



Mediterranean City-to-City Migration

Dialogue, Knowledge and Action

Peer-Learning Event – Thematic paper

How to build knowledge on urban migration:

Innovative tools and practices to face data challenges

This background document has been drafted by Hadi Assaf for the purposes of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration project (MC2CM) peer learning event on “*How to build knowledge on urban migration: Innovative tools and practices to face data challenges*” taking place in Amman on 19-20 March 2019.


The document introduces general concepts and provides a basic framework for discussion on the theme data challenges in the field of migrant reception and inclusion policies at city level. The examples provided are meant to be illustrative of some of the actions already taken in the field. The concepts introduced will be further developed and expanded during the course of meeting discussions.

Introduction and context

Migration has always been a key historical feature of the Mediterranean region, both inter-regionally, from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe and the Gulf region, as well as intra-regionally, i.e. from Syria to Lebanon and from Egypt to Jordan. Nonetheless, in recent years, and particularly at local level, governments’ reception and hosting capacities on both shores of the Mediterranean have been put under growing pressure due to migrant and refugee flows ensued from conflicts and dire economic situations in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, as well as sub-Saharan Africa.

Mixed-migration flows converge in cities and are one of the leading causes of rapid urbanisation. In that context, many cities in the region have surpassed their capacities and resources to respond to the recent flows of migrants and refugees (particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Greece, Italy and Germany)¹. They are facing constant developments at local level, ongoing in- and out-migration flows, and the presence of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. This situation induces challenges in providing basic services to all, fostering the integration of newly arrived populations, and advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable

¹ https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/syrian_refugees_report._uclg_middle_east_working_group_1.pdf



cities and communities, as well as SDGs 1, 7, 15, 16 and 17. The realisation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will also partly depend on local and regional authorities' resilience to migration, which is particularly pressing in the Mediterranean region.

Yet, policy efficiency, particularly in the field of migrant reception and integration, largely depends on access to accurate and up-to-date information. At local level, low data-gathering capacity, as well as the lack of comprehensive and disaggregated datasets on topics such as education, place of residence, family and labour composition, in addition to changes over time, hinders the precise and timely analysis of migration trends. This directly impacts the efficient implementation and monitoring of inclusion policies. It is therefore essential for all government levels to develop and implement evidence-based migration policies that build on national, but also local data to support targeted policies.

In addition, in order to counter hate speech and discrimination, governments ought to promote a balanced narrative on migration, based on migrants and refugees' contributions to the economic sector and labour market, and assessed impact on welfare systems. However in the Mediterranean region, limitations on data availability, accuracy and quality hinder the development of informed policies, which in turn remain largely guided by public perceptions and political agendas.

I. Data for policy-making and policy monitoring

1. *The national-local nexus*

Migration policies and dedicated budget often fall under the realm of national governments, detracting important resources from local governments to respond to the needs of migrant and host communities at local level (UNESCO 2016). They find themselves on the front-line of service provision. Yet, depending on the governance model in place and the level of decentralisation, local governments are often limited in their action in the fields of social, housing, employment and education policies².

As the level of government closest to citizens, cities have expert knowledge of the local situation and can effectively engage with migrant populations through trade unions, employers' organisations, migrant associations, schools and training centres. Municipalities in the region have therefore implemented successful integration policies in coordination with, in complement of, or independently of national authorities.

For instance, in the Netherlands and Sweden, local authorities have implemented tailored integration policies at local level, in complement of national policies. In Switzerland, on the other hand, the cities of Basel, Berne and Zurich have developed integration policies in the absence of national policies³. In North Africa, the municipalities of Tangier and Sousse often partner with local stakeholders and civil society to offset the lack of integration strategies at local level.

On the other hand, multilevel governance systems can sustain data collection and analysis for local policy development. Inter-institutional coordination and local partnerships with stakeholders such as civil society organisations, including migrant associations, research institutions (universities and think tanks), private sector and international organisations can therefore ensure the good coordination of the data collected and sharing of information.

² MC2CM Peer-to-Peer Meeting on Interinstitutional coordination in migration governance: Towards improved multilevel cooperation, Lyon 2017.

³ Jane Lethbridge; 2016; Migration and local authorities: impact on jobs and working conditions.

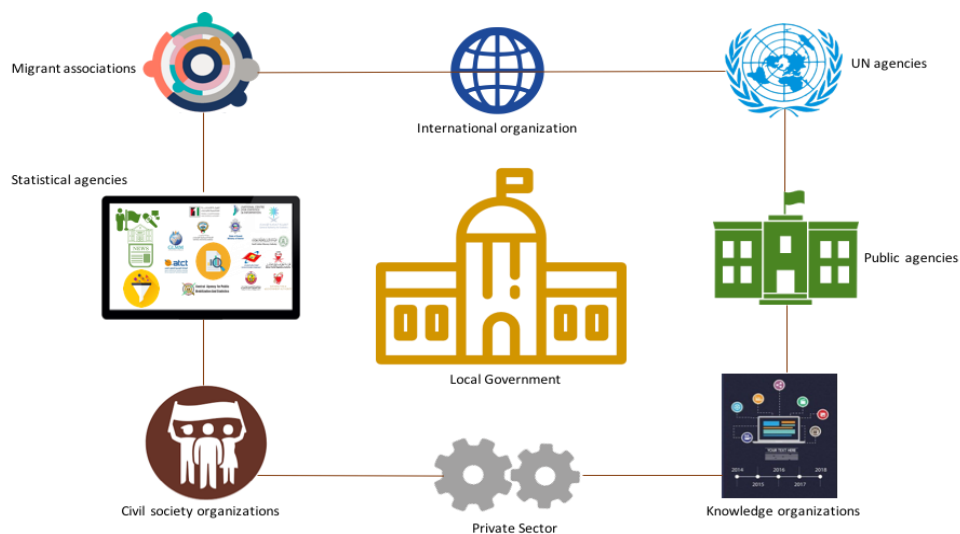


Figure 1 - Multilevel coordination at local level

2. Policy-making

Policy-making is a cycle involving agenda-setting, design, implementation, evaluation and learning. Cities need data to back their action, in order to implement informed, tested and improved policies. Data availability is therefore not only key to policy-making but also to policy evaluation and monitoring.

With regards to integration at local level, data and targeted indicators should support the identification of needs among local and migrant populations in order to upscale and diversify service provision, and cater for specific needs. In this sense, data can effectively support social inclusion and ensure that all strands of the population are fairly accounted for in policy design. Data should also serve as a basis to monitor and evaluate policy efficiency, particularly in situations of increased diversity where cities need to accommodate growing and various populations.

Four main dimensions of migration should be considered and assessed with data for migration policy development and planning at local level:

- a) Migration trends (stocks and flows) and migrants' characteristics over time
- b) Impact on main policy sectors (e.g. education, health, social protection, urbanisation)
- c) Migration governance (e.g. policies, legislation, institutions, programmes)
- d) Multilevel cooperation (e.g. assistance to local governments, synergies, policy coherence)

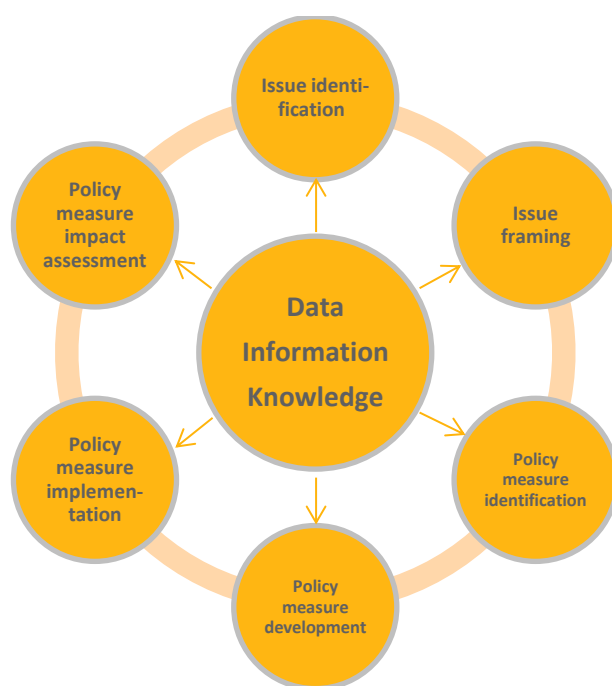


Figure 2 - The multiple stages of policy cycle, supported by data, information and knowledge. Source: European Environmental Agency (EEA)

For instance, based on needs assessment, a policy target leads a local government to formulate a given policy measure. Following policy development and implementation, the said measure is evaluated to assess whether or not it has effectively reached its set objectives, and successfully achieved the overall objective. Policy impact assessment will lead to improvements in policy design, supporting the identification of further issues.

3. Indicators

The choice and design of indicators for data collection is tightly connected to policy objectives. Indicators break down policy goals in specific objectives, support progress monitoring, and provide a crucial source of information for outcome evaluation. For instance, indicators can support policy evaluation in a targeted manner. Exploring students' performance in relation to their migrant background can help identifying specific needs, adjusting policies in place, and evaluating the efficiency of new policies. Indicators are used to identify policy effects, measure policy efficiency and inform future policy changes in an inclusive manner and therefore:

- articulate relevant stakeholders' views and actions
- increase the transparency and accountability of governance processes
- provide basis for comparative analysis across localities and policy areas

Box 1: Key migration indicators




1. Migrants countries of origin / destination
2. Regions or cities of origin / destination of migrants
3. Migrant employment rates (sex, age groups)
4. Economic activity and working conditions (sector, occupations, earnings)
5. Migrant associations and civil society organizations working with/on migrants
6. Educational attainments of migrants (school attendance, continuation of studies, fields of specialization)
7. Health information: access to health and health care services
8. Social programs: housing, nutrition programs, employment etc. provided to migrants
9. Remittances (distribution, use and savings)

II. Sources of migration data

Adequate data collection and analysis can effectively support the action of local authorities in the Mediterranean, particularly in the field of integration, planning and development policies. In addition, locally-retrieved data contribute to global knowledge and debates on the impact of migration at local level, and sheds light on cities' needs and actions.

However, this not only requires the effective use of current data sources, but also the development of new methods and techniques for data collection and analysis. Additionally, data collection can prove challenging in specific situations, such as economic informality and invisibility of certain migrant groups. Further to traditional sources of migration data, innovative data such as "big data" have enhanced the panel of migration-related data.

Migration information and data derived from a variety of sources: **statistical, administrative and innovative**. We outline these categories, their strengths and limitations below.

	1. Statistical data	Population and housing censuses, and household surveys.
	2. Administrative data	Administrative records and registries, residency permits, border crossings.
	3. Innovative data	Mobile phones, money transfers, internet-based platforms such as social media, online payment services, digital sensors and meters such as satellite imagery.



1. Statistical data

Population censuses and household surveys present several limitations in providing accurate migration statistics. Census data is not regularly updated and is collected, on average, every 10 years. In addition, censuses design structure has a limited number of migration-related questions which fail to provide detailed and disaggregated information. Further, population censuses account for people present in the country at the time of the census, providing a snapshot of a dated stock, rather than a detailed and comprehensive representation of migrations flows.

There are two kinds of sample surveys that are used to analyse local migration: passenger surveys conducted at the country borders, and household surveys which include:

- a) Labour force surveys
- b) Household income surveys
- c) Health surveys
- d) Demographic surveys
- e) Specialised migration household surveys

The first four categories do not specifically focus on migration but provide rich data and information on migration (i.e. number of foreigners, wages by nationality, migrant students). However, as migrants often represent a low share of the general population, the sample size may not be significantly large enough to provide relevant and in-depth analysis.

2. Administrative data

Regularly updated administrative records can support the analysis of local migration stocks and flows. Local administrative data can be enhanced in this regard through capacity-building in registry and information management, and improved multilevel coordination with other government bodies in charge of data collection.

Box 2: Administrative Records

1. **Administrative registries:** district/local/regional authorities and administrations, national government – Ministries of Labour, Health, Education.
2. **Information collected at borders and ports:** data on border crossings provides information on in- and out-migration and migration flows. However, various levels of controls at borders and restricted administrative capacities limit further exploration of data.
3. **Other administrative sources:** residence permits (stock of registered migrants) and work permits (stock of migrant workers).

It is important to note that administrative data reflects administrative needs. The records account for administrative procedures and not individual figures: e.g., the number of residence permits issued during a specific year does not necessarily reflect to the number of migrants who have entered the country during that year. One individual can receive over the course of a year more than one residency permit (renewal or change of visa type), and in some cases one permit can cover a person's household and dependents. Hence, statistics generated from administrative records is not equivalent to the actual situation of migration.

3. Innovative data

Supported by fast technological progress and evolving socioeconomic trends, private sector sources are now providing migration-related data. Big data refers to large amount of data generated through digital devices such as internet platforms, mobile devices and online remittance services. Call detail records (CDRs), which are anonymised digital records collected by mobile networks, are also used in the field of migration.

Box 3: Improved migration data can deliver real-life benefits for migrants and governments

- **Emigration:** In Australia, data is used to identify and incentivise foreigners with specific skill sets to immigrate to Australia and reduce labour gaps. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of job vacancies filled by employer-sponsored migrant workers rose by almost 15% each year.
- **Migrant integration and contribution:** Using data to match migrants' skills with adequate jobs could increase the income of highly skilled migrants by EUR 5–7 billion in the EU alone.
- **Protection:** Data-driven interventions can double the number of human trafficking cases identified. This could provide additional support to about 150 000 victims.

Source: International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and McKinsey & Company; 2018

III. Challenges and opportunities

1. Challenges

In many countries across the Mediterranean region, local and regional governments have limited capacity to access, collect, compile and analyse migration related data. Low data collection capacity at local level also reflects weak inter-institutional coordination systems and a lack of policy coherence. This can in turn create multiple levels of decoupled data collection, resulting in data gaps and duplication. Yet, local data also supports national efforts to produce aggregate and accurate estimates of migration flows in a structured and systematic manner.

Local authorities lack the required technical resources and knowledge, in addition to the difficulty of reaching out to migrants who in many cases are reluctant to participate in formal coordination mechanisms due to situations of legal and social vulnerability. It is therefore fundamental for local government to create trust and spaces for dialogue with migrants in order to reach and include these populations.

Undocumented migrants and the informal sector represent an increasing challenge for both national and local authorities. At their level, cities and local governments can however implement local registration programmes, in lieu of residency or work permits and regardless of migrants' legal status, in order to account for the presence of undocumented migrants. Such information sheds light on situations of social invisibility and vulnerability, supporting the work of local authorities to ensure access to rights and services for all. In this sense, local authorities can also consider the added value of local data on issues such as electricity consumption, public transport, solid waste, students, and public spaces.

2. Opportunities

At their level, local authorities have the possibility to develop data and information sharing mechanisms with local stakeholders (civil society organisations, universities and international organisations). They can also collect data among communities through Community-Based Monitoring Systems (CBMS) which is a tool used to collect local data for evidence-based planning. It involves district-level household surveys, based on indicators including health, housing, education, employment.

Community-based and local monitoring systems can also provide information on the migration cycle and support the development of adequate local responses to migrants in- and outflows, as summarised in the below table.

Local data on migration flows

	Prospective migration	Out-migration	In-migration	Return-migration
Type of information	Estimates on future migration flows	Migration outflows, including skilled labour migration (brain drain)	Migration inflows, including rural-urban migration	Return migrants and families
Added value to local policy making	Supports strategic planning, including infrastructures, housing and education needs	Supports identification of emigration causes, knowledge on diaspora members and internationalisation	Supports strategic planning, related to service provision, urban-rural mobility	Supports reintegration policies, identification of skills and local needs
Magnitude of migration	Estimates on prospective migration	Evolution of migrant stock	Evolution of migrant stock	Evolution of return migrant stock
Rationale for migration	Incentives for future migration	Incentives for emigration / migration push factors	Incentives for immigration / migration pull factors	Incentives for return migration
Profile	Socio-economic profile of prospective migrants	Socio-economic profile of the diaspora	Socio-economic profile of current migrants	Socio-economic profile of returnees
Location	Target location for prospective migrants, in relation to local services, opportunities and existing migrant communities	Target location for emigrants, in relation to local services, opportunities and existing migrant communities	Previous location of current migrants	Previous location of return migrants, in relation to diaspora communities
Networks	Local migrant networks (i.e. migrant associations, employers, communities)	Nature of connection with place of origin (institutional, family, association, work-related)	Nature of connection with place of origin (institutional, family, association, work-related)	Nature of connection with diaspora members
Issues	Potential issues (i.e. access to rights and services, legal status, segregation)	Issues leading to and faced during out-migration (i.e. change of status, registration, service provision)	Issues leading to and faced during in-migration (i.e. change of status, registration, service-provision)	Issues leading to and faced during return migration (i.e. change of status, registration)
Contributions	According to prospective migrants' profile	Transfers with place of origin (remittances, family connections, brain drain)	Contribution of current migrants to local economy (business development, internationalisation)	Transferability of activity and skills in support to local economy

Source: Adapted from JMDI Toolbox and E-Course on Migration and Local Development Module 1: Managing the link between migration and local development.



Policy Guidance: City action for migration data – What does your city do?

1. *Local capacities:*

- Does your city have the adequate infrastructure in place to collect local migration data (e.g. human resources, data collection instruments such as household surveys, technology, funds)?
- Are there other locally-based organisations and institutions better equipped for local migration data collection?
 - ✓ If yes: Do you, or will you, consider partnering with them to bolster local-level data collection?
 - ✓ If not: What challenges do you face to form partnerships with local stakeholders, including other levels of government, civil society and private sector, to improve data collection?
- Has your city supported the development of databases in local government and administrative agencies to systematically collect, store, and perhaps analyse data?
 - ✓ If so: What were the political, administrative and financial requirements to conclude this collaboration? What are the lessons learned from this experience?
- What challenges (e.g. political, financial and administrative) does your city face when requesting primary or secondary data (e.g. population censuses, surveys, and interviews) from national, regional or international organisations?

2. *Technical considerations:*

- How do you ensure the accuracy of the data collected? How often is data updated?
- How do you ensure that the data collected from different agencies and departments are comparable?
- Have you supported the inclusion of migrant populations in local statistical and data systems (for example, registers, censuses, labour and household surveys)?
 - ✓ If not: What are barriers to their inclusion?
- Have you supported, or considered supporting a Migration Module that can be added to existing household surveys, including labour force surveys?
 - ✓ If yes: What are lessons learned?
 - ✓ If not: What are barriers to the development of a dedicated module on migration?

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