

# Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development

## Key ideas

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Migrations are a rising phenomenon, mainly of urban and cross-border nature. Both increasing world population and increasing international human mobility have a great impact on cities -since 2010, most of the worldwide population lives in urban areas and numbers are still rising.

Migration transforms cities and communities -both those from origin as well as those from destination- and constitutes one of the main sources of economic and social development. Nevertheless, migration presents significant challenges on urban planning, provision of services, labour market and social cohesion.

City Councils and Mayors are at the forefront when dealing with the complexity of the migration phenomenon, and this is why the first **Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development**, held in **Barcelona**, became a rich space for exchanging views, experiences and reflection, within which to identify the main past and future daring points, share knowledge and adopt and maximize common messages from the local level.

### **Migration and development**

Mobility used to happen within countries' borders, from the rural areas to the cities, while nowadays it also happens across borders. Even if poverty, natural disasters or armed conflicts are still recurrent causes of migrations, there has been an increasing rate of individuals that are moving because of work related causes, in search of a good education or simply attracted by higher living standards in certain places.

Of all factors -international, national, regional and local- cities are at the core of migration related issues, since their increasing attraction forces are making them the common destination for migrants. Cities constitute at the same time starting points for Diasporas and attracting poles for migrants.

Participants in the **Mayoral Forum** have given importance to the impact of migration on their cities. They have exposed how, as a result of the economic crisis, migration fluxes are changing and cities that were destination areas during the last few decades are beginning to be -as they had already been in the past- areas of origin or transit of

and for migrants -and vice versa. Other participants remarked the importance of emigration in the development of their economic structures, mainly via the remittances coming from the Diasporas, though they underlined that an increasing rate of foreigners are coming to their cities.

South-South migration fluxes are as relevant as South-North. Good examples of that are the many cities of the North of Africa that are becoming destination points and not only origin and transitory ones. Indeed, human mobility is inseparable from an interconnected world and globalized markets and has **a cross border and predominantly urban nature; it is dynamic, changing and multidirectional.**

In this constant global finance and labour mobility scenario there is a harsh **competition for talent** in which migrants' contribution to development, especially within cities, is undeniable. Attracting capital and qualified professionals from abroad becomes crucial for demographic, economic and social sustainability of our communities. Accepting mobility is no longer an option, but a necessity.

In this context, cities have developed a range of strategies to attract international talent and investment. One of the most powerful tools is *City Branding*, which consists of generating **an attractive image of the city abroad**. Some cities present themselves to the rest of the world as places with high living standards, thanks to their geographic location, gastronomic tradition, social care facilities or a compact and comfortable urban structure. Others try to project a business-friendly image that helps generate business activity, or try to attract international students via collaboration with foreign universities or through powerful scholarship programs. Diasporas can also help to generate a positive image of the city of origin, some Mayors pointed out. A good brand positioning can become a key factor to gain competitive advantage.

In this regard, some best practices were mentioned in the **Mayoral Forum**. Lisbon, participates in the *Erasmus City* programme, which works to raise the number of international students that attend courses in the city, has created the *Lisbon MBA* in collaboration with two universities, a programme that has become one of the most prestigious European masters on its matter. Lisbon offers other remarkable experiences related to the attraction of foreign capital. The municipality has created

the *Latin American Business Centre*, an institution oriented to attract investment from Latin America, and to strengthen bonds with the region.

### **Migration management and its effects on the local scale**

High human mobility can generate huge positive effects on cities, but there are many challenges to solve that emerge when planning everything necessary for **welcoming and integrating newcomers, and managing the consequent diversity**. In the same manner, there must be cooperation to reduce some attitudes against migration derived from distorted images generated by xenophobe political positions. All in all, this situation jeopardizes social cohesion, and the first in line to make this cooperative effort are the local entities.

Cities have expressed unanimously that their main goal is to become spaces in which citizens can live in a happy and dignified way, and so all of them have agreed on the need to bring forth **inclusive cities**, in which public policies serve the community, with no discrimination towards any of its inhabitants regardless their place of origin. In this sense, municipalities must have **the capacity of developing migration related policies**, which have to be transversal and present in all areas of municipal action. Attending mayors and city representatives have highlighted three fundamental axes when facing the challenges of migration: **integration, participation and recognition, and diversity management**.

On one side, in relation to integration, municipalities are the ones providing **services and basic goods** to citizens, granting them, therefore, **fundamental rights**, even when cities do not have the necessary resources to do it. Opening municipal services to migrants, those in an irregular position too, is a humanitarian priority, but it is also fundamental for **social cohesion**. In this sense, cities are facing the effects of **irregular migration**, and do so in solitude. Local authorities call for funding and an appropriate regulatory framework to continue addressing people's needs under proper conditions, and called on international organizations and national governments to cooperate with them in a joint effort against irregular migration.

As to some of the practices mentioned during the Forum, the city of Seoul has a *Plan for the Integration of Multicultural Families*, planned to cover the basic needs and support the migrant search for occupation. Colony has, since 2004, a number of guidelines for the accommodation of refugees, which guarantee fundamental services such as housing.

Under the prism of inclusive cities, municipalities work to guarantee **equal opportunities**, especially in matters such as education and access to the job market. The attendees have insisted on the role of education as a guarantee of the social upbringing of the newcomers, particularly the most vulnerable migrant collectives. In that sense, the women's case was highlighted, and some cities, as Paris, develop specific professional training programs for women. The importance of learning the language to ease the integration process has also been mentioned -the French capital carries out courses for immigrants.

Another noted aspect is the necessity of maximizing and making the most of the **entrepreneurship spirit of migrants**. Firstly, they need to be involved in a **constant dialogue** with public Administrations and the business councils so they can develop economic activities -we have learned of some programs to enhance the entrepreneurship of migrants, such as *Start-up Lisbon*. Secondly, improving the **recognition of the migrants' qualifications** to reduce the possible barriers that they may encounter when trying to implement their talents and abilities was a key point, brought up several times during the meeting. Lastly, it is essential that **regulatory frameworks of recruitment** adapt to this high mobility reality.

Participation is, however, an element that may enormously ease the integration process via **shared management**. So was said by some cities that maintain a formal and constant dialogue with a series of city associations -Milan, which collaborates with over ninety associations of migrants; the *Migrant Integration Council* in Athens, with the participation of over 23 ethnic communities; or the *Integration Council* and the *Council of Religions* in Colony, in which 25 religious groups are counted, are a series of examples.

Another relevant factor for the integration process of migrants is **giving them access to the public sector**, to facilitate dialogue between migrant collectives and the Administration as to improve the efficiency of the policies destined to these collectives. A remarkable experience from this perspective are the tutoring programmes between equals started up by the city of Bilbao, where immigrants already settled and integrated to the municipality's life exercise as tutors of newcomers.

Some cooperation programmes between origin and receiving cities are moving in a similar direction. Cities such as Lisbon and Milan work together with the **local immigrant networks** and their communities of origin to ease the generation of synergies established as a consequence of mobility, which generate positive impact in both origin and destination points. **Co-development** contributes to the tightening of bonds between individuals across borders, and so allows the strengthening of the cities' capacity to attract talent in a proper manner to maximize benefits.

Lastly, a third axis of the local migration policies that has been emphasized is the **management of diversity**. The increase of the cross-border mobility has transformed many destination communities into **hyperdiverse societies**, and the behaviour of global migration fluxes indicate that this tendency is going to grow. Receiving foreigners with different culture, religion, or skin colour is something irreversible, so the challenge is being able to generate a framework in which this pluralism is accommodated and **shared values and responsibilities** are achieved.

In this effort, the **cultural aspects** are a central element for migrants' accommodation, their integration and the sustainability of the welcoming societies. Accepting diversity is a necessity for the cities that want to attract foreign talent, so their public discourse must be based on the idea of pluralism in order to build an identity susceptible of **being shared by all of the inhabitants**. The term *interculturality* comes in here, not only understood as integration of several diverse cultures but also as the interaction between them -the Council of Europe works in this direction with *the Intercultural Cities* programme, which includes evaluation indicators such as the *Intercultural Cities Index*.

Migrants and their collectives' participation is key in this diversity recognition effort, as many of the presented experiences in the **Mayoral Forum** so clearly stated. Several cities have worked on the cultural accommodation of the minorities via the formalization of spaces that give them voice. We can add the relationship between Sincan City Hall and the local *Russian Cultural Association* to the aforementioned examples of Milan, Athens and Colony.

Since the acceptance of diversity is not always an easy exercise as a consequence of prejudice or unfounded rumours about immigration, cities and international organisms insist on claiming measures that emphasise the **positive aspects of mobility**. Cities should contribute more on showing a positive perception of migration, underlining its crucial role in creating wealth, and highlighting the importance of migrants' remittances to the development and the reduction of poverty in their countries of origin, as well as a major contribution to the economy of the countries in which they reside. In that sense, the *Anti-Rumours* campaign in Barcelona, the global campaign by the OIM *Global Contribution of Migrants* or the public-private partnerships that some cities partake on to involve companies in the disclosure of this positive message -the example of Copenhagen is to be noticed- are major experiences. We must also take into account "*How to communicate the positive aspects of migration?*" a forum that will be organized by Metropolis in October this year.

### **An international agenda on migration and development**

As it has already been said, the role of cities is central for many reasons. In one side, they are the ones who provide all kinds of services via their public policies. On the other side, they are the managers of the three main points of migration: inequality, difference and diversity. This is why the **Mayoral Forum** has discussed the role that cities should have in the decision-making process related to migration, as well as in which way they can influence the international debate on these regards.

People migrate to cities looking for new opportunities, and cities try to attract talent to assure that their development is maintained and balanced. Nonetheless, central

Governments are the ones who usually have the decision-making role on the mobility regulating frameworks and they tend to exercise it exclusively from a border management and immigrant administration perspective, leaving the local authorities alone to manage all the rest. In this sense, some cities have insisted in claiming central governments major attention to **their financial needs**.

The OIM conference on migrations and cities that will probably take place in Geneva in the end of 2015, with the attendance of national Government representatives, can be a good opportunity to work on this relationship, as might be future editions of this same Mayoral Forum -Quito and Seoul already have shown interest in giving it continuity.

During the debate, reference has been made to the role of cities in relation to the international organizations. Present organizations such as UNITAR, the World Bank, the OIM, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and also international city networks such as CGLU and Metropolis will be fundamental when establishing a thorough and permanent dialogue in which not only States but also cities must be present. In this sense, international cities associations constitute a very powerful tool for fostering **multilevel global governance practices**. Its voice has to be a guide with which to set the political agenda in migratory affairs for the following years, taking the upcoming dates of defining the **global development objectives post-2015** as a crucial starting point.

The matter of **asylum and refugees** deserves a special mention, since it has been heavily discussed in several parts of the session. With the Syrian conflict in mind, it is necessary that the international organizations cooperate with the local administrations in the issue of refugees. At a European level, policies on refugees have to be deeply harmonized so to guarantee common admission criteria and better standards in the political asylum procedures.

Ultimately, the clear message that this debate sessions leave us with is the need to claim to the central Governments, and the international organizations, that they must **listen to what cities have to say**. Cities must be included in the decision-making processes. They are the engines of migration and the ones who manage a great deal of



its impact, and so they know best the complexity of the situation. In a multilevel governance situation, cities must take the lead in governing migration and mobility.

### Key ideas

- Need to maximize **entrepreneurship of migrants**;
- Improve the **recognition of qualifications** of migrants and regulatory frameworks to adapt to the reality of hiring high mobility;
- Deepen joint work with **local networks of migrants** and their communities of origin to maximize the positive impacts of migration and enable the participation of migrants in host societies;
- Build and project an image of **plural city** to attract investment and talent from abroad;
- Need to work on **spreading the positive impacts of migration** to help improve the perception of this in the host societies;
- The need for national governments to meet **the financing needs** of the cities so that they can continue to exercise the function of guaranteeing the fundamental rights and the provision of basic services to migrants;
- The cities claim **a greater support** from other governments and international organizations to tackle the challenges of **irregular migration**;
- Cities call on international organizations to cooperate with local authorities on **refugees**.

