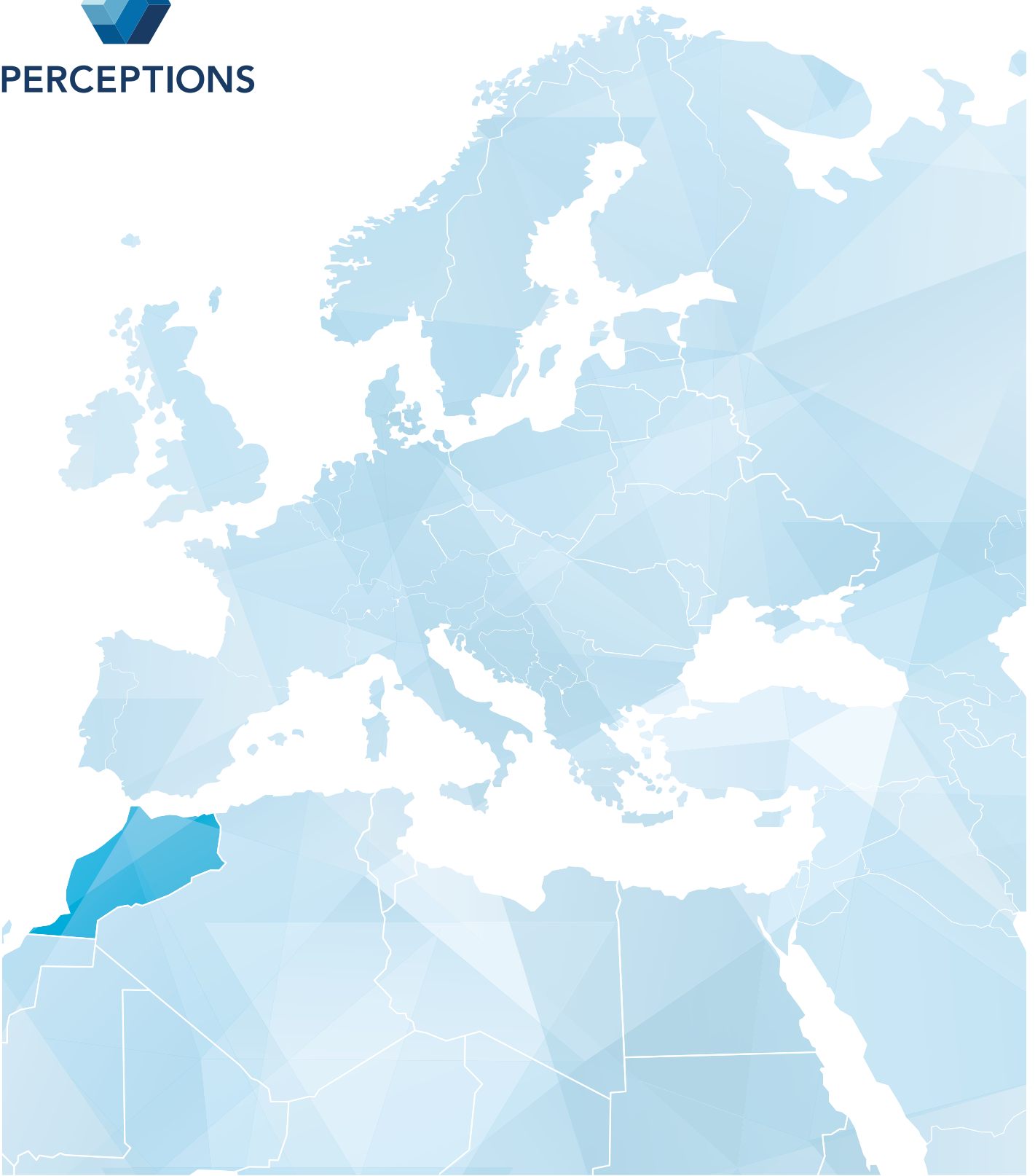




PERCEPTIONS



Morocco

PERCEPTIONS
Country Report

PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH:

Literature, studies, projects, stakeholders, solutions, tools and practices

DISCLAIMER:

Disclaimer: This report is based on desk-research conducted between 2019 and 2022 and covers major development between the period of 2015-2019. For more updated information on the country profile, please check the additional institutional links at the end of the document.



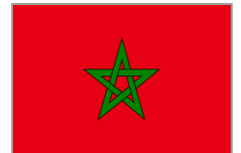
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a) Geographical map



b) Short summary

Competences on immigration, international protection and migrant integration fall within the scope of the central government, which launched in 2013, the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum under the auspices of King Mohamed VI. Centrality also characterises border control, which is assumed by the Interior Ministry. Nowadays, migratory flows between Europe and Morocco are not unidirectional: a sizeable amount of Europeans migrate to Morocco for retirement or economic opportunities (the 2007 recession motivated many Europeans to migrate, especially Spaniards). Moroccan official data may not accurately reflect this reality (e.g. the French embassy registers a higher amount of French residents) as the government is quite tolerant with these so-called expatriates, many of whom stay irregularly in the country for years, renewing their three-month tourist visas. The number of refugees and asylum seekers is increasing (9,756 in 2019; 25% more than in 2018 when the number was 7,775). Syrians are the most numerous nationals among refugees and asylum seekers (3,676 in 2019). Yemenis are next, followed by Central Africans and Ivorians.

c) Facts & figures



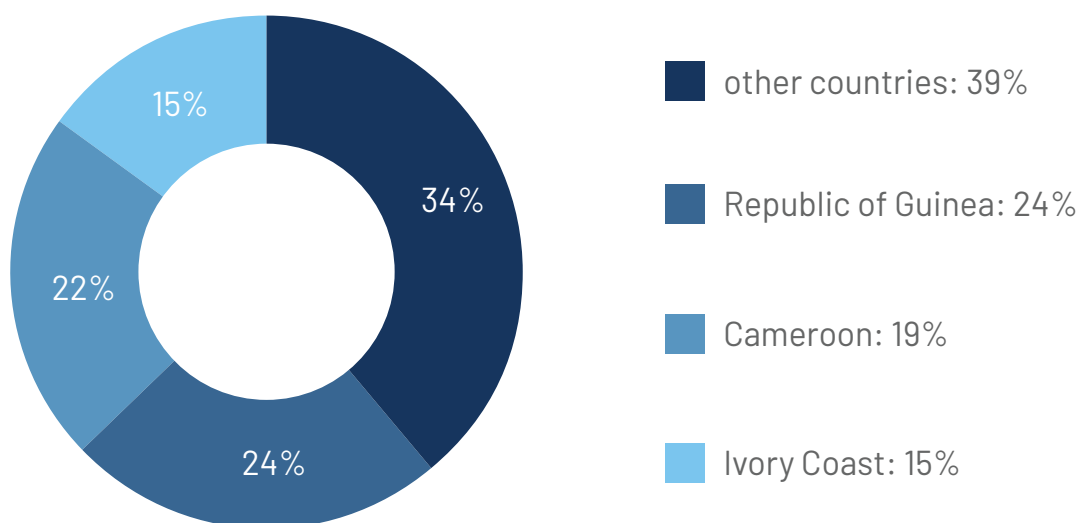
More than 4 million Moroccan citizens live abroad

(mainly in France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany).



In the last three decades, **Morocco has also become a transit country**, mainly for sub-Saharan Africans on their way to Europe. More recently Morocco is also becoming a destination country as many sub-Saharan decide to establish their residence in the country.

Asylum seekers' nationality in Morocco in 2019



c) Full document

Institutional setting

Morocco is formally defined as a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, even though the Constitution of 2011 consolidates the sovereign's vast powers, which dominate the political field (El Mossadeq, 2014). The country has implemented a Project of Advanced Regionalisation in recent years, yet the territory is de facto subject to a considerable level of centralisation under the aegis of the monarch (Ojeda-García & Collado-Suárez, 2014).

Competences on immigration, international protection and migrant integration fall within the scope of the central government, which launched in 2013, the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum under the auspices of King Mohamed VI (Alioua, Ferrié & Reifield, 2017). In that framework, after ten years of inactivity in 2013 Morocco reopened the Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Bureau des Réfugiés et Apatrides), which is in charge of the legal and administrative protection of refugees and reports to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. Additionally, the Government created an inter-ministerial Commission for the Regularization of Refugees Registered with UNHCR. Nevertheless, Morocco has not yet developed a national asylum system. The adoption of a law-regulating asylum is still pending, even though a bill is ready since 2017 (Projet de loi 66-17 relative à l'asile et aux conditions de son octroi). The Ministry of Employment regulates economic emigration: it grants permits to foreigners wishing to exercise a professional activity on the national territory and authorises to maintain service for those citizens and foreigners who have reached the age of retirement.

Centrality also characterises border control, which is assumed by the Interior Ministry. Irregular migration is tackled by the Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance. Morocco has an excellent cooperation relationship with the European Union regarding border surveillance and migratory flows control. This could be exemplified by the €101,7 million financial support granted by the EU to Morocco to help its fight against irregular migration and human trafficking in December 2019. Likewise,

since 2003, Spain and Morocco have a working group on migration. There are mixed patrols of the Moroccan Royal Gendarmerie and the Spanish Civil Guard controlling air and land maritime spaces, and cooperating in the exchange of information to fight against criminal networks.

Additionally, the entity for emigration is the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs, whereas the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad, established by Mohamed VI, is competent for monitoring and evaluating the public policies of Morocco towards its nationals abroad.

Short migration overview

Morocco's geographic proximity (14 km from Europe) has shaped two-way migration flows from ancient times between this region and Europe. The imposition of the French-Spanish Protectorate (1912) and the Tangier International Zone (1924) favoured dense cross-border mobility from Europe to Morocco during decades. In the years following independence (1956), major flows of European repatriated to their French and Spanish metropolis, especially after nationalisation and "Moroccanisation".

The Spanish civil war and the two World Wars enrolled tens of thousands of Moroccans from the colonial troops to fight in Europe. Additionally, most members of the vibrant Moroccan Jewry (over 250,000; the most populous community in the Arab world) massively left the country between 1948 and 1964, mainly migrating to Israel (the second largest Jewish community after the Russian), but also to France, Canada, Spain and Venezuela. Migratory flows boosted during the 1960s, when European countries were in need for workforce (Belgium, France, West-Germany, the Netherlands). In the 1970s, the economic crisis shifted those policies, though family reunification kept the migration flow going. Spain's accession to the European Community in 1986 deeply affected the mobility of Moroccans. From 1991, Moroccan citizens required a visa to enter EU territory,

according to the Schengen Treaty, activating irregular migration into Spain whilst discouraging circularity and return, which was widely practised by Moroccans.

Besides being a significant migrant country, with more than four millions of its citizens living abroad (mainly in France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany), in the last three decades, Morocco has also become a transit country, mainly for sub-Saharan Africans on their way to Europe. In the last two decades, Morocco has become a host country for those migrants (Khrouz & Lanza, 2015). Morocco's strategic position has favoured the establishment of privileged relationships with the EU in different areas, including a close control of migratory flows, which remains controversial (Benamar & Ihadiyan, 2016; Carrera et al., 2016), as the treatment of immigrants arriving in Morocco is often harsh, especially in the case of sub-Saharan Africans.

Even nowadays, migratory flows between Europe and Morocco are not unidirectional: a sizeable amount of Europeans migrate to Morocco for retirement or economic opportunities (the 2007 recession motivated many Europeans to migrate, especially Spaniards). Moroccan official data may not accurately reflect this reality (e.g. the French embassy registers a higher amount of French residents) as the government is quite tolerant with these so-called expatriates, many of whom stay irregularly in the country for years, renewing their three-month tourist visas. Data from the World Bank, however, indicate that the migrant population in Morocco went from around 92,400 in 2015 to around 98,700 in 2019, with the main countries of origin being France, Algeria and Spain (UNDP, 2019).

Key development since 2015

Morocco is consolidating as a host country, mainly for sub-Saharans, many of whom reside irregularly. Undocumented migrants in Morocco face similar issues as undocumented migrants in Europe: labour exploitation, ethnic profiling, difficult access to health care and schooling, and major obstacles to regularise their residence status. The measures against them may be considerably harsh (refoulement to the Algerian border, sometimes in

desert areas). Discrimination and ill treatment from both LEAs, and some citizens represents a major problem (CEAR, 2015). In that vein, civil society has recently developed campaigns like "I'm Moroccan, I'm African" or "Neither slave, nor Negro. Stop that's enough" to combat hate speech and racism. Morocco launched two regularisations of migrants in an irregular situation (in 2014 and in 2016), granting residence and access to the national health system and education. Nevertheless, serious human right abuses occur (Amnesty International, 2018).

The number of refugees and asylum seekers is increasing (9,756 in 2019; 25% more than in 2018 when the number was 7,775). Syrians are the most numerous nationals among refugees and asylum seekers (3,676 in 2019). Yemenis are next, followed by Central Africans and Ivorians. Although refugees come from 39 different countries, the majority of them (92% in 2019) are African (Guinea, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Nigeria, Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Congo) followed by Syrians and Yemenis. As for asylum seekers (3,100 in 2019), most came from the Republic of Guinea (732), Cameroon (687) and Ivory Coast (457).

Morocco has consolidated its role as a key transit country to Europe, mainly for sub-Saharan migrants; but also continues to be a country of origin for Moroccans migrating to Europe, whose number is notoriously increasing. In the last years, the Western Mediterranean route has acquired greater prominence compared to other routes, such as the Central Mediterranean route (FRONTEX, 2019). Irregular migrants departing from Morocco reach the EU by sea, arriving in Andalusia. In that vein, the main rescue port for Gibraltar Strait crossing is Algeciras; and Motril and Almería for the Alboran Sea. Ceuta and Melilla fences allow irregularly accessing to EU territory by land. On a smaller scale, the West Africa route is another way of reaching the EU from South-western Moroccan and Western Saharan (in dispute) coasts to the Canary Islands.

New developments, which directly affect the relation between Morocco and the EU/Spain considering migration policies, have arisen between May 2021 and March 2022. In that regard, during the spring of 2021, coinciding with Morocco's

formal protest at the hospitalization in Spain of a Polisario Front leader, Morocco relaxed border controls in Ceuta, allowing for a significant number of irregular entries by both land and sea borders in the Spanish enclave. This reflected a new phase in Morocco's push for international recognition of Western Sahara as part of Morocco's territorial integrity. The Spanish Government finally made an unexpected turn recognizing Western Sahara as part of Morocco's sovereignty in March 2022. This not only illustrates the way in which migration policy is an international instrument for negotiating issues of special interest to Morocco, but also an escape valve to relieve internal social pressure. In that vein, the country's socio-economic conditions have further aggravated due to the Covid-19 crisis, provoking social protests and increasing the desire of a large part of the population to migrate.

For more information, see:

IOM Morocco:

<https://morocco.iom.int/fr>

Foreign Affairs Morocco:

<https://www.diplomatie.ma/en>

Interior Affairs Morocco:

<https://www.maroc.ma/en>



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