



Republic of Senegal



Rabat Process

Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development



Kingdom of Belgium

Meeting on the cross-cutting topic:

# Strengthening evidence-based policy making in the field of migration

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11-12 September 2013, Dakar

**Summary of debates and conclusions of the co-chairs**

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## **SUMMARY OF DEBATES**

More than sixty delegates from partner countries and organisations as well as observers of the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process) met in Dakar on 11 and 12 September 2013 in order to discuss and develop cooperation on the theme of strengthening the use of migration information and data for evidence-based policy making.

This theme corresponds to Objective 10 of the “Dakar Strategy”<sup>1</sup>, namely “To base policy consistency and coordination on acquiring and sharing information”, adopted during the third Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development held in Dakar in November 2011.

This objective is crucial as the development and implementation of policies and programmes in the field of migration may not be effective unless reliable and up-to-date information is available. Given its importance, this topic was recognised as a cross-cutting priority and discussed in this first expert meeting of phase three of the Rabat Process.

The need to hinge migration policies and programmes on evidence-based data was recalled in the keynote addresses of the co-chairs, delivered by His Excellency the Ambassador Sheikh Tidiane Thiam, Director-General of Legal and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Senegal and His Excellency the Belgian Ambassador to Senegal Johan Verkammen. The co-chairs said that the Rabat Process was an innovative form of partnership characterised by a vision shared by countries and organisations concerned by the West African migration route. Its added value and usefulness were said to be so widely recognised at present that this dialogue was bound to last, be supported and become permanent. The co-chairs also underscored that the third phase of the Rabat Process was firmly committed towards organising concrete, operational activities in the context of the 3 pillars and, specifically, on the cross-cutting priority of the Dakar Strategy Objective 10, to support evidence-based policy making.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dakar Strategy defines 10 priority objectives for the period of 2012 to 2014, founded on the three fundamental pillars of the dialogue, in order to ease the adoption of concrete measures designed to put discussions into action.





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The background to and logic behind this meeting were subsequently outlined by Dr. Chantal Lacroix, Programme Manager and Deputy Head of Mission at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Brussels. Next, she summarised the main aspects of the Support Project for phase three of the Rabat Process, funded by the European Union and implemented by ICMPD and the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP). In addition to organising meetings and activities in support of the dialogue and monitoring progress of the implementation of the Dakar Strategy, this project was also described as having a unique character, as it comprises new practical activities meant for knowledge development and sharing. Finally, this project was also said to be innovative as short-term technical support is offered to partner countries and organisations in view of the implementation of the Dakar Strategy, especially in the sector of evidence-based policy making, border management and migration in crisis situations. In the latter respect, requests are expected from the dialogue partners.

The **first session** was instrumental in identifying and illustrating the use of migration data and information in support of policy making by way of practical examples.

Professor Michel Poulain from the Louvain Catholic University, made a plea for the collection of reliable statistical data as a way to support migration policies. He explained the limits of national censuses and surveys to feed migration statistics. Subsequently, he pointed to the importance of sharing and making the best possible use of administrative databases between ministries in charge of collecting data and insisted on the need to initially set up a specialised coordination team at national level.

Mr. Benedikt Vulsteke from the Belgian Immigration Office (*Office belge des étrangers*) and Coordinator for Belgium of the European Migration Network demonstrated the growing importance that policy makers in Belgium attached throughout the years to the acquisition of tangible and objective migration data. He also outlined main indicators and data sources, explained the extent to which this type of information was sought in Belgium and quoted practical examples of data use by policy makers.

Ms. Awa Cissoko Faye, a demographer serving at the Senegal National Agency of Statistics and Demography (ANSD), presented the Senegalese experience in this field and focused on the sources of migration data and information and on their use in her country. The use of these

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data had induced the Senegalese government to consider international migration among its priorities and to centre policies on the return of nationals from abroad, their reintegration, and the leveraging of their financial, human and material resources. Backed collected data, Senegal was currently developing a national migration policy.

Subsequently, Ms. Inês Máximo-Pestana, Programme Manager at the Employment, Social Inclusion and Migration Unit of the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) of the European Commission, illustrated the key role of migration profiles in the European Commission's approach to the promotion of evidence-based policy making on migration and recalled that the EU had introduced these tools in 2005 and was promoting their development and use. Ms. Máximo-Pestana observed that these instruments had evolved towards 'extended' versions in order to offer a more solid and comprehensive picture of the migration situation of a given country and strengthen national ownership. Finally, she provided an overview of the past and present initiatives sponsored by the European Commission, including those in the context of the EUROMED Migration III project, of the regional project on the free movement of people in West Africa, and of the Rabat Process, and emphasised the consistency of these initiatives.

In the wrap-up part of session one, participants highlighted challenges encountered in the context of intergovernmental cooperation for the collection of data and concerning the type of support to be given to States to set up data sharing systems. Participants agreed on the fact that, for international cooperation on data sharing to be strengthened, bilateral efforts were required between countries with strong ties.

These efforts had to go hand in hand with building analytic capacities and the development of up-to-date indicators, because data *per se* were meaningless. Furthermore, the effectiveness of methods used to analyse data also had to be assessed.

Methodologies used to quantify the number of nationals living abroad were also discussed. In this respect, it was found that national surveys could also be an opportunity for measuring the diaspora phenomenon by collaborating with foreign consulates, embassies and diaspora associations.

It was also recalled that data production and sharing were influenced by political aspects and restrictions posed to free circulation in practice, which favoured illegal migration. The importance of interpreting migration statistics in a qualified and balanced way was therefore stressed.





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It was argued that despite the efforts deployed in the region, it was difficult to identify cases in which data were used for decision making. Quite often decisions were made out of urgent and contingent requirements.

A few countries offered to cooperate and exchange information on their programmes in progress, as was the case for Mauritania and its wide-ranging and ongoing four-year programme on migration management in all of its aspects.

Finally, to conclude, participants agreed on the ultimate objectives of improving the wellbeing of individuals and allowing migration to become a personal choice rather than a choice forced by political and economic considerations.

The **second session** was centred on tools to support evidence-based policy making that are available to partner countries and organisations in the context of phase three of the Rabat Process, namely, support in the use of migration profiles and the extension of the Interactive Map on Migration (i-Map - <http://www.imap-migration.org/>).

Ms. Aurélie Sgro, Project Officer at ICMPD, outlined the details of an initiative targeting a stronger use of migration profiles. Its expected outcome would be the production of national guides on the use of migration data and information, particularly data contained in migration profiles, to support policy making. These guides, she explained, would be concise, simple and customised to each participating country. Their development would be steered by countries themselves so as to favour ownership and would therefore also include a component on national capacity building. In particular, they would pave the way to the further update or development of migration profiles. Expressions of interest from States are expected.

Next, Ms. Kristina Sam, Junior Project Officer at ICMPD, presented the current i-Map platform and the project for the extension of this tool to the partner countries of the Rabat Process. The final objective was to provide policy makers with a user-friendly and visual tool to transpose migration data and information into migration programmes and policies. The Rabat Process i-Map would also feature the practical guides on the use of data and migration profiles and contain additional information on this subject. It would also provide access to unique infographics that visualise best practice case studies on border management and migration in crisis situations. Finally, Ms. Sam announced that the i-Map News Centre now covered the entire region of the Rabat Process and invited participants to subscribe to email alerts in order to receive articles on migration related news.

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The participants of the meeting expressed their interest in these knowledge development and sharing initiatives designed to better meet the needs and challenges in the area of migration. This discussion was also an opportunity to again highlight that the development of guides on the use of migration data and profiles would be made in a coordinated way with other regional initiatives on the issue. Some participants voiced their concerns regarding the concurrent challenges posed by poor data collection and analysis capacities. Attention was consequently drawn to the complementarity of activities within the Support Project, as short-term technical support offered to the dialogue partners could be instrumental in the organisation of training workshops and other activities on this topic. Partners were therefore encouraged to submit requests to that end. As for the i-Map, some participants praised the usefulness of the platform and in particular of its News Centre and encouraged the other participants to use it. The discussion also contributed to clarifying the information collection and update modalities of this tool.

The **third session** focused on the use of migration data for decision making in the two key themes of the third phase of the Rabat Process, namely border management and migration in crisis situations. Two interactive working groups were organised to that end.

Mr. Alain Texier, *Commandant de police* and Deputy Head of the Regional Office for Civil Aviation Security (CRASAC) of the French Ministry of the Interior, summed up the discussions held in the working group on border management, in which seven recommendations were made as detailed below:

1. To identify the needs of national and community levels in order to define useful indicators
2. To implement an institutional and legislative framework with due account taken of the need for harmonisation with neighbouring countries in this field
3. To integrate border management into migration policy development
4. To encourage the development of data collection systems
5. Training of border officers with a special focus on land borders
6. Need for vertical and horizontal information circulation
7. Exchanges and partnerships between countries, including those with local actors on the borders

Mr. Norbert Allale, Regional Coordinator for Risk Management at the Dakar Sahel Office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), presented the results

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of the working group on migration in crisis situations. Four general recommendations were made:

1. Need to coordinate migration management during crises and define the relevant mechanism by type of crisis at national and regional level
2. To make border management a focus of migration management in crisis situations
3. To implement a migration flow monitoring system for imminent crises
4. To put into place efficient coordination between actors involved in migration issues in each country by resorting to new technologies

The **fourth session** focused on the launch of the monitoring activity that follows-up on progress achieved in the implementation of the Dakar Strategy and on strengthening the National Focal Points Network.

Ms. Sara Bayes Puig, Head of the Migration and Development Programme at FIIAPP, outlined the methodology and a calendar for the monitoring of the Dakar Strategy Roadmap adopted at the Senior Officials Meeting held in Madrid in 2012.

This initiative will lead to:

- identifying common interests in order to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between participating countries and consequently promote South-South dialogue;
- improving peer learning models and the promotion of information exchange and best practices between National Focal Points;
- submitting operational suggestions adapted to the needs of each country; and
- developing a database, listing the implemented activities by action.

To that end, the Support Project would maintain a regularly updated list of projects and initiatives carried out by participating countries by staying in regular contact with National Focal Points and by analysing the information collected during the compilation of guides on the use of migration profiles as well as during discussion groups and technical support missions.

Subsequently, Ms. Petra Mezzetti, an independent expert, facilitated an interactive working group with the aim of presenting and discussing certain aspects of the methodology of the Roadmap monitoring. The comments and suggestions of the participants will allow to consolidate this methodology.

During this session, the National Focal Points agreed on the crucial importance of their role for a successful follow-up.





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In concluding this session, Mr. Maxence Defontaine, Communications Officer at FIIAPP, called the participants' attention to the new private exchange area available on the Rabat Process website ([www.processusderabat.net](http://www.processusderabat.net)), which offers a contact database and discussion forums.

Finally, in the **closing session**, the ten conclusions and recommendations of the co-chairs on the topic of data utilisation (see below) were presented by Ms. Sara Bayes Puig and applauded by participants.

In concluding this session, the co-chairs commended the high level of participation and the invariably high qualitative level of presentations and debates. They emphasised that this meeting illustrated the need and willingness to have a dialogue on migration questions both within the region and with European partners. The co-chairs recognised the challenges posed by the use of data for policy making and admitted that the task was demanding but indispensable. Finally, they expressed their trust in the Rabat Process, which, they said, had been marked by ongoing progress.

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## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CO-CHAIRS**

The co-chairs

1. Recognise the **fundamental importance of having data that are up-to-date and validated by national quality assurance processes** to support migration policy development.
2. Highlight the benefits arising from **the set-up of a national coordination platform based on a specialised technical structure and** working to achieve the dual purpose of coordinated migration data management and **administrative database sharing** so as to cope with problems of data fragmentation and limited access.
3. Find it important to ensure two-way, vertical and horizontal **information circulation between producers and users of** migration data and information, for data to meet both national and regional requirements.
4. Call to attention the need to continue regional dialogue to strengthen cooperation and share best practices on migration data. To that end, the co-chairs recognise the **importance of having harmonised regional principles and indicators on migration data.**
5. Emphasise the **importance for border management to be based on reliable and useful indicators** so as to facilitate the implementation of migration policies.
6. Emphasise the **importance of developing data collection, analysis and sharing mechanisms to prevent and manage migration in crisis situations** based on a typology of crises.
7. Invite partner countries **to commit to the production of national guides on the use of migration data and profiles** with special attention to the role of migration profiles as a policy/programme development and evaluation tool.





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8. Encourage the dialogue partners **to contribute to the extension of the i-Map**, given its potential to support policy making in the key areas of the third phase of the Rabat Process, its innovative character and its user-friendliness.
  
9. Invite the partner countries **to seek support from the short term technical assistance offered by the Rabat Process** to develop their own migration data and information collection, analysis and sharing systems.
  
10. Reiterate their support to the **ongoing efforts to ensure the implementation of and a follow-up to the Dakar Strategy** with a view to measuring progress in the Rabat Process, while emphasising the special role played by National Focal Points.

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