

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conditions for cooperation between the European Union and The Kingdom of Morocco in the field of migration

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Abstract

The aim of article is to analyze the importance of migration in EU cooperation with the Kingdom of Morocco. Although population flows in the Mediterranean region are a constant phenomenon, their nature and intensity have changed. The specific nature of this region as an area of many disparities makes it a ‘problematic space’ of enormous importance for the entire planet. The complexity of changes in the region may in future lead to mass migration, which no country or organization will be able to cope with on its own.

Two hypotheses were verified in order to achieve the research objective. The first assumes that the European model of migration management in the Mediterranean region is causing a change in the functioning of Arab societies, as exemplified by Morocco. The second hypothesis assumes that the intensification of EU cooperation with the Kingdom in the field of migration is a manifestation of external Europeanisation, which is undergoing gradual institutionalization. In the study, both the traditional theoretical perspective of subject analysis (E. Lee’s push-pull theory) and the new generation of migration theories (I. Wallerstein’s center-periphery system theory) proved helpful. Theoretical triangulation was supported by the process of combining methods (quantitative and qualitative). The quantitative strategy is manifested in the use of statistical techniques, while the qualitative strategy is evident in numerous references to the statements of people involved in decision-making regarding the matter. However, factor analysis was crucial for identifying the main variables determining the parties to change the way of cooperation in the field of migration.

The study provided the basis for three conclusions. Firstly, in view of the growing threats affecting the Mediterranean, EU cooperation with Morocco on migration management is taking on new importance for the security and stability of the entire area. Secondly, the process of Europeanisation that has been taking place in Morocco since decolonization has led to the evolution and a high degree of convergence with the Western model of migration policy implementation in that country. Thirdly, we are witnessing the development of a ‘Euro-Mediterranean migration policy,’ whose central country ensuring its effectiveness will be Morocco.

Keywords

Migration management, Mediterranean region, relations European Union with Morocco

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Introduction

The phenomenon of human migration is an evolving, multifaceted social and cultural construct that has existed since the earliest days of recorded history and is inextricably linked to the fundamental human experience. While affecting 3.6% of the world’s population, international human flows remain at the heart of the concerns of many organizations and institutions, including the European Union (EU)¹. Specifically, the EU’s political agenda places significant emphasis on combating illegal migration and controlling border crossings. However, while it is possible to control the flow of people and try to limit it as much as possible, it is unlikely that this phenomenon will disappear. The 2020 World Migration Report demonstrates the persistence of this trend regardless of the pandemic-induced slowdown, with high-income destination countries consistently attracting a significant proportion of migrants².

It appears that this situation will continue because the efforts of states and “international communities” prove insufficient beyond the conventional push-pull drivers of migration and the attempts to curb it with the various instruments at their disposal. In and of itself, the phenomenon of migration is not inherently problematic; it does bring about certain benefits. However, it raises transnational security concerns, as shown by migration flows in the Mediterranean. The massiveness of this phenomenon is associated with the migration crisis that took place in 2015–2016 in the analyzed region, which individual states are ill-equipped to handle. Failure to cooperate and act collectively is making matters worse and generating new challenges. As a result, the Mediterranean is now regarded as the most dangerous maritime border in the world in recent years³.

The Mediterranean region is characterized by significant disparities in respect of natural resources, indispensable for human life and development, including drinking water and fertile land. Additionally, the region experiences high rates of natural increase. It is estimated that the population of the North Africa and the Middle East (MENA) has risen

¹ *World Migration Report 2024* (IOM, 2024), 384, <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>.

² *World Migration Report 2020* (2019), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020-1.pdf.

³ A.G. Ben Allal, *Le défi de la crise migratoire en Méditerranée: réflexion sur la dialectique sécurité, droit et solidarité*, 22 czerwca 2021, <https://ieim.uqam.ca/le-defi-de-la-crise-migratoire-en-mediterranee-reflexion-sur-la-dialectique-securite-droit-et-solidarite/>.

from 105 million in 1960 to 493 million in 2022⁴. Projections indicate that this figure will reach from 724 million⁵ up to 768 million by 2050⁶. Economic uncertainty, unemployment, conflicts (mainly the Israeli-Arab conflict, which flared up in February 2023) and climate change in the region further exacerbate the situation. The accumulation of these factors in the Euromed region may trigger migration crises in the future.

In light of these developments, European states and regional institutions have adopted several measures, including border security, closures of some sea routes, and the implementation and tightening of national legislation pertaining to asylum rights. However, they have also sought ways to solve common problems with selected neighbours in the region.

The EU pursues a multi-level policy towards the Mediterranean in order to address the challenges of so-called 'soft' security and general threats to the region's security. The Kingdom of Morocco is a key player in cooperation with the EU in this area. In order to deepen these relations, the EU has been using a unique tool for years, namely the process of 'Europeanisation', spreading the Western model of economic and social development, in which Morocco is doing very well, becoming a leader among other states on the southern flank of the Mediterranean. The securitization of migration issues, especially after the Arab Spring, triggered a process of action on the part of both partners, creating political strategies both in bilateral relations and for the entire region.

The aim of this article is to analyze the importance of migration in EU cooperation with the Kingdom of Morocco, in particular: 1. To explain the specific nature and context of cooperation between the parties in the field of migration; 2. To identify the structures and instruments developed by the EU (in the process of Europeanisation) and even international ones in the area under analysis; 3. Defining the framework for mutual cooperation by identifying actors, strategies and mechanisms for managing migration in order to establish them more effectively in the long term.

Several hypotheses were verified in this study. The first assumes that the European model of migration management in the Mediterranean is changing the way Arab societies function, an example of this is Morocco and its new migration policy. The second hypothesis assumes that the increase in EU cooperation with Morocco in the area of migration is a manifestation of external Europeanization, which is subject to gradual institutionalization.

The starting point for these hypotheses were the following research questions: what is the reason for the EU's strategic anchoring in Morocco, and how do the parties perceive the importance of close cooperation in the area of migration? Is Morocco or could it become Europe's 'policeman', protecting the states on the northern flank of the Mediterranean from renewed mass flows of people, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa? Can the EU continue to

⁴ "World Bank: Population, total - Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan & Pakistan", dostęp 18 listopada 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ZQ>.

⁵ "Total Population across the Middle East and North Africa from 1990 to 2050", dostęp 5 maja 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/978535/mena-total-population/>.

⁶ *Global Wealth Databook 2023* (2023), <https://rev01ution.red/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/global-wealth-databook-2023-ubs.pdf>.

play a significant role in transferring migration management pathways and models in the Mediterranean, given that it itself has problems with some Member States accepting a common vision for resolving this issue?

In order to understand the significance of human flows in EU-Morocco cooperation, a theoretical perspective was helpful, taking into account both traditional approaches to the analysis of migration, such as E. Lee's pull-push theory⁷ and the new economics of labour migration developed in the 1980s, as well as subsequent generations of migration theory. The latter include I. Wallerstein's analysis of the relationship between the center and the peripheries of the world system, and the analysis of transnational social spaces for which the Mediterranean is an area where a specific migration strategy is implemented by certain people who are referred to as transmigrants.

Theoretical triangulation was accompanied by a process of combining methods, reflecting the researcher's naturalistic ontological perspective and realistic epistemological approach. The quantitative strategy manifests itself in the use of statistical techniques, while the qualitative strategy is evident in numerous references to statements made by key actors involved in the decision-making process of the issue in question, as well as by researchers. However, the analysis of the exploration of variables that make up this complex system of problems related to migration in the Euromed area, which determine the need for EU cooperation with Morocco, proved to be crucial. The first variable is an independent variable that refers to the historical and cultural dimensions and geographical proximity of migration in the region. The second variable concerns the political and legal dimension of migration in the activities of the parties, including the internal evolution of the Kingdom's migration and asylum policy in the face of the increasing influx of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to this state⁸. The third variable relates to the identification of economic forces influencing the decision to migrate. The fourth variable refers to the ecological element of generating migration.

The historical, cultural and geographical conditions

The history of the Mediterranean region, in particular that of Europe and Morocco, has been characterized by frequent mobility between the regions. Morocco's unique geographical position at the intersection of Europe, Africa, and between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic has rendered it a pivotal partner of the European Union as to security and strategic cooperation with regard to combatting illegal migration. The security activities of the Kingdom and the other nations within the region are crucial for regional and international stability not only in terms of military concerns, such as neighbourhood conflicts, but also the social dimensions of security, particularly migration and transnational threats. Morocco's

⁷ E. S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration", *Demography*, nr 3 (1966): 47–57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>; M. Urbański, "Comparing Push and Pull Factors Affecting Migration", *Economies* 1, nr 10 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies10010021>.

⁸ R. EL. Fella, *Introduction, w Regards croisés sur la question migratoire au Maroc et dans l'espace euro-méditerranéen*, red. R. EL. Fellah i L. Errami (2021), <https://www.kas.de/documents/276068/8307005/Regards+croise%CC%81s+sur+la+migration.pdf/ec606cbf-1515-9b3a-663a-e6aece933a0e?version=1.0>.

strategic geographical location enables it to adopt a stance of openness towards the regions, fostering collaboration and exchange with Europe, the Arab world, and Africa⁹.

The geographical proximity of the two regions, coupled with their shared cultural richness and heritage of a 3,000-year history¹⁰ has been instrumental in fostering relations between societies on both coasts. In the context of population flows, the colonial past played a significant role. These variables became significant drivers of transborder migration. This phenomenon is perfectly explained by the theory of dependent development incorporated in the original concept of I. Wallerstein, which indicates that in the 1960s, societies entered a phase of economic and political integration, which emerged as a result of complex historical processes, being the legacy of colonization, as well as the expansion of European societies, resulting in a structure of dependency based on the center-periphery model¹¹.

The colonial period marked the onset of a significant influx of individuals, predominantly laborers and military personnel, to the Maghreb states (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia), thereby gradually drawing the populations of the conquered colonies to Europe. This dynamic, initiated in 1912, persisted and diversified in subsequent years. Initially, these migrations exhibited a colonial character, with European citizens, predominantly from France and Spain, settling in North Africa. A notable example of this were the twenties of the 20th century, marked by the ‘pacification’ of Morocco and the Rif War¹². The armed conflict that transpired between 1920 and 1927 between colonial Spain (with subsequent involvement from France) and the Berber tribes of the mountainous Rif region of Morocco, led by Abd El-Karim, culminated in defeat. This resulted in the formation of the so-called Republic of the Rif as an administrative entity within the Kingdom¹³. Within a decade, hostilities subsided, but colonisation intensified. Newly acquired lands were distributed to European settlers, who arrived en masse due to the unemployment resulting from the 1929 economic crisis or to avoid fascist repression in their respective states. While occupying Maghreb, France at that time were being occupied by Germany. Furthermore, the liberation of France relied on Maghreb soldiers (including Moroccan goumiers), who had participated extensively in the fighting and the Allied victory over Nazi Germany on European soil.

⁹ “In the Preamble of the new Constitution of 2011, the Kingdom refers to its diverse and undivided Arab-Islamic, Berber (Amazigh), Saharan-Hassani identity, as well as those enriched by African, Andalusian, Hebrew, and Mediterranean influences. This pluralistic reorientation of Morocco’s identity affects the shape of its current migration policy.”

¹⁰ “Panorama of Morocco in the World”, dostęp 5 września 2024, https://www.ires.ma/iip/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Panorama-of-Morocco-in-the-World_-The-Kingdoms-International-Relations.pdf.

¹¹ I. Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smzx1>.

¹² “Abd el -Krim (1882–1963), Le stratege de la guerre du Rif”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, nr 86 (2006), <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/mav/86/A/52519>.

¹³ P. Daudin, “The Rif War: A Forgotten War?”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, nr 923 (2023): 914–46, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383122001023>.

The end of the Second World War saw a deterioration in relations between France and Morocco, leading to an open crisis in the 1950s¹⁴. Ultimately, invoking the foundational principles of the United Nations (UN), established in 1945, namely the tenets of equal national rights and the right of self-determination for peoples, the societies of the Maghreb, including Morocco, embarked on a course towards freedom.

Following this, the Kingdom of Morocco regained independence in March 1956, and the process of normalizing relations with their former colonizer was initiated. France, a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC), which was established in 1957, emphasized the importance of the Community establishing relations with the Maghreb states. This was reflected and formalized in a trade agreement concluded between the European Community and Morocco as early as 1969¹⁵.

An analysis of the above-mentioned determining factors shows Morocco as a state whose actions are determined by three distinct geostrategic areas. The primary space is that of proximity, shared with Spain, Algeria and Mauritania. The second encompasses complex cultural domains, including the Arab-Muslim world, Africa, and the Euromed region. Finally, global space, representing a new scale, i.e. the planet¹⁶. These three spaces significantly impact Morocco's new migration policy, establishing a backdrop for the response to the EU's actions.

Legal and political conditions

It is an irrefutable fact that the phenomenon of migration is inextricably linked to the movement of individuals referred to as 'migrants', a term that has gained widespread currency in both popular and political discourse since the advent of the twenty-first century¹⁷. In order to comprehend the significance of the legal and political factors influencing migration in EU-Morocco relations, it is imperative to operationalize the concept of who this phenomenon concerns, and then to present its evolution in mutual contacts.

The term 'migrant' refers to an individual who permanently changes their place of residence, often for a period exceeding one year, and for reasons that fall outside the scope of tourist activities. According to the International Office for Migration (OIM), the term 'migrant' is a "generic term, not defined in international law", signifying "any person who leaves their habitual place of residence for some time, or settles permanently and for various reasons." A key merit of this definition is that it no longer insists, as was the case in the previous version, on the final nature of migration. Indeed, migration is often followed by return (i.e. migratory movements) or subsequent another migration, given that individuals

¹⁴ K. Stachurska, "Polityka Francji wobec Maroka w latach dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku", *Annales. Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska Lublin – Polonia*, nr XI (2004): 39–58.

¹⁵ K. Stachurska-Szczesiak, *Rozwój samopodtrzymujący w polityce Unii Europejskiej wobec państw Maghrebu*, The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press (Lublin, 2019).

¹⁶ "Panorama of Morocco in the World".

¹⁷ *Migrant*, dostęp 15 maja 2025, <https://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/glossaire/migrant>.

frequently move on multiple occasions during their lifetimes. However, it should be noted that this definition does not allow for the distinction between a migrant and a tourist, who often settles temporarily outside his or her usual place of residence.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an international migrant is an individual who is not considered a refugee and who has migrated from his or her country of origin to another country, regardless of the reason for leaving¹⁸. The term 'migration' may, in fact, encompass both refugee movements and mixed movements¹⁹. It is imperative to recognize that these migratory patterns encompass diverse countries of origin, transit, and destination, each with its unique implications. Consequently, effective response strategies must encompass all three elements.

Although cooperation between the EU and the Kingdom dates back to the 1960s, when the parties signed a first-generation trade agreement²⁰, relations concerning deeper cooperation in the field of human mobility began only thirty years later²¹.

European migration policy underwent a period of significant development concurrent with the establishment of the Barcelona Process (otherwise known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, EMP), which was formalized in November 1995²². While the issue of migration was initially not a prominent aspect of the partnership, it was within its framework that the outsourcing of migration management began²³. At that time, the main challenge was to strengthen cooperation in the Mediterranean region in order to reduce migratory pressure and combat illegal migration. The core concern, therefore, was the promotion of shared prosperity as a means of mitigating the potential destabilizing impact of migratory movements along the northern coast²⁴. Since signing an Association Agreement with the European Communities on 26 February 1996 (which entered into force on 18 March 2000), Morocco has played an important role in this process²⁵, and its importance grew in 2005, the year marking the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Barcelona Declaration. At that time, in order to revitalize the EMP, the EU approved a five-year programme to establish a cooperation forum on justice, security and migration²⁶.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UNHCR, "Définition de « migrant »", w *Emergency Handbook*, 18 marca 2019, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/fr/protection/cadre-juridique/d%C3%A9finition-de-migrant>.

²⁰ E. Rein, "La politique Méditerranéenne de la Communauté Européenne", *Confluences Méditerranée*, nr 7 (1993): 31.

²¹ *EU-Morocco Relations*, 31 marca 2022, <https://esthinktank.com/2022/03/31/in-context-eu-morocco-relations-part-i/>.

²² "EC-Morocco Association Agreement", 1996, <https://edit.wti.org/document/show/3ee57053-37ce-46a0-beb0-90ce91400fb9>.

²³ N. EL. Qadim, "La politique Migratoire Européenne vue du Maroc: contraintes et opportunités", *Politique européenne*, nr 31 (2010): 98.

²⁴ M. Diallo, "La dimension migratoire des relations euro-méditerranéennes: la perception du Maroc", *EU Diplomacy Papers*, nr 6 (2023): 9; 11; 17.

²⁵ "Official Journal of the European Communities, L 70, 18 March 2000", https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj%3AJOL_2000_070_R_TOC.

²⁶ "COM (2005) 139 final", <https://aei.pitt.edu/39624/>.

This development subsequently established migration oversight – encompassing border control and the suppression of irregular movement of persons – as the fourth pillar of the Barcelona Process. Within this framework, Morocco successfully negotiated several economically beneficial agreements, including those pertaining to fisheries and the establishment of a free trade area. Moreover, it was the beneficiary of substantial financial assistance from the MEDA programme, particularly during its second edition for the years 2000–2006, which concentrated exclusively on migration-related issues. A programme totalling €40 million was earmarked for border management and control, with the aim of counteracting illegal migration, and €5 million to support workers seeking emigrant status. The programme also involved the establishment of so-called ‘information centers’²⁷.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which was inaugurated in 2003, marks a novel phase in the European-Moroccan relationship, progressing from a partnership to friendship, yet without the prospect of membership, in line with the concept of sharing everything except institutions. ENP was to cultivate close relations with neighbouring countries, including Morocco, without them participating in decision-making processes. The ENP institutionalized the area of justice and home affairs, especially the issues of migration and external border control. As a result, the EU’s southern neighbourhood has emerged as a strategic domain of its external actions, particularly with regard to migration policy. This strategic focus is evidenced in the European Commission’s (EC) 2002 Communication on integrating “the issue of migration into the EU’s external relations”²⁸. In comparison to the antecedent formula of the EU’s Mediterranean policy, the ENP aspired to establish a geographical buffer between Sub-Saharan Africa and the European continent. However, the substantial influx of migrants from the south of the Mediterranean to Europe between 2015 and 2016, triggered by the popular uprisings in the Arab world known as the Arab Spring, revealed the limitations of effective and coordinated cooperation between the parties in this field.

The migration crisis has given rise to heated debates among EU governments²⁹. As a result of the growing narrative of limiting the influx of foreigners into Europe, the EU has launched a series of measures and instruments to strengthen its borders. Morocco has become a natural leader in cooperation on this issue. This was influenced by two jointly negotiated documents, even before the mass mobility in the region, the adoption of which led to Morocco becoming the first state in the Euromed region to sign a Mobility Partnership (MP) with the EU in June 2013³⁰. The first of these is the Action Plan to strengthen the

²⁷ N. EL. Qadim, “La politique Migratoire Européenne vue du Maroc: contraintes et opportunités”, *Politique européenne*, nr 31 (2010): 99.

²⁸ “COM (2002) 233 final”, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52002DC0233>.

²⁹ J.-F. Drevet, *L’Europe face aux migrations: “forteresse assiégée” ou “Europe passoire”*, 10 października 2019, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/271054-europe-migrations-forteresse-assiegee-europe-passoire>.

³⁰ “The origins of this form of cooperation date back to the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, when in November 2011 an action plan was proposed as part of the Prague Process – Building Migration Partnerships 2012–2016. The Prague Process reflected the evolution of EU policy, involving Central and Eastern European countries in the management of migration to southern Member States.”

European-Moroccan partnership adopted in 2005³¹, while the second follows the signing of the 2008 Declaration on the deepening of bilateral relations³². The objective of MP was to ensure more effective joint management of migratory flows, to prevent and combat illegal immigration, and to promote an effective return and readmission policy in exchange for a visa facilitation agreement. The mobility partnership is a commitment on the part of all signatories to achieve specific objectives that are collectively defined; a sort of road map for mobility. However, it is imperative that these commitments do lead to negotiations and the conclusion of two agreements: a readmission agreement and an agreement on the facilitation of visa formalities (AFFV). In accordance with the recommendations of the EU Council, these are to enter into force on the same day³³.

All these legal and political elements intrinsic to the mutual Morocco–EU relations point at the long path Morocco has had to follow in order to gradually integrate with the EU internal market, i.e. attain legislative and regulatory convergence. Beside counter-terrorist efforts, employment and social welfare collaboration, migration flows constitute a particular domain of collaboration between the two parties aimed at collective regional security³⁴.

In addition, two further documents, namely the Action Plan for the implementation of advanced status in 2015³⁵ and the Joint Declaration for the Mutual Prosperity in the EU-Morocco Partnership in 2019, crown these relations³⁶. This strategic initiative by the two parties is set to further strengthen their long-standing privileged relationship. The Euro-Moroccan Partnership fosters a shared community of values, complementing the existing natural community of interests defined by history and geography. Being geographically close, the two parties have a converging vision of the future towards the Mediterranean. The numerous challenges and opportunities present in today's complex global environment they face are set to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of both the Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-African regions³⁷. Alongside the imperative of combatting climate change, cooperation on mobility and migration is recognized as a cornerstone of the Partnership.

³¹ "Association between the EU and Morocco", 27 lipca 2005, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-2705-2005-INIT/en/pdf>.

³² "It Was Also a Clear Response from the EU to Morocco's Request for 'More than Association, Less than Membership' and Illustrates Well the Principle of Differentiation in the ENP. The Flagship Measures Concern the Approximation of the Legal Framework through the Gradual Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* in Morocco."

³³ M. Limam, "Les Partenariats pour la Mobilité de l'UE avec le Sud", *med dialogue series*, nr 28 (wrzesień 2020), <https://www.kas.de/documents/282499/282548/Partenariats+Mobilit%C3%A9+UE+-+Mohamed+Limam.pdf/677e2c95-7b24-e505-fd89-8c0c7f671bba>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "Plan d'action dans le cadre de la politique européenne de voisinage pour la mise en oeuvre du statut avancé (2013–2017)", dostęp 28 stycznia 2025, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/4326_en.

³⁶ "Déclaration conjointe de l'Union européenne et du Maroc suite à la 14ème réunion du Conseil d'Association UE-Maroc", Conseil de l'Union européenne, 27 czerwca 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2019/06/27/joint-declaration-by-the-european-union-and-the-kingdom-of-morocco-for-the-fourteenth-meeting-of-the-association-council/>.

³⁷ "Soutien de l' UE au Maroc", dostęp 28 stycznia 2025, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/Fiche%20migration.pdf>.

This convergence of views (sensitivity to global issues such as human development, security, fair international order, climate change) and Morocco's flexible adaptation to the requirements of its European partner is an expression of the Kingdom's thinking, which has been clearly visible since the 1990s as it continues to open up to the outside world. This period was marked by a change in Morocco's position in the context of migration flows. From a sending country, the Kingdom became a major transit point for sub-Saharan migrants. Although the country did not formally pursue a migration policy between 1990 and 2003, its roots can be traced back to the management of its own migration since the first flows to Europe.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the parties began close cooperation in this area, and Morocco attempted to 'turn upside down' the existing institutional work in order to create a genuine strategy that would meet international standards. Since then, the Kingdom has consolidated its position as a major player in the regional and even global development of migration management strategies. A notable example is the organization in Rabat of the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, initiated in 2006 by Mohammed VI. This, in turn, led to numerous meetings over the following years, which later became known as the 'Rabat process'. This initiative, resulting from the global approach to migration proposed by the EU, was also a signal to Morocco that rational and international management of a phenomenon that affects them so much is necessary.

The signing of the PM between the EU (its nine Member States) and Morocco in June 2013, followed by the announcement of the Kingdom's new migration policy in November of the same year, confirmed the central place of migration in the strategic relations between the two partners³⁸. There has been a visible evolution in the perception and understanding of the issue of migration in Morocco and the role and position of this country in this regard. Speaking on 18 April 2024 at the opening of the North Africa Regional Ministerial Conference, organized by Morocco and the Republic of Togo under the theme 'Pan-Africanism and Migration', N. Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Abroad, said, "the Kingdom has opted for a humanistic and solidarity-based approach by adopting a new migration policy in 2013"³⁹. In addition to strengthening cooperation with the EU and its individual member states, the Moroccan government has introduced programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of migrants on its territory. A key development in this context was the launch in 2013 of the National Programme for the Regularisation of Foreigners in an Irregular Situation (Programme

³⁸ "On 18 December 2014, Morocco adopted a migration policy (La Stratégie Nationale d'Immigration et d'Asile – SNIA) aimed at issuing residence permits to migrants and introducing robust legislation to protect asylum seekers. It is based on two key strategies, the aforementioned SNIA and the Stratégie Nationale au profit des Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger (SNMRE) of 2015. Both strategies bring the Kingdom closer to its international commitments on migration and asylum and address these issues in a comprehensive manner, protecting the rights of migrants and seeking to optimise their contribution to the country's development."

³⁹ "Panafricanisme et Migration", dostęp 17 lutego 2025, <https://www.mapaudio.ma/produit/rabat-ouverture-de-la-conference-ministerielle-regionale-de-lafrique-du-nord-sous-le-theme-panafricanisme-et-migration/>.

national de régularisation des étrangers en situation irrégulière - PNRE), which marked a turning point in the country's migration policy⁴⁰.

Morocco's role in the context of EU migration policy can be characterized as that of both a 'buffer' and a 'hotspot': while the Kingdom strongly restricts the flow of irregular migration across the Mediterranean, it also hosts large numbers of irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Statistics on foreign residents show that the number increased from 148,152 in September 2024, representing a 61,946-person increase between 2014 and 2024⁴¹. The importance of this state will grow, given the demographic data which shows that between 2018 and 2050, Europe's population is projected to reach 700 million, whilst the African population is expected to rise to 2.4 billion. It is estimated that 60% of the African population will be under 25 years of age⁴². In light of this anticipated growth, the European Commission's ongoing financial assistance to Morocco is intended to address existing challenges and to stem migration programmes.

In the light of the above, Morocco has a unique position in its relations with the EU. Moroccans themselves see their country as strongly affiliated with Europe, as evidenced by the words of King Hassan II of Morocco, who declared in a speech in 1976 that "Morocco is like a tree whose nourishing roots plunge deep into the soil of Africa and whose rustling leaves breathe in the wind of Europe"⁴³. According to a 2021 opinion poll, more than half of Moroccans have a positive view of the EU (57%). 76% think their country has a good relationship with the EU, and 65% believe that the EU effectively supports their country financially. The survey also shows that Moroccans would like the EU to play an even greater role in their trade (84%), health (84%) and migration (83%)⁴⁴. Unlike other southern Mediterranean neighbours, the Kingdom does not just want to be an already privileged partner of the EU or a good student of the ENP, but also, in the words of Michael Köhler, retired EC official, DG Neighbourhood: "Morocco wants to gain strategic autonomy and to enforce benefits for itself, from financial to the recognition of its ownership of Western Sahara"⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ M. Boukhari, "Migration: le Maroc à la croisée des chemins", *FinancesNewsHebdo*, 1 maja 2024, <https://fnh.ma/article/actualite-economique/migration-maroc>.

⁴¹ B. Khirchi, "Augmentation du nombre des étrangères résidant au Maroc: les explications d'un expert en immigration", *Medias24.com*, 12 listopada 2024.

⁴² D. Bouissa, "La nouvelle politique migratoire marocaine: instrument diplomatique d'intégration régionale" (2018), <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-02530255/document>.

⁴³ F. Bahri, "Le Maroc et l'Union africaine, une pièce en plusieurs actes", *Jeuneafrique*, 11 lutego 2024, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1534289/politique/le-maroc-et-lunion-africaine-une-piece-en-plusieurs-actes/>.

⁴⁴ "Opinion Poll 2020: Moroccans and the European Union", 6 stycznia 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/opinion-poll-2020-moroccans-and-european-union_en.

⁴⁵ "Online interview with M. Köhler conducted by K. Stachurska-Szczesiak", 31 stycznia 2025.

Morocco's actions in the area of migration at the level of legal and political changes are having direct positive effects, which also translates into the image of cooperation with the EU⁴⁶.

The revival of relations in the Mediterranean, where the flow of people plays an important role, was prompted by the High Representative's Communication issued in February 2021. This document establishes a new Agenda for the Mediterranean (2021–2027)⁴⁷. It appeared in the context of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Barcelona Declaration, but also the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which the EC presented in September 2020⁴⁸.

The Agenda is an ambitious programme aimed at strengthening multiannual programming through the creation of a new Instrument for Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (IVCDI). It characterizes migration as a challenge requiring the implementation of common solutions and the sharing of responsibilities. It states that this renewed partnership encompasses all aspects of migration, while taking into account the interests of the Mediterranean partner countries. To address irregular migration, the programme aims to bolster border management capabilities and intensify actions on effective return and readmission. It draws inspiration from the Council's strategic priorities outlined for 2019–2024, during which time the primary concerns were the effective management of borders, tackling irregular migration and ensuring effective return by deepening cooperation with countries of origin and transit. This commitment was further reaffirmed by High Representative J. Borrell in March 2021, who stressed that “the EU has the need and the desire to ensure that migration in all its aspects becomes an important element of European relations with third countries”⁴⁹.

This brief review illustrates, the management of migration has become an significant part of Euro-Moroccan cooperation over time. In particular, the EU is attempting to ‘streamline’ its approach to migration management by collaborating with regional states to reducing migration flows.

⁴⁶ “It Is Worth Noting That as Early as 2003, at the Institutional Level, the Kingdom Adopted Law 02-03 on ‘the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in the Country, Immigration and Illegal Immigration’. According to the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior, More than 76,000 Attempts at Illegal Immigration Were Thwarted in 2018, and 174 Human Smuggling Networks Were Dismantled. These Figures Are Comparable to the Failed Border Crossing Attempts Detected by European Border Guards in the Same Year. As a Result, Half of the Attempts to Cross the Border into Europe Illegally in 2018 Were Stopped in Morocco before They Reached the European Coast; See More: <https://Maroc-Diplomatique.Net/Les-Dynamiques-Socio-Economiques-et-Politiques/>; https://Www.Lemonde.Fr/Afrique/Article/2021/08/24/l-Algerie-Rompt-Ses-Relations-Diplomatiques-Avec-Le-Maroc_6092242_3212.Html.”

⁴⁷ “A new Agenda for the Mediterranean”, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/459c4319-f163-4b4b-8c6b-0f278e80f497_en?filename=joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood_en.pdf.

⁴⁸ “Pacte sur la migration et l’asile”, dostep 16 grudnia 2024, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-of-life/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_fr.

⁴⁹ M. Diallo, “La dimension migratoire des relations euro-méditerranéennes: la perception du Maroc”, *EU Diplomacy Papers*, nr 6 (2023): 11.

When migration is put at the center of EU-Morocco cooperation, the analysis shows clearly that the EU employs increasingly institutionalized forms of outsourcing to manage migration flows. Hence the cooperation at multiple levels (national and regional) to extend the reach of migration policy beyond the EU's borders. Countries of origin and transit thus become sites for the external management of EU migration – outsourced and conditional. These strategies are designed to shift the burden of migration to the external environment⁵⁰. Convergence of migration policies is also evident at the EU-Morocco bilateral level. However, a salient conclusion emerges: the greater the European Union's reliance on external partners for migration management, the more dependent it becomes on the goodwill of these partners⁵¹.

They are well aware that cooperation as to migration in the Mediterranean is crucial, and they implement very similar negotiating strategies. These include expressing concerns (on the issue of asylum outsourcing), having expectations to meet (establishing a balance in the relationship of concessions versus gratification) and, finally, trying to delay the negotiations by using the 'deficiencies' tactic related to the lack of appropriate legal or institutional frameworks. In his study, M. Limam emphasizes the necessity of reflection on existing hypotheses, as the European Union's partners are opposed to the readmission of third-country nationals who have transited their territory, especially when they have no possibility to negotiate their return with their country of origin. One potential solution could be for the EU to assume the role of negotiating readmission agreements with these countries, thereby avoiding any potential negative repercussions for its policy towards Africa in the case of Morocco⁵².

Economic conditions

A further important element of the role of migration in EU-Morocco cooperation is the economic attraction and repulsion factors. Repulsion stems from the developmental disparities that exist between the northern and southern Mediterranean. These factors can be captured by quantifiable elements, such as differences in living standards measured in GDP per capita or HDI⁵³. On the other hand, one of the factors that attracts migrants to Morocco is the country's rapid economic development. The transformation of Morocco from a country of origin to a temporary layover and, ultimately, a destination for migrants has prompted the implementation of a series of government policies and actions aimed at capitalizing on international migration while mitigating its associated risks.

⁵⁰ E. Lannon, "The Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A New Agenda for the Mediterranean: Another EU-Centric Initiative?", *IMED*, 2021, <https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-externalization-of-eu-policies-in-the-renewed-partnership-with-the-southern-neighbourhood-the-potential-impact-of-the-new-mediterranean-agenda>.

⁵¹ Limam, "Les Partenariats pour la Mobilité de l'UE avec le Sud".

⁵² Ibid: 10-11.

⁵³ "In 2023, Morocco's HDI Index Was (0.69); Germany's Was (0.95); France's Was (0.91) and Spain's Was (0.91)".

Morocco has formulated an all-encompassing vision for development. It is apparent in the principles of sustainable development the state implements and in the way Morocco has assumed the role of a regional hub in a number of areas. The Kingdom has ambitious plans to leverage its geo-strategic position to enhance the dialogue between Europe and Africa⁵⁴. Migration constitutes a pivotal component of this vision and, at the same time, of Morocco's modern economic history. With the prospect of remittances, emigration has shaped certain economic and social aspects since independence, with the strong involvement of the diaspora. The 1990s saw the government adopt a new stance on the issue, leading to a favourable 'turning point' and the establishment of ties with numerous Moroccan diaspora business leaders⁵⁵.

Moroccan citizens residing in the EU, play a key role in ensuring their country's economic resilience. Europe is home to 85% of Moroccans, with the remaining 15% residing in North America, Africa and the Gulf States. The primary destination country is France, with 1.5 million residents, followed by Spain with 860,000, Israel with 800,000 and Belgium with 700,000⁵⁶. The state has, therefore, sought to foster strong and regular connections with its diaspora, leveraging the skills and expertise of its citizens residing abroad to drive the accelerated accumulation of Moroccan human capital. This is achieved by channeling corporate profits into development and expansion, resulting in enhanced production and stimulated demand⁵⁷. The role of cash transfers in driving economic development, particularly in rural areas, has been well-documented by OIM research⁵⁸. Morocco stands to benefit considerably from this phenomenon, consequently positioning itself as a primary recipient of international remittances. Data from the Moroccan Monetary Agency show that the volume of remittances sent by Moroccans living abroad exceeded 117.7 billion dirhams (equivalent to €11.385 billion), marking an increase of 2.1% compared to the 115.26 billion dirhams (equivalent to €11.15 billion) recorded in 2023⁵⁹, ranking third (after Egypt and Nigeria) among African states in 2024. This surpasses both foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA)⁶⁰. These measures contribute to supporting households and provide an important currency safety "cushion" for the state, as was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁵⁴ "Panorama of Morocco in the World".

⁵⁵ OCDE, *Interactions entre politiques publiques, migrations et développement au Maroc* (2017), 55–56, https://www.oecd.org/fr/publications/interactions-entre-politiques-publiques-migrations-et-developpement-au-maroc_9789264279193-fr.html.

⁵⁶ "Les Marocains du Monde en chiffres", *Maghreb Observateur*, 16 lipca 2023, <https://maghreb-observateur.com/?p=10630>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Bilan OIM Maroc 2022* (2023), <https://morocco.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1936/files/documents/2023-06/bilan-2022-230623-web-v2.pdf>.

⁵⁹ A. Icaza, "Moroccans Living Abroad", *Atalayar*, 7 lutego 2025, <https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/economy-and-business/moroccans-living-abroad-sent-more-than-1177-billion-dirhams-in-remittances-during-2024/20250204104431210674.html>.

⁶⁰ "Morocco Among Top African Countries Receiving Diaspora Remittances in 2024", *Assahifa*, 6 stycznia 2025, <https://www.assahifa.com/english/morocco/morocco-among-top-african-countries-receiving-diaspora-remittances-in-2024/>.

Due to its modern migration policy, Morocco is one of the main beneficiaries of the European portfolio allocated to financing migration-related activities. However, this assistance is provided not only at the EU level, but also by UN agencies and NGOs. Financial support is provided through two instruments: the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and the Global Europe Instrument – Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (NDICI – Global Europe Instrument)⁶¹. As part of the EU's multiannual financing for 2021–2027, a draft bilateral indicative programme for Morocco has been prepared to address the causes of migration, protect migrants, reintegrate returning Moroccans and develop a talent partnership in the broader context of a possible focus on post-crisis economic recovery⁶². Under certain circumstances, other EU instruments, notably the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border and Visa Management Instrument (BMVI) might offer complementary funding opportunities for the external dimension of migration.

It is estimated that the EU provided close to €1 billion for the EUTF alone, between 2016 and 2021 (with projects continuing until 2025). The funds were primarily reallocated to the following areas: 1) the protection of vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and host communities with a view to stabilizing the situation; 2) the support of integrated border management and the combatting of human smuggling and trafficking; 3) the support of labour migration; 4) the support of better migration management and assisted voluntary return and sustainable reintegration. Although no new programmes have been adopted since December 2021, 29 projects are still ongoing in North Africa (as of end August 2024)⁶³. For its part, the EU has earmarked an additional €631 million for general bilateral cooperation with Morocco between 2021 and 2022 under (NDICI – Global Europe)⁶⁴. It is believed that the EU has committed more than €2.1 billion to cooperation with Morocco in the area of migration between 2014 and 2022⁶⁵.

While the EU is Morocco's main trading partner, the Kingdom is the EU's largest trading partner in the Southern Neighbourhood, accounting for 25% of the EU's total merchandise trade with the region. In 2021, almost half (49%) of Morocco's total imports came from the EU, while 59% of Morocco's exports went to the EU, and total trade in goods between the EU and Morocco amounted to €44 billion⁶⁶. The EU is also the largest foreign investor in Morocco, making up more than half of FDI in the country. The aforementioned NDICI – Global Europe is the EU's main instrument for cooperation with external partners,

⁶¹ "EU Migration Support in Morocco", lutego 2023, https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/document/download/6690bcbf-3bec-40e1-b80e-f57a724cdf09_en?filename=EU_support_migration_morocco_Kostas.pdf.

⁶² "Les plans de migration de l'Union Européenne pour le Maroc", *Challenge*, 28 października 2021, <https://archive.challenge.ma/les-plans-de-migration-de-lunion-europeenne-pour-le-maroc-224673/>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "EU Migration Support in Morocco".

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ M. Badrane, "Nouvel élan aux relations Maroc-UE", 26 listopada 2024, <https://aujourd'hui.ma/focus/nouvel-elan-aux-relations-maroc-ue>.

including Morocco, for the period 2021–2027. The indicative amount of bilateral grants for this period is €1.6 billion. This will be complemented by other regional and targeted programmes, as well as financing in the form of loans and guarantees⁶⁷. These figures illustrate the extensive cooperation between the partners in the economic and financial dimension, which has given impetus to the process of modernization and democratic transition in Morocco and paved the way for deeper relations in respect of reciprocal flows.

Ecological conditions

Although E. Lee placed ecological push factors in the economic category in his theory of factors, due to the seriousness of the threats posed by the state of the natural environment in the Mediterranean, they should be treated separately in this study.

The areas on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea are considered to be the most affected by the developing climate change. This is manifested in recurrent water shortages, floods, extremely high temperatures and droughts. Such changes often coincide with chronic structural problems resulting from the depletion of natural resources⁶⁸. There is increasing media or press coverage of the role of environmental factors and their impact on migration, and the problem itself has been studied in the scientific world for nearly 30 years. However, there is still a lack of precise data that would illustrate the processes occurring between socio-environmental phenomena. D. Ionesco, D. Mokhnacheva and F. Gemenne in *The Atlas of Environmental Migration* published in 2016 clearly showed that discourses on this topic are divergent and evolve over time⁶⁹.

Part of the problem is the definition of ‘environmental migrants’. This term is not entirely accurate, as a ‘migrant’ is a person who moves and enjoys a degree of freedom in making decisions about the departure, duration and destination of the migration. Therefore, the term obscures many forced migrations that occur during environmental displacement. ‘Environmental displacement’ would be a more appropriate term, but this is rarely used by international agencies such as IOM⁷⁰. The term ‘environmental refugee’ first appeared in the title of a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report in 1985. This, in turn, led to further definitions in the 1990s related to the integration of migration and environmental processes, i.e. ‘climate migration’ or ‘climate refugees’⁷¹.

Setting aside this definitional mess, the World Bank (WB) data shows the scale of problem. This institution predicts that by 2050, more than 216 million people will have been displaced within their own countries due to climate change, including 19 million North

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ OIM, *Atelier de renforcement des capacités sur la migration, l’environnement et le changement climatique-Maroc* (2016), https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11411/files/MECC%20Maroc%20_%20rapport%20de%201%20atelier%20final.pdf.

⁶⁹ D Ionesco et al., *The Atlas of Environmental Migration* (Routledge, 2016).

⁷⁰ B. Mérenne-Schoumaker, “Les migrations environnementales: un nouvel objet d’enseignement”, *Géoconfluences*, juillet 2020, <https://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/informations-scientifiques/dossiers-thematiques/changement-global/articles-scientifiques/migrations-environnementales>.

⁷¹ “Zoï Environment Network”, <https://zoinet.org/>.

Africans⁷². In turn, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicates that while the number of internal displacements in MENA countries in 2014–2023, taking into account the criterion of displacement due to conflict and violence, remains stable, the number of people displaced due to disasters is growing significantly. In 2014, the number of displaced persons stood at 23,000, whereas by 2023, the figure had escalated to 1.3 million, necessitating the resettlement of these individuals⁷³. Morocco has been particularly affected by this phenomenon, with 146,000 people identified in 2023 alone, and environmental disasters are considered to be the main cause⁷⁴. According to the OIM, by the end of 2022, large forest fires in northern Morocco had led to the displacement of 9,500 people⁷⁵.

The diagram providing a conceptual framework of migration factors included in the 2011 Foresight report indicates that the emergence of elements that trigger migration does not necessarily mean that it will occur⁷⁶. The likelihood of migration depends on a number of intervening factors as well as personal and household characteristics, and is particularly important in the face of environmental change. Resource-poor populations are ‘trapped’ in places that make them vulnerable to environmental change⁷⁷. Therefore, environmental migration is undoubtedly a complex phenomenon that is difficult to distinguish from others, as natural causes are often combined with other economic, social and political causes. It is further noted that there is a risk of this process intensifying in the wake of climate change. This may lead to catastrophic scenarios and stimulate discussions on people’s capacity to withstand natural hazards⁷⁸. To this end, a regional symposium was organized in Marrakech in October 2022 to highlight the link between climate change, migration and health. The recommendations from this meeting were presented at COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh⁷⁹. This choice of city is symbolic, as it was here in 2018 that the UN and its key actors met to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. This global agreement provides a framework for cooperation on migration, the first to link climate change to the causes of forced migration. In the context of the threat of increased migration as a result of

⁷² “World Bank: Population, total - Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan & Pakistan”.

⁷³ *Global Report on Internal Displacement, IDMC/GRID* (2024), <https://disasterdisplacement.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/IDMC-GRID-2024-Global-Report-on-Internal-Displacement-2.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Ibid: 46.

⁷⁵ “Rapport 2024 de l’OIM”, 20 lipca 2025, <https://www.gadem-asso.org/rapport-2024-de-loim-le-maroc-pays-demigration-devenu-pays-de-transit-et-dimmigration/>.

⁷⁶ *Migration and Global Environmental Change Future Challenges and Opportunities* (London, 2011), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74b18840f0b61df4777b6c/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Ibid: 11.

⁷⁸ Mérenne-Schoumaker, “Les migrations environnementales: un nouvel objet d’enseignement”.

⁷⁹ “L’OIM Maroc organise un symposium sur le changement climatique, la migration et la santé avant la COP27”, 13 października 2022, <https://morocco.iom.int/fr/news/loim-maroc-organise-un-symposium-sur-le-changement-climatique-la-migration-et-la-sante-avant-la-cop27>.

climate change, the Kingdom's great advantage is that it is a world leader in green transition⁸⁰.

Concluding remarks

The issue of migration in/to the periphery of both the EU and the Kingdom is becoming increasingly complex and represents a radical change in the Mediterranean basin compared to the past. When one considers the birth rate of African citizens in relation to the ageing European continent, a picture emerges of the importance of migration as a key determinant of the security of states, the region and even both continents. It is certain that in the short term the problems of illegal migration will increase, especially if by 2050 more than 40% of the world's children will be born on the African continent⁸¹. The medium-term challenge will be to create a Marshall Plan for Africa, taking into account the process of democratic consolidation and economic and social stabilization in the countries of origin of migrants. In order to meet this challenge in the immediate term, the EU may seek to control and better manage the waves of illegal migration. In this regard, the Morocco is well-positioned to assume a leading role, by combining economic integration efforts with the consideration of both sides' migration strategies and by directing efforts towards the overall reconstruction of Africa.

The analysis provided the basis for formulating several conclusions, which also respond to the questions and research hypotheses posed in the introduction. Firstly, in the face of growing political, economic, environmental and demographic threats affecting the Mediterranean, EU cooperation with Morocco in the area of migration management is taking on new significance for the security and stability of the entire region. Secondly, the process of Europeanisation that has been taking place in Morocco since decolonization has led to an evolution and a high degree of convergence in the thinking and implementation of migration policies on both sides. This makes the Kingdom a true partner in the area under analysis. It is clear that Morocco's migration policy has evolved from a reactive approach to EU policy in this area to a strongly proactive one that reflects the Kingdom's economic interests. Rather than being a by-product of European migration policy, Morocco's new migration policy, introduced in 2013, is a strategic response by the authorities to the country's complex geopolitical situation and aspirations to restore the Kingdom's central role in the region in this area. Thirdly, we are witnessing the development of a Euro-Mediterranean migration policy, with Morocco as its core and guarantor. Thanks to its openness to cooperation and effective adaptation to the challenges in the region, this state is able to turn migration into a powerful tool for development, essential for the long-term growth prospects of both Europe and its neighbouring states. An additional advantage is Morocco's political stability. The implementation of numerous reforms, including those in

⁸⁰ C. Amoussou, "Maghreb: un pays grimpe dans le classement 2025 de l'indice de Performance Climatique", *La Nouvelle Tribune*, 21 listopada 2024, <https://lanouvelletribune.info/2024/11/maghreb-un-pays-grimpe-dans-le-classement-2025-de-lindice-de-performance-climatique/>.

⁸¹ Bouissa, "La nouvelle politique migratoire marocaine: instrument diplomatique d'intégration régionale".

line with the principles of sustainable development, makes this state a key player among the states of the southern flank of the Mediterranean.

This special anchoring of Europe in Morocco is the result not only of the effectiveness of the Europeanisation process observed by the EU in this state, but also of the Kingdom's pluralistic identity which makes it a leader in intercultural dialogue. Morocco's experience to date in managing its own and African diasporas makes it an important player, capable of sharing its knowledge with Europe in this area. Morocco's remarkable ability to 'combine issues' in practice is aimed in particular at linking migration cooperation with financial assistance, thereby making migration an important resource (both political and financial) as well as a diplomatic instrument⁸².

However, the problem is the lack of a readmission agreement between the EU and Morocco. This issue has been recurring for over 20 years in relations between the partners, even though Morocco has signed bilateral agreements with some European states. In essence, the Mediterranean common space obliges the EU and its Member States to conduct migration policies with the participation of third states, i.e. to involve them in cooperation. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, from 2020, is the first step towards such an approach. However, its implementation has been hindered, in part due to opposition from Poland, which is grappling with its own challenges related to the flow of people on the eastern fringes of the EU. M. Prawda, the deputy head of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has expressed reservations about the Pact's implementation in its present form. In his opinion, it requires changes, e.g. in terms of allowing asylum procedures abroad and seeking better solutions that actually solve problems rather than shifting them onto someone else⁸³. This particular dimension of EU-Morocco cooperation has also proved controversial, primarily because the Kingdom refuses to accept full responsibility for outsourcing asylum procedures. It considers this to be a violation of its sovereignty and detrimental to relations with states in the sub-Saharan African region. Needless to say, talks, both at EU level and in relations with Morocco, will require a willingness to compromise.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are publicly available from sources cited in the references and footnotes.

⁸² M. Diallo, "La dimension migratoire des relations euro-méditerranéennes: la perception du Maroc", *EU Diplomacy Papers*, nr 6 (2023): 17.

⁸³ "Pakt migracyjny trzeba zmienić", <https://dorzeczy.pl/opinie/686891/tusk-vs-pakt-migracyjny-wiceszef-msz-postuluje-zmiany.html>.