FRONTEX

Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report

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Frontex official publications fall into four main categories: risk analysis, training, operations and research, each marked with a distinct graphic identifier. Risk analysis publications bear a triangular symbol formed by an arrow drawing a triangle, with a dot at the centre. Metaphorically, the arrow represents the cyclical nature of risk analysis processes and its orientation towards an appropriate operational response. The triangle is a symbol of ideal proportions and knowledge, reflecting the pursuit of factual exactness, truth and exhaustive analysis. The dot at the centre represents the intelligence factor and the focal point where information from diverse sources converges to be processed, systematised and shared as analytical products. Thus, Frontex risk analysis is meant to be at the centre and to form a reliable basis for its operational activities.

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List of abbreviations used

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AFIC	Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community
AQIM	Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BCP	border crossing point
CCRC	Canary Islands Regional Coordination Centre of Guardia Civil (*Centro de Coordinación Regional de Canarias*)
CF	Frontex Consultative Forum
CFA franc	Communauté financière africaine franc
CMFPR-I	Coordination of movements and patriotic resistance fronts I (*Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance I*)
CPA	Coalition of the People of Azawad
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSS	Nigeria's Department of State Services
EB-RAN	Eastern European Borders Risk Analysis Network
EC, COM	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF-RAN	European Union Document-Fraud Risk Analysis Network
EPN	European Patrols Network
EU	European Union
EUCAP Sahel Mali	European Union CSDP Mission in Mali
EUNAVFOR Med	European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean
EUR	euro
Eurostat	Statistical Office of European Communities
FOC	Full Operational Capability
Frontex	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
G5 Sahel	Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad
GADM	Database of Global Administrative Areas
GATIA	Pro-unity Self-Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (*Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat*)
HALCIA	Niger's High Authority for the Fight against Corruption and Similar Crimes (*Haute Autorité de lutte contre la Corruption et les Infractions Assimilées*)
HCUA	High Council for the Unity of Azawad (*Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad*)
ID	identity document
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIL/Da'ish	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISWAP	Islamic State's West Africa Province
JO	Joint Operation

MAA	Arab Movement of Azawad
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad*)
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MUJAO	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (*Mouvement pour l'unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*)
NEMA	Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OPV	Offshore Patrol Vessel
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RFI	Request for Information
RTV	Rimbo Transport Voyageurs
SALB	Second Administrative Level Boundaries
SAR	search and rescue
THB	trafficking in human beings
TU-RAN	Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network
UK	United Kingdom
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
VIS	Visa Information System
WAI	Web Accessibility Initiative
WB-RAN	Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN	United Nations

Executive summary

Legal travel channels to the EU available for most West Africans are quite narrow. Some AFIC countries have visa rejection rates close to 50%. This high rate indicates that irregular migratory movements from the AFIC region to the EU are largely perceived as economic migration by consular authorities in the EU.

When measured in terms of the number of refusals of entry issued per 1 000 passengers, flights from Lagos to Paris, with rates of around 3–4 refusals for every 1 000 passengers, are considered the most risky. However, the overall ratio of refusals of entry to the number of passengers has been steadily declining on a number of air routes between West Africa and Europe.

The prevailing profile of rejected visa applicants (young males) corresponds to the profile of migrants arriving in the EU through irregular channels. Also, apart from North African nationals all other AFIC country nationalities face a very low risk of return after their irregular entry to Italy, which is the main entry point for African migrants.

For many West Africans, the decision to migrate is motivated by the feeling of inequality as well as social, peer and family pressure rather than by desperate need (poverty). This is why many of the migrants are not the worst-off in their home countries.

Routing through Niger is currently the preferred option despite the turmoil in Libya and a high risk of loss of life when crossing the Mediterranean. This is largely due to the fact that would-be migrants face a much higher risk of return if detected on other routes. Most notably, very good operational cooperation between Spain, Senegal, Mauritania and Mo-

rocco has significantly reduced the pressure on the route towards the Canary Islands and south of Spain.

The city of Agadez in Niger is catering for a growing number of transiting migrants en route to Libya and further on to the EU. Arriving in Niger and travelling to Agadez is a relatively cheap, fast and simple option. People smugglers in Agadez consider themselves to be service providers. Attempts to tackle this growing industry could spark local protests.

Part of the challenge for the Nigerien authorities is the fact that the smuggling service industry is not controlled by one person or group. Authorities in Niger also face transiting migrants who are determined to reach Libya and Italy, have entered the territory of Niger legally (under the ECOWAS free-movement protocol) and for the most part are able to finance their onward journey.

AFIC members pointed to a lack of harmonisation, especially with regards to different ECOWAS free-movement protocols. While some countries allow entry with ID cards both on land and air routes on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements (e.g. between Senegal and Guinea or Senegal and Cape Verde), others require travel documents (passports and IDs) in line with the ECOWAS protocols (Ghana and Nigeria). In practice, ECOWAS countries' citizens very often travel without any kind of identity documents due to a lack of basic knowledge of the free movement of people within ECOWAS countries.

Additionally, with regards to the maximum period of stay (90 days), travelling on the basis of ID card makes it difficult to confirm the period of stay, as there is no notification of

entry/exit (a stamp or registration system). Thus, in majority of cases this requirement is not respected.

Some people arriving in Agadez (mostly Sudanese) are also lured by the promise of finding gold in Djado, a hamlet located seven hundred kilometres north-east of Agadez, where soil gold was discovered in 2013. Such artisanal mining carries life hazards and also breeds the phenomenon of explosive smuggling on board regular buses. Regular bus lines in the ECOWAS region were also associated with drug smuggling as reported by Niger.

Migrants making a maritime crossing continue to run a high risk of dying in the process. The increasing death toll in the Central Mediterranean during 2015, however, shows that more vessels engaged in rescue operations do not necessarily guarantee fewer deaths at sea.

For several West African nationalities, the ratio between illegal border-crossings at external borders of the EU and the number of EU visas issued approaches 1:1 (e.g. the case of Malians in 2014).

Reducing irregular migration through an efficient asylum and visa system is likely to be difficult to implement in the case of West Africa. This is suggested by the current visa rejection rates and the profiles of rejected visa applicants and irregular migrants detected in the Mediterranean.

Based on discussions during thematic workshops held in Africa, AFIC delegates agreed that irregular migration, terrorism and organised crime must countered using a holistic approach.

Consensus was reached that the securitisation and prosecution of smugglers and terrorists is exacerbated by the porosity of borders and vast areas of terrain in the Sahelian corridor (adjacent to ECOWAS free-movement space), corruption, opaque criminal structures and plethora of terrorist networks.

AFIC delegates proposed that fight against cross-border criminality and terrorism should be based on three pillars: international cooperation, exchange of intelligence, and the provision of training and technical equipment to agencies and organisations involved in neutralising these security threats.

1. Introduction and methodology

1.1. Introduction

The Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) was set up in 2010 to provide a framework for regular knowledge and intelligence sharing in the field of border security between Frontex and African countries. The concept of this collaboration was broadly based on the model of the Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN) and the two already established regional risk analysis networks (the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network – WB-RAN and the Eastern European Borders Risk Analysis Network – EB-RAN).

In April 2010, a conference initiating this new network was held in Madrid with the participation of representatives of selected African states from West and North Africa, as well as Immigration Liaison Officers based in some African countries. The participants agreed to name the network 'the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community', in short 'the AFIC'.

Following the positive experiences of 2011 and 2012, further joint activities of the AFIC were organised in 2013 and 2014. Several workshops, annual conferences, field visits and three joint reports (prepared in English and French) testify to the achievements of the community.

The AFIC has also gained more visibility outside its immediate members by sharing its knowledge with external stakeholders, such as ECOWAS, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and regional initiatives such the Rabat and Khartoum Processes and the G5 Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad).

This growing recognition was also echoed in the 'EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling' (COM(2015) 285 final), which recommended the AFIC to be further developed as a platform for information-sharing and joint analysis with third countries in Africa.

In 2015, several new countries participated in the work of the AFIC. These are predominately countries of the Khartoum Process and Chad.

1.2. Methodology

Over recent years, the AFIC has grown and matured as a community of experts. Discussions throughout 2014 revealed a clear need for further development of the community beyond the established model. In particular, work was initiated to create a dedicated and secure information-sharing platform that will be accessible via the internet. This was designed to extend the type and number of reports which could be shared within the AFIC and thus used in the drafting of this report.

Furthermore, AFIC participants decided to create sub-regional analytical groups, based on linguistic, thematic or geographic criteria allowing for workshops to take place in Africa and not only in Europe, as has been the case until now.

In March 2015, the AFIC held its first workshop in Warsaw, where information-sharing platform was presented and a training session was offered to AFIC participants on the use of the platform and the new reporting templates. Two types of reporting templates were agreed upon: Incident Reports (to be prepared on an ad-hoc basis) and In-

Figure 1. **Geographical scope of the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community**
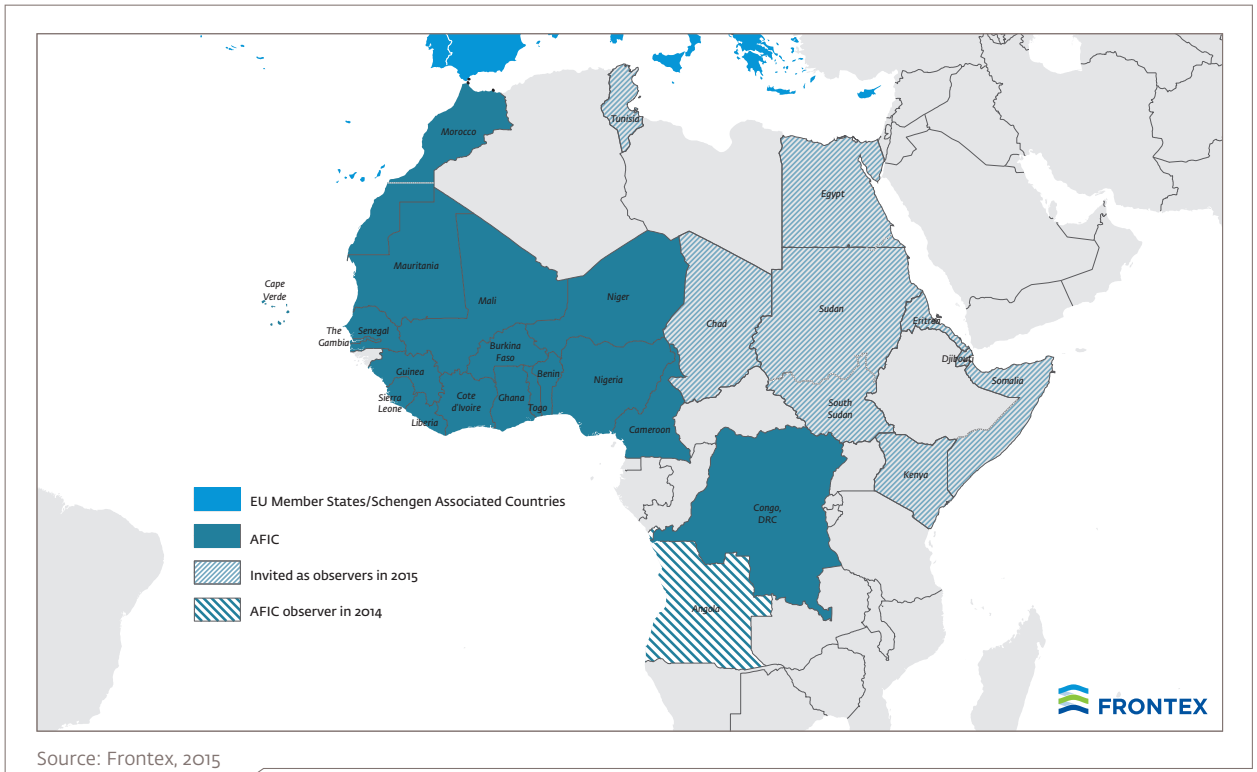
Source: Frontex, 2015

telligence Analysis Reports (to be submitted on a quarterly basis).

The workshop participants agreed that the newly-created information-sharing platform is a major step forward in the development of the AFIC, as it:

- Allows for structured, secure and regular information sharing;
- Enhances the goal of shared ownership of the AFIC;
- Offers near to real-time information sharing among all AFIC participants;
- Limits access to the AFIC platform to registered users (no access to information uploaded by AFIC users to externals, such as other EU institutions, commercial companies, banks, etc.);
- Standardises the format of the provided information: Incident Reports (on an ad-hoc basis) and Intelligence Analysis Re-

ports (on a quarterly basis) as well as photographs and other graphic elements.

AFIC participants also noted that Frontex should explore options on how to bring the countries of the so-called Khartoum Process gradually into the community.

The community also used the March 2015 workshop to agree on the composition of, and the topics and venues for sub-regional groups. Frontex initially proposed three groups; however, the number was later reduced to two taking into account logistical issues and available resources. The first workshop took place in Casablanca between 26 and 27 May 2015.

The purpose of this workshop was to discuss, share and jointly analyse very important issues linking Africa and Europe: terrorist
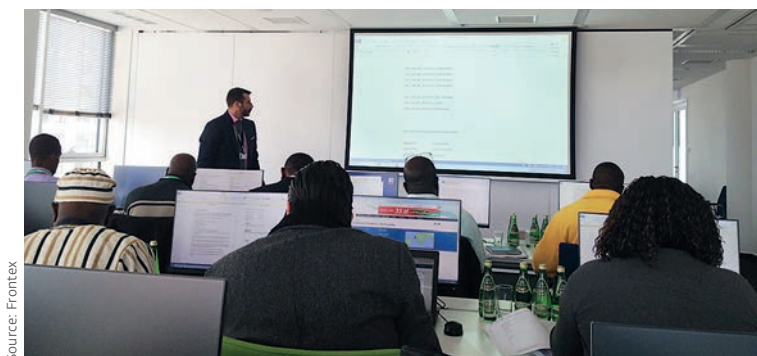
Source: Frontex

Figure 2. **Participants from AFIC countries during a training session on the use of a new platform and AFIC reporting templates**

* In order to promote the highest levels of transparency and respect for Fundamental Rights in all Frontex activities, the Frontex Fundamental Rights Strategy (March 2011) and Article 26a (2) of the amended Frontex regulation (December 2011) mandated Frontex to create a Consultative Forum (CF) comprised of relevant European and international fundamental rights organisations. The organisations currently represented in the CF are: Amnesty International European Institutions Office, Caritas Europa, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Council of Europe, European Asylum Support Office, European Council for Refugees and Exiles, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, International Catholic Migration Commission, International Commission of Jurists, International Organisation for Migration, Jesuit Refugee Service, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, Red Cross EU Office, and the UNHCR.

movements affecting the Sahel and North Africa and irregular migration linking West Africa with North Africa and the EU. In addition, by organising the first event on the African continent, the community also wanted to test the feasibility of such events in the future.

The second workshop took place in Dakar between 10 and 11 June 2015. The objective was to review the functioning of the information sharing platform and, more importantly, discuss the topics of common interest: cross-border crime and the threat posed by Boko Haram.

The two workshops were conducted in 'open discussion' format that allowed for direct and very productive exchanges. As such, they provided additional ideas for topics to be explored in the joint report. These include an update on legal travel channels between the EU and the AFIC region.

In order to present a more comprehensive picture regarding this additional topic, Frontex addressed consular authorities from Germany, France, Belgium, Spain and Italy with a specific Request for Information (RFI). Furthermore, the European Commission and the European External Action Service were also addressed with specific RFIs.

All replies to the RFIs and the issues discussed during the two workshops were fully integrated into the present report. Frontex would also like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to our Moroccan and Senega-

lese hosts for their excellent support, hospitality and professional attitude during the two events.

Joint analytical work continued throughout August and early September when the first draft of the annual report for 2015 was finalised. The draft was also shared with the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights*, which provided its comments. In addition, a meeting with International Organization for Migration (IOM) representatives was held in Dakar (June 2015) as were numerous audio or video conferences with the relevant representatives of the UNHCR, supported by UNHCR-Frontex liaison office in Warsaw.

A drafting workshop was held in Warsaw between 8 and 9 September 2015 with the purpose of improving the draft's quality by providing additional and more specific information from AFIC countries and other invited participants. Namely, apart from AFIC participants, nine observer countries (Khartoum Process + Chad) and experts from different EU missions in the Sahel region were also invited.

The drafting workshop in Warsaw was also used to further enhance the visibility of the community by adopting an AFIC logo (see Fig. 5). It will be used in conjunction with the Frontex logo in accordance with the established rules.

In addition, AFIC email server was created by Frontex and all participants were provided with initial training on the use of new communication channel. The new emails will be used to reregister all countries in the AFIC on the information-sharing platform.

Objectives of this joint report

Since the publishing of AFIC third annual report in November 2014, AFIC started to be seen by policy makers in Brussels as a model for a successful analytical and information-sharing platform. This fourth annual AFIC report is a further attempt to consolidate this cooperation model further.

Figure 3. **The first two sub-regional analytical group workshops were also attended by representatives of several EU Member States and the European Commission**

Figure 4. **Drafting workshop in Warsaw was very productive with all participants engaging in lively discussions**

Figure 5. **Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community adopted a logo that represents core values of the community and symbolically brings the two continents closer together**

Furthermore, AFIC joint report drafting process is designed in a way to provide many opportunities for African partners to engage in practical implementation of risk analysis methodology used by Frontex.

This annual report is also a culmination of joint efforts in terms of information exchange and the use of information-sharing platform. As such, the report testifies also to the positive developments in bringing African part-

ners together and sharing information among themselves as they see fit.

Lastly, the report should be read in the context of all major policy developments regarding the management of migration flows between West Africa and Europe and initiatives aimed at improving border control and return capacities of the countries involved in the AFIC.

2. Irregular migratory movements affecting AFIC countries and EU Member States

2.1. Introduction

The EU is facing a **dramatic and unprecedented irregular migration crisis**. More precisely, with roughly 340 000 illegal border-crossings reported until July 2015, the sheer magnitude of the development becomes clear. By comparison, during the same period in 2014 (a record year in its own right) 'only' 123 400 illegal border-crossings were reported.

In July 2015 alone, there were 107 500 detections of illegal border-crossing, which is more than the sum of yearly totals for 2012 and 2013.

Figure 6. **Comparison of different routes used by irregular migrants from West Africa in 2015 compared with 2014**
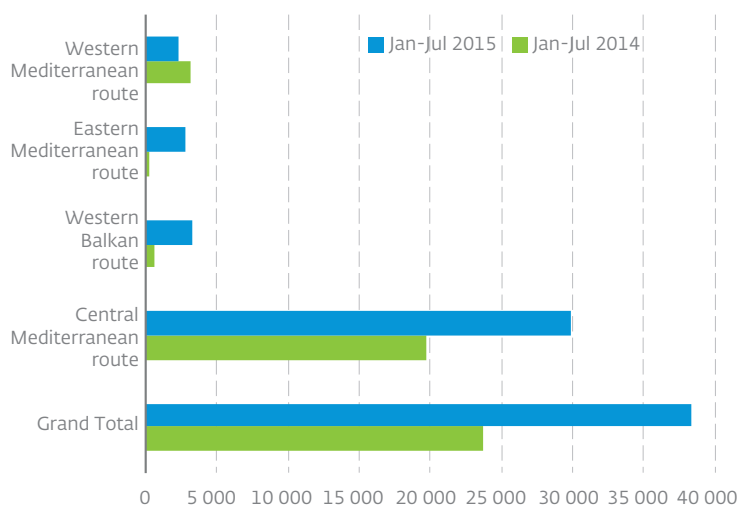

Source: FRAN data as of 10 August 2015

The dramatic nature of the situation is apparent, especially given the scale of irregular migration flows faced by border-control authorities in Greece, Hungary and Italy. These three Member States reported 97% of all cases of illegal border-crossing in the EU during 2015.

A significant share of this flow is composed of persons coming from countries producing very high numbers of refugees (e.g. Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq). This particular flow has, during 2015, mostly affected Greece on the Eastern Mediterranean route, and by extension Hungary and Croatia on the Western Balkan route. The pressure stemming from large numbers of arriving refugees is also being largely felt by the main destination EU Member States (Germany, Sweden, the UK and France).

In the Central Mediterranean, however, sub-Saharan Africans are the single largest group of persons being detected/rescued. More specifically, Nigerians, Gambians, Senegalese, Malians and Ghanaians are the top five nationalities detected amongst AFIC country nationals.
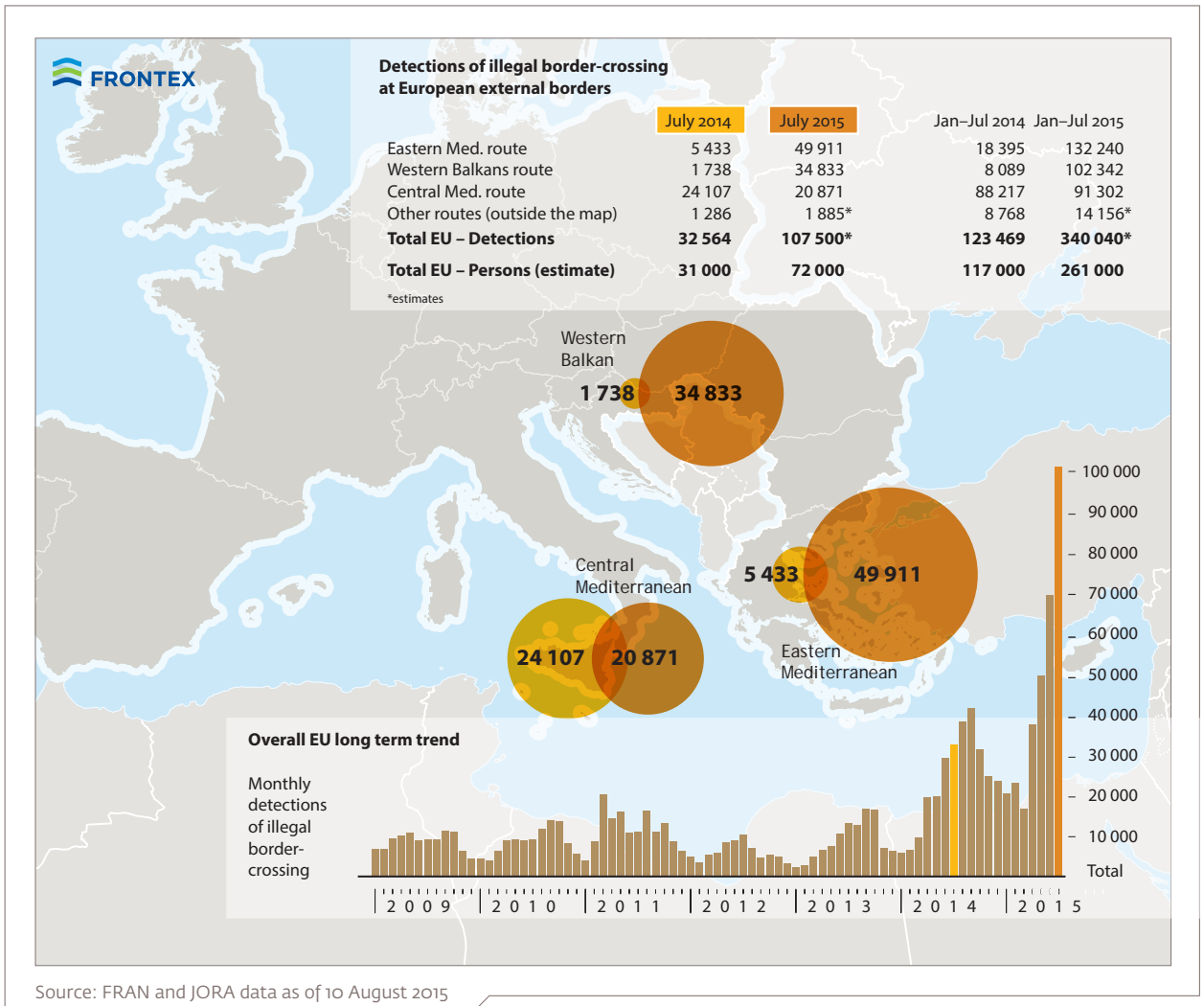
Their numbers have been steadily increasing, mostly in the Central Mediterranean as shown in Figure 6, which compares the numbers of arrivals from West Africa in the first seven months of 2014 and the same period of 2015.

Figure 7. **Detections of illegal border-crossing at European external borders during July 2015 compared with July 2014**

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Detections of illegal border-crossing at European external borders

	July 2014	July 2015	Jan–Jul 2014	Jan–Jul 2015
Eastern Med. route	5 433	49 911	18 395	132 240
Western Balkans route	1 738	34 833	8 089	102 342
Central Med. route	24 107	20 871	88 217	91 302
Other routes (outside the map)	1 286	1 885*	8 768	14 156*
Total EU – Detections	**32 564**	**107 500***	**123 469**	**340 040***
Total EU – Persons (estimate)	**31 000**	**72 000**	**117 000**	**261 000**

*estimates

Western Balkan
1 738 **34 833**

Central Mediterranean
24 107 **20 871**

5 433 **49 911**
Eastern Mediterranean

Overall EU long term trend

Monthly detections of illegal border-crossing

2 0 0 9 2 0 1 0 2 0 1 1 2 0 1 2 2 0 1 3 2 0 1 4 2 0 1 5

100 000
90 000
80 000
70 000
60 000
50 000
40 000
30 000
20 000
10 000
Total

Source: FRAN and JORA data as of 10 August 2015

Using knowledge of AFIC experts, contributions from the European Commission, EU Member States' consular authorities, regular reporting from EU Member States and available information from debriefing activities of Frontex, the current chapter explores underlying reasons behind these developments. The focus is put on analysing how several key factors have evolved. These include:

(i) availability of legal travel channels for AFIC country nationals;
(ii) likelihood of entering the EU without being returned and the risk of dying en route;
(iii) advice from relatives or friends already present in the EU and peer pressure;
(iv) access to smuggling services.

2.2. Availability of legal travel channels

2.2.1. In Africa

Travelling in Africa is greatly facilitated by the existence of ECOWAS* free-movement protocols and great porosity of the borders. Citizens have therefore access to a large area of West Africa and the Sahel with roughly 340 million inhabitants. The volume of these regular movements is difficult to estimate as reliable passenger flow data are not available; however, it is likely quite significant.

Despite the legal framework that was put in place over thirty years ago, ECOWAS nationals are still facing limitations regarding free movement. More precisely, there are significant differences among ECOWAS member states' implementing entry controls. Namely, ECOWAS member states reserve the full right to refuse entry to anyone from the ECOWAS region on the basis of their national legislation, which can substantially differ between one another. In some cases, border-control officials enjoy absolute discretion to refuse entry to would-be migrants without the need to explain their reasons or process the case.

These challenges were also mentioned during the AFIC workshop in Dakar when a lively debate arose over the question of whether one ECOWAS member state has the right to refuse entry to a national of another ECOWAS member state on the basis that the person has no sufficient means of subsistence. The debate also demonstrated the possible differing interpretations of the same text amongst border-control authorities in the ECOWAS region.

While some countries allow entry with ID cards both on land and air routes on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements (e.g. between Senegal and Guinea and Sen-

* The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on May 28 1975 via the treaty of Lagos with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. Member countries making up ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

Box 1. Increasing number of bus companies offering extensive route network in the ECOWAS region

A novel feature during 2014 and 2015, according to AFIC experts, is the increasing market presence of many bus companies. They compete for their customers by providing relatively cheap and thus affordable transport for potentially millions of persons across ECOWAS region.

Rimbo Transport Voyageurs in particular stands out as the company with the most developed network of routes and prices that are quite affordable. This company is also frequently mentioned by irregular migrants upon arrival in Italy. Its role in facilitating transit through Agadez in Niger is explained in greater detail in Section 2.3.

egal and Cape Verde) other require travel documents following the ECOWAS protocols (Ghana and Nigeria). In practice, ECOWAS countries' citizens very often travel without any kind of identity documents due to lack of basic knowledge of the free movement of people within the ECOWAS countries.

Additionally, with regards to the maximum period of stay (90 days) travelling on the basis of identity card makes it difficult to confirm the period of stay as there is no notification of entry/exit (stamp or registration system). Thus, in majority of cases this requirement is not respected.

The European Commission and its ECOWAS counterpart are aware of these many challenges. In fact, in its European Agenda on Migration, the European Commission proposed

a 24-million-euro project aimed at 'maximising the development potential of free movement of persons and migration in West Africa by supporting the effective implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement of Persons' Protocols and the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration.' The project covers all ECOWAS member states and Mauritania.

In its proclaimed objective, the action wants to strengthen the capacities of the ECOWAS commission to lead an intra-regional dialogue on free-movement and migration issues and act as a platform for policy development and harmonisation.

Furthermore, the capacities of national institutions of ECOWAS member states and Mauritania in the areas of migration data collection and management, migration policy development, border management, labour migration and anti-trafficking will be improved.

2.2.2. Between Africa and Europe

As the recently published European Agenda on Migration (COM(2015) 240 final) states, 'a clear and well implemented framework for legal pathways to entrance in the EU (both through an efficient asylum and visa system) will reduce push factors towards irregular stay and entry, contributing to enhance security of European borders as well as safety of migratory flows.'

The fact, however, remains that most of the countries in the Sahel and West Africa have the highest visa and asylum rejections rates compared to other regions of the world. For example, when it comes to visas, West Africa is the region with a visa rejection rate almost six times higher than the EU average.

In 2014, almost one in three visa applications was rejected by EU Member States'

consular authorities in West Africa resulting in 213 000 visas issued, predominately, by five EU Member States (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Spain; data do not include the UK and Ireland) for a region with an estimated 340 million inhabitants. This represented only 1.3% of the total number of short-term visas issued by EU Member States (excluding the UK and Ireland) to third country nationals.

In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, visa rejection rate stood at 50% during 2014, which was the highest rate among AFIC countries and the second highest for any third country in 2014. Other AFIC countries with consistently high rejection rates (30–40%) since 2011 are Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon and Ghana. In fact, there were five AFIC countries among the top ten third countries with the highest visa rejection rates in 2014.

The fact that visas are hard to obtain even for AFIC representatives was mentioned several times during the past meetings of the AFIC and reiterated during the AFIC workshop in Dakar. While in some cases these are logistical problems (no Polish consulate in their country or the need to travel great distances for the fingerprinting in accordance with VIS regulation), the biggest concern is the fact that a stamp with 'visa rejected' is put in the passport of an unsuccessful visa applicant. This fact alone has a potentially detrimental effect if the same persons wants to travel to Canada, the USA or the Persian Gulf.

The AFIC representative from Cameroon also mentioned that in some cases people will change their passport up to four or five times in order to have one without such a stamp. In his words: 'This practice is breeding also identity and document fraud as many try to fraudulently obtain a clean passport'.

Figure 8. **Rejection rates of visas and the number of visas issued to AFIC country nationals in 2014**
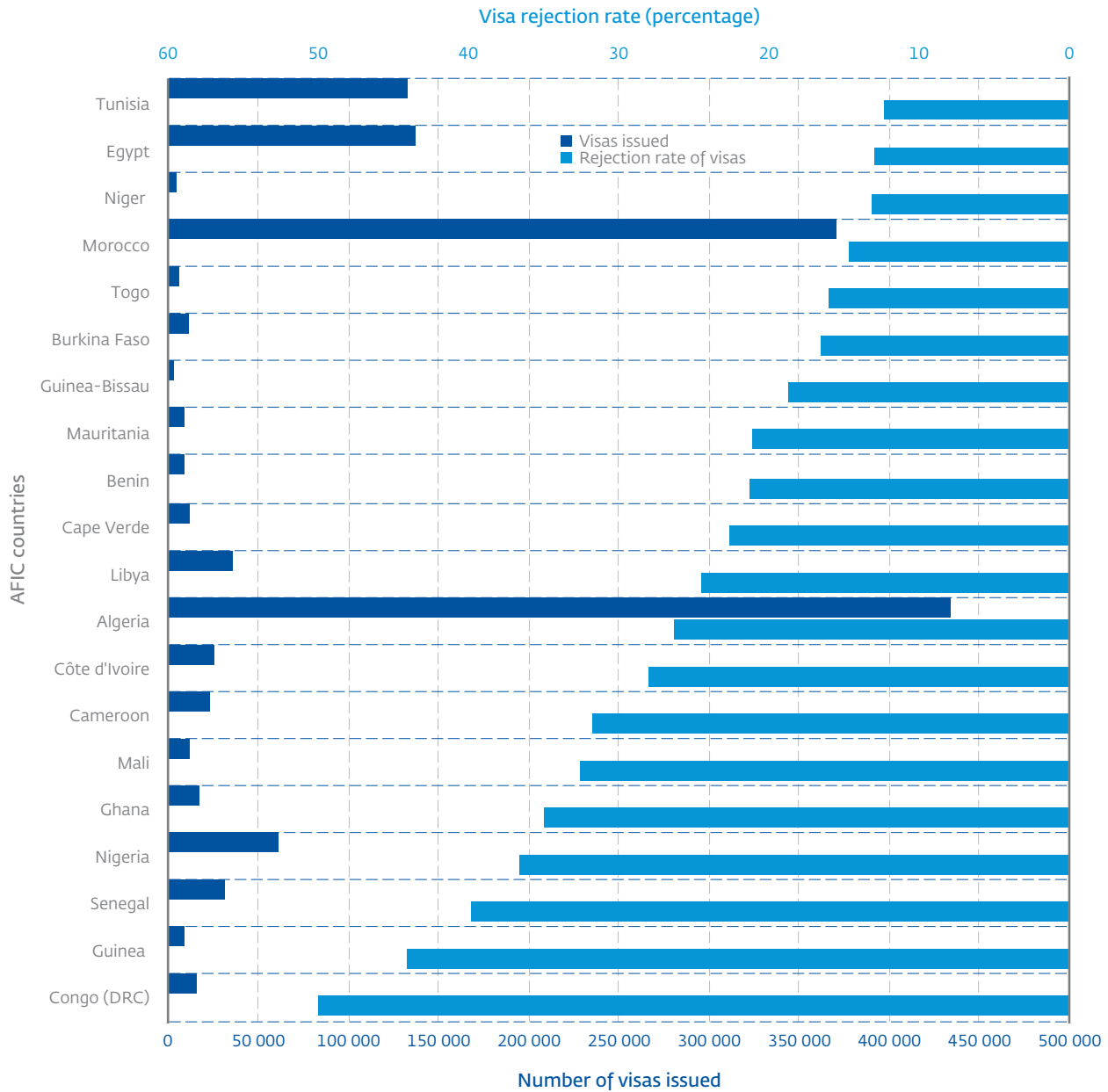
Source: Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen States

2.2.3. Regular passenger flow between West Africa and Europe

According to available Eurostat data, the number of passengers arriving in the EU on flights originating from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Togo has been steadily rising since 2009. During 2014 this trend reversed as the numbers decreased compared to 2013.

This was likely due to flights from Senegal and Nigeria carrying fewer passengers to Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Madrid and Brussels airports. The largest drop in passengers were on flights to Paris, both Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports especially from June 2014 onwards, while Madrid also registered fewer passengers from Dakar, albeit with a more moderate decrease.

These decreases on direct routes to Europe are likely down to the 'Ebola' restrictions and passengers increasingly flying via Turkey given that Turkish Airlines increased capacity from Lagos and Dakar in the summer of 2014.

In the case of Lagos, Turkish Airlines has increased its capacity annually for a number

Figure 9. **As visa rejection rates are the highest in West and Central Africa consular authorities of several EU Member States clearly mark a rejection by stamp affixing a stamp in the passport pages normally reserved for visas and entry/exit stamps**

**Box 2.   Impact of introduction of Visa Information System (VIS)**

Facilitation in visa procedure, less visa shopping: with the implementation of the VIS consular authorities can verify also possible other visa applications of the applicant. This gives a full image of the profile of the applicant (purpose of stay and country of destination). The status of earlier visa applications can be decisive in some cases.

Reduction of fraud: The fingerprints of the applicant and the verification in the VIS by linking with other applications, give a useful control mechanism of the identity of the applicant. This limits the cases of look-alikes and identity theft.

Source: Belgian consular authorities in Dakar, Abuja, Abidjan and Yaounde (reply to the RFI)

Figure 10. **Gradual increase of air passenger flow both from West African countries and Morocco to the EU**

Air passenger flow from West African and Moroccan airports to EU destinations between 2009 and 2014
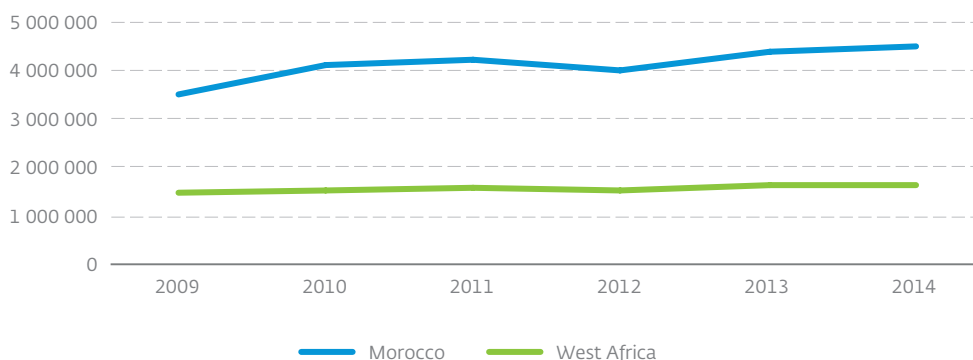
Source: Eurostat as of 26 June 2015

Box 3.   Turkish Airlines have the largest network in Africa

Turkish Airlines has nearly doubled its seat capacity to Africa from about 38 000 in 2011 to about 70 000 weekly seats at the end of 2014.

Turkish Airlines further expanded during 2015 adding at least six new destinations in Africa. The airline already has the largest network in the continent among foreign carriers, followed by Air France and Emirates. By the end of 2015, Turkish Airlines has approximately 45 destinations in its African network across 30 countries.

Air France has the second largest African network among European carriers with 34 destinations. Brussels Airlines operates 19 destinations, while British Airways has 18 and Lufthansa 13.

Unsurprisingly, several members of AFIC members mentioned the fact that Turkish Airlines are transporting a growing number of their nationals either towards Istanbul or in transit towards the Gulf region.

Flying to Turkey seems to be fairly easy for many would-be migrants who gain an easy access to the external borders of the EU.

Importantly, during 2015 significantly more Congolese and Cameroonians, Moroccans, Algerians, Nigerians and Ghanaians were detected en route from Greece through the Western Balkans towards Hungary.

Source: centreforaviation.com

Source: Frontex

Figure 11. **Turkish Airlines advertisement in Dakar, where passenger numbers on Turkish Airlines flights are increasing**

of years, however, in the case of Dakar, the capacity was increased by over 50% in 2014, which was not the case in 2013. These diversions in passenger flow during the summer months could account for around 3 000 passengers per month not taking the usual direct connections to Europe (calculation based on the capacity of aircraft and frequency of flights). Also of importance is the fact that Turkish Airlines have been adding capacity on all their flights to Africa, including in other AFIC countries (like Cameroon) that are not included in the Eurostat data set (see Box 3).

Flights from Sierra Leone and Liberia, which are not included in the Eurostat database,

Figure 12. **Lagos and Dakar accounted for most passengers travelling via air route towards the EU in 2013 and 2014**
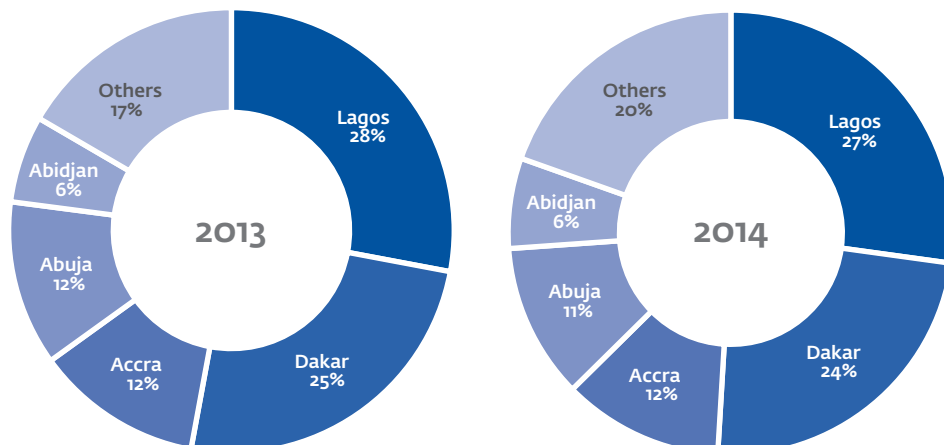
Source: Eurostat as of 26 June 2015

Figure 13. **The main destination airports from West Africa to the EU were Paris Charles de Gaulle, Porto Santo, London Heathrow and Amsterdam Schiphol**

Passenger flow between the main West African airports and European destinations during 2014
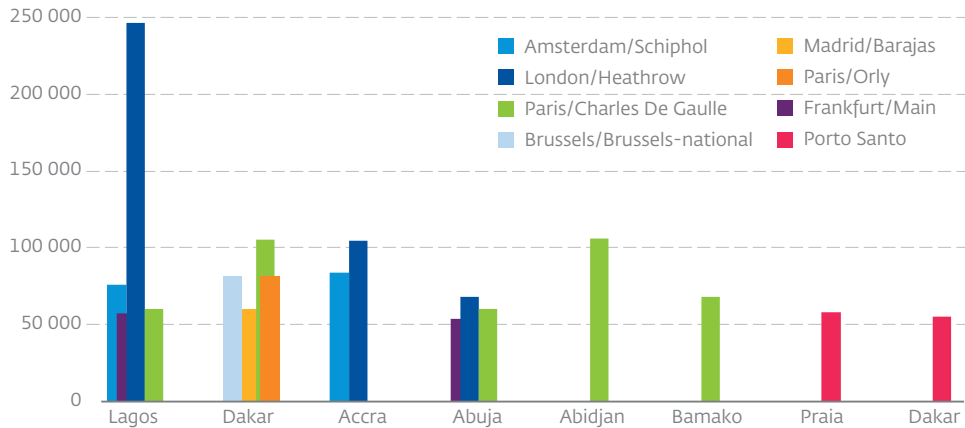
Source: Eurostat as of 26 June 2015

Figure 14. **2009 and 2012 saw a high rates of refusals of entry issued to West Africans (principally at London Heathrow and Paris Charles de Gaulle) despite relatively low passenger flows, but since 2012 refusals of entry have been declining sharply thanks to all EU destinations issuing less refusals**

Refusals of entry issues to West African countries' citizens at reporting EU airports between 2009 and 2014
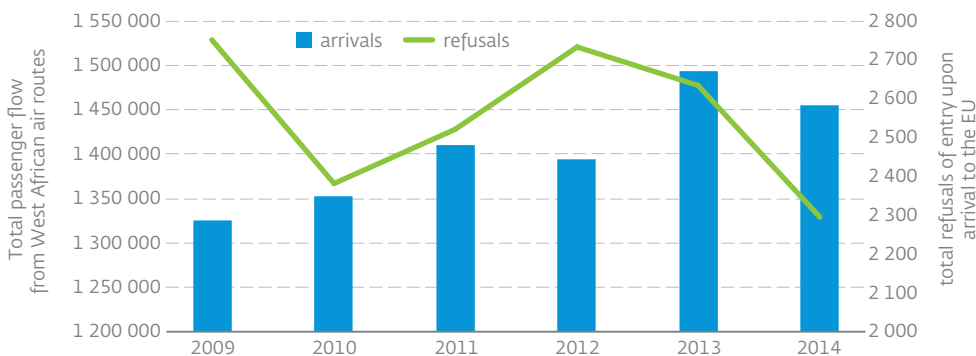
Source: Eurostat and FRAN data

Figure 15. **Refusals of entry are gradually decreasing, although each year a surge occurs in the final four months of the year**

Monthly breakdown of passenger flow (left scale) compared to refusals of entry (right scale) in 2012–2014
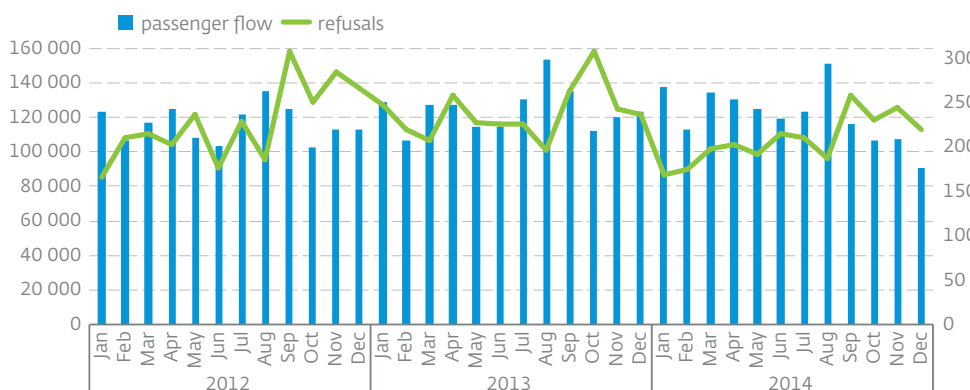
Source: Eurostat and FRAN data

could have further dented this longer term rising trend of passenger flow in the second half of 2014, since flights between London Heathrow and Freetown/Monrovia (British Airways) were suspended between August 2014 and January 2015, due to the Ebola crisis.

In 2014, most passengers from West Africa used Nigeria's Lagos Murtala Muhammed International Airport to make their way towards Europe, with around 56% of these 440 000 passengers flying to London Heathrow airport, the rest were split between the international airports of Paris, Amsterdam and Frankfurt.

The second main air hub to the EU from West Africa during 2014 proved to be Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, despite noting the largest decrease in its passenger flow compared with any other West African airport under investigation (23 782 or 6.7% since 2013).

In addition to these two main airports, Ghana's Accra Kotoka International airport with connections to London Heathrow, Frankfurt International and Paris Charles de Gaulle, as well as Nigeria's Abuja Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport connecting Paris Charles de Gaulle, proved to be airports with significant passenger flows above 180 000 in 2014.

The drop in the share of total passengers travelling through Lagos, Dakar and Abuja seem to have been diverted towards other airports in the West African region. The main airport witnessing a large surge in passenger travel in 2014 was Bamako in Mali. Between 2011 and 2013, the passenger flow to Paris dropped from 67 986 (2011) to 38 578 (2012) to 29 949 (2013). In 2014 however, the passenger flow through Bamako bounced back to 68 327. This can be linked to the end of operation Serval, the French military intervention in Mali which began in January 2013 and

lasted until mid-2014. Indeed, during 2013 no passengers departed Bamako towards Europe in the first five months of the year, coinciding with the beginning of the military intervention.

2.2.4. Ratios of refusals of entry compared to passenger flow

The peak in EU-wide refusals of entry noted in 2012, was mainly due to London Heathrow and Paris Charles de Gaulle airports issuing high numbers of refusals. Since 2012, the refusals of entry issued by these two major air hubs to West Africans has been declining, contributing greatly to the overall decrease in refusals of entry issued by Member State authorities at air borders.

The highest number of refusals of entry per 1 000 passengers in 2014 were on flights between Lagos and Paris Charles de Gaulle. Refusals in Paris were slightly above 3 per 1 000 passengers, which represents a marginally higher rate compared to 2013.

Most of these refusals were issued because no appropriate documentation justifying the purpose and length of stay could be provided by the traveller. A disproportionately high (55%) share of refusals of entry were issued during the last 4 months of the year, which seems to be in line with the general trend across reporting EU airports.

Passengers travelling from Lagos to other European destinations were also refused entry in higher ratios than from other departure airports in West Africa. Indeed, authorities at London Heathrow airport refused entry to around 2.7 out of 1 000 passengers while in Amsterdam this ratio was a lower 1.7 out of 1 000. Reasons for refusals were similar, in that most passengers were refused for a lack of visa or residence permit, or because they could not present suitable documents to justify their stay.

In contrast, the lowest rates of refusal measured against passenger flow were between Abuja (Nigeria) and Paris, while Accra (Ghana) to Amsterdam followed close behind. On these connections the refusal of entry ratio per 1 000 passengers was below 0.5 in 2013 and dropped to below 0.25 in 2014, in other words approximately 1 in 4 000 passengers were refused entry.

2.3. Access to smuggling services, advice from relatives or friends and peer pressure

Most irregular migrants from West Africa who cannot obtain a visa or travel to the EU using other legal avenues opt to travel by land through Agadez in Niger, where many smuggling services are easily available.

Evidence from debriefing of migrants in the Central Mediterranean during 2015 suggest that many have started their journey after receiving information or encouragement from friends or relatives already in the EU. The suggestion was that it is now fairly easy to reach the EU regardless of the heightened risk of dying in the desert or at sea in the Mediterranean.

This perceived easiness is obviously prompting many new departures as open source reporting suggests that the number of weekly arrivals of West Africans to Agadez can reach around 6 000.

What is interesting is the fact that poverty is not necessarily the sole factor that influences a decision to migrate. As suggested by an IOM study*, 'poverty usually needs to be accompanied by a perception of inequality or an appreciation for the fact that something greater exists'. IOM termed this as 'aspirational migration'.

An example given by the AFIC representatives of Niger highlights the aspirational nature of some migratory movements: even though the agricultural region of Kantche in Niger (on the border with Nigeria) is relatively rich, people who are relatively well off still choose to depart. Furthermore, micro credits given by the government to local women were used to finance trips to Europe instead of for its intended purpose.

Many in Niger and West Africa view migration to Europe also as a 'cultural' phenomenon. Some would-be migrants are driven by the fame and status migrants gain after they are able to buy a house or a car upon return from Europe. These perceptions of how easy it is to get rich in Europe are strong.

The paradox mentioned by the representative of Niger is that many migrants would never accept menial and low-paying jobs in their own countries but are willing to do so when either in transit or already at destination.

In any case, arriving in Niger and travelling to Agadez is relatively cheap, fast and quite simple. As discussed in further detail below, migrants need only buy a bus ticket and hop on buses that connect Niamey and Agadez with numerous cities in the ECOWAS region.

Many regular bus lines are operating en route from countries like the Gambia, Senegal, Benin, Mali and Ghana to Niger. In the case of migrants from the Gambia, there are at least

* *Migration Trends across the Mediterranean: Connecting the Dots,* IOM, June 2015

Figure 17. **Hundreds of young Africans wait to board a RTV bus from Niamey to Agadez in late July 2015. The ticket costs EUR 19**

four companies operating buses en route between the Gambia and the city of Agadez: Rimbo Transport Voyageurs (RTV), Sonef, Africa Star and 3STV.

For example, it costs around EUR 60 or 41 000 CFA francs to travel 1 600 km from Cotonou in Benin to Agadez in Niger. From Dakar in Senegal, RTV is offering tickets for EUR 120 for the journey that covers almost 3 800 km (see Fig. 16).

Migrants usually pay for each leg of the bus ride separately so that they do not carry large sums of money with them. The money is

Figure 16. **Main routes and prices of the bus company Rimbo Transport Voyageurs linking many cities in West Africa with Agadez**
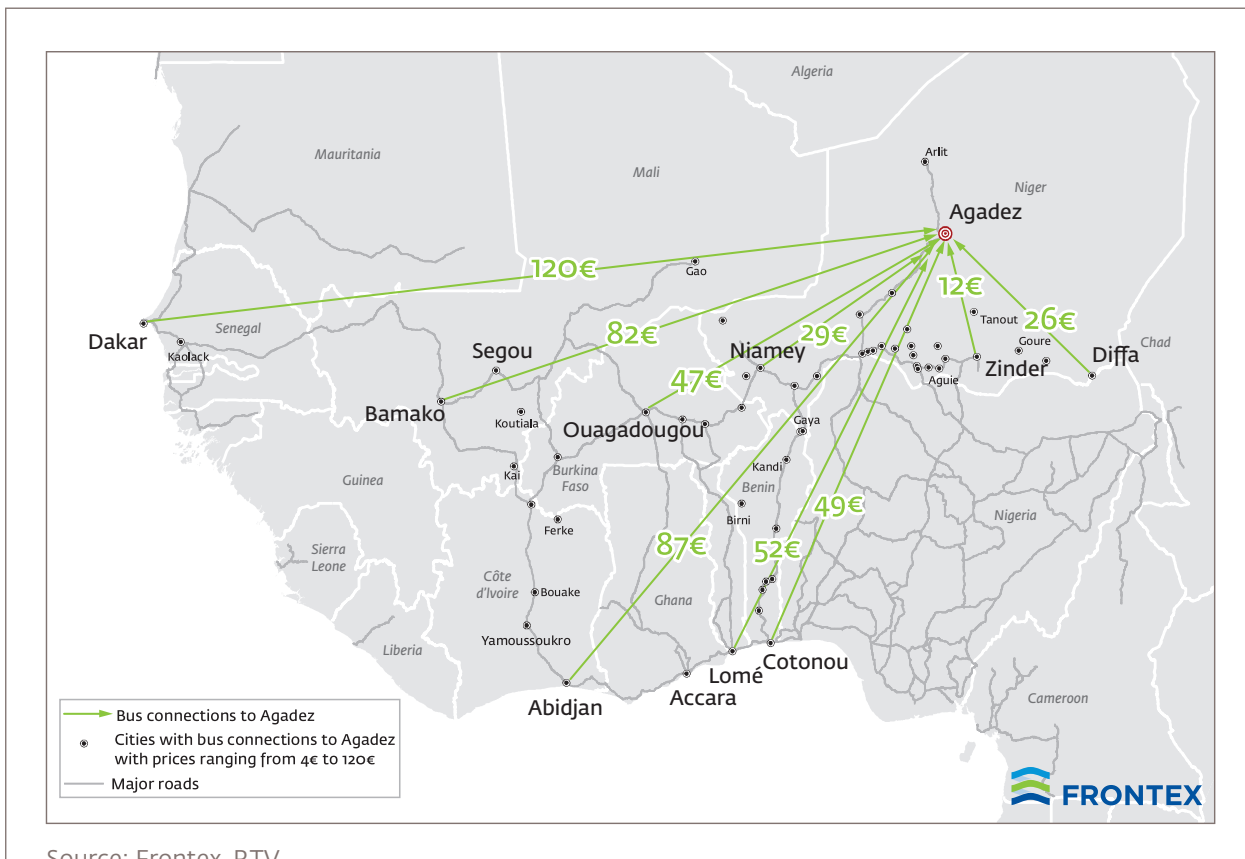
Source: Frontex, RTV

transferred using money transfer companies along the route.

Nigerien authorities are maintaining several checkpoints between Niamey and Agadez. Police and soldiers manning these checkpoints are often accused of taking bribes from smugglers and migrants. In fact, according to Niger's agency HALCIA (*Haute Autorité de lutte contre la Corruption et les Infractions Assimilées*) corruption remains a major issue. In its report from 2013 the HALCIA concluded that payments to security forces and local authorities totalled USD 450 per vehicle and USD 30 per foreign migrant on the route between Agadez and the Libyan border. The HALCIA mission also found that bribes paid by migrants were essential to keep the security forces functioning as money earmarked in the military budget to buy diesel for vehicles, spare parts and food simply disappeared in Niamey.

This sentiment was echoed during the April 2015 HALCIA workshop on corruption in the road transport sector. According to the chief of staff of the Minister for Transport of Niger, corruption and false travel expenses have become common practices in relations between some road users and those responsible for management and traffic control. Furthermore, corruption in the transport sector is also manifest in unhealthy practices regarding issuing of administrative documents, and especially the control of the roads through what is commonly called 'road harassment'.

The issue of corruption is also exacerbated by the fact that in practically all AFIC countries border guards who are sent to remote regions consider this as a form of professional punishment and are therefore unmotivated. As reported by Cameroon, the approach often taken by the authorities to counter corruption is to rotate available staff on a regular basis.

Figure 18. **Regular bus lines are not used only for transport of people but also drugs**

Box 5.   AFIC Incident Report.

Operation against a migrant smuggling network

27.05.2015 – As part of the fight against Illegal immigration, Nigerien National Police intercepted, at the entrance of the city of Agadez, 124 sub-Saharans. They are as follows: 12 Gambian, 15 Senegalese, 45 Nigerians, 2 Bissau Guineans, 10 Malians, 1 Guinean, 11 Ivorians, 6 Burkinabe, 21 Ghanaians and 1 Beninese.

Result: The Nigerien authorities have put several buses available to ensure return of the migrants to their home countries.
Source: Nigerien AFIC delegation

Box 6.   Smuggling of explosives on regular bus connections in Niger

Authorities in Niger are confronted with a growing problem of explosives being smuggled on regular passenger buses. There were at least two seizures of large quantities of explosives and detonators during July-August 2015. Both cases were discovered during routine checks of passengers' baggage on bus lines linking Niamey and Agadez. The first seizure was of 96 sticks of explosives, 50 detonators, 10 detonating cords and 6 rolls of detonating cords. The second one was very similar regarding the material however with smaller quantities.

Some AFIC partners expressed their worry (during AFIC workshop in Warsaw, September 2015) that these explosives might also be used for terrorist attacks in the wider region.

Source: Niger, AFIC workshop in Warsaw, September 2015

When buses arrive in Agadez, passengers are immediately surrounded by people, called 'Chasseurs' offering accommodation in so-called 'ghettos' and onward transport to Libya. They get a few thousand CFA francs (up to EUR 5) for each migrant they bring to the ghetto. Accommodation is reportedly not very expensive as most of the profits are made on transport towards Libya.

Interviewed migrants, authorities in Niger, different NGOs and open sources cite fairly similar prices for the trip to Sabha – between EUR 180 and 300. Usually, the money is split between the owner of the ghetto and the driver of who reportedly gets around 100 000 CFA francs or EUR 150 per each migrant.

Those that cannot afford to travel to Libya opt to go to Morocco (Algeria/Morocco/Spain) and in some cases are provided with Malian passports (visa-free status in Algeria and Morocco) and/or a false UNHCR document registering them as refugees is Algeria. 'Rental' of this kind of documents costs between EUR 50 (for a Malian passport) and EUR 10 (for UNHCR documents). Malian or UNHCR refugee documents are used for identification during many road check Algerian authorities hold on major roads in the region. Once in Maghnia, close to the Moroccan border, the networks will take care of retrieving the documents so that they can be reused.

The vast majority, however, chooses to go to Libya. Some arrivals in Agadez (mostly Sudanese) are also lured by the promise of finding gold in Djado, a hamlet seven hundred kilometres north-east of Agadez, where soil gold was discovered in 2013. Such artisanal mining not only carries life hazards but also breeds smuggling of explosives on regular buses (see Box 6).

Source: Georg Hofer

Figure 19. **A group of young migrants from Burkina Faso is waiting for onward transport in a ghetto in Agadez**

Box 7.   EU to help Niger by creating a pilot multi-purpose centre

According to the European Agenda on Migration 'a pilot multi-purpose centre is to be set up in Niger. Working with the IOM, the UNHCR and the Niger authorities, the centre will combine the provision of information, local protection and resettlement opportunities for those in need. Such centres in countries of origin or transit will help to provide a realistic picture of the likely success of migrants' journeys, and offer assisted voluntary return options for irregular migrants.'

Whereas the existing four centres in Niger (operated by IOM) provide basic assistance to migrants and limited Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) opportunities, the new *multi-purpose centre* project will offer a more comprehensive range of services aimed at supporting migrants (including returnees) and local host communities, and promoting alternatives to irregular migration.

Such a centre should offer the possibility of medical and psychological assistance to migrants transiting through Niger as well as the host communities. The migrants would be advised on the dangers of irregular migration, and provide a realistic view of future perspectives of life in Europe (existence as an irregular migrant) and inform about credible alternatives to risky journeys.

According to AFIC representative from Niger persuading the transiting migrants not to continue their onward journey is and will remain an uphill battle. Namely, the authorities in Agadez are dealing with migrants who are determined to reach Libya and Italy, have invested money and reputational capital, are legally present on the territory of Niger (ECOWAS free-movement protocol) and in most part are able to finance their onward journeys. Only small minority request return assistance from IOM and their transit centre is currently (August 2015) almost empty (capacity up to 1 000 persons).

Box 8.   Niger adopts a tough law against the smuggling of migrants. This is the first law of that kind in West African countries

The Nigerien Parliament approved a law that increases sentences from 1 to 30 years of prison, penalties from 3 million up to 30 million CFA francs (EUR 4 500–45 000) for human traffickers and allows for the seizure of their vehicles.

According to the Nigerien Ministry of Justice, the main goal of this law is 'to protect the country borders. At these disturbed times, when the organised crime sows the terror in our country, it is essential that all those who travel have their identity accreditation. This law imposes it'.

Smaller vans are also transporting would-be migrants from Niamey to Agadez

Source: Spanish National Police

2.3.1. Growing service industry catering for transiting migrants in Agadez

Thousands of would-be migrants transit Agadez every month. In fact, given the increasing weekly arrivals in Agadez and almost 45 000 that have already irregularly entered Italy from Libya (until August 2015), roughly 100 000 West Africans are expected to transit through Agadez in 2015. In a city of 140 000 people, the numbers are staggering and difficult to ignore. According to open source estimates, these numbers are as much as four times higher compared to the period prior to 2011 when a lot of Africans were travelling to Libya for work.

Unsurprisingly, local officials and inhabitants (according to open sources) view this transit as beneficial to the local economy. Transiting migrants spend money on food, water, accommodation, and generally contribute critically to the local economy. Furthermore, the steady demise of regular tourism prompted many former tour guides to switch and cater for the transiting migrants.

Attempts to tackle this growing industry could spark riots in Agadez. Part of the challenge for authorities in Niger is also the fact that no one person controls the smuggling/services industry. Already in 2013 Niger's national police reported there were more than 70 smugglers 'ghettos' active in Agadez.

2.4. Libya remains in a power vacuum

The current Libyan situation is characterised by the collapse of government security structures, even in the west of the country, where most of the migrants start their journey towards Europe. The security vacuum is filled by militias, often performing duties in their area of influence. They are not bound by state law, but rather guided by their own interests. These militias range from city and district militias to tribal militias, ideologically motivated militias and criminal gangs. The command and control structures often function only to a limited extent.

The southern tribes of Libya, the Toubou and Tuareg are both engaged in providing some border security, in the absence of a central and effective border force. However, elements from both tribes are almost certainly also involved in the smuggling business themselves, and it is judged that their primary interests will remain financial.

Source: Georg Hofer

Figure 20. **Water stand in Agadez where locals are selling water canisters to the migrants preparing to travel through Sahara to Libya**

Source: Jochen Stanchke

Figure 21. **A migrant is waiting in front of a banking establishment in Agadez for money transfer**

**Box 9.   Irregular routes as reported by Niger**

According to the National Police of Niger, moving towards Libya or Algeria maintains these main routes than precedent years:

- Agadez/Arlit/Assamaka/Inguezzam/Tamanrassett, the main road, which is less risky;
- Agadez/Arlit/Inguezzam/Tamanrassett (route bypasses the police station);
- Agadez/Arlit/Tchingalen/Bouss Adrar/Tchibarakaten, where Libyan and Algerian facilitators offer packages to Janett (Algeria) or Gath (Libya). Migrants are housed in places called 'garage' that belong to the facilitators. Crossing to Algeria or Libya is done in small groups and preferably overnight in order to avoid possible checkpoints;
- Agadez/Ténéré/Dirkou/Seguidine/DaoTimi/Madama/Toumo/Gatrone/Oubari/Sabahaon.

Starting from Seguidine, the route is very dangerous and migrants face a high risk of dying in the desert given the many cases of drivers simply abandoning migrants;

- Agadez/Dirkou/Seguidine/Chirfa/Djado/Janet in Algeria. This route is also very dangerous since most of the journey is done at night with only stars showing the way;
- Tchintabaraden/Azanag/Albada/Nabamgaré/Assamaka/Tamanrasset/Dabab;
- Tchintabaraden/Gharo/Tassara/Assamaka/Tamanrasset/Dabab. The routes departing from Tchintabaraden are becoming more and more important. Often, the transport is provided by vehicles from Libya.

Geographical representation of these routes as presented by Niger during the AFIC workshop in Casablanca (May 2015)
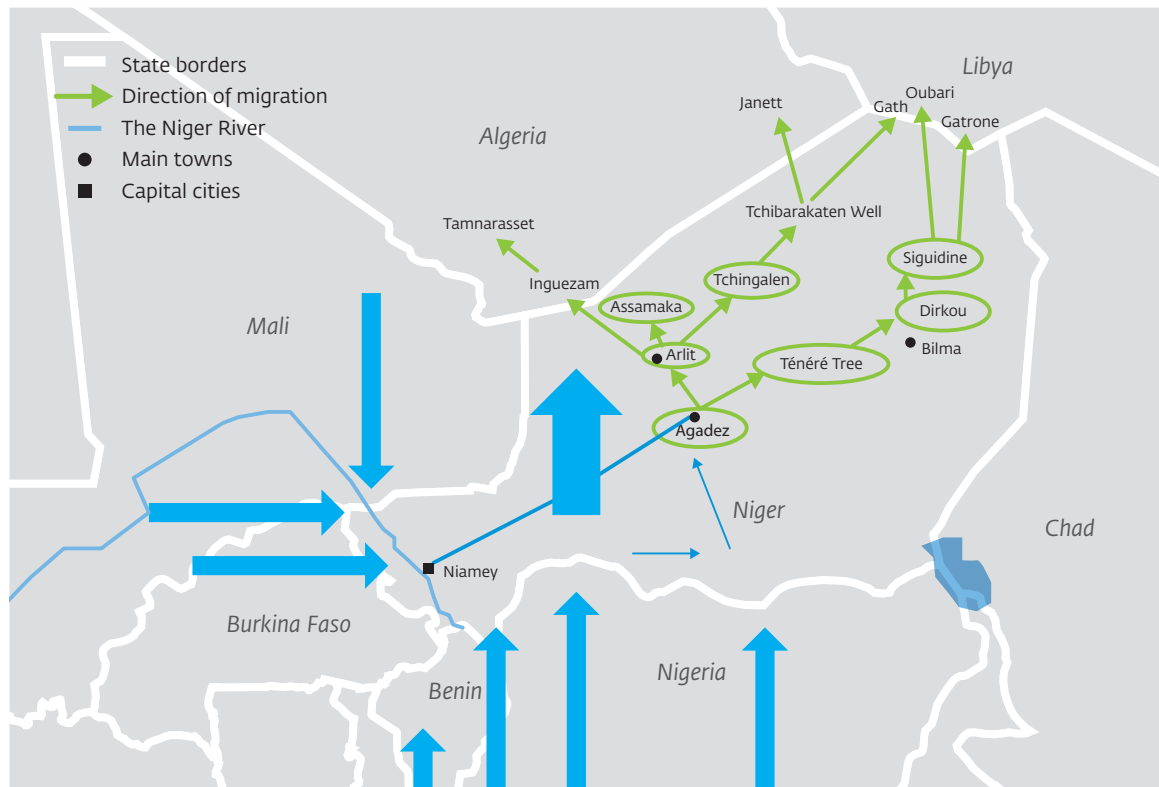
2.4.1. Anatomy of smuggling networks in Libya

The migrant smuggling networks in Libya are composed of active and former military/law-enforcement officers structured in a hierarchical and strict criminal organisation.

It is challenging for the smugglers to transfer migrants to the coastal departure points, as they have to move through the various militia control points. Due to hostilities and rivalry among militias, their controlled areas change constantly. Therefore, it is indispensable for human smugglers to know which group controls the transit areas at any given moment. Most probably, the fighting in coastal areas (e.g. over the route between western Tripoli and Ras Ajdir) is actually for control over the smuggling routes and the share of the profits.

The common structure of these smuggling networks has three levels:

- **High level:** composed of the leading persons, described as Libyan nationals and members of active/former military/police officers.
- **Medium level:** middlemen named 'people smugglers' (usually Libyans) who organise the journey of the would-be migrants and their shelter while in Libya. They confirm the arrangements of the journey (such as price, type of vessel, etc.).
- **Low level:** members in charge of collecting new 'clients' willing to reach the EU, as well as giving support to the people smugglers during the embarkation process at the beach. Usually, these members are of the same nationality as the would-be migrants (Syrian, Sudanese, Eritrean, and Somali), in order to be trusted easily by them.

2.4.2. Purchasing boats in Libya

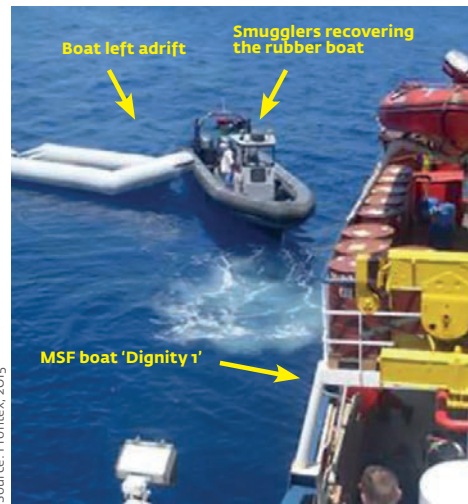Thus far in 2015, inflatable dinghies (75% of the total) and wooden boats have been the

Source: Frontex, 2015

Figure 22. **Smugglers towing a rubber boat back to Libya**

two types of boats used to cross the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Italy. The choice of boat is based on the availability and price of the vessel.

The type of boat used by the irregular migrants arriving in Italy from Libya has varied since the beginning of 2015. Starting from April an increase in the use of wooden boats has taken place. The migrant smuggling networks typically buy wooden boats in Tunisia and to a lesser extent in Egypt. Smugglers are also increasingly adamant to recover boats used for crossings as clearly shown by Figure 22.

Cooperation between authorities is of key importance on other routes

In the case of western Mediterranean and Ceuta and Melilla, cooperation between Spain and Morocco is also helping to reduce the number of irregular migrants. The Moroccan Gendarmerie Royale informs that 90 attempts to climb over the fences of Melilla and Ceuta involving more than 18 000 irregular sub-Saharan migrants were recorded in 2014.

Box 10. EU Naval Force – Mediterranean

MISSION

On 23 April 2015, the European Council stressed that the Union will mobilise all efforts to prevent further loss of life at sea, tackle the root causes of the human emergency in the Mediterranean – in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit – and fight human smugglers and traffickers. On 18 May 2015, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a military CSDP operation to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean (Council Decision 2015/778 dated 18 May 2015).

As a result, and as part of the EU's comprehensive approach to the challenge, on 22 June 2015 the EU launched an EU military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med). The aim of this military operation is to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and dispose of vessels as well as enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers. Countering the smuggling and trafficking of migrants is one dimension of addressing the human tragedy that we see in the Mediterranean Sea. It is also an important contribution to saving lives and improving security in the region.

MANDATE

EUNAVFOR Med (now renamed Operation Sophia) operates in accordance with the political, strategic and politico-military objectives set out in order to:
- disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Mediterranean;
- contribute to reducing the further loss of lives at sea In accordance with the Council Decision dated 18 May 2015 the operation shall end no later than 12 months after having reached Full Operational Capability (FOC).

The Operation Sophia is conducted in sequential phases and in full compliance with international law, including humanitarian, refugee and human rights law.
- The first phase focuses on surveillance and assessment of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean.
- The second stage of the operation provides for the search and, if necessary, diversion of suspicious vessels.
- The third phase would allow the disposal of vessels and related assets, preferably before use, and to apprehend traffickers and smugglers.

The Council shall assess whether the conditions for transition beyond the first phase have been met, taking into account any applicable UN Security Council Resolution and consent by the Coastal States concerned.

Source: European Union External Action Service

Moroccan authorities have also dug a moat and have built a high fence on its own territory in the most vulnerable areas of the perimeter near the border with the Spanish cities. These fences and moat, combined with implementation of readmission agreement between Morocco and Spain, reinforcement of Moroccan Border Guard Units protecting the fence and dismantlement of makeshift camps of irregular migrants, have reduced the numbers attempts.

In response, many sub-Saharan migrants have changed their *modus operandi* and are increasingly trying to take the sea route towards Spain.

Box 11.   Western African route remains effectively closed due to joint efforts of Spain, Senegal, Morocco and Mauritania

At the Western African route that connects Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco with the Canary Island in Spain the numbers remain almost negligible despite a gradual increasing trends for departures from Morocco during 2014.

These recent departures are mainly located in Moroccan shores specifically nearby the ports of Agadir, Sidi-Ifni, El Ouaitia/Tan-Tan, Tarfaya, Boujdour* and Ad Dakhla** (see map).

Due to the effectiveness of the MoUs between Spain, Senegal and Mauritania, the last boat (*cayuco*) which arrived on the Canary Islands from Senegal was in 2008 and the last one coming from Mauritanian shores was in June 2014, as Mauritanian and Senegalese AFIC delegates reported during workshops in Casablanca and Dakar.

This route is therefore characterised by a high return/readmission risk for migrants which contributes to the low numbers of departures and low numbers of migrants dying. Still, at least 12 people died during March 2015 (exposure and dehydration) in two separate incidents involving boats that have departed from Morocco.

As the route is effectively closed, migrant smuggling networks are constantly testing other *modi operandi*. Hence, in recent years Senegalese authorities have reported the use of cargo vessels, which have previously been moored in the port of Dakar, by migrants trying to enter illegally into the EU.

Canary Islands

Agadir
Sidi Ifni
Morocco
El Ouatia
Tarfaya
Al Ayoun
Boujdour
Ad Dakhla
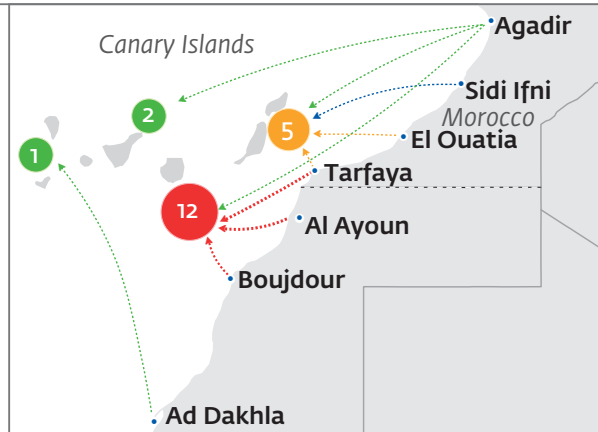
Source: CCRC, Guardia Civil

Between 2013 and 2014 three cargo vessels, towed to EU ports for scrapping, were used by sub-Saharan to illegally enter European soil. This is a very similar *modus operandi* well-known in other parts of the Mediterranean Sea, such as the ports of Turkey and Eastern Mediterranean, where criminal networks used old cargo vessels to transport irregular migrants towards the EU.

Last Senegalese intervention was carried out on 15 February 2015 when Senegalese Marine Commandos boarded the vessel *Dola*, sailing under Togolese flag, which was escorted and docked at Dakar port.

After the operation, 17 members of the crew were arrested, accused of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and human trafficking. This vessel was also involved in a piracy attack against the fishing vessel *Lu Rong Yu-Tuan* off the coast of Ghana (January 2015).

After an in-depth search in the interior of the vessel, 11 Nigerian would-be irregular migrants were found. They were attempting to reach Europe. They started the trip hidden as stowaways in the Nigerian port of Lagos.

Source: Frontex

Senegalese patrol boat donated by Spain

Source: Senegalese AFIC delegation

Vessel *Dola* assaulted on 15 February 2015 by Senegalese Special Forces

* In areas between Tarfaya-Al'Ayun-Boujdour, AoI in beaches such as Negritas, Blaibilat, Mraijnat and Roka Ariel

** Ad Dakhla port: attempts in 2014 but no arrivals due to Spanish-Moroccan cooperation (including JO EPN Hera)

Algerian nationals also continue to arrive on Spanish shores of Andalucía and Levante. The phenomenon called *harga* ('burning' in Arabic) has decreased since 2013, largely due to good collaboration between Spanish and Algerian authorities regarding rapid repatriation processes.

This again shows how important effective cooperation between transit, source and destination countries is in preventing unauthorised departures and thus preventing death at sea and ensuring integrity of legal migration channels.

The European Commission (EC) is aware of this link between effective return policy of persons who are illegally present on the territory of the EU or no longer have the right to stay (e.g. failed asylum seekers). In its European Agenda on migration, the EC states that 'one of the incentives for irregular migrants is the knowledge that the EU's return system – meant to return irregular migrants or those whose asylum applications are re-

Figure 23. **Very typical toy boat used by many would-be migrants for crossing from Morocco to Spain. In 2014, Morocco reported a total of 12 267 irregular migrants that were prevented from reaching Spain by sea (1 746 until April 2015). The main nationalities were Senegalese (41%), Malians (33%), Guineans (12%), Ivorians (9%), Algerians, Ghanaians and Nigerians (all 3%)**

fused – works imperfectly.' The EC proposes several key actions in this regard, including to reinforce and amend the Frontex legal basis to strengthen its role on return.

Figure 24. **Illegal border-crossings of Algerian nationals in Spain and effective returns of Algerian nationals by Spain, comparison between years. Return likelihood is calculated using ratio between illegal border-crossings and effective returns performed by Spain. The number close to one indicates higher likelihood and therefore higher return risk (year 2015)**


■ Illegal border-crossings ■ Effective return ▬ Return likelihood – right axis
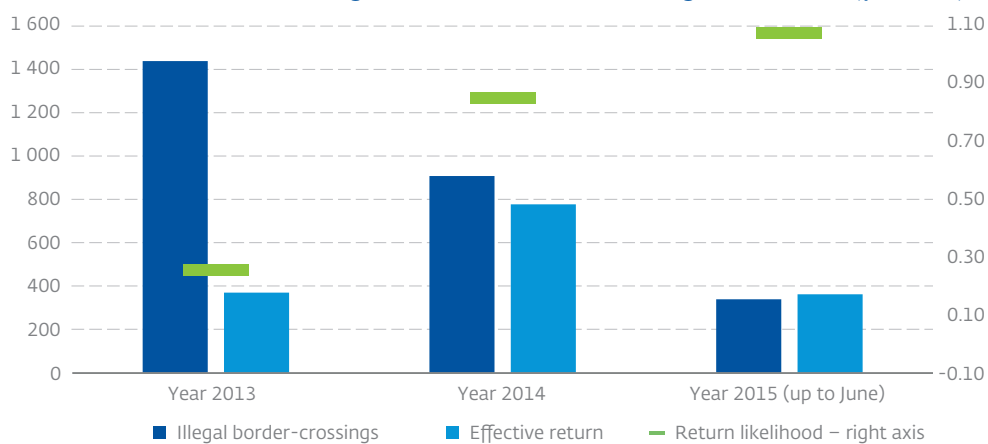
Source: FRAN data as of 7 August 2015

Box 12. Increasing number of Syrian asylum seekers in Ceuta and Melilla

In March 2015, the International Protection and Asylum Offices were inaugurated at BCPs in Ceuta and Melilla (Spain). The decision came as response to a surge in the number of Syrian families seeking asylum there. The trend started in November 2014.

Exponential growth of asylum applications by Syrian nationals in Ceuta and Melilla
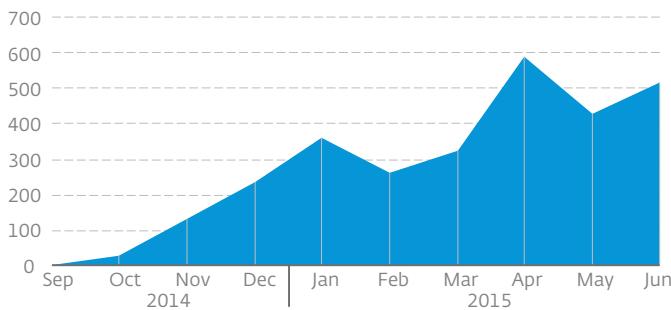
Source: FRAN data as of 7 August 2015

The route followed by these Syrian asylum seekers is Syria/Lebanon/Algeria/Morocco (Nador)/Spain (Melilla or Ceuta).

Different *modi operandi* used by Syrians to enter Ceuta and Melilla have been detected: They range from document fraud, mostly by using genuine Moroccan passports of residents of Tetuan and Nador (no visa needed, impostor method, reported by Frontex) to posing as Moroccan goods carriers. The impostor method started to be used by Syrians already in May 2014 when Spanish authorities reported the first 72 cases.

No Syrian national was detected for trying to storm the fences at the two Spanish cities. Furthermore, Spain reported 478 cases of Moroccan passport being used by Syrian impostors in the period between 2014 and the first half of 2015 while more than 2 800 Syrian asylum applications were submitted in Melilla alone only during eight months between November 2014 and June 2015. This difference would indicate that many are able to enter Melilla undetected (successfully posing as Moroccans for example).

There are still hundreds of Syrians in Moroccan city of Nador waiting to enter Spain through Melilla BCP. According to Moroccan intervention during AFIC workshop in Casablanca, altogether there are more than 5 000 Syrian refugees in Morocco. Moreover, the decision to open Asylum offices in Ceuta and Melilla has acted as an additional pull factor.

2.5. Rising number of casualties among migrants

According to IOM estimates, more than 2 000 migrants have died during the first seven month of 2015 trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. This represents an increase of 27% compared to the same period in 2014. Frontex reporting from the Joint Operation Triton for the same period suggests 190 confirmed fatalities (recovered bodies).

As in 2014, the overwhelming majority died in Central Mediterranean route connecting Libya and Italy. When it comes to this tragic loss of life one must note the fact that 86% of all interceptions in the Central Mediterranean until the end of July 2015 were outside operational area of JO Triton and 90% of these cases were done as search and rescue (SAR – after receiving a call).

What is also interesting is the fact that on the route from Libya to Italy there were almost exactly the same number of persons that were rescued/intercepted during 2015 and the reference period in 2014. However, there were roughly 100 more incidents (551 in 2014 and 657 in 2015) to which authorities had to respond in 2015, unfortunately resulting in the previously mentioned 27% increase of the estimated number of casualties. In addition, geographical location of these interventions moved further south as indicated by Figure 25.

In May, the operational area of Frontex JO Triton 2015 was extended closer to Libya. In addition, the number of assets in this area were increased. Through the whole period Italian authorities continued with their naval operation 'Mare Securo'.

Importantly, the EU naval operation EUNAV-FOR Med was approved in July 2015, and several additional naval vessels were deployed

Figure 25. **In some areas, in particular those of Zuwara and Misrata, detections have moved closer to the Libyan coast**

Detections of migrants' boats up to 31 May 2015 (blue spots), and detections reported between 1 June to 26 July 2015 (green spots)

Source: Frontex
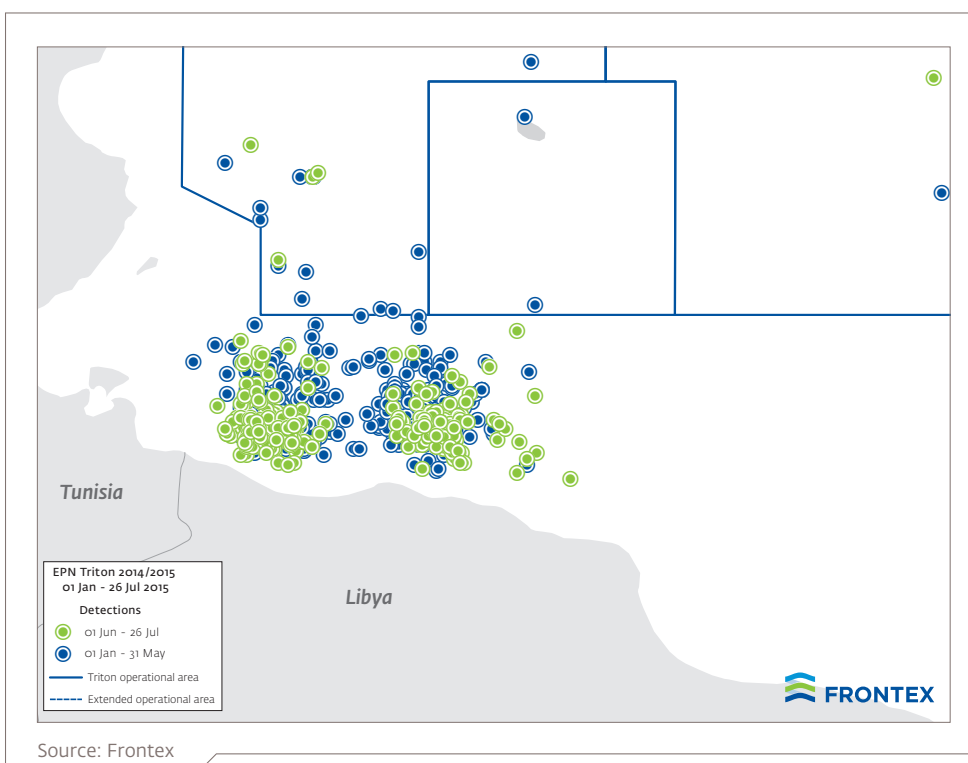
in the operational area of JO Triton and the Libyan SAR area.

In addition, four vessels belonging to various NGOs (Sea-Watch, Norwegian Society for Search and Rescue, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and Migrant Offshore Aid Station) continued their patrolling close to the main departure areas in Libya.

Despite these efforts and many more additional vessels engaged in rescue operations, new tragedies occurred in August 2015 when at least 340 people died. One incident that took place only 15 nautical miles from Libyan shores where 25 people died was soon fol-

Figure 26. **Deaths in the Central Mediterranean, by region of origin of migrants perished while making the sea crossing between 1 January and 14 July 2015**

Sub-Saharan Africa 46%

Breakdown unavailable/ Unknown 22%

Horn of Africa 18%

MENA 14%
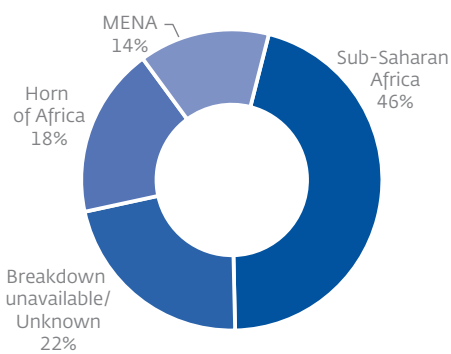
Source: IOM

Box 13. Inhumane treatment prompts return of 50 Sierra Leoneans from Libya

Some 50 Sierra Leoneans had travelled by land to Libya through irregular means, in a bid to cross over to Europe. They were taken to the Southern City of Sabha where they were subjected to inhuman conditions by the facilitators. At the request of the Government of Sierra Leone and in coordination with the Libyan authorities and the Sierra Leonean embassy, IOM helped 35 of these Sierra Leonean migrants stranded in Libya to voluntarily return home from the south of the country through Tripoli.

Source: Sierra Leonian AFIC delegation

Box 14. IOM: Migrants in Libya suffer many types of abuse

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has collected the testimonies of more than 2 000 migrants from West Africa and Central Africa recorded between January and September 2014 two transit centres and assistance for migrants in Niger (Dirkou and Arlit).

The migrants from Senegal, the Gambia and Mali, are mostly young men, married, who left their own country for Libya to find job opportunities. Only some migrants from Benin, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo chose Algeria as their final destination.

As the interviewed migrants were returning back to Niger, their statements reflected precarious living conditions in Libya. Namely, the majority of migrants reported having suffered abuse and threats, including from their employer: the threat of intervention of law enforcement, confiscation of identity documents, forced use of drugs and other substances, restriction of movement and physical abuse.

Source: *Profilage de l'OIM: migrants en transit*, IOM, January–September 2014

Source: Italian Navy

Figure 27. **Dramatic rescue of a migrant by the Italian Navy on 12 August 2015. At least 50 people could not be saved and were declared missing**

with many more vessels now engaged in rescue operations it is simply impossible to effectively rescue all as there are often multiple simultaneous rescue operations requiring high level of coordination.

The increasing death toll during 2015 is therefore highlighting possible paradox. That is to say, more and more vessels engaged in rescue operations is not necessarily a guarantee for reduction of number of people dying.

In addition, operational intelligence from JO Triton 2015 suggests that Libyan smugglers are taking advantage of rescue vessels' proximity to the shores of Libya and are overcrowding the vessels, with limited amount of fuel and water as they know that migrants will be rescued very soon. For example, in one incident a Spanish vessel participating in JO Triton 2015 was called to intervene roughly 22 nautical miles from the coast of Libya. It managed to bring to safety 112 persons that were cramped on a rubber boat. The boat was at sea for less than 12 hours with only nine 20 litre fuel containers on board. Given the engine used in this particular case this is only enough for around 12 hours of sub-maximum speed sailing, therefore nowhere sufficient to reach Italian Pelagic islands. This overcrowding and low fuel supplies on unseaworthy vessels increases the risk of death at sea by a great deal.

lowed by another in which up to 250 people were declared missing.

These incidents in August 2015 exposed the enormity of the challenge. Namely, as the number of SAR incidents is increasing, even

Figure 28. **A typical incident where a rubber boat is overloaded and equipped with minimal fuel supplies**

Given that sub-Saharan African are the largest group of arrivals in Italy, most of the death during 2015 were linked to this group. According the IOM's Missing Migrants Project, 888 individuals from sub-Sahara Africa died at sea, which represents 46% of all deaths in the Mediterranean during 2015.

Migrants also face constant danger during the crossing of the desert or when in Libya. The discovery of the remains of 30 migrants in Dirkou during May 2015 and Boxes 13 and 14 clarify this point further.

While crossing Sahara desert and the Mediterranean is extremely dangerous, reaching Italy does not necessarily means the end to

Figure 29. **There are between 3 000 and 4 000 residents in 'The Jungle', as the makeshift camp outside Calais is called. Around 90% of those living there are men, most of whom are in their late teens or early twenties**

all hazards. Migrants or refugees that move towards northern Europe often live in appalling conditions, usually in makeshift and improvised camps (e.g. Italy-France border, Austria-Germany border). Those travelling to the UK also risk injury or even their lives when trying to cross from Calais to Dover.

Since June 2015 alone at least nine people died while attempting to cross the Euro tunnel. The rising death toll is following significant increases in the number of daily attempts to enter the tunnel (from 500 in May to 2 000 in June 2015).

3. Cross-border criminality

3.1. Introduction

Similar to other regions of the world, cross-border criminality in West Africa can be largely divided into two main categories: smuggling of people and illicit trade. Illicit trade can be further classified into six main non-exhaustive categories:

- Trafficking in human beings;
- Smuggling of natural resources and wild-life: crude oil (bunkering), cocoa, gold, minerals, vital commodities or crops, ivory, horns of rhinoceros and/or other protected species;
- Smuggling of excise goods: cigarettes (genuine or counterfeit) or fuel;
- Drug trafficking;
- Smuggling of stolen cattle, stolen vehicles, toxic waste, weapons, firearms and ammunition;
- Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Illicit trade is often driven by factors such as considerable cross-border price differentials and differences in the legal status of particular products, taxation of excise goods, as well as local, regional and global demand for smuggled goods. In many cases, locals participating in illicit trade consider their activity as legitimate given the lack of other economic opportunities. Additionally, most borders in

West Africa are highly porous and difficult to patrol with border-control authorities often suspected of corrupt practices. This in turn further facilitates illegal cross-border flow of goods and people both in the region and transiting towards Europe.

It is also worth highlighting that West African criminal networks are non-hierarchical informal structures, in many cases linked by tribal, social or family ties showing a high degree of flexibility. Such loose structure allows for members to have exchangeable roles.

Most informal groups are composed by networks of three to six individuals, mainly relatives or friends. There is hardly a permanent membership in the criminal group. These characteristics, make these groups highly fluid, which in turn makes detection, investigation and eventual criminal prosecution very difficult.

3.2. Trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is a demand and profit driven crime. Vulnerability of people alone does not result in trafficking. Factors that render people more vulnerable to trafficking include limited economic opportuni-

Figure 30. **Evolution of cross-border criminality**
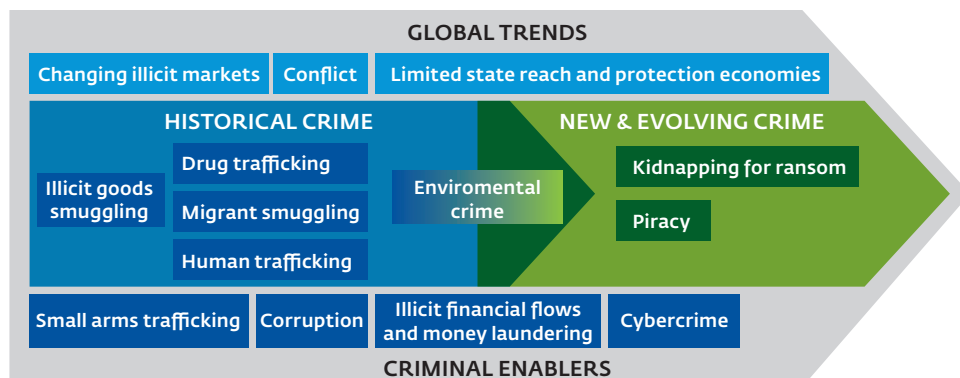
Source: *Comprehensive Assessment of Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime in West and Central Africa*, African Union, 2014

ties, desperate socio-economic conditions, regional imbalances and violence. The line between people smuggling and human trafficking in the case of West Africa is therefore often blurred as prospective migrants or guest workers may often end up as victims of trafficking once in their destination country.

For example, when irregular migration is financed by smugglers themselves (debt-financed migration), migrants often find themselves exploited en route or in the destination country.

As these debt/labour obligations incurred by migrants are easily enforceable by criminal groups, it can be profitable for smugglers to finance irregular migration.

Debriefing interviews conducted in the context of Frontex Joint Operations revealed several suspected cases of 'debt bondage' victimisation. They all are linked to Nigerian women who were forced to provide sexual services in transit countries such as Libya or Algeria before being transported further across the sea to Europe.

One interviewee, who had escaped from the trafficking network in Libya before travelling onwards to Europe alone, described her journey in detail starting from her recruitment in Nigeria to the forced travel through Niger and Libya. She also described the system of debt bondage used to coerce the victims. First, victims are required to pay a fee for their travel from Nigeria. Once they leave the country and begin the journey through Niger and Libya they are told that they must pay again to 'regain their freedom'. In this way they are forced into prostitution to repay these debts. Once they are transported to Europe they are forced to pay the traffickers an even higher fee to be released.

Box 15. Labour recruitment morphing into a trafficking case

In another typical case of labour recruitment morphing into a trafficking case, a women from Sierra Leone paid approximately USD 1 480 to recruiters who promised her a nursing job or hotel work in Kuwait. Upon her arrival in Kuwait, however, she was instead forced to work as a domestic worker for a private Kuwaiti family. She worked all day, every day without compensation. Her employers forbade her from leaving the house or from using a cell phone. The family eventually returned her to recruiter, taking advantage of a guarantee allowing them to obtain a refund for domestic workers they are not happy with. She ran away from the recruiter to the Sierra Leonean Embassy and was placed in a Kuwaiti government-run shelter with approximately 300 other former domestic workers.

Source: *Trafficking In Persons Report*, US Department of State, July 2015

AFIC representatives from Sierra Leone share their growing concern regarding trafficking in persons. In particular, establishment of many so-called phantom employment recruitment agencies. There were at least 20 such agencies with 301 cases of officially confirmed victims of trafficking in human beings (2013–2014). As the case described in Box 15 suggests, most victims ended up in Kuwait but also in Lebanon, Qatar and Europe.

3.3. Document fraud involving AFIC nationals and travel documents issued by AFIC countries

3.3.1. Most detected AFIC nationals using fraudulent documents

Moroccan nationals represented the largest group among AFIC nationals detected for document fraud in the EU. In 2014, there were over 800 Moroccans with fraudulent documents and just over 300 in the first five months of 2015. The trend has been more or less stable over the past couple of years.

Most of the Moroccans were detected on entry to the EU/Schengen area, mostly from Morocco to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, followed by arrivals on flights from Casablanca (CMN) to Fiumicino (FCO) or Brussels (BRU).

Moroccan nationals often use Spanish documents (ID cards, residence permits, passports) or Moroccan passports. Most of abovementioned documents were abused by Moroccan impostors, using genuine documents of someone else.

Nigerian nationals form the second biggest group reported for document fraud in the EU/Schengen area. The overall number of detections and trends remained stable in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Just under 800 document fraud cases were linked to Nigerian nationals in 2013 and a very similar figure was also recorded in 2014. Almost two-thirds have been reported on arrival from third countries, in particular from Lagos (LOS), followed by arrivals via Istanbul (IST).

Senegalese nationals rank third among the AFIC nationals abusing travel documents. The overall number of detections oscillates around 280 cases per year. They are mostly detected on entry to the EU/Schengen area from third countries, in particular from Dakar (DKR).

Most of the Senegalese attempted to reach either Spanish airports, such as Madrid (MAD) or Barcelona (BCN), or Lisbon airport (LIS) in Portugal. They were often detected travelling with their national passports (impostors), as

well as mostly counterfeit French and Italian visas and residence permits.

Congolese nationals have been mostly detected with fraudulent documents on the routes from Lagos (LOS) to Fiumicino (FCO) or on routes to French airports. Congolese nationals have been also departing from Kenia or attempting to reach the EU/Schengen area via Turkey, in particular via Istanbul (IST).

The route via Istanbul (IST) includes embarkation in N'Djili (FIH) and intended final destination of Fiumicino (FCO), Charles de Gaulle (CDG) or Brussels (BRU).

Ghanaian nationals were mostly detected on intra-Schengen air routes between Italy and Germany. Those detected on entry to the EU/Schengen area are in 50% of cases depart from Accra (ACC). There are also attempts to target the EU/Schengen area via Istanbul on the following air routes: ACC → IST → MAD, MXP, DUS, VIE. Ghanaian nationals were often detected presenting counterfeit Italian residence permits, passports, ID cards and fraudulent Ghanaian passports.

3.3.2. Most abused travel documents issued by AFIC countries

In total, there were approximately 1 400 fraudulent travel documents issued by AFIC

Figure 31. **Moroccan and Nigerian nationals were the AFIC nationals most detected for document fraud. Overall figures, however, remain stable in the past 2.5 years except for a decrease in Angolan and Guinean nationals**

Detections of AFIC nationals presenting fraudulent documents, by nationality of the holder between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2015
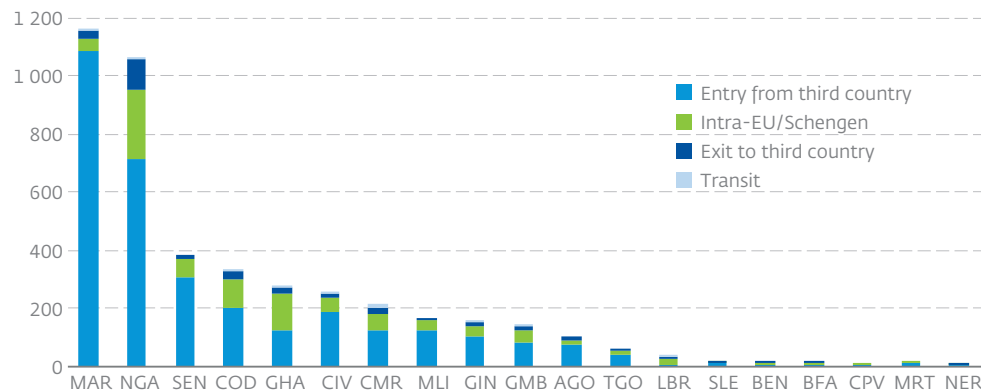
Source: European Union Document-Fraud Risk Analysis Network (EDF-RAN) data as of 6 July 2015

countries reported as fraudulent by EU Member States during 2013. This figure increased by 14% in 2014. The beginning of 2015 seems to follow the trend of previous years. These figures, however, include all persons showing fraudulent AFIC documents and not just AFIC nationals.

Around 85% of fraudulent documents issued by AFIC countries were detected on entry from third countries and the most detected documents were passports issued by Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Due to the significant increase in the use of genuine Moroccan passports by Syrian impostors, this type of document fraud became prevalent also in case of AFIC travel documents.

3.4. Drug smuggling

In July 2015, regional representative for West Africa of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that between 30 and 40 metric tonnes of cocaine transit West Africa every year en route to Europe. This represents a decrease from the peak of 47 tonnes in 2007.

According to the UN Secretary General, this flow of cocaine in West Africa could have the market value of USD 1.25 billion in Europe, and would bring West African traffickers profits in the order of USD 150 million per year.

3.4.1. Routes

Drug trafficking continues to be the most lucrative form of business for criminals. Despite the international cooperation and transnational efforts to curb the trafficking of cocaine, large and small shipments by sea or by air, continuously flow from South America (Venezuela, Peru, Argentina, Brazil or Colombia) to Europe, through the Sahel region. According to information from AFIC partners and other sources, three main cocaine hubs can be identified. The first consists of the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Cape Verde islands. The second is the Central Sahelian corridor, which covers vast areas of Mali and Mauritania (air transport). The third hub is the Coastal Southern corridor includ-

<div style="border:1px solid #000; padding:10px;">

**Box 16.   AFIC Incident Report.
Exchange of Information. Ghana.**

Drug trafficking

A 26-year-old Kenyan female, claiming to be a businesswoman, was arrested at Kotoka International Airport for carrying cocaine into the country. She arrived on a Kenya Airways flight from Nairobi, Kenya with approximately 3 kg of cocaine wrapped and hidden in her luggage. She claimed she was only to deliver the cocaine to someone she did not know but who was to meet her on arrival.

Source: Ghanaian AFIC delegation

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ing Benin, Togo and Ghana (as entry points) and Nigeria (as the main centre for distribution and control of the drug by the criminal networks).

Cocaine originating from South America is transported across the Atlantic by sea or air along the so-called Highway 10, i.e. the shortest distance between the two continents along the 10th parallel.

Once it arrives in Africa, it is transported northwards towards Europe through the Sahara along routes which have been used for legal and illegal trade for centuries. Also for centuries, these transportation routes have been controlled by tribal groups such as Tuaregs and Tebus. Nowadays they use off-road vehicles to transport everything, starting from human beings, firearms, narcotics to

Source: Guardia Civil

Figure 32. **Helicopter intercepted by Spanish authorities after crossing the Strait of Gibraltar carrying 200 kg of hashish from Morocco to Spanish mainland**

Box 18.   AFIC Incident Report. Exchange of Information, Cape Verde

Citizen of Guinea-Bissau

On 15 June 2015 Nigerien Police apprehended, at the International Airport of Niamey, a citizen of Guinea-Bissau (male aged 45, residing in Liberia) for drug trafficking inside of his body. He had swallowed 70 capsules of cocaine weighing 1 241 grammes to transport them from Nigeria to Niger on the itinerary Lagos/Nairobi/Addis Ababa/Niamey.

Source: Nigerien AFIC delegation

Box 17.   AFIC Incident Report. Exchange of Information, Cape Verde

The Airport Anti-Trafficking Cell seizes cocaine at Praia International Airport Nelson Mandela

28.05.2015 – Due to Cape Verde's geographic and strategic position, the country continues being used as a drug transit point from South America to Europe. Several 'couriers' transporting drugs inside their bodies and under clothes were arrested and the drug was apprehended by police at airports. Praia International Airport has an Airport Anti-Trafficking Cell composed of Judiciary Police, Borders Police, Fiscal Guard and Customs. In this specific case, the suspect was arrested, sent to the Main Court of Praia and put in prison to await the final trial.

Source: Cape Verdean AFIC delegation

cigarettes. As the provision of such services is a very lucrative business, new players are violently seeking their slice of the pie: the terrorist groups of the Sahel region.

Cocaine is transported across the Sahel by different routes: through northwestern African countries (Morocco and Mauritania) to Spain or through Libya to EU Member States in the Central Mediterranean.

Morocco, considered as the largest producer of cannabis in the world alongside with Algeria, is also the first supplier of this drug for the EU market, using Egyptian and Balkan criminal networks. To avoid the troubled Moroccan-Algerian border, smugglers use two different routes: across the Sahel or following the Northern coastal path.

International cooperation and exchange of intelligence are essential for curbing the black market of cocaine, methamphetamine and other narcotics. Also, such cooperation helps neutralise the criminal networks, forcing them to constantly adapt their *modi operandi* to maintain the flow of drugs towards the EU.

During the workshop in Dakar in June 2015, Ghanaian AFIC delegates reported that drug smugglers are also using Kenya Airways flights to deliver small shipments of cocaine.

Likewise, during the AFIC workshop in Senegal, delegates from Liberia, according with their intelligence analysis, concluded the following concerns on national security matters:

- The trafficking of illicit drugs and fake pharmaceuticals by Chinese transnational criminal organisations in West Africa;
- The resumption and reorganisation of major drug shipments in Liberia after the Ebola outbreak;
- South American criminal groups resurfacing in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau;
- Increased possibility of cross-border criminality across the Liberian-Ivorian border as the Ivorian elections draw near.

3.5. Firearms trafficking

Whilst trafficking in illicit goods, narcotics or human beings thrives in the areas of intense conflict and institutional chaos (e.g. Libya), firearms trafficking flourishes throughout the Sahelian area. This criminal activity responds to the demand for armaments in unstable areas, such as Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, among others. Firearms trafficking is of course not limited to supplying the needs of criminal networks but also those of terrorist groups such as MU-JAO, MNLA, AQIM, Boko Haram or small secessionist factions.

Thus, particularly after the collapse of Gaddafi's regime in 2011, the main routes of arms trade run from Libya: to Niger and the south of Algeria (area of influence of terrorist groups such as al-Mourabitoun or AQIM), to northern Mali to supply terrorist and separatist groups (MUJAO, Ansar al-Dine, MLNA) and also from Chad to Nigeria to feed Boko Haram's needs.

Source: Liberian AFIC delegation

Figure 33. **Typical handgun smuggled from Guinea and used in armed robberies in Liberia**

Other routes of illegal arms trade have been detected between other ECOWAS countries: from Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia or Guinea to Mali, and from Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to Liberia through the coastal corridor of the Gulf of Guinea to supply local criminal networks.

Liberian AFIC delegates expressed their concerns about new non-Liberian gunsmiths emerging in Central Liberia and in the north-western suburb of the capital, Monrovia.

4. Regional security threats

Both AFIC workshops in Africa highlighted that political violence and terrorism in AFIC countries are mainly linked to: Boko Haram activities, attempts of ISIL/Da'ish to establish itself in the Maghreb/North Africa, a more latent threat of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and activities of groups such as al-Mourabitoun, MUJAO or Ansar al-Dine.

The absence of state authority and institutional weakness in vast regions of the Sahel and West Africa, porous borders and an ongoing chaos in Libya continue to be cited by AFIC members as the main obstacles when addressing the physical threat that these groups pose.

According to AFIC members and other relevant sources, the groups mentioned above are mostly operating in the following areas:
- Boko Haram: mainly in the north-east of Nigeria and at its borders with Niger, Cameroon and Chad;
- ISIL/Da'ish: trying to operate in North Africa, mainly Libya with the Wilayat (province) in Barqa/Cyrenaica, Sinai in Egypt and Jamaat Jund al-Khalifah in Algeria;
- AQIM: after this Al-Qaida franchise evolved from the Algerian terrorist group known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in January 2007, it mainly operates in the north of the Sahelian corridor;

- Al-Mourabitoun, MUJAO or Ansar al-Dine: mainly in northern Mali.

In addition to the above, AFIC workshops also provided an opportunity to openly discuss the issue of young men mostly from North Africa travelling to Syria and Iraq to engage in combat. Concerns were voiced that many might be travelling to and from these war zones without being identified and thus posing a serious security risk.

4.1. Regional initiatives gain ground against Boko Haram

After shifting away from insurgent tactics in order to seize and hold territory in 2014, Boko Haram terrorist group succeeded in gaining control over a vast swath of territory in northeastern Nigeria. In fact, during the AFIC workshop in Dakar, Nigeria reported that 2014 was the year of the most violent and intensive activities of Boko Haram. Data on clashes and casualties reported by diverse specialised open sources confirm this conclusion.

In February 2015, the Nigerian government initiated military operations north of Maiduguri and Mubi. They first liberated towns along the main road to Baga, up to Monguno, as reported by the Nigerian AFIC member. They later captured Baga (where Boko Haram had taken control of a Nigerian military outpost and massacred the local population), Monguno, Marte, Gamboru-Ngala and Dikwa. This offensive push was the first major success since minor operations in northern Adamawa during 2014.

In other words, at the beginning of 2015, Boko Haram controlled 20 districts of Nige-

Box 19. Number of terrorist attacks on the rise in North Africa and the Sahel

According to open sources, the documented numbers of terrorist attacks in North Africa and the Sahel during 2014 show an increase of the political violence in the area. Thus, the countries most affected were Libya with 201 attacks, Mali with 35, Mauritania with 27, Tunisia with 27 and Algeria with 22.

Figure 39. **Military operations against Boko Haram at the beginning of 2015 (upper map) and changing intensity of the crisis in 2012–2015 (bottom map)**

Source: Stratfor 2015

Source: ACLED data, by Prof. Clionadh Raleigh, University of Sussex
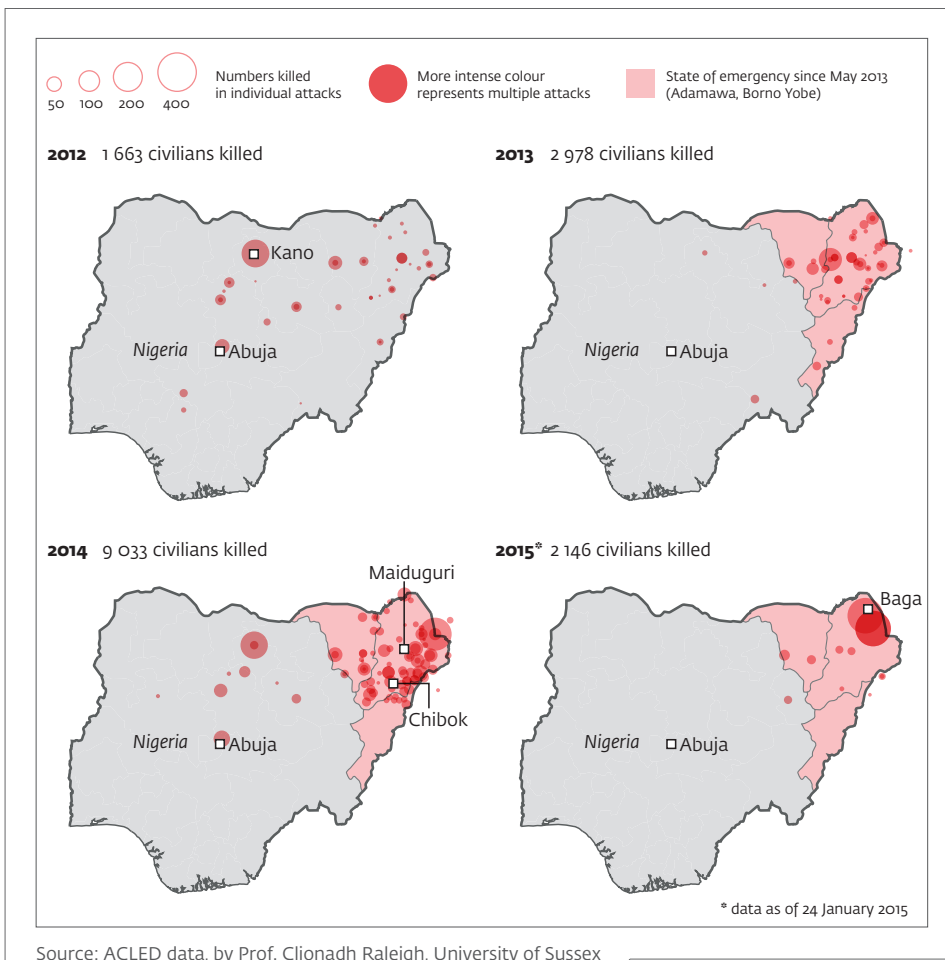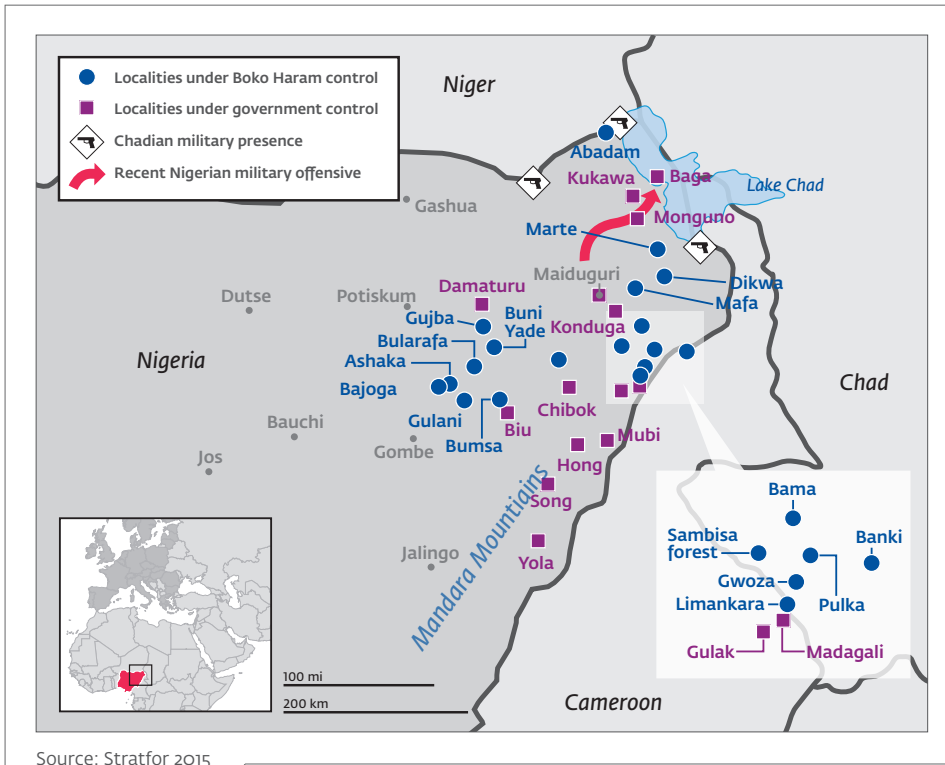
Figure 40. **Women and children kidnapped by Boko Haram a moment after the liberation by Nigerian Special Forces in Sambisa forest**

ria (a territory the size of Belgium). By mid-March, they only controlled three.

The AFIC member from Nigeria also reported that the Nigerian military had received more sophisticated arms to confront Boko Haram and senior officers had also changed their strategy, which resulted in these successes. In March 2015, Nigerian Defence Headquarters also declared Adamawa and Yobe States free from the control of Boko Haram insurgents.

While these operations have pushed Boko Haram forces out of many population centres in a substantial portion of northern Borno State, insurgents dispersed closer to the mountainous Cameroonian border.

The new Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari announced in his first speech on 29 May 2015 that the Command Centre of Nigerian Military Operations against Boko Haram would be moved from Abuja (capital of Nigeria) to Maiduguri. This move to the largest city in the north-east of Nigeria, where the insurgency is the strongest, was aimed at establishing governmental control over a

territory around the size of Belgium and the Netherlands.

According to the Nigerian AFIC delegate, this decision was taken in cooperation with Chad, Cameroon and Niger (Multinational Joint Task Force – MNJTF, 9 000 troops) and a clear demonstration of commitment to fight Boko Haram on the regional level.

The joint offensive by the MNJTF forces also rescued 200 girls and 118 women from the Sambisa Forest (April and May 2015) and additional 260 women and children in the outskirts of Chalawa village in Adamawa State.

With the new and increasing pressure exerted by the MNJTF, Boko Haram lost control of additional villages and its combatants dispersed in the surrounding forests. In doing so, the group made sure to slow down the advance of the MNJTF with minefields and other measures.

4.1.1. Financing of activities and recruitment

Boko Haram gains finances through diverse illegal activities such as fake military checkpoints, kidnapping people for ransom, extortion, looting, bank robberies and illicit trafficking of arms or other goods. It is estimated that more than 2 000 women and girls have also been kidnapped to be used as sexual slaves, forced into marriages and recently even used as suicide bombers.

During the discussions in both AFIC workshops, Nigerien and Nigerian delegates came to the same conclusion that economic incentives are a very powerful tool to recruit young people, above all in economically deprived communities. In the geographical area formed by the borders of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger, poverty and unemployment is widespread. Boko Haram uses money and ideology to approach young individuals

who are more receptive to indoctrination and recruitment.

AFIC members also reported that in some cases Boko Haram also kidnaps people and forces them to fight for them.

4.1.2. Change in tactics – going back to roots

Boko Haram is an ideologically driven group so setbacks such as loss of territory will not lead to its complete disintegration. However, these setbacks require a change in tactics. Rather than acting like a state, which provides services to its people and protects its borders, terrorist organisations without territory use more typical terrorist tactics – bombing, shooting, assassination and kidnapping.

These changes in *modus operandi* are evidenced by a number of terrorist attacks attributed to Boko Haram in Nigeria and nearby countries. Two explosions in Chad, where the MNJTF has its headquarters, killed 11 people. A few days later, approximately 150 people died in Nigeria: nearly 50 killed in a shooting in Monguno and almost 100 in Kukuwa. The group has been trying to smuggle weapons through Chad but Chadian police forces raided two arsenals, seizing a large number of arms and gathering intelligence.

4.1.3. Regional threat

Although Boko Haram's acts of violence are mainly concentrated in Borno State in the north-east of Nigeria, the terrorist group has demonstrated the ability to launch attacks in the territories of Niger and Cameroon and even in Abuja, the Nigerian capital.

In the case of Niger, Lamina and Ungumawo villages in the Diffa region suffered at least 40 casualties after Boko Haram staged their attacks there. Similar attacks outside Nige-

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Box 20. The 'deadliest massacre' of Baga

Between 3 and 9 January 2015, the group Al-Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lid Da'wati Wal Jihad, commonly called Boko Haram, carried out massive attacks in the city of Baga and its outskirts, located in the state of Borno, north-east of Nigeria near the border with Chad.

The storms of attacks began when Boko Haram assaulted the Headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) containing troops from Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In the days that followed, Boko Haram terrorists were killing people in the area. According to an Amnesty International statement, and other sources of information, the town was razed and 2 000 people were killed in the 'deadliest massacre' in the history of Boko Haram.

Source: Amnesty International

Box 21.   Pledging alliance to ISIL/Da'ish?

In March 2015, a ISIL/Da'ish's spokesman said that the leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi accepted the pledge of allegiance (*bayat*) by Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau, adopting the name 'Islamic State's West Africa Province' (ISWAP). Nigerian member of AFIC informed however that there is no intelligence so far to establish any relation between Boko Haram and Da'ish. Boko Haram is a local group, very focused and located in a specific region which does not have international links, not even with AQIM, Al-Shabbab or other terrorist groups operating in the Sahel.

There were also no confirmed foreign fighters among Boko Haram's troops. Most of the fighters are locals from Nigeria or immediate border regions.

Figure 42. **Nigerian refugees in a Nigerien camp**

Figure 43. **Nigerian refugees in a Cameroonian camp**

Figure 44. **Nigerian refugees in a Chadian camp**

ria have provoked mobilisation of troops in the Diffa region, which meant fewer troops in the area of Agadez. This vulnerability could have been exploited by migrant smuggling networks and other criminal organisations.

Boko Haram mainly uses car bomb attacks, young girls as suicide bombers and very often also 'moto raids'. This method was described by the Nigerien AFIC member during the workshop in Casablanca. Groups of motorcycles reach the target, attack using RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenades and quickly disappear. In fact, Boko Haram might be giving away motorcycles among the Nigerien youths to increase the number of recruits.

Likewise, AFIC members from Cameroon expressed their concern about the persistence of Boko Haram and pointed to a need to disrupt radicalisation and recruitment of local population. In addition, Cameroon is very concerned about Boko Haram members hiding among refugees. Namely, Cameroonian authorities were able to detect such cases in August when two female bombers were arrested with explosive devices in a refugee camp of Minawao (northern Cameroon). As female suicide bombers were behind several blasts in northern Cameroon in July 2015, the regional governor banned the Islamic veil as part of counter-terrorist measures.

4.1.4. Humanitarian impact

In April 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimated that 1.5 million people had been forced to flee their homes in Nigeria. They are either internally displaced or are living as refugees in neighbouring countries.

The Nigerian AFIC member reported that Niger has evacuated thousands of Nigerian refugees sheltering from Boko Haram fighters on Lake Chad's Karanga Island in May 2015. Karanga Island has been used by Boko Haram

Figure 41. **Displacement statistics for Cameroon**

**Cameroon: Far North
–Displaced Population**
(as of 1 June 2015)

Resident Population:
3 945 168

Affected Population
Affected Population

Border Crossing
Border Crossing

Sites
Refugee Camp
Refugee Site
Transit Site

Settlements
Transit Site

Borders
National
Regions
Departments

Roads
Primary

0   25
km
N

NIGERIA

LOGONE-ET-CHARI

Fotokol

Ndjamena
Kousséri

Chad

Waza

Amchide
Kolofata
Ashigashiya

Magdame
Mora
MAYO-SAVA
DIAMARE

Mokolo
EXTREME-NORD
Maroua

Minawao
Population: 37 171

MAYO-TSANAGA

NORD
Guider

Nigeria   Chad
Yaounde
Central
African
Republic
Gabon   Republic
of the Congo

Source: Natural Earth, SALB, GADM, UNHCR, MapAction, 2015

Figure 45. **33 Nigerian women and children rescued from Sambisa forest and located at IDP camp of Maiduguri, Borno State**

to mount surprise attacks in Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria itself.

By the middle of 2015, UNHCR reported the presence of 74 000 Nigerian refugees in the Far North of Cameroon (Logone-et-Chari; Mayo Sava, Dimare, Mayo-Sanaga). This represents an increase of around 26 000 refugees from 30 December 2014, when there were 48 000 Nigerian refugees. In addition to the Nigerian refugees, there are 81 700 IDPs, 36 000 returnees and 74 000 Nigerian refugees in the Far North region. These massive numbers, added to the 200 000 people settled in this region and the refugees form Central Africa Republic, are considered a factor of destabilisation and this situation is overwhelming the Cameroonian capabilities of security and assistance.

Minawao Camp in Cameroon saw an increase in arrivals as its population rose from about 30 000 in late 2014 to approximately 44 000 at the end of July 2015. On 5 August 2015, Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that 12 000 Nigerian refugees had been returned to Nigeria from Cameroon.

All the returnees are currently being screened by the Nigerian Immigration Service and security agencies (DSS) to confirm that there

are no Boko Haram terrorists among the refugees. Of those, 650 have been relocated to Borno State and the rest to Malkohi IDP camp in Yola. Nigerian authorities are calling for international assistance to mitigate the appalling conditions in these IDP camps.

4.2. Northern Mali remains unstable

Despite the efforts by Malian authorities and the international community, instability persists in the Northern regions of Mali. On 15 May 2015 a peace agreement was signed in Bamako between Malian government and the 'Platform movement' composed by Coordination of movements and patriotic resistance fronts I (CMFPR-I), a faction of the Coalition of the People of Azawad (CPA), a faction of Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) and the pro-government Tuareg militia of the Pro-unity Self-Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA), and representatives of two groups of the 'Coordination movement'.

However, the core members of 'Coordination movement' did not sign the agreement, which led to a serious deterioration of security situation and violent clashes between the opponents.

The Malian AFIC member reported, during the workshop held in Casablanca (Morocco), the proliferation of terrorist activities from AQMI, MUJAO and Ansar al-Dine. These groups are responsible for destruction of places of religious worship and attempts to violently impose sharia (Islamic law) in the Kidal district. The Malian member of the AFIC also highlighted the persistence of terrorist activities after the French intervention, referring to the operation Serval and the appearance of new jihadist or radical groups, such as the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA), formed by members of the Al-Qaida-allied Islamist Ansar al-Dine.

International community is supporting the government of Mali in its fight against terrorism and political violence. These efforts include the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), EUCAP Sahel Mali mission, the French operation Barkhane and cooperation with the USA.

The Malian armed forces have also intensified their activities at the border with Côte d'Ivoire. For example, near the Sama forest, Malian forces neutralised a group of jihadists belonging to Ansar al-Dine, seizing diverse weaponry and vehicles.

These groups often operate as criminal networks engaged in narcotic trafficking, migrant smuggling activities, kidnapping for ransom, looting and all kind of cross-border crimes in order to finance their activities.

Box 22. Regional displacement of people

As of 31 July 2015 Malian refugees were residing in the following neighbouring countries: Niger (52 445), Mauritania (49 911), Burkina Faso (33 907), Algeria (1 330), Togo (169) and Guinea (27). Additional 90 000 live as IDPs in Mali's southern cities, including Bamako (46 143), Koulikoro (19 101) and Ségou (12 139), and just over 16 000 have returned to their homes. The camp in M'berra (Mali), at the border with Mauritania, is the most populous with almost 60 000 people.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This AFIC Joint Report covers several subjects broadly linked to border management which call for measures to be taken in coordination and at different operational levels.

Possible measures also fit into the recent EU actions addressing the challenges of migration (European Agenda on Migration, Agenda on Security, Action Plan on smuggling, and Action Plan on return) and the current discussions concerning the scope and deliverables of the upcoming Valletta Summit on Migration. The multitude of issues mentioned in the preceding analysis can be summarised into the following core blocks:

Reducing risks that migrants or asylum seekers face during irregular migration through new framework for legal pathways

The analysis of legal travel channels clearly points to the fact that travelling to the EU legally is simply not an option for large sections of African societies. As mentioned by several AFIC members, the fact that visa rejection rates are by far the highest for AFIC nationals is also perpetuating false and often exaggerated impression of Europe as a sort of 'the promised land'.

To obtain a chance of getting to Europe, many young Africans are willing to resort to illegal means. As reported by Cameroon and consular authorities of EU Member States, these include falsification of breeder documents (salary slips, passports, birth and marriage certificates, etc.), misleading consular authorities about their intended duration of stay, identity theft and – as a last resort – also irregular migration using the routes described in the analysis.

While decision on issuing visas is an exclusive competence of every EU Member State, AFIC members agree that currently the threshold for obtaining a visa is set extremely high compared to other regions.

Stamping the rejected visa applicant's passport with a 'visa rejected' stamp should be avoided given the existence of the Visa Information System and its impact on reducing visa shopping and identity fraud.

Several nationalities in West Africa have the ratio of illegal border-crossings at external borders of the EU to the number of visas issued for a legal travel to the EU was very close to 1:1 (e.g. the case of Malians in 2014).

Furthermore, the prevailing profile of rejected visa applicants almost perfectly corresponds to the profile of migrants arriving through irregular channels.

This would indicate that their propensity to use irregular routes is to be reduced, the possible new framework within the Mobility Partnerships should be geared towards this group of migrants. In addition, circular migration patterns should be encouraged taking into account EU rules facilitating circular migration (Seasonal Workers Directive).

Improving effectiveness of rapid return of those who are not eligible for international protection

It is clear that the lack of effective return of persons not eligible for protection is encouraging others to try their chances. This can lead to unnecessary human suffering as migrants face harassment, exploitation, violence

and even death while trying to cross the desert or the Mediterranean Sea.

The EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling (COM(2015) 285 final) clearly acknowledges this by making a link between a lack of effective return and increasing migrant smuggling.

In addition, EU Action Plan on return (COM(2015) 453 final) identifies many AFIC countries as possible priority countries regarding readmission building on the 'more-for-more' principle (e.g. Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia).

If the ratio between illegal border-crossings and subsequent returns by the affected EU Member States in line with the EU Return Directive (2008/115/EC) was improved, fewer migrants would be willing to risk the journey as clearly demonstrated by the case of Tunisians in Italy or Algerians in Spain.

However, in order to improve this ratio, additional support from the affected AFIC countries needs to be secured, taking into account financial, technical and logistical limitations that many of these countries will have to be helped with.

This could result in possible presence of their consular authorities at the main entry points where Frontex-coordinated Joint Operations are ongoing (mostly Italy and Spain) in order to assist with the procurement of return documentation. Given the complexity of the return procedure, a pilot project with one or two African countries could be initiated.

Such initiatives should be implemented in conjunction with the Commission's plan to provide 'technical support to countries of origin or transit for migrants, to help improve their capabilities to integrate the returnees.' Furthermore, they should build on already

established bilateral arrangements that several AFIC countries (e.g. Cameroon or Nigeria) have with EU Member States.

Helping transport companies in Africa to operate responsibly and thus minimise migrant smuggling

It is clear that the growing travel industry can help maximise the development potential of the ECOWAS protocols on free movement of persons.

Many bus companies now operate in all 15 ECOWAS countries and offer a vast network of routes (for example Africaada Trans-Continent or Rimbo Transport Voyageurs) at relatively affordable prices. In doing so, the companies play a key role in regional mobility and should thus be an important partner to consider when AFIC countries are addressing irregular migratory movements.

Authorities from AFIC countries should therefore engage in dialogue and establish partnership with these companies to raise awareness and work with them on proper implementation of ECOWAS free-movement protocols.

Improving detection of THB victims as they cross borders

Potential THB victims typically travel either alone or in groups of two or three persons. If the victim is accompanied by a trafficker during the journey, they often cross the border control separately. They may claim that they are travelling with an apparent family member.

If the victim travels alone, they are usually picked up directly at the airport by the trafficker (sometimes the 'madam'). During the interview victims make false statements about the travel and their personal and family situation as they present a story learnt by

heart from the traffickers. Victims can initially appear arrogant or aggressive and refuse to cooperate with border guards.

All these insights should be taken into consideration by border authorities in AFIC countries when they perform border checks. Frontex should further assist by providing a handbook and/or risk profiles when available.

Further development of the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community

The AFIC is growing both in terms of its participants and ability to share information. New AFIC mailboxes dedicated to each AFIC country have now been added to the already introduced information sharing platform. This allows for more frequent and permanent information sharing and more frequent production of joint reports (quarterly and annual).

To further develop information sharing capacity, Frontex would be ready to engage in developing technical and institutional capacity using available EU financial instruments.

Frontex will also support AFIC partners to effectively disseminate joint reports and present the work of the AFIC in regional fora (ECOWAS, AU, other). AFIC partners will provide proposals for regional meetings where this support will be needed.

The AFIC should also continue to meet in Africa at least once per year. Frontex will support study visits that could be organised on the margins of such AFIC meetings in Africa.

Finally, while this report is mostly focused on ECOWAS and Central African region, steps will be taken to cover also East Africa the Horn of Africa in future activities of the AFIC.

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