

Facts on the European Dimension of Displacement and Asylum: Morocco

May 2016

OVERVIEW

Demographic Structure

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Population | 33.3 million |
| Growth rate | 1.13% |
| Ethnic groups | 44% Arab, 24% Arab-Berber, 21% traditional Berber, 10% Moorish and other minorities |
| Languages | Arabic, French, Berber dialects (Tamazight) |
| Religion | 99% Sunni Muslim; Shiite, Christian, Jewish and Baha'i minorities |
| Median age (EU 28) | 28.5 years (42.2 years) |

Economy & Employment

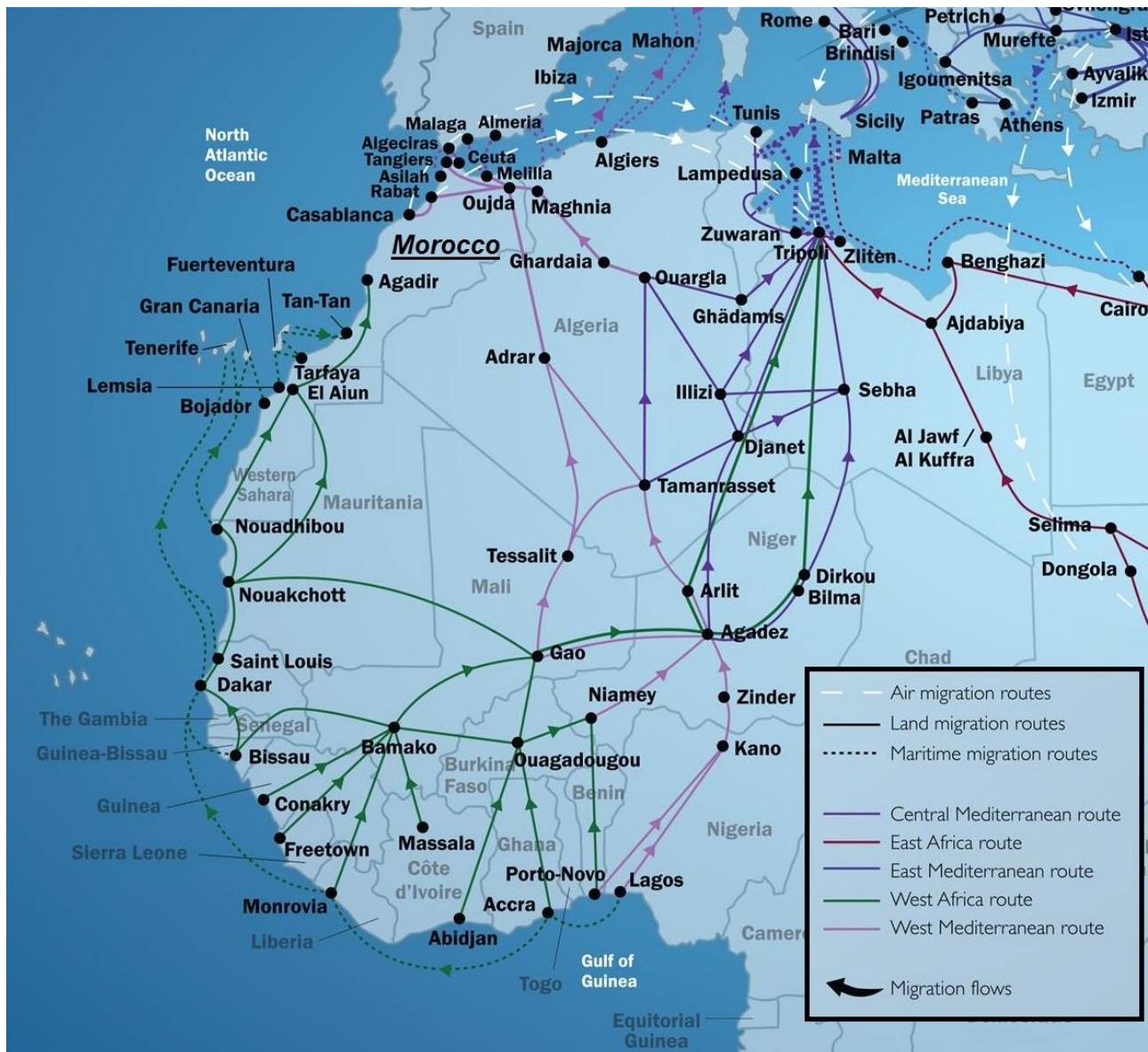
| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| GDP (per capita) | \$110.0 bn (\$3,190) ¹ | ↗ |
| GDP growth | -2.4% ¹ | ↘ |
| GNI (PPP) (per capita) | \$251.5 bn (\$7,290) ¹ | ↗ |
| Inflation (CPI) | 1.5% | ↗ |
| Unemployment | 9.4% | ↘ |
| Youth unemployment (15-24 years) | 19.1% ¹ | ↗ |
| FDI (inflows) | \$3.6 bn ¹ | ↗ |
| Share of EU 28 | NA | |
| Imports of goods | \$46.2 bn ¹ | ↘ |
| Share of EU 28 | 53.6% | ↗ |
| Exports of goods | \$21.2 bn ¹ | ↘ |
| Share of EU 28 | 65.1% | ↗ |

All figures are for 2015, except ¹2014; arrows = change from previous year

Political System & Relations with the EU

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of state/government | Constitutional monarchy in which the king is accorded key prerogatives; elements of parliamentary democracy |
| Transformation | Compared to 129 developing and transition countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index 2016) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political transformation: 3.83 out of 10.0; ranked 93rd out of 129 2. Economic transformation: 5.36 out of 10.0; ranked 73rd out of 129 3. Management Index: 4.37 out of 10.0; ranked 81st out of 129 |
| Human rights and protection of minorities | Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions on freedom of expression through criminalization of acts deemed harmful to the king, the monarchy, Islam or Morocco's claim over Western Sahara • Partial respect of the freedom of assembly and association, complete prohibition of all public gatherings in Western Sahara, arbitrary application of rules for registering associations • Unfair trials for political and security-related cases, but improvement of the legal system following limitation of military trials |
| Corruption | Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 Country ranking: 88 out of 167 (lower = better), comparable to Egypt and Algeria |
| Freedom of the press | Reporters Without Borders – 2016 World Press Freedom Index Status: difficult situation Country ranking: 131 out of 180 (lower = better), comparable to Jordan and Algeria |
| Relations with the European Union (EU) | Previous steps to integration: Association Agreement (since 2000), Agreement on the Liberalization of Agricultural and Fishery Products (2012, annulled in 2016 by CJEU), negotiations for a “deep and comprehensive free trade agreement” currently suspended; debate about status as “safe country of origin,” mobility agreement, repatriations |

MIGRATION ROUTES IN WEST AND NORTH AFRICA



The designations and borders used here do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung / based on a map from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), available at <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/migrant-routes-mediterranean-16-february-2016> and licensed under [Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

SITUATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN MOROCCO

| Category | Source, transit and (de facto) destination country |
|------------------------------------|---|
| As country of origin | More than 3.5 million Moroccans (some 10% of the total population) live abroad. |
| As transit and destination country | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to UNHCR, 4,301 recognized refugees and 1,819 asylum-seekers from 48 countries reside in Morocco (as of February 2016). In 2015, UNHCR in Rabat registered 4,237 asylum-seekers, incl. 2,542 from Syria. In 2014, UNHCR in Rabat registered 1,875 asylum-seekers. The Moroccan government estimates the number of migrants with irregular residence status at 25,000–40,000. |
| Status of migrants and refugees | <p>As part of a one-time process, authorities in Morocco registered approx. 27,300 migrants and issued approx. 27,000 residence permits between September 2013 and February 2015. The <i>carte d'immatriculation</i> includes a work permit and offers access to primary and secondary schooling, but not to the public health insurance system.</p> <p>An inter-ministerial commission also initiated a status review of some 1,000 refugees registered by UNHCR. Syrian refugees were given special treatment in this process; their status remains unclear. In addition, 64% of refugees from other countries were recognized and accorded the same rights as recognized migrants. Moreover, their work permits are not subject to a priority review based on nationality.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Housing for migrants and refugees</p> | <p>According to a study by Amnesty International, most migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa live in unauthorized camps, especially on Mount Gourougou between the Spanish exclave of Melilla and the coastal city of Nador. The Moroccan police have repeatedly carried out violent raids during which the camps have been demolished, migrants detained and their possessions destroyed.</p> |
| <p>Funding</p> | <p>UNHCR budgeted US\$3.4 million for Morocco in 2015. By the last quarter of the year, 18% of the funds had been received.</p> |
| <p>Irregular border crossings into the EU</p> | <p>Because of the strict Moroccan-Spanish border protection measures, less than 1 percent of all irregular border crossings into the EU take place on the so-called West Mediterranean route. In 2015, Frontex, the European border protection agency, counted 7,164 irregular border crossings from Morocco to Spain. Balkan route: The share of Maghrebis tripled in the second half of 2015 compared to the first half. The share for all of 2015 was 23%.</p> |

1. Morocco as traditional country of origin

More than 3.5 million Moroccans live outside of Morocco, 85% of whom live in the EU, especially France, Spain, Italy and Belgium. Some 158,000 people of Moroccan descent live in Germany, of whom 70,000 were born in Germany.

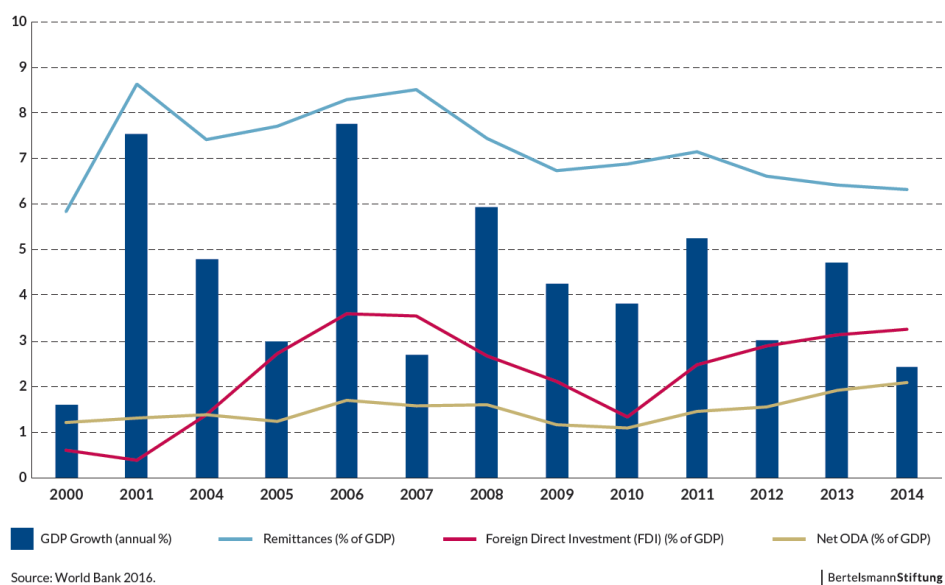
Due to their considerable need for foreign labor, several European countries signed bilateral recruitment agreements with Morocco, including France (1963), Germany (1963), Belgium (1964) and the Netherlands (1969). The mostly unskilled migrants found jobs primarily in the coal and steel industries and thus contributed to the economic expansion that took place in Western Europe.

The economic recession that followed the oil crisis of 1973 put an end to the agreements, although Moroccans have continued to migrate to Europe. Two examples: (1) EU member states such as Spain greatly benefit from Moroccan (seasonal) workers, especially in the agricultural sector. (2)

French firms send representatives to Moroccan universities to recruit recent IT graduates who, as highly skilled workers, provide the firms with strong business connections to Morocco and French-speaking Africa.

Outside of Europe, communities of expatriate Moroccans continue to increase in size in the United States, in French-speaking Canada, in the Arab Gulf and in sub-Saharan Africa, above all in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon.

Remittances from Moroccans living abroad to their families at home are playing an ever greater role in the Moroccan economy. The yearly transfers now amount to approx. €6.5 billion. The remittances are three times as high as the country's *official development assistance (ODA)* and are a much more stable capital flow than foreign direct investment (FDI) (see illustration below).



Source: World Bank 2016.

Although use of the highly developed banking system and *money transfer operators (MTOs)*, a practice legally sanctioned by Rabat, does not afford the state direct access to these private financial flows, it does allow the country to list them in its balance of payments. The country's public finances thus benefit from this inflow of foreign currency through better evaluations on international financial markets and more favorable credit conditions. The remittances are mostly spent on consumer goods, education and health care, thereby stimulating the local economy.

Since the country is increasingly relying on Moroccans living and working abroad, the government established institutions in the 1990s (a special Ministry for Migrant Affairs and the Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger) in order to strengthen connections to expatriate communities.

There are, however, limits to how much the dual loyalties of expatriate Moroccans are promoted, individuals who are supposed to both integrate into their adopted countries and still feel connected to their native land. For example, Moroccans living abroad are not allowed to vote in their native country, even though, according to Morocco's legal code, they will always remain Moroccan citizens, even if they acquire citizenship in another country.

2. The repatriation debate

Europe remains attractive to young Moroccans, for both political and economic reasons. According to statistics from Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 10,258 Moroccans were registered in Germany in 2015. Many arrived via the Balkan route, since it is inexpensive for Moroccans to travel to Turkey and they do not need a visa to do so. Other Moroccans who had recently been working seasonally in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy and who lost their jobs there due to the economic crisis have taken advantage of the lack of border controls in the Schengen area and traveled to Northern Europe looking for new sources of income.

The events on New Year's Eve in Cologne, the police raids in Düsseldorf's "Moroccan quarter" and the fact that people with Moroccan roots have made headlines as terrorists have cast Moroccans in a negative light and thereby fueled the debate about deporting and/or repatriating them. Since only approximately 3 percent of Moroccan asylum-seekers are actually granted asylum in Germany,

the German government classified Morocco as a "safe country of origin" in May 2016 in order to more quickly reject asylum applications from Moroccan nationals.

That decision remains controversial. The Moroccan government sees no reason for Moroccans to apply for asylum abroad. According to many civil society organizations, however, Morocco is not a "safe country" *per se* for human rights defenders, members of the opposition, activists, homosexuals and journalists critical of the country's government. To that extent, an individual evaluation of each application for asylum seems necessary. The classification as a "safe country of origin" must be understood as an obligation to better protect civil and human rights and adhere to the rule of law, and to ensure these standards are maintained over time. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the closure of the Balkan route, the Moroccan-Spanish border protection measures and the "safe country" debate have already notably reduced the number of Moroccans entering Germany.

3. Morocco as transit and destination country

Over the last two decades, Morocco has become less a traditional source of migrants and refugees and more a destination for them. One reason for the increase in immigration to Morocco is that traditional trade relations in French-speaking Africa have enjoyed a revival and Morocco's business leaders have expanded their commercial contacts to the south. Visa-free travel has made economic cooperation with partners in neighboring countries easier. The university scholarships granted by the Moroccan state have also resulted in more and more people from sub-Saharan Africa coming to the country.

A second group of new arrivals consists of refugees fleeing from, above all, Syria, Yemen, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iraq, as well as conflict areas in East Africa. Less than 5,000 have been registered (2015), a relatively small number. Most Syrians who have fled to Morocco have done so because they have family or friends living there.

The largest group of immigrants consists of nationals from sub-Saharan and West Africa who originally intended to stay in Morocco only temporarily, as part of a longer journey to Europe, to which they were headed either for political reasons or in the hope of finding a better job or continuing their education. Since the early 2000s,

however, Brussels has been pressuring Rabat to reduce the migration flows of both Moroccans and Africans in transit. The tightly coordinated border control methods jointly implemented by the Moroccans and Spanish – measures that even include Spanish coast guard vessels patrolling Morocco's ports – have virtually closed the traditional migration routes that run from the Moroccan coast to Spain via the Canary Islands and the Strait of Gibraltar. A system of five high fences has been erected around Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish enclaves located on Moroccan territory, making them virtually unreachable for refugees.

Anyone who has wanted to migrate to Europe in recent years has thus taken either the route through Libya and across the Mediterranean or has travelled through Turkey and the Balkans. Many of the refugees who were originally only in transit have not returned to their native countries, but are now in Morocco permanently. The Moroccan government estimates that there are between 25,000 and 40,000 people in this group, i.e. who are in the country as irregular foreign residents.

There are now so many immigrants in total that the king officially declared Morocco to be an immigration country in November 2013. The Moroccan government therefore expanded the mandate of the ministry responsible for Moroccans living abroad to include issues relating to migration. In addition, as part of a broad-based national campaign, it has granted official residence permits to approximately 27,000 migrants since 2014. An asylum law, a migration law and a law designed to combat human trafficking are also currently being drafted.

4. International cooperation with Morocco on migration

Germany is helping Morocco in this area by participating in joint projects. For example, GIZ, the German agency for international cooperation, offers a portfolio of migration-related activities that includes consulting for creating a national agency that will address the issues of migration and displacement; training and networking for select Moroccan communities to help them respond to migrants and refugees; and allocation of seed money (up to €15,000) to enable returning Moroccans to realize business ideas in their native country. A trilateral partnership between Germany, Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire is planned to combat the causes of displacement.

Responding to the reasons people become refugees, promoting legal immigration by helping migrants attain an occupational qualification, strengthening institutions so they can better manage migration flows, and assisting expatriates to reintegrate after they return home are all measures that offer shared opportunities to source, transit and destination countries. What is required for such measures to succeed, however, is not just short-term crisis management, but also coherent, forward-looking strategies that link migration-related issues with foreign-policy, security and development-policy considerations, thereby creating a triple win.

One reason for hope here is that the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) will be jointly hosted by Germany and Morocco in 2017 and 2018. That means a traditional immigration country and a traditional emigration country will, for the first time, be leading the international discussion about cooperative approaches to migration and development and will be working together to identify effective solutions.

5. Education and employment for Morocco

Although the agenda being pursued by the European Union and its member states with Morocco focuses on the topics of mobility, migration, border protection and repatriation, the working portfolio between the EU and Morocco is much broader. This must be the case if the country is to be supported politically, socially and economically. The European Commission's report on Morocco published in March 2015 expresses concern over the country's lack of literacy, its unemployment rate and the significant urban-rural gap in the areas of health care and education.

Official sources of development aid make up almost 2 percent of gross national income. The international community gladly initiates projects in Morocco. Compared to other countries in the region, Morocco has allowed more diversity into its social and economic spheres in recent years; the G8 classified it as a "transformation country" in 2011 and provided it with funding as a result. Morocco also receives by far the most funding from the line items in the European Neighbourhood Policy budget. Its institutional relations with the EU have progressed from an Association Agreement to a partner with "special status," a development in which Spain has played a key role.

The negotiations that began in 2015 for a "deeper and comprehensive free-trade agreement" have

been suspended. The reason is Morocco's fear that taking on European standards and regulations, especially in the service sector, would cost it too many jobs. Rabat feels it can bolster its economy and employment rate by securing higher export quotas to the EU for its agricultural products.

Along with freer trade flows, the growing start-up sector can help improve the employment situation. Many young Moroccans would like to launch small businesses in their native country. To do so they need seed money and assistance in covering their ongoing costs during the first years of operation, as well as coaching and advice.

Transnational global skills partnerships also offer considerable potential. These partnerships are designed to promote cross-border cooperation and mutual benefits while workers are undergoing training. They could help reduce the high rate of youth unemployment and the skills mismatch in Morocco and, at the same time, play a role in overcoming the demographically induced shortage of high-skilled labor in Germany and other EU member states. They could also help reduce irregular migration.

Morocco's economy offers two promising prospects in this regard. The first is the ambitious *Plan Azur*, which aims to increase the number of tourists visiting Morocco to 20 million per year by 2020. This would, in turn, increase demand for personnel in hotels, restaurants and other enterprises in the hospitality industry.

In the field of renewable energies, Morocco has recently opened *Noor*, the world's largest solar thermal power plant. That means, strategically, Morocco now has much in common with Germany, which has decided to shut down its nuclear power plants. Both nations also have a need for skilled energy-industry personnel. Since 2012 PAREMA, the German-Moroccan energy partnership, has been making use of the momentum generated by the Moroccan government's decision to pursue the strategic goal of promoting wind and solar power. Morocco wants to cover its expected increase in energy consumption by tapping alternative sources. It also wants to reduce its imports of oil and gas and is interested in entering the electricity market on the Iberian Peninsula. To do so it urgently needs more qualified personnel, as does Germany.

An economic upswing could put an end to the icy relations between Morocco and Algeria. Dialogue

and trade between the two Maghrebian regional powers are needed on all levels, from senior policy makers and business leaders to local mayors. The EU and its major member states need to apply as much diplomatic leverage as they can to promote an intra-North African rapprochement process.

The Moroccan economy is dominated by the "Palace" and the "500 families." These elites must allow a true diversification of the country's economic and financial structures, so that as many small and mid-sized enterprises as possible have an opportunity to succeed on the local market, thereby creating jobs and generating tax revenues.

6. The third sector creates jobs too

This diversification must include civil society, academia and the media. In many countries, providing greater freedom for the third sector results in more education, employment and income.

In its last report on cooperation with Morocco in March 2015, the European Commission openly discussed current shortcomings. In the area of human and civil rights in particular, the discrepancy between the country's laws and what happens in reality is often quite large. Freedom of expression, assembly and the media is limited and a public debate about the monarchy and the system in general is forbidden. Activists from the February 20 movement who began fighting for democracy in 2011 are still in prison. The Germany-based Friedrich Naumann Foundation had to recall the director of its Moroccan office after an award was given to a journalist critical of the government.

At the same time, Morocco was one of the initial leaders (besides Tunisia) of the Arab Spring. Following peaceful protests, King Mohammed VI engaged with the general public in an open and wide-ranging discussion of constitutional reform. Laws were rewritten. Free parliamentary elections in November 2011 resulted in the leader of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) becoming the head of government. The PJD has even adhered to democracy's ground rules.

Unfortunately, despite the high level of legitimacy accorded the monarch and the exemplary successes achieved in Morocco's process of transformation, the peaceful attempts to create a more open and diverse society have stalled.

CONTACT

Christian-Peter Hanelt, Middle East Expert
Tel.: +49 – 5241 81 81 187
christian.hanelt@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Najim Azahaf, Migration Expert
najim.azahaf@bertelsmann-stiftung.de
Tel.: +49 – 5241 81 81 411

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Amnesty International, [Fear and Fences: Europe's Approach to Keeping Refugees at Bay](#) (November 2015).
- Azahaf, Najim, Entwicklung durch Migration? – Die Wirkungen von Remittances auf die sozioökonomische Entwicklung Marokkos (2015).
- Baumgratz, Gisela, "EU-Migrationspolitik - Auswirkungen auf Marokko," in INAMO, 85 (Spring 2016).
- Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), [Morocco Country Report](#) (2016).
- Carrera/Cassarino/El Qadim/Lahlou, "[EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission, Borders and Protection: A Model to Follow?](#)" in CEPS Paper 87 (January 2016).
- CIA, The World Fact Book: Morocco (March 2016).
- de Haas, Hein, "Un siècle de migrations marocaines: transformations, transitions et perspectives d'avenir," in Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger (ed.), Marocains de l'extérieur, Rabat, 61–91 (2013).
- DG NEAR of the European Commission, [Morocco Overview](#) (March 2016).
- DG TRADE of the European Commission, [Trade Statistics: Morocco](#) (October 2015).
- EEAS, [EU Relations with Kingdom of Morocco](#) (March 2016).
- Euromesco, Van der Loo, Guillaume, Mapping out the Scope and Contents of the DCFTAs with Tunisia and Morocco (2016).
- Frontex, [Risk Analysis Report Q4 2015](#) (March 2016).
- Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Das Migrationsportfolio der GIZ in Marokko (2016).
- Human Rights Watch, [World Report – Morocco](#) (2016).
- Lahlou, Mehdi, "Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country," in IAI Working Papers 15 (September 2015).
- Munzinger Online/Länder – internationales Handbuch, "Marokko – gesamt" (March 2016).
- Reporters Without Borders, World Press Freedom Index (2016).
- Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index (2015).
- UN Populations Division, [Migrant Stock Total 2015](#).
- UNHCR, [Morocco Update – Regularisation of Refugees by National Authorities](#) (April 2015).
- UNHCR, [Morocco Update – Information Note on Syrians Applying for Asylum in Morocco](#) (September 2015).
- UNHCR Morocco, [Statistical Report on UNHCR Population of Concern](#) (November 2015).
- World Bank, World Development Indicators (April 2016).