

GFMD Thematic Workshop: Narratives on Migration: Toward evidence-based Communication

4 - 5 July 2019,

[Mohammed VI International Conference Center](#), Skhirat, Morocco

Concept Note

CONTEXT:

Today's world is characterized by increased migration flows that have affected not only developed countries but also emerging countries. The configuration of these migratory flows has changed profoundly, both in terms of diversification of countries of origin and the types of migration. At the national level, the design and implementation of migration and integration policies have become more complex as they become a political issue.

Migration policy development is the result of a complex process in which public opinion plays a key role. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of rhetoric that goes in opposition to immigration and triggers anti-immigrant sentiments. In the coming years, the management of these potential sources of social tension will be a major challenge for the governments of countries of destination, even as the globalization of trade and the hunt for skills would make it desirable to increase the use of labor immigration. In reality, migrants, regardless of their level of skills, make a substantial contribution to societies, but stereotypes and negative stereotypes about migrants prevail. Governments in their policies and own discourse have an important role in setting the tone for the national debate. But governments by far are not the only actors. Traditional and social media are a powerful force in shaping migration narratives that may not always be based on facts. Social media tend to have an 'echo chamber' effect, whereby people receive (false) information that reinforces their existing views and beliefs and is thus prone to driving polarization.

In this context, a better understanding of the process by which public opinion is formed concerning immigration would make it possible to counter hostile opinions to immigrants and immigration, and the tensions that this could provoke.

The Marrakesh Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted in December 2018, states in the guiding principles that "We also must provide all our citizens with access to objective, evidence-based, clear information about the benefits and challenges of migration, with a view to dispelling misleading narratives that generate negative perceptions of migrants." This demonstrates the opportunity for the international community to work to distil evidence-based, objective information on public opinion.

Within this framework, the Kingdom of Morocco, which provides regional leadership on migration issues, is working towards the establishment of the African Observatory on Migration, which will be a flagship institution in the African Union's framework. This institution will help inform safe, orderly and regular migration policies to reflect the reality of African migration, far from stereotypes and alarmist rhetoric. Ecuador, as the 2019 Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), has defined the issue of migration narratives and communication as one of its thematic priorities for the chairmanship.

As such, the GFMD 2019 Chair Ecuador, in partnership with the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, is convening a GFMD Thematic Workshop entitled *“Narratives on Migration: Toward an evidence-based Communication”* on 4 – 5 July, in Rabat, Morocco. The aim of this GFMD thematic workshop is to initiate an open discussion, allowing each of the stakeholders (Governments, civil society, private sector, academia, media, etc.) to analyze in depth the mechanisms to shape public perceptions of migration issues. Additionally, the workshop will focus on the issue of data, its collection, and analysis in order to provide the public with objective, clear and evidence-based public discourses, reflective of the reality on the ground.

Under this second thematic priority, the 2019 GFMD aims to discuss the practical experiences and lessons learned of governments and other stakeholders in communicating about migration, migration policies and their interconnection with sustainable development in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, both with the wider public and with migrants and migrant communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Exchange experiences of governments and other stakeholders about practices and lessons learned in communicating about migration, migration policies and their interconnection with sustainable development.
- Understand the mechanisms of antagonistic discourse on migration and identify concrete recommendations to foster good perception of migration with a greater outreach and impact.
- Identify the benefits of effective partnerships between research actors and communication actors in the digital age.
- Reinforce the commitment of key actors to change negative public perception towards migration

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Identification of government communication strategies to inform about their migration policies and options to address new challenges in the context of emerging forms of media, including misinformation and hate speech.
- Suggestions for areas of improvement in the future through real multi-stakeholder cooperation.
- Proposals for concrete actions, grouping all levels of decision-making, including non-governmental actors.

- Reflection on national and international media strategies to increase the positive impact of public narratives on migration and migrants.

FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION¹

In line with the recommendation of the GFMD Ten-Year review to explore new formats for more interactive GFMD meetings, this GFMD thematic workshop will feature moderated “Davos-style” panels.

Participation is encouraged at appropriate political and expert levels from relevant government departments and agencies dealing with the topic. Consistent with the multi-stakeholder nature of the GFMD, the workshop would also welcome the participation of civil society, business and local authorities.

¹ Consistent with the GFMD’s character as a non-binding, informal and voluntary process, this thematic workshop will be held under the Chatham House Rule.