

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has published on 12 December 2023 the [Africa Visa Openness Index 2023](#), the report that analyses the visa openness policies that African countries adopt towards other African States. The seventh edition of the report reveals significant progress, showing an increasing number of African countries that have opened their doors, at least apparently, to visitors from other African countries. The publication comes on the day of celebration of the birth of the Kenya Republic, during which the Kenyan President [announced](#) the elimination of visa from all countries (both African and non-African), starting from 1 January 2024. A measure this, that is expected to increase tourism in Kenya.

The AfDB report shows that for 28% of intra-Africa travel, Africans do not need anymore a visa (up from 27% in 2022). A modest progress. By the way, at present, 24 countries offer an e-visa, almost three times as many as in 2016. A cold comfort, considering that the African Union adopted a Protocol relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment which has been so far ratified only by 4 African countries. A shame for the African continent. We have on many occasions [stated](#) that in order to have a single African market it is necessary to remove barriers to the movement of people. An analysis on how African countries are stuck on this issue can be read [here](#)

. Africa needs a champion of free movement of persons that can significantly accelerate this process, by inspiring other African nations to remove restrictions to the entry of other African citizens in their territory.

Four countries (one more, compared to last year, namely: Rwanda), have eliminated all visa requirements for African travelers. They are Rwanda, Benin, The Gambia, and Seychelles. However, what the report does not say is that Seychelles maintains a [travel authorization](#) fee for entering the country which is equivalent to a visa (with a cost of 10.90 EUR), while Djibouti, which is not mentioned in the report, has a short-term visa which is similar to the Seychelles travel authorization (as it is aimed only to verify that travelers declare where they will stay during the period they spend in the country) and whose cost is only 12 euros.

According to some [rumors](#), also Kenya is going to replace its visa requirements with a 'electronic travel authorisation' (ETA) whose cost will be of 30 USD, subject to the same formalities of a visa, including the submission to Immigration of a detailed application to be filled out online. This is a smart way of reintroducing a fee under a different name for the same purpose of entering the country. “[Everything must change for everything to remain the same](#)”

was a famous quotation from the renowned Italian novel "The Leopard". It seems to be the same philosophy adopted by many African countries with regard to the issue of liberalisation of movement of persons.

It remains now to be seen what Rwanda will do, after the recent announcement by the country's President that ' [each African can get on a plane to Rwanda whenever they wish AND WILL NOT PAY A THING to enter our country](#) '.

Maybe also Djibouti should consider renaming its visa in "travel authorisation", so that it will be included in the list of the countries that will be judged as worthy to have advanced the free movement of persons in Africa? In the end, what matters is just the discontinuation in the use of the term 'visa', and its replacement with a more creative one. A suggestion for the country's authorities...