

The Africa Migration Report is a joint report of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The first edition was published in 2020. The [second edition \(AMR II\)](#), just released, notes that the high mobility of African population is a cultural behavior that is deeply rooted in ancient nomadic activities and practices, justified by economic reasons, that still today are widespread in the continent. The main ones are indicated in pastoralism and small-scale cross-border trade, where huge masses of people every day crisscross borders in search of trading opportunities (profiting from the price differentials among African countries due to different application of customs duties and taxes on traded goods) or of pasture for their livestock. These activities and practices, the report notes, have been exacerbated by conflicts and climate change, which push entire communities to continually move from one territory to another in search of opportunities capable of guaranteeing a livelihood for themselves and their families.

In such a context, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is indicated as an essential tool capable to facilitate this circulation of persons from a country to another in Africa, enhancing the protection of migrants and optimizing the benefits of informal trade. With regard to the protection of migrants, the report reminds that the free movement of persons is a complimentary policy to the AfCFTA, and that the movement of persons and movement of goods are inextricably linked to each other. Hence, in order to enhance inter-African trade of goods, the movement of persons need to be facilitated. Yet, despite an African Union (AU) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right to Residence and Right to Establishment of the African Union was adopted in the same year of the AfCFTA (2018), its fate followed a totally different course from this Agreement. In fact, while the AfCFTA has been signed so far by 44 African Union Member States (almost the totality), with 47 ratifications in total, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has been signed only by 32 African countries. But even more worrying is the fact that the number of those States that have ratified such a Protocol is four (4), noting that to date only one country (Rwanda) has taken steps to implement its provisions. This is a sign of total failure that shows a lack of political will to liberalize, at least for the moment, the movement of persons in Africa. One of the main reasons justifying this resistance is the fear, especially by the wealthier African economies, that such liberalization could threaten internal security and that an excessive influx of people from less developed countries in their territories could disrupt their social systems, leading to the collapse of welfare systems. In addition, intraregional tensions, nationalism and xenophobia are indicated as additional factors that impede the liberalization of immigration regimes.

Lastly, the report notes that the liberalization of the movement of persons across borders can optimize the benefits of informal trade, particularly informal cross-border trade, which represents a huge size of African economies. The AfCFTA needs to be accompanied by the elimination or at least the reduction of the stringent travel requirements. In this regard the report concludes that, in the long term, the free movement of people will help integrate the informal sector into formal trade structures for sustainable economic growth.