migration and Asylum Policy, a perspective of African migrants in Europe. Attempts were made to identify the perception of Africans in the EU on its migration and Asylum policy and assess whether the policy encourages migration and Asylum in the EU. To achieve this, descriptive survey was employed and questionnaires were administered to 100 respondents in Europe from different African countries. The data collected using the online questionnaires were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviations. From the results, it was concluded that immigration into the EU is undertaken by male citizens of most African countries especially at their youthful ages driven by the need to pursue education and job opportunities. Their stay in the EU breeds the desire (positive perception and desire) to obtain either work status or EU nationality. Many of them desire to be integrated into the host countries rather than repatriated to their countries. Finally, most of them greatly esteem the EU migration and asylum policy and prefer to stay within the EU than be resettled or repatriated, according to the new EU Pact policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Europe has for long been very familiar with irregular migration, since Spain and Italy for example introduced visa requirements for the Maghreb immigrants in the early 1990s; hundreds of thousands of Maghreb have never stopped attempting to cross the Mediterranean illegally (de Haas, 2008). According to Spindler (2015), The situation of the EU took a dramatic turn in 2015, when it is believed that close to a million people found themselves on the borders of the EU, with over 3550 were still in the course of their journey coming through the Mediterranean Sea, from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and part of Northern and Sub-Saharan African nations, fleeing away conflicts. The fear of a major influx of people from low income countries, job market competition and security issues are some of the reasons given for stricter migration policies (Abebe et al., 2019).

With the increasing number of global crises induced by man and natural causes, e.g. political crisis, economic hardship and severe drought, have so far prompted people to leave their respective countries of origin. In total of approximately 507 million people living within the EU, approximately 20 million are citizens coming from non-EU countries (Brown, 2021). The increasing inflow of migrants into the EU has overwhelmingly put the resources and institutions of the EU under pressure. The long-term rise in the numbers seeking asylum in Europe has brought asylum policy to the top of EU's agenda (Hatton, 2005). In order to harness this pressure, the EU commission has not stopped in proposing policy such as the 'Relocation and Resettlement plan to address the situation (European Commission, IP/16/829 of 16/03/2016) and the EU New Pact Policy on Migration and Asylum Policy (Keifer & Effenberger, 2020). All these in order to cover all the different elements needed for a more common and a comprehensive approach towards migration within the EU. In a statement released by the European Commission, COM.2021/590 final, the ultimate aim of the EU migration policy has been to ensure that migration takes place in a safe, regular and well managed manner, and to reap the benefits migration offers.

The aim of this study is to investigate the overall perception of African migrants within the borders of EU as concerns it Migration and asylum

policy, the study also seek to assess whether the policy encourages migration and Asylum into EU. The above objectives lead us to answer the following research questions; (i) what is the current state of EU policy on migration and Asylum? (ii) Do migrants pose threats to the EU community? (iii) What is the cost of EU on increasing refugee and asylum seekers (iv) Does the EU policy on migration and Asylum encourages immigration? Despite all the valuable contributions made by other scholars, a unified understanding of the current perspectives of African migrants' within the EU is still lacking. To have a better understanding, this paper employs the use of both the primary and secondary sources of data; a well-structured questionnaire was designed to reflect the opinion and minds of the respondents, specifically migrants of African origin residing within the borders of EU.

EU MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICY

Migration crises in 2015 put to test the concept of the management of the external borders of the EU and demonstrated its failure in the field of common policy, common approach and solidarity among member states (Pūraitė et al., 2017). Migration is said to have become increasingly accepted today as a tool for development, thus both the EU-Less Economic Develop nations are open to the notion that migration can be a good tool for development (Tagliapietra, 2019). On September 23rd, 2020, in order to address migration and refugee situations within the EU, the European Commission presented its awaited New Pact Policy on Migration and asylum, aimed at tackling irregular migration issues (Wihtol de Wenden, 2021; Petroni, 2021). The New Pact Policy proposed covers different facet for a well comprehensive migration in balancing the principles of fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity among members; this is contained in a release of IP/20/1706 of 23/09/2020 by the European Commission.

Responsibility to the New Pact policy refers to employing a more efficient procedure that seeks to ensure clearer responsibilities, that is providing help that focuses on restoring trust among member states at the same time bringing clarity to applicants (Wihtol de Wenden, 2021). The rules

here will improve the link between the key processes, specifically asylum and return. On the other hand, solidarity includes; relocating newly arrived migrants, return sponsorship, by which member state takes the responsibility in returning migrants who has no right to stay on behalf of another member states, provides immediate operational support like reception of newcomers or return operation, providing assistant to specific migratory trends affecting member states as contained in the same release IP/20/1706 of 23/09/2020. Solidarity provides the duty for states to cooperate in handling and management of migration flows while responsibility requires states to take part in the management of migration flows as to control national borders (Helluin, 2021). Though, some opinion holds that this policy is still far from alleviating migration and refugee issues especially on the southern borders. For example, to the disappointments of the southern states; the New Pact Policy in itself did not take into account the challenges that come along in assigning migrants rescued by Non-Governmental Organization vessels (Petroni, 2021).

According to Keifer & Effenberger, (2020), The New Pact Policy goal on putting in place a comprehensive and a robust migration and asylum policy is the best protection against the risk of a crisis situation as the pact offers a fresh beginning in addressing migration issues. The EU has sought to strengthen its support for its member states facing difficulties in coping with pressure from migration. The EU border management agency; FRONTEX and EASO (European Border and Coast Guard Agency and European Union Agency for Asylum) is very much involved in the management of migrants and asylum seekers among its member states (Trauner, 2016). Table 1 & 2 below depicts the leading African migrants and asylum applicants in the EU.

The table 1 shows varied number of Africans migrating to the EU, through different transit routes, Mali is considered a country providing irregular migrants and serves as a transit country for sub-Saharanans to the North (Sylla & Schultz, 2020). The effect of this is seen in the number of asylum seekers. Between these periods, Its peak was recorded in 2017 with a total of 212,695 applicants, followed by 2018 with a total of 157,500, then 2019 with a total of 153,065 and the least been 2021 with 59,115.

Table 1. Leading African Nationalities Arrivals to EU between 2017–2021

No	Nations	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
1	Tunisia	15,679	13,011	-	5,265	-
2	Algeria	13,344	12,946	5,183	6,229	8,328
3	Morocco	15,407	16460	7847	13,584	11,853
4	Sub-Saharan Africa	15,077	10,179	6125	18,907	-
5	Egypt	8,877				
6	Ivory coast	4,041	2702	3,065	3,552	13,336
7	Sudan		1813			
8	Somalia		1840	3,193		
9	D.R. Congo			3,069		
10	Guinea				7,121	13,839
11	Nigeria					18,260

Source: IOM (2021).

Table 2. Total Asylum Applicants by Africans in EU from 2017–2021

No	Year	Total Number
1	2021	59,115
2	2020	97,370
3	2019	153,065
4	2018	157,500
5	2017	212,695

Source: Eurostat, 2022.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the various responses of the survey presented in figures and tables. From Figure 1, the majority of the participants were males (60%) in their youthful ages (18 to 34 years) followed by those with 34 years and above. The targeted respondents choosing are believed to have an appropriate understanding and have well digested the objectives of the EU migration and asylum policy. Targeting Africans specifically within the borders of the EU nations, for duration, we found that those less than

5 years in Europe dominated the respondents and they can communicate in at least one of the EU languages like English, French, and German. The variation in gender distribution is consistent with the fact that the male gender at their youthful ages migrate more than the female in search of greener pastures and to further education.

Participants were from different African countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, Angola, Congo, DR Congo, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal Tunisia, and others (Appendix 1) with most of them from Cameroon (28%), followed by Nigeria with 10%.

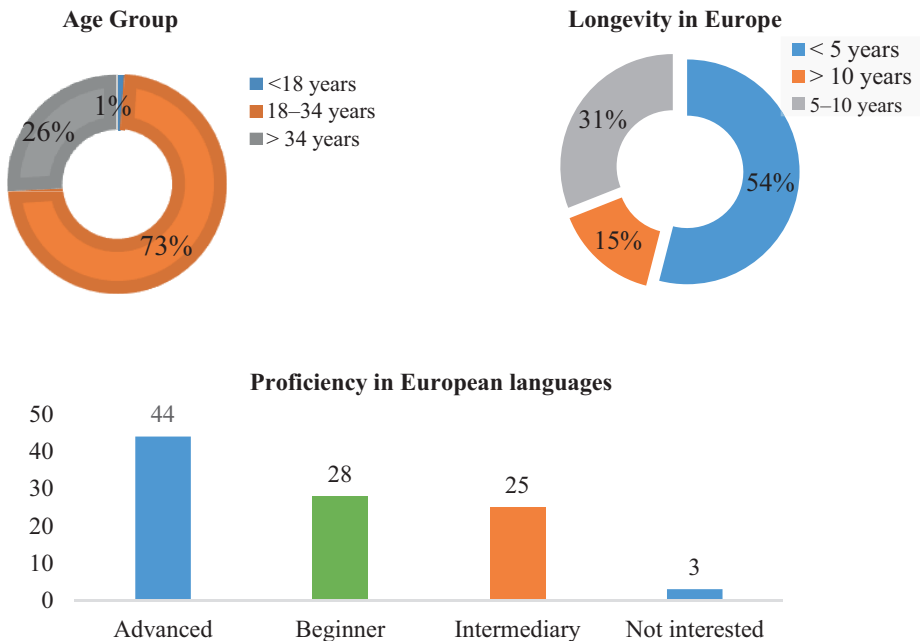


Figure 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

A cross-section of reasons for migrating to Europe hinged mostly on the need to pursue education and jobs with education securing more than half (51%) and job-seeking 20%. Only a few migrated because of wars and the occurrence of natural disasters in their country of origin (Table 3).

Table 3. Main Reasons for Migrating to Europe

	Frequency	Percent
Education	51	51.0
Education, Job seeking	20	20.0
Education, Job seeking, to be away from family problems	1	1.0
Education, Natural disasters in my country of origin	1	1.0
Education, War from my country of origin	1	1.0
Education, War from my country of origin	1	1.0
Education, War from my country of origin, Natural disasters in my country of origin, Job seeking	3	3.0
Family re-union	7	7.0
Family re-union, Job seeking	1	1.0
Job seeking	6	6.0
Natural disasters in my country of origin, Job seeking	1	1.0
Persecution	1	1.0
War from my country of origin	5	5.0
War from my country of origin, Job seeking	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4. The Perception of Africans in the EU on its Migration and Asylum Policy

	Mean	SD
Plan obtaining European citizenship	4.050	1.095
Immigrating Europe best option	3.900	1.159
Recommend irregular migration	2.330	1.450
Feel Integrated into the European Society	3.980	0.974
Inflow of African migrants into Europe is a threat to the EU	2.060	1.153
Irregular African migrants currently in Europe should be returned to their countries	1.720	1.026
Plan a voluntary return to my country	2.950	1.480
Life and economic status are better now	3.980	1.119

On average a great proportion of the participants agreed that they plan to obtain European citizenship ($M = 4.050$, $SD = 1.095$), they equally regard immigrating to Europe as the best option ($M = 3.900$, $SD = 1.159$)

and are comfortable with the integration into the European society (M = 3.980, SD = 0.974). In addition, a great proportion of the participants regard their lives and economic status to be better up as compared to the situation in their country (M = 3.980, SD = 1.119). Meanwhile, the study averagely recorded fewer agreements on the willingness to recommend the repatriation of irregular migrants to the European Union (M = 1.720, SD = 1.026). As well, they do not regard immigrants as a threat to the EU, hence do not intend to voluntarily return to their home country. Nevertheless, few intend to voluntarily return upon completion of studies, at retirement, and the need to be with their families/loved ones back in their countries of origin.

Table 5. Family member currently benefitting from EU Social Scheme

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financial benefits	12	12.0
Financial benefits, Health Insurance	7	7.0
Health Insurance	5	5.0
Free education	3	3.0
Academic scholarship	2	2.0
Financial benefits, Health Insurance, Free education	1	1.0
Housing	1	1.0
All of the above	1	1.0
None of the above previously had scholarship grants	2	2.0
None of the above	66	66.0
Total	100	100.0

More than half of the participants 66 (66%) have not been opportune to benefit from the EU social scheme. Others have benefitted from various schemes majority of which is the financial benefits 12%, both financial and health insurance 7% and in some cases the free education scheme.

With the new EU New Pact Policy designed to reduce pressure on migration and asylum, about half (58%) of the participants prefer to stay in their first country of entry and 31% prefer to be relocated to other EU countries. Also, 6% prefer to be resettled to non-EU nations while the remaining 5% prefer to be sent back to their countries of origin.

Table 6. Opinion regarding the New EU New Pact Policy

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Relocate to another EU country from my first country of entry	31	31.0
Resettled to a non-EU nation	6	6.0
Send back to my country of origin	5	5.0
Maintain my first country entry	58	58.0
Total	100	100.0

DISCUSSION

Results showed that the principal motive for immigrating remains focused on education and job search goals; although without the intention to return to one's country of origin. This is consistent with the Eurostat (2021) results that the permits issued in the EU in different sectors are mostly education, family reunion, asylum, work, visit or short stay, Dependency, and based on permanent residence.

Participants highly esteem their immigration to Europe without any willingness to return to their country of origin, hence anticipating obtaining European citizenship. An indication that the non-EU population in the EU is supposedly at an increase as many disdained returning home. Consistent with a report of January 2020, 447.3 million inhabitants were living in the EU, out of which 23 million were non-EU citizens giving a percentage of 5.1% of EU total population, while nearly 37 million people were born outside of the EU giving a total 8.3% of all EU inhabitants (European Commission, 2021). Their stay in the EU breeds the desire to obtain either work status or EU nationality as many sampled considered migrating to EU was the best decision and they plan to have EU work permit or stay permanently.

Results recorded high reluctance to support the repatriation of unlawful migrants from the EU, debunking the claim that these immigrants constitute a security threat to the EU. In essence, despite the measures to discourage irregular migration, most migrants themselves hold a contrary view. Rather they prefer that the EU nationality be granted to them irre-

spective of the implication on the resources of the host economies. Pūraitė et al., (2017) defines irregular migrants as those who cross a border illegally, and Europe has for long been a victim of a huge number of irregular migrations. In other words, immigrants desire to be integrated into their host economies; in accordance with the suggestion of Sebola (2019), among the approaches in managing migration crisis the best approach to immigrants and refugee situation is the African approach; whereby immigrants are integrated into the society, within which they are given access and rights to effectively localized themselves as citizens, instead of being put in refugee camps which on the contrary isolate them from the country's membership status.

The EU social scheme does not offer most immigrants financial and health benefits, yet, the majority prefers to remain in the EU original country they migrated to than to be resettled or repatriated. This is in response to the clause on the EU New Pact Policy on migration and asylum stating that one of the new mechanisms for constant solidarity is the relocation of recently-arrived persons into the EU (European Commission, 2020). Besides, for the first time, the EU Commission took an initiative where member states were tasked to relocate 160,000 migrants from Italy and Greece nations that were under high pressure (Spindler, 2015). Despite the New EU Pact policy on resettlement of immigrants in order to reduce the pressure of migration and asylum, most immigrants prefer to settle in their original immigration countries than be resettled despite the challenges.

The EU social scheme current state fails to protect and provide immigrants financial and health benefits from the New EU pact, however, it creates a new mechanism for constant solidarity in the relocation of recently-arrived persons into the EU member states, to add, the EU has been registering huge cost in restraining migration. The EU is spending millions forcibly sending people back to their countries of origin, with one case costing up 90,000 Euro per head, FRONTEX had spent some 11.4 million Euro on joint return operation, which saw it values almost triple the following year with over 66.5 million euro which being devoted to the operation (Civillini & Bagnoli, 2017). There was not enough evidence from the respondents view to conclude that immigrants pose a threat to the EU

community although they indicate the presence of pressure on the available resources.

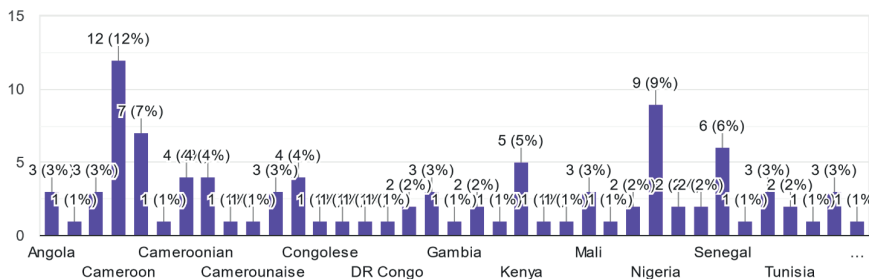
CONCLUSION

The study examined European Union's (EU) Migration and Asylum Policy, with specific interest on the perception of Africans within the borders of the EU and to assess whether the policy encourages migration and Asylum. The finding therefore reveals that though the EU New Pact policy and previous policy on migration asylum policy implemented as measures to control external borders and migration flows, it may be irrational to conclude its objective is attained. This is so because the migrant routes are still very active and passing, witnessing a continuous increase in the number of migration and asylum applicants especially from countries like the sub-Saharan nations. In fact in a more recent report by France 24 News Channel, on the 25/06/2022 at 09:04, at least 23 Africans were reported dead on the doors of the EU, when over 2000 mostly sub-Saharan African migrants approached the Moroccan border heading to Europe (France 24, 2022), thus, distancing away from the objective of the policy

APPENDIX 1

1). Nationality / Country of Origin

100 responses



APPENDIX 2

Demographic Items	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	40	40
	Male	60	60
	Total	100	100
Age Group	<18 years	1	1.0
	18–34 years	73	73.0
	> 34 years	26	26.0
	Total	100	100
Longevity in Europe	< 5 years	54	54.0
	> 10 years	15	15.0
	5–10 years	31	31.0
	Total	100	100.0
Proficiency in European languages	Advanced	44	44.0
	Beginner	28	28.0
	Intermediary	25	25.0
	Not interested	3	3.0

Current status in EU	Frequency	Percentage
Dependent	8	8.000
Education	33	33.000
Permanent residence	20	20.000
Seeking international protection (Refugee status)	5	5.000
Short stay	1	1.000
Temporary residence	9	9.000
Work status	24	24.000
Total	100	100.000

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