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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES



MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE



Co-financed by the EU

Migration Facts Mauritania

On the web: www.migrationpolicycentre.eu

April 2013

Introduction Since its independence in 1960, Mauritania has seen intense migratory movements. Outward flows started in the 1970s due to severe and frequent droughts together with high levels of poverty and unemployment. Early flows were mainly directed towards African countries such as Senegal, Mali, the Ivory Coast and Gambia. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, buoyed by the violent 1989 Mauritania-Senegal conflict, outward flows were directed towards job opportunities offered by the oil-producing Gulf countries and by Libya and the European countries. In the past, inward flows consisted of labour migration which filled the needs of the labour market. The 1990s was characterized by large inward flows of refugee and asylum seekers due to civil conflicts in African countries (i.e. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Mali). Due to the most recent conflict in Mali, Mauritania currently hosts 70,000 Malian refugees. Within the last decade, Mauritania has also evolved into an important transit country, attracting irregular migrants attempting to cross to Europe through the Canary Islands.

Demographic-Economic

Outward Migration

Inward Migration

STOCK

Mauritanian emigration stocks - year 2011 (a)

Immigration stocks in Mauritania - year 2000 (b)

Total emigrants: 35,148
(according to: a) 2004 Mauritanian consular statistics: 250,000; b) UNHCR-2011: 39,929 refugees)

Total immigrants: 43,159 (1.7% of the total resident pop.)

Five top countries of residence:

Five top countries of birth (c):

Destination countries' statistics	Mauritanian consular statistics (2004)	UNHCR statistics
France: 13,699 Spain: 11,274 Senegal: 2,738 Algeria: 800 Morocco: 755	Ivory Coast: 50,000 Mali: 40,000 Gambia: 20,000 Saudi Arabia: 20,000 France: 20,000	Senegal: 19,817 Mali: 12,442 France: 4,734 United States: 1,887 Canada: 292

Mali: 16,712
Senegal: 14,681
Guinea Conakry: 1,651
Ivory Coast: 1,651
Morocco: 746

(b) Irregular migrants are not included

Sex:
Males: 72.0%
Females: 28.0%

Age group:
Less than 15: 11.4%
15-64: 79.1%
65+: 9.5%

Sex:
Males: 54.3%
Females: 45.7%

Level of education (year 2006): primary or below (59.2%); secondary (20.9%); tertiary (19.9%)

Notes: (b) Immigrants are defined according to the country of birth criterion.

Source: Mauritanian population census (2004).

Occupation (year 2006): elementary occupations (29.0%); service workers and shop and market sales workers (15.9%); craft and related trades workers (10.9%)

Refugees in Mauritania (year 2013): 121,340

Top country of nationality: Mali 70,000

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Notes: (a) Mauritanian emigrants are defined according to the country of birth (best option) or country of nationality criterion according to countries of residence. **Source:** destination countries' sources (population census/population register/household survey). Data on the distribution of Mauritanian migrants by level of education and occupation had been taken from the DIOC-OECD Database.

FLOWS

Outflows of Mauritanian nationals to selected countries of destination – year 2011

Expelled irregular migrants from Mauritania – years 2003-2007

Total outflows: 2,236

Five top countries of destination:

France: 1,146
Spain: 689
Belgium: 187
United States: 70
Italy: 69

Year	Number of migrants
2003	50
2004	250
2005	3,250
2006	11,637
2007	6,634

Source: flow data are proxied by first residence permits (EU MS + Norway) and visas (US + Australia) issued annually to Mauritanian nationals.

Source: Ministry of Interior - Mauritania

Legal and political framework governing migration and mobility

General legal references

- Mauritania Constitution of 12 July 1991;
- Decree 64-169 of 15 December 1964, modified by decree 65-110 of 8 July 1965;
- Law 65-046 23 February 1965 (irregular entry);
- Law 25-2003 of 17 July 2003 (human trafficking);
- Decree of 16 April 2008 (employment of foreign nationals);
- Law n°1961-112 of June 20, 1961 enabling the Mauritanian Nationality Code, modified in 1962 and 1976

Outward Migration and Mobility	Inward Migration and Mobility
Visa	Visa
Exit visas for foreign nationals. Suppression of exit visa for nationals in 1985. The legal conditions to enter the country of destination may be checked by national authorities before a person leaves Mauritania.	No visa requirement for nationals of states linked to Mauritania by circulation and/or establishment conventions. Visa required for other foreign nationals.
Labour	Labour
Government strategy regarding Mauritanian labour migration has been to promote temporary labour migration or circular migration schemes (mainly between Mauritania and Europe – e.g. Spain – as well as with the Gulf countries) and to craft a sustainable labour migration policy in cooperation with international organizations such as the IOM. Mauritania has reached several agreements regarding manpower with: Senegal (1972), Algeria (2004), Spain (2007), along with some Gulf countries.	Government strategy to develop action plans for attracting economic immigrants in certain job sectors (services, fishery, and education) and for ensuring that employment contributes to local economic development. Government collaboration with international organisations (IOM) so as to craft labour migration policies. Three categories of work permit with variable terms (temporary or indeterminate). Equal access to employment, except for those linked to sovereignty (public, judicial security service, etc).
Rights	Rights
Mauritanian citizens have the right to leave the country (Article 10, 1991 Constitution). No one may be extradited unless it is by virtue of the laws and conventions of extradition (Article 22, 1991 Constitution). Electoral representation of expatriates in the Senate and the Economic and Social Council. Expatriates' right to parliamentary eligibility.	Distinction between privileged and ordinary foreign nationals. The former have the right to stay (with a resident card) indefinitely. The latter have to apply for a foreign national identity card. Legal silence on family reunification. Equal access to public services and access to estate ownership. Constitution guarantees aliens who reside legally on national territory protection of the law for his person and his property (Article 21).
Readmission Agreements	
Agreement on the control of migratory flows (and readmission) with Spain in 2003 and 2006. Arrested transit migrants are detained and repatriated.	
Irregular Migration	Irregular Migration
Mauritania is defining cooperation frameworks with external stakeholders (IOM, UNHCR, EU, Spain) with a view to identifying the root causes of irregular emigration and reinforcing border management (e.g. Mauritania-FRONTEX cooperation). Mauritania has worked with Spain and FRONTEX since 2006 to combat irregular emigration by readmitting foreign nationals who transited through the country and who are placed in detention camps before repatriation. Human trafficking punishable with a 5 to 10 year hard-labour confinement and a fine.	Government attempting to reduce number of undocumented immigrants through: apprehending, regularising or deportation procedures; developing cooperative mechanisms with international and external parties (e.g. UNHCR, IOM, EU, Spain) in order to mitigate the effects of irregular and transit immigration on Mauritanian territory; and reinforcing sea and land control. Human trafficking punishable with a 5 to 10 year hard-labour confinement and a fine. Foreign nationals who irregularly enter or stay in Mauritania punished with a 2 month to a 2 year prison sentence.
International Protection	International Protection
Government has been devising plans for the return and repatriation of Mauritanian refugees: e.g. the Mauritanian refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal and Mali) whose return has been monitored since 2008). Tripartite agreement with Senegal and UNHCR for the voluntary return of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal (2007).	Mauritania is developing a national asylum system with UNHCR's assistance. 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol ratified. In 2005, creation of a National Consultative Commission on Refugees to the Ministry of Interior in charge of eligibility to refugee status, based on UNHCR refugee status determination.
Diaspora	Citizenship
Government strategy is to sustain links with the Diaspora, encourage remittances, and spur Mauritanians abroad to invest in the country. Mauritania has been consolidating cooperative mechanisms with international organisations (e.g. IOM) with a view to mobilising Mauritanian expatriates' competencies abroad and facilitating their return. Mauritanians residing abroad are represented in the Senate (Article 47, 1991 Constitution).	<i>Jus sanguinis</i> by descent of father or mother. Children born to a Mauritanian mother in the country are given citizenship, but have the right to repudiate citizenship when they come of age; born abroad, they can opt for their mother's nationality when they come of age. <i>Jus soli</i> : simple, with a declaration at age (birth + 5 years residency); and double right of soil. Automatic acquisition of nationality through marriage with a Mauritanian (unless otherwise requested). No right to nationality through marriage with a female Mauritanian. Possibility of naturalization without past residency requirement.
Multiple Citizenship	
Dual nationality prohibited.	