

Mediterranean City-to-City Migration

Dialogue, Knowledge and Action

Peer-Learning Event – Concept Note and Agenda

Communication on Migration: Rebalancing the Narrative to Strengthen Local Governance

15-18 June 2020

Location: Online via Zoom (Hosted by Seville, Spain)

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| Context of the Event |  |
| Today, the migration narrative in the Euro-Mediterranean region is characterized by a strong polarization: On one side, we have the highly emotional reporting of the humanitarian plight of desperate migrants who risk their lives on treacherous journeys. On the other hand, we have coverage that depicts migration as a threat to the security, welfare and culture of host communities.  In the media coverage and public discourse, migration is frequently presented as “out of control”. Irregular migration, which makes up a small proportion of actual mobility, dominates the discussion, despite the downward trend in overall asylum applications in comparison to the peak of migration pressure. The notion of migration perceived as a threat to host communities has become the norm around much of the region. This leads to an overall distorted narrative that affects millions of people.  A concrete example of this distorted narrative is occurring during the COVID 19 pandemic, where suddenly societies started to recognise that many foreigner workers (not migrants – terms used in most newspapers) provide essential work to the wellbeing of our societies, in particular in crisis moment. However, when it comes to vulnerabilities or risks, the word migrants reappears straightway. Even worse, misinformation has been spread, especially at the beginning of the crisis, identifying migrants as the vector for the spread of the disease. While the COVID 19 pandemic opens the door to a more balanced narrative, it is hard to say if this will last. Indeed, the economic crisis which is likely to follow the pandemic make fear a return of xenophobic and racist speeches taking advantage of the plight of many people looking for work, to once again stigmatize migrants.  Unfortunately, as the challenge is multi-faceted and it touches upon various levels of governance, on the policy-making side much remains to be done to close the gap between public perceptions and the real figures and actuality of migration.  Mobile foreign-born and technically skilled entrepreneurs are bringing about profound transformations in the global economy and in local communities. Hence, it is important to talk about mobility and migration in a realistic and balanced way as a natural phenomenon that should be a choice for all and has the potential to affect positively both the sending and host communities. It is time to shift the conversation from migration crisis to migration and diversity capital, from the perception of threat to the recognition of opportunity.  Rebalancing the perceptions on migration can pave the way for the development of evidence-based policies. As one of the greatest political challenges of our times, migration is too complex and nuanced to be addressed solely by one nation, one region or one city alone. All levels of governance must work together by understanding and accepting the functional part each of them plays. National governments cannot act alone on such a complicated and evolving issue and cities must acknowledge and embrace their own role as necessary active agents in migration governance.  It is at the local level that the reality of migration affect peoples’ lives, whether they are newly arrived immigrants or long-term city dwellers. Migration has a direct impact on cities, its administrators and its people. However, cities currently hardly influence the conceptualization and application of migration policies, which are mostly drafted on a national or supranational level. This creates a governance discrepancy between policy-making and policy-implementation.  If this continues, there are serious risks that migration policies will impair the level of social cohesion of the territories and disrupt the quality of life of their inhabitants. Better synergies between cities and governments are necessary across all policy areas that have a direct impact on mobility and migration, such as employment, education and urban planning. | |
| Objectives |  |
| Making sure that policy-makers and civil servants are well trained on communicating migration is key to pursue the development of a balanced narrative on migration for local authorities. One of the main objectives of the Mediterranean City to City Migration (MC2CM) project is to promote a realistic and fair narrative on migration and intercultural dialogue, and to foster cultural diversity and mutual understanding.  To this end, MC2CM organizes this training under the auspices of the City of Seville and of FAMSI (Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International solidarity). This event will be a step towards the upcoming EuroMed Migration Narrative Forum (dates pending confirmation due to the pandemic).  This training aims at raising awareness about the role and responsibility of local authorities in fostering a balanced narrative on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region as a tool to strengthen the role of cities in migration governance by:   * Presenting and discussing the issue of communicating migration at the local level with recognized experts in the field and identifying challenges and opportunities for local governments; * Exchanging best practices and strategies in communicating migration at the local level; * Empowering and providing knowledge to representatives from local governments and authorities in order to strengthen the role of cities in migration governance; * Extracting key lessons, messages and policy recommendations to support MC2CM’s promotion of a realistic and fair narrative on migration based on intercultural dialogue; * Drafting policy recommendations and action plans to be presented at the EuroMed Migration Narrative Forum. | |

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| About MC2CM |  |
| Internal and international migratory movements in the greater Mediterranean have a direct long-term impact on the development of urban areas. In order to maximise the social and economic development of these migrant populations, cities need effective migration governance capacity, particularly in ensuring the protection of the human rights of migrants and their access to services. In this context, MC2CM aims to improving migration governance at the local level within a network of cities in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean.  Activities are clustered under three axes: Dialogue, facilitating cooperation between migration governance stakeholders at different levels; Knowledge, contributing to improved information and knowledge on urban migration; and Action, supporting the implementation of policy recommendations and development of pilot initiatives. At the same time, MC2CM brings forward a balanced discourse on migration in a cross-cutting manner, notably through the promotion of diversity and intercultural dialogue.  Within the framework of the Dialogue on Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM)[[1]](#footnote-1), the project is implemented by a consortium led by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), in partnership with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). MC2CM is financed by the European Union (EU), co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). | |
| Methodology |  |
| The event will bring together communication specialists, policy-makers, academics and representatives of cities affiliated with the MC2CM network and city associations with an expressed interest in the project and facing similar issues in communicating on migration and diversity. The event will see the participation and intervention of cities from the Euro-Mediterranean region, academics and communication experts.  All participants are invited to engage proactively in the discussion and reflect upon the drafting of recommendations and actions.  Working languages for the event are English, French and Arabic (interpretation). Discussions will take place under Chatham House rule (comments are not attributed) with a report produced as summary of learnings of the event.  While MC2CM normally host face to face peer-learning meeting, this event will have to adapt to the current pandemic situation. Therefore, the event will be held online as a Digital peer-learning week, translating the 2 days face-to-face event into a 4 days (1 session of 2h per day) online event.  However, the online setting will follow the same rules of selection and engagement as the face to face meeting, meaning that the event will be reserved to around 30 selected participants (based on the pertinence of their profiles, gender and geographical balance among others).  Participants will be required to commit participating actively to the 4 days, making sure the learning and recommendations extract from this meeting are based on practionners needs, experiences and knowledge. | |

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| Monday, 15 June 2020 | | |  |
| 09:00 – 09:15 | Welcoming participants | |  |
| **09:15 – 10:00** | Opening and Welcome   * **Juan Espadas**, Mayor of Seville * **Emilia Saiz**, Secretary General of UCLG * **Simone Giger** - Head Global Programme Migration and Development Division – SDC * **Emma Udwin**, Head of Unit, Migration Assistance to Neighbouring Countries, DG Near, EC * Representative from Tunisia Government (TBC)   *Moderator***: Julien Simon**, Regional coordinator for the Mediterranean, ICMPD | |  |
| **10:00 – 11:15** | Building a common ground on Rebalancing the Narrative on migration to strengthen local governance  Objective: To present concepts and set the framework for discussion and exchange  *Cities Challenges:*   * Representative from themunicipality of Seville (TBC) * Representative from themunicipality of Oujda (TBC)   *Concepts and approaches*   * **Daniel Howden,** Director of Lighthouse Reports   Moderation**: Marco Ricorda,** Communication officer, MC2CM, ICMPD | |  |
| **11:15 – 11:30** | Methodology of the Breakout session   * **Lamine Abbad,** Project manager, MC2CM, ICMPD * **Fatima Fernandez,** Project Officer, UCLG | |  |
| Tuesday, 16 June 2020 BREAKOUT SESSIONS | | |  |
| 09.00 – 10.15 : Round 1  10:15-10:30 : Coffee Break  10:30 – 11.45 : Round 2 | | |  |
| **Session: Rebalancing the Migration Narrative to Strengthen Local Governments**  Objective: Clarifying the technical jargon (“narratives”, “opinions”, and “attitudes”) and present studies on public attitudes and communication on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.   * James Dennison, Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration, Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute | | Session: Running effective campaigns  Objective: Share experiences and best practices on communication campaigns related to fostering social inclusion, storytelling and advocacy.   * **Lucila Rodríguez-Alarcón**, Director General PorCausa | |
| Wednesday, 17 June 2020 BREAKOUT SESSIONS | | |  |
| 09.00 – 10.15 : Round 1  10:15-10:30 : Coffee Break  10:30 – 11.45 : Round 2 | | |  |
| **Session: Nurturing relations with media**  Objective: To set the stage for a sustainable cooperation with local, national and regional media to foster fact-based journalism on migration.   * Leila Beratto, Journalist, member of 15-38 Mediterranée | | Session: Curbing disinformation on migration  Objective: Clarifying technical jargon (“fake news”, “disinformation”, “manipulation”) and present best practises and recommendations from local authorities.   * **Alberto Horst Neidhardt**, Policy Analyst for the European Diversity and Migration programme at the European Policy Centre | |
| Thursday, 18 June 2020 | | |  |
| **09:30 – 10:45** | Presenting recommendations – The way forward  Objective: To set the basis for an MC2CM roadmap to assist cities in contributing to balancing the narrative on migration at the local, national and regional level.   * Rapporteur from Migrant group * Rapporteur from Expat group * City representative (TBC)   Moderator**: Daniel Howden,** Director of Lighthouse Reports | |  |
| **10:45 – 11:15** | **Concluding remarks**  Objective: To reflect on the discussions and reflections undertaken during the event, set out next steps towards the EuroMed Migration Narrative Forum.   * **Francisco Guerrero**, Mayor of Campillos - Secretary of Migration, FAMSI (TBC) * **Mohamed Boussraoui**, Director of programs, UCLG * **Ana Feder,** Portfolio Manager, Regional Coordination office for the Mediterranean, ICMPD | |  |
| **11:15 – 11:30** | **Cultural visit of Seville** | |  |

1. The MTM Dialogue in informal consultative platform between migration officials from origin, transit, and destination countries along the main migration routes in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)