



European
Research Area

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



African migrants at work: Labour market integration in Europe & re-integration of returnees

MAFE PROJECT Policy Briefing No. 4

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Project overview: The Migrations between Africa and Europe (MAFE) Project focuses on all phases of the migration process, encompassing migration, return, routes of transit, economic implications and transnational relationships. Its findings are based on multi-sited and comparative surveys, including over 5,000 retrospective longitudinal interviews with individual migrants and non-migrants in six European countries and three African countries, and 4,000 interviews of urban African households, conducted in 2008-2009. The four main areas of the MAFE Project's enquiry are: (1) changing patterns of migration over time; (2) determinants of migration; (3) economic integration of migrants, and re-integration of returnees; and (4) transnational families and networks. For more information visit: www.mafeproject.eu.

Key findings: Labour outcomes for migrants and returnees

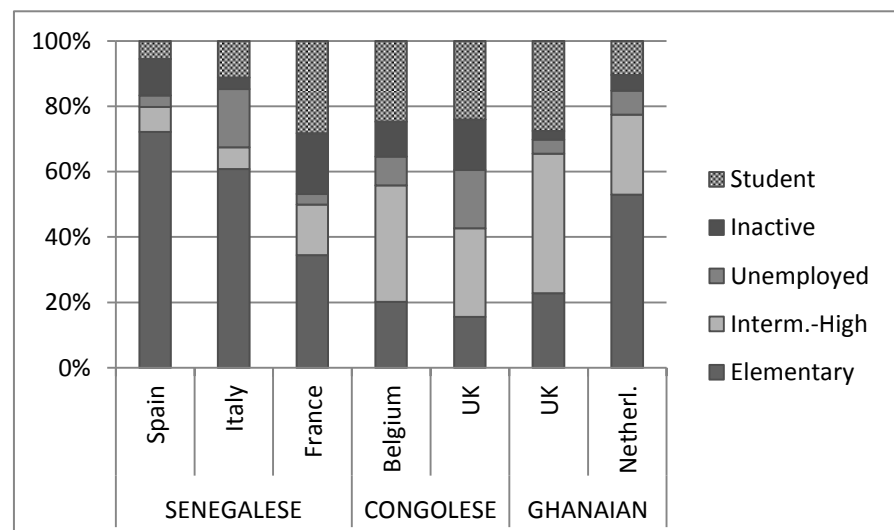
- **The employment profiles of migrants upon arrival in Europe vary considerably between flows** from different origin countries, and between 'traditional' and 'new' destination countries, with the latter generally attracting more low-skilled migrants.
- **The employment trajectories of African migrants in Europe are also diverse**, reflecting different educational profiles, ease of integration, and access to jobs that match migrants' skills.
- **There is a significant link between studying for a higher degree in Europe and access to highly skilled positions thereafter.** Migrants were much more likely to enter skilled work if they studied after arrival in Europe than if they arrived from a

- skilled occupation in Africa.
- **Migrant women are less likely to be economically active than men**, with the largest gap existing between male and female Senegalese migrants and the smallest between Ghanaian male and female migrants.
 - **Economic contributions of migrants to their country of origin** through remittances, contributions to hometown associations, and the purchase of property **increase according to time spent in Europe**.
 - **The economic re-integration of migrants from all three countries is broadly positive after return**. However, origin countries tend to experience a 'brain re-gain' rather than a 'brain gain', as the occupational level of returnees mainly reflects their initial position before migrating.

African migrants' integration in the European labour market: Profiles and trajectories

The occupational profile of African migrants before they come to Europe varies significantly between different countries of origin and destination. Overall, **migrants coming from Senegal to 'new' destinations in southern Europe were most likely to have been working in elementary occupations in the year prior to departure** (see Fig 1).

FIG 1. LABOUR STATUS OF AFRICAN MIGRANTS UPON DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE



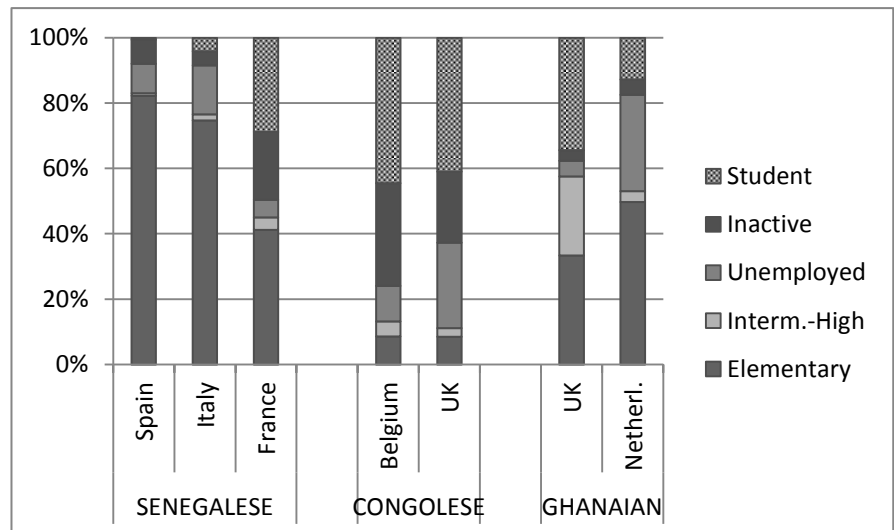
In contrast, **migration to 'traditional' destinations – former colonial metropolises – involved much higher proportions of former students, or those working in intermediate or high-level occupations** in the year prior to departure. A high proportion of Ghanaians in the UK and Congolese in Belgium had been in higher level occupations or were former students – and a large number of Senegalese migrants to France also fell into the latter category (refer again to Fig 1). An anomaly is provided by the 'new' migration of Congolese to the UK, where those who were students, inactive or unemployed before leaving the Democratic Republic of Congo accounted for over half of all migrants – likely reflecting political upheaval in DR Congo.

Migrant employment trajectories

The **labour status of migrants in their origin countries had an impact on their subsequent employment status in the labour markets** in Europe. However, while the low-skilled workers were steadily integrated into elementary positions in labour markets at destination, most of those who left their countries as **intermediate-high level workers experienced a drastic professional downgrading upon entry** in Europe (compare Figs 1 & 2).

This reflects a mismatch between skills obtained and occupational demands, which can be associated with a lack of recognition of African qualifications and poor transferability of skills and professional experience in some European countries. On the other hand, for some individuals, migration to Europe coincided with entry into the labour market for the first time, after they left their country of origin unemployed or inactive.

FIG 2. LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN MIGRANTS AFTER ONE YEAR IN EUROPE



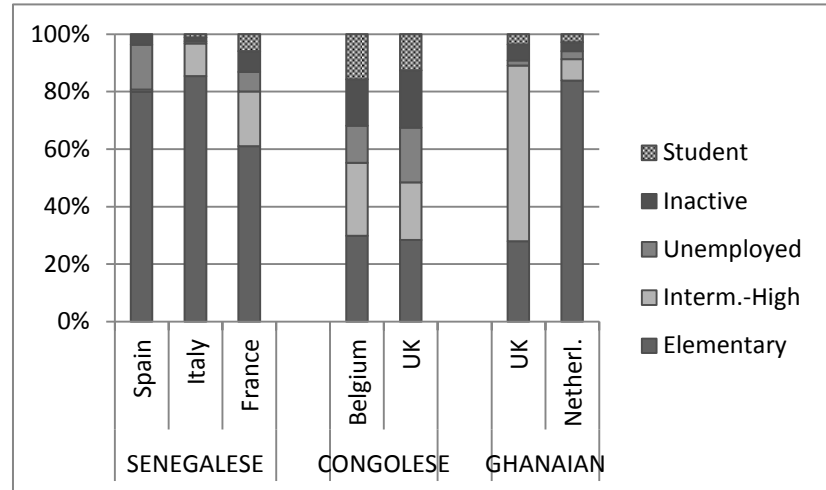
In the years after entry into Europe, the most common employment trajectory for migrants involved remaining in the same occupational category, with little possibility of inverting this trend (see Fig 3)¹.

MAFE data suggests that the increase of highly skilled workers across time is mainly associated with the entry into the labour market of students². This emphasises the important role that higher education in Europe can have in African migrants' labour market integration – as this appears to be the most common route through which African migrants access better paid work whilst in Europe.

¹ More in-depth analysis of migrants' employment trajectories is available in MAFE Working Paper 26, which is listed in the 'Key resources' section of this briefing.

² This trend is captured in Fig 2 and Fig 3, which show a shift in the proportion of students to a greater percentage of migrants working in high-intermediate employment in these countries over the course of a decade.

FIG 3. LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN MIGRANTS AFTER TEN YEARS IN EUROPE

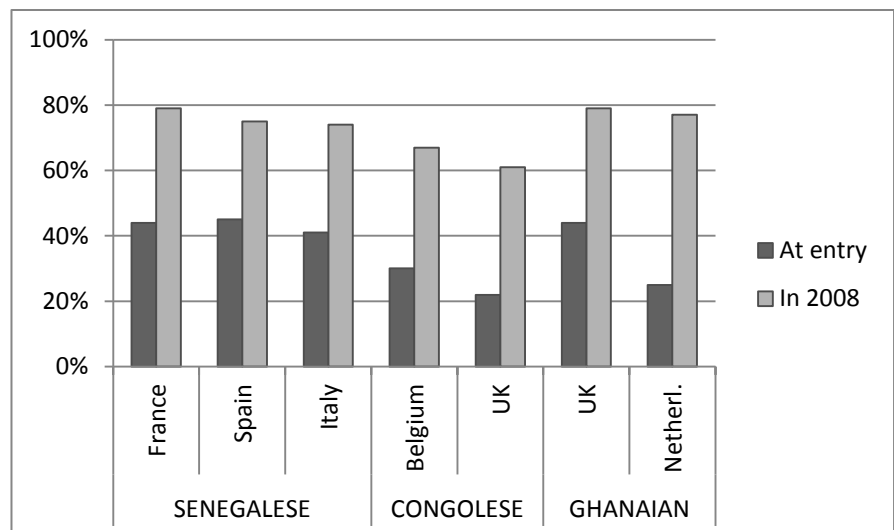


In addition to differences between countries, labour market experiences of African migrants in Europe are also highly gendered. Thus **female migrants are much more likely than males to be economically inactive during their time in Europe.** This is particularly true for Senegalese and Congolese female migrants, with over 25 per cent of women being unemployed or economically inactive after ten years in Europe³.

Migrants' economic contribution to countries of origin

In all cases, African migrants' economic contributions to their country of origin increased over time, demonstrating that transnational ties continue to remain strong in the years following migration to Europe. MAFE findings thus challenge the assumption that migrants' links with their country of origin erode over time.

FIG 4. PROPORTION OF MIGRANTS SENDING REMITTANCES AT ENTRY AND IN 2008, BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE



³ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 26 in the 'Key resources' section for more information.

In fact, across all African migrants surveyed in Europe, the percentage who sent remittances, owned assets in their country of origin, or contributed to hometown associations increased from the time they entered Europe to the time of the MAFE survey⁴.

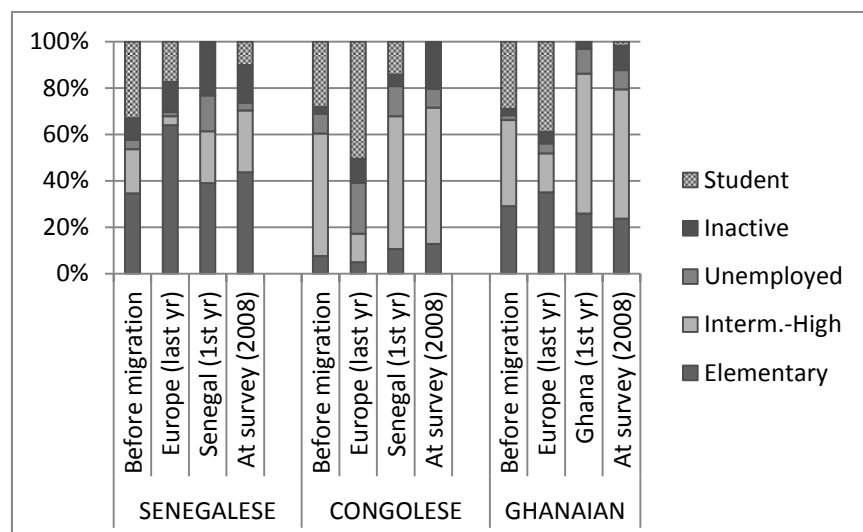
For example, less than half of migrants in all countries were sending remittances in the year after arrival, but in most cases this had risen to three quarters of the migrant population by the time of the survey (see Fig 4), with the bulk of this increase occurring in the first two years after arrival. There was also significant growth in the ownership of assets back home, especially in the case of Senegal and Ghana, although investment in assets was found to build up more slowly over time.

Labour market re-integration of returnees: A brain gain?

Broadly speaking, the outlook for return migrants from Europe was positive across Senegal, DR Congo and Ghana, with more returnees initially employed in intermediate/high employment upon return than when they left Europe (see Fig 5). In all three countries, returnees were also more successful in the labour market than those who never left, particularly in Ghana and Congo.

However, despite these overall trends, **a non-negligible number of returnees were economically inactive or unemployed upon return.** In DR Congo and Senegal, this trend was evident immediately after return, whereas in Ghana unemployment and inactivity amongst returnees was evident in the years following return – although in some cases this may capture returnees who resettled in their country of origin at retirement age.

FIG 5. LABOUR MARKET RE-INTEGRATION OF RETURNEES: COMPARING STATUS BEFORE MIGRATION TO EUROPE; PRIOR TO RETURN FROM EUROPE; IN FIRST YEAR AFTER RETURN; AND AT TIME OF MAFE SURVEY



Overall, MAFE data provide evidence of a modest 'brain gain' due to migration – although the labour market re-integration of returnees does tend to mirror their respective pre-migration

⁴ These latter data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 26 in the 'Key resources' section for more information.

labour market statuses (see Fig 5). In the case of Senegal and DR Congo, occupational patterns are similar to those held before migration and the slight differences may be due to switches from pre-migration student status (Senegal) or inactivity (DR Congo) to employment. As for Ghanaians, returnees' share of intermediate-high skilled occupations increases after return, and also when compared to their pre-migration status. This pattern could be due to the fact that returnees who studied during their last year abroad then succeeded in accessing higher-level jobs once they were back in Ghana.

Policy implications

- **It is impossible to generalise about African migrants in Europe in terms of their labour market prospects and outcomes.** This is because migrants fall into at least four distinct categories: students and highly-skilled migrants who move to 'traditional' destination countries; lower-skilled migrants who move to 'new' destinations; women who migrate for family reasons and stay inactive; and political refugees who have more diverse characteristics.
- In relation to the first category, a key determinant of whether highly skilled migrants are able to access professional and high-skilled jobs appears to be whether they can first access higher education in Europe. **Policy measures could support greater access to higher education, including through language training;** an alternative policy of promoting greater recognition of African qualifications might also have some success.
- **For less skilled migrants, there is a need to address an apparent lack of opportunities to gain skills as a route to occupational mobility.** Whilst men with limited educational qualifications are often 'trapped' in low-skilled jobs, women often experience entrenched unemployment or inactivity, suggesting the need for a particular policy focus on women.
- **Policy implications for refugees are less clear,** as this group is more diverse. However, they too could clearly benefit from access to higher education, with positive implications for integration.
- MAFE research shows that across all surveyed populations, migrants increase their investments in their country of origin over time. **Policies to facilitate both remittances and circular movement could support such investments, which are often a preparation for eventual return over the longer term.** As highlighted in MAFE Briefing No. 3, return is most likely to occur after 3-to-10 years in Europe and such policies should consider this timeframe.
- MAFE findings show that return migration is broadly positive in the case of all three countries, although significant rates of unemployment and inactivity suggest that migrant re-integration should not be taken for granted. **Further evidence is required to establish key ways in which re-integration could be enhanced.**

Key resources

Castagnone E., Mezger C., Schoumaker B., and Nazio T., (2013) 'Understanding Afro-European labour trajectories: Integration of migrants into the European labour market, transnational economic participation and economic reintegration into the country of origin. A comparative study.' MAFE Working Paper 26. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Schoumaker, B., Castagnone, E., Phongi Kingiala, A., Rakotonarivo, N., and Nazio, T. (2013) 'Integration of Congolese migrants in the European labour market and re-integration in DR Congo'. MAFE Working Paper 27. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Black, R., Quartey, P., Castagnone, E., Nazio, T., Schoumaker, B., and Rakotonarivo, N. (2013) 'Understanding Afro-European labour trajectories: Integration of migrants in the European labour market and re-integration in origin countries. The case of Ghana.' MAFE Working Paper 28. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Castagnone, E., Sakho, P., Nazio, T., Schoumaker, B., and Rakotonarivo, N. (2013). 'African migrants at work: Patterns of labour market integration in Europe, transnational economic participation and economic re-integration of migrants in origin countries. The case of Senegal.' MAFE Working Paper 29. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Obućina, O. (2011) 'Occupational trajectories and occupational cost among Senegalese immigrants in Europe.' MAFE Working Paper 15. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mezger, C. and Beauchemin, C. (2010) 'The role of international migration experience for investment at home: The case of Senegal.' MAFE Working Paper 12. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mangalu Mobhe, A. (2010) 'Les transferts des émigrés congolais vers les ménages de la ville de Kinshasa: Niveau et déterminants.' MAFE Working Paper 10. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Diagne, A., and Rakotonarivo, A. (2010) 'Les transferts des migrants sénégalais vers la région de Dakar: Ampleur et déterminants.' MAFE Working Paper 9. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mezger, C., and Flahaux, M.-L. (2010) 'Returning to Dakar: The role of migration experience for professional reinsertion.' MAFE Working Paper 8. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Flahaux, M.-L., Beauchemin, C., and Schoumaker, B. (2010) 'Partir, revenir: Tendances et facteurs des migrations africaines intra et extra-continentales.' MAFE Working Paper 7. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

MAFE working papers and briefing papers are available online at:
www.mafeproject.eu/publications

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