

Who wants to go to Europe?

Results from a large-scale survey on migration aspirations

For every individual who migrates to another country, there are many others that aspire to do the same. Throughout the world, people are becoming increasingly aware of the possibility of international migration. But, how do migration aspirations vary from one local community to another, or between individuals in the same community? This policy brief presents results from a survey of 8,000 people from 16 different areas within Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine, conducted as part of the project 'Imagining Europe from the Outside (EUMAGINE)'.

Brief Points

- A survey conducted in 16 different parts of Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine indicates that international migration aspirations are widespread.
- Migration aspirations are most common among men, but gender-related differences are generally small.
- The likelihood that individuals will wish to emigrate does not appear to be strongly related to their perceptions of how their own standards of living may be changing.
- People with a strongly positive perception of Europe are far more likely to have migration aspirations than those with a neutral or negative perception of Europe.

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Why migration aspirations matter

Having a wish to migrate does not always translate into actual migration – especially when there are restrictive migration control measures to overcome. Accordingly, migration aspirations cannot be used directly to predict migration. However, the strength and prevalence of migration aspirations do affect the dynamics of migration processes, migration management and transnational networks.

Furthermore, people's hopes for migration may be linked to other decisions they take – e.g., in relation to education or investment.

A large-scale survey

The project *Imagining Europe from the Outside* (EUMAGINE) set out to understand why people in Europe's neighbouring regions may or may not want to migrate to Europe. In each of the four countries included in the project, the team selected four research areas representing diverse socioeconomic conditions and migration histories (Figure 1).

Quantitative data collection consisted of a survey that was carried out with 500 respondents in each research area, yielding a project-wide total of 8,000. Households were selected through random sampling, and one household member aged 18–39 was randomly selected for an individual interview.¹

The questionnaire was developed over a ten-month period that included pilot testing in

Table 1. Indicators of the migration context

	Proportion (percent) who have...		
	Transnational network	Return migrant relatives	International migration experience
Morocco			
M1 Todgha Valley	51	9	1
M2 Central Plateau	31	4	0
M3 Tanger	51	9	3
M4 Tounfite	7	1	0
Turkey			
T1 Emirdag	79	9	3
T2 Dinar	27	9	4
T3 Fatih	37	16	3
T4 Van Merkez	6	1	0
Senegal			
S1 Darou Mousty	44	13	4
S2 Lambaye	40	8	3
S3 Golf Sud	59	15	3
S4 Orkadiere	58	22	9
Ukraine			
U1 Zbarazh	41	10	7
U2 Znamyanska	22	1	4
U3 Solomyansky	20	5	6
U4 Novovodolaz'ka	20	1	4

Source: EUMAGINE Survey. Complex weighting applied. N=500 per research area.

each research area. Questions covered household migration histories, individual migration aspirations, perceptions of human rights and democracy, and a range of other issues.

This policy brief presents selected results from the survey. The project also included extensive qualitative data collection, which is not reported on here.²

Sixteen diverse contexts

Migration aspirations are closely connected with past migration patterns and transnational networks. The survey included questions about two types of transnational contacts: (1) relatives abroad with whom respondents had been in contact during the previous year and (2) emigrant non-relatives to whom respondents could turn for help if they needed it. Having networks of these kinds was very common among those interviewed (Table 1). Indeed, in only two areas did less than one-fifth of all respondents have transnational networks. The prevalence of transnational networks varied greatly within each country, however, especially in Turkey and Morocco.

Some areas have also experienced substantial return migration. In five areas, at least every tenth person had return migrant relatives. In Senegal and Ukraine, 3–9% of the randomly sampled respondents in each area had international migration experience.

Migration aspirations

Respondents were asked the following question: 'Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work some time during the next five years, or would you prefer staying in [this country]?' The question deliberately avoided the words 'migration' and 'emigration', which might have culturally specific connotations. The time-frame of five years was long enough to transcend short-term limitations, such as pregnancy, and short enough to make the choice between going or staying a tangible one.

Measured in this way, the proportion of people in each area who had migration aspirations was 25–76% among women and 43–90% among men (Table 2). In every area, migration aspirations were more prevalent among men than among women. The gender differences, however, tended to be small, especially in the Senegalese and Ukrainian research



Figure 1. Map of the sixteen research areas in the EUMAGINE project

Table 2. Migration aspirations and destination preferences, percent.

	Proportion who aspire to emigrate during the next five years		Proportion who would migrate to Europe if given the necessary documents		Proportion who hold a valid passport or have taken steps to prepare migration*		Most commonly preferred destination	Second most commonly preferred destination**	Third most commonly preferred destination**	Proportion of aspiring migrants whose preferred migration destination is in Europe
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men				
Morocco										
M1 Todgha Valley	61	74	61	74	8	26	France	—	—	98
M2 Central Plateau	65	68	70	72	11	18	France	Spain	—	95
M3 Tanger	35	52	35	52	13	22	Spain	Belgium	France	96
M4 Tounfite	42	60	43	61	1	2	France	Spain	—	93
Turkey										
T1 Emirdag	37	43	48	53	8	17	Belgium	France	—	94
T2 Dinar	33	46	37	50	2	9	Germany	France	—	76
T3 Fatih	31	51	29	55	14	26	United States	Germany	United Kingdom	67
T4 Van Merkez	25	61	29	60	2	8	Germany	United States	—	73
Senegal										
S1 Darou Mousty	59	71	65	76	3	8	Italy	Spain	United States	81
S2 Lambaye	76	78	75	75	1	4	Italy	Spain	France	80
S3 Golf Sud	72	76	86	88	28	30	France	Italy	United States	72
S4 Orkadiere	74	90	79	94	6	14	France	United States	—	84
Ukraine										
U1 Zbarazh	50	58	56	71	21	39	United States	Italy	—	54
U2 Znamyanska	35	44	33	48	11	11	Germany	Russia	Italy	70
U3 Solomyansky	43	53	43	55	35	34	Germany	United States	—	63
U4 Novovodolaz'ka	44	49	46	52	8	12	Russia	Germany	—	63

Source: EUMAGINE Survey. Complex weighting applied. N=500 per research area. *) Compiled on the basis of questions about specific steps such as applying for a visa. **) Only destinations preferred by at least 10 per cent of the respondents who wish to emigrate are included.

areas. Only in one of the Turkish research areas, Kurdish-dominated Van Merkez, were migration aspirations more than twice as prevalent among men as among women.

Respondents who said that they would prefer to go abroad were then asked about their preferred destination (Table 2). On average, 79% of respondents in each area stated that they would like to go to Europe (excluding the countries of the former Soviet Union). Preferences for specific destinations were closely related to each area's migration history.

Migration aspirations, however, are not immutable facts but potentially unstable attitudes. Respondents were therefore asked a second, complementary question in a later section of the questionnaire: 'If someone were to give you the necessary papers for going to live or work in Europe, what would you do?

Would you stay here or go to Europe?' In most cases, migration aspirations were even more prevalent when measured in this way (Table 2).

The survey included questions on a range of possible preparations for migration, such as applying for a visa or university enrolment abroad, seeking information from agents, and obtaining a passport. The prevalence of such preparations varied far more between the research areas than was the case for migration aspirations (Table 2). The gender differences were also larger. On average, preparations for migration were more than twice as common among men as among women.

The impact of perceptions

Even in areas where most people have migration aspirations, there are others who prefer to stay. Explaining such differences between

individuals is a core concern of the EUMAGINE project. Figures 2–4 illustrate some of the relationships between migration aspirations and other personal characteristics.³ The dashed lines in these figures represent the 95% confidence intervals of the estimates.

Respondents were asked how they felt about the way in which their current standard of living seemed to be developing. Contrary to expectations, responses to this question did not appear to be strongly related to the desire to emigrate. The prevalence of migration aspirations was almost identical among respondents who felt that their standards of living were worsening, staying the same or improving. However, the prevalence of migration aspirations among those who felt that their standards of living were getting either *much* worse or *much* better were somewhat higher and lower, respectively.

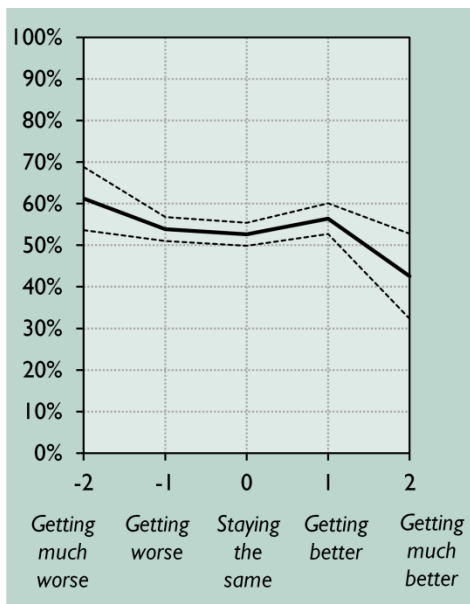


Figure 2. Proportion who aspire to migrate, by perceived trend in standard of living

Dashed lines represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. Source: EUMAGINE Survey. Complex weighting applied within each research area. Total across sixteen areas. N=7993.

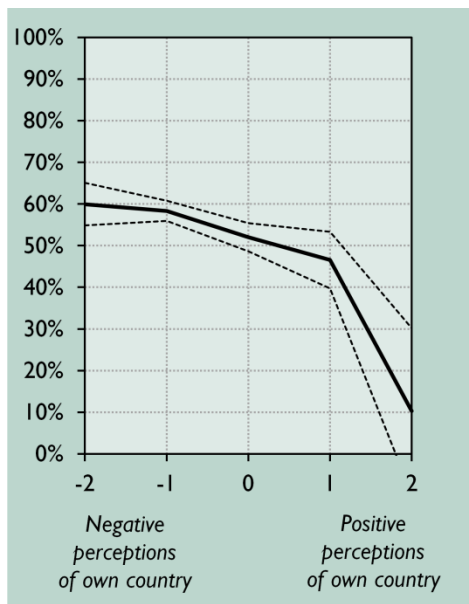


Figure 3. Proportion who aspire to migrate, by perceptions of one's own country

See Figure 2 for notes. N=7997.

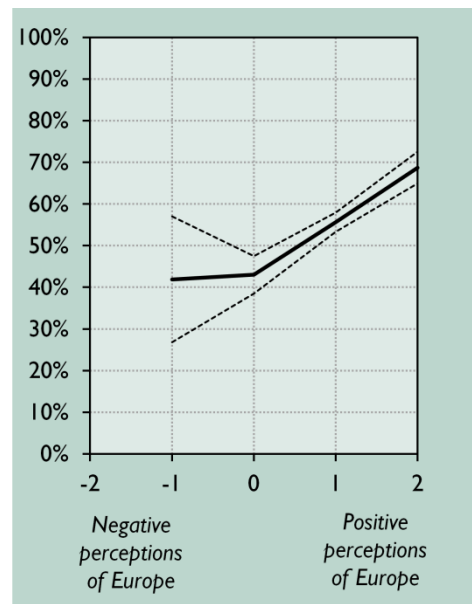


Figure 4. Proportion who aspire to migrate, by perceptions of Europe

See Figure 2 for notes. N=7901

Relatively few people held these extreme views, however, and the confidence intervals are therefore wider at the two ends of the curve.

The survey also included a range of questions about perceptions of healthcare, education, corruption, politicians, employment opportunities and other aspects of quality of life both in the respondent's own country and in Europe. Answers to these questions were used to construct summary measures of people's perceptions.⁴

People who had strongly positive perceptions of their own country were indeed less likely to have migration aspirations (Figure 3). However, such individuals represented a tiny minority of the respondents – less than 0.1%. There

were smaller differences in migration aspirations among people whose perceptions of their own country ranged from strongly negative (-2) to somewhat positive (1).

Perceptions of Europe tended to be more positive. Indeed, only one person held strongly negative views about Europe. Even people with moderately negative perceptions (-1) were so few that there is considerable uncertainty around their estimated level of migration aspirations (Figure 4).

Among the vast majority whose perceptions of Europe ranged from neutral to strongly positive, there was a very clear pattern: a more positive view of Europe is associated with a higher prevalence of migration aspirations.

Notes

1 Data collection took place from January to June 2011. Analysis of the cleaned dataset began in 2012. **2** Multivariate analyses of the quantitative data, as well as analyses of the qualitative data, have been carried out in research papers written by the project team. References will be posted on the project website, www.eumagine.org. **3** These figures represent bivariate relationships only. **4** Additive indices based on seven questions each, drawn from batteries approximately twice as large. Cronbach's Alpha for the two indices is 0.77 and 0.71, respectively.

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THE PROJECT

Imagining Europe from the Outside (EUMAGINE) is an FP7 project 2010–2013 conducted jointly by the University of Antwerp, the University of Oxford, the Peace Research Institute Oslo, Koç University, Université Mohamed V - Agdal, Centre of Sociological Research, and Université Cheikh Anta Diop. For more information, see www.eumagine.org.

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