



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni

European Commission

Understanding and Tackling the Migration Challenge: the role of Research

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Looking forward: future migration trends and research needs for Europe

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- Managing migration represents **one of the mayor challenges for the European Union and its citizens**. Being discussed at all levels of government and everyday by media, we are aware that the “migration challenge” is of fundamental importance to the European Union. Consolidated European principles, such as freedom of movement and the right to asylum, are somehow being challenged even within our borders.
- This is certainly due to the significant migration flows to Europe. According to IOM data, since January 2015, **1,084,625** migrants, including asylum seekers, are reported to have arrived to Europe by land and sea routes (among them, 1,048,268 by sea). Only in the first month of 2016, the number of people arrived to Europe is of **more than 36,700**.
- They are, often, migrants who arrive in conditions of **extreme fragility and vulnerability**, after long and exhausting journeys and being highly exposed to threats – only last year, 2,892 people lost their life in crossing the central Mediterranean route.
- However, these numbers **only partially** describe the current migration scenario, and it has to be considered that Europe faces a little portion of the global migration: today, an estimated **232 million people are international migrants**, whose patterns are mainly intraregional and interregional; furthermore, we have to be aware that migration from countries in the global south to the global north involves **the same amount** of people of migration between countries in the global south.



- In addition to that, if it is true that Europe is exposed to irregular arrivals of migrants, it also has to be noticed that most migration worldwide is for economic reasons, it takes place regularly and it is of overwhelming benefit to migrants, the countries where they live and work and their countries of origin.
- In this framework, the interconnection between migration and research are manifold. Indeed, the Research contributes to better shaping and understanding different *phenomena*, it supports policymaking for the development of effective and up-to-date policies, and it is through the Research that good practices can be shared and widespread.
- Moving from these preliminary remarks, I would like to discuss **three priority areas** on which future Research should be focused: irregular and forced migration; migrants' integration; migration and development.

Irregular and Forced Migration

- Irregular and forced migration flows to Europe are today characterized by a high degree of complexity. Together, different people (families, women, youth and unaccompanied children) are moving across borders fleeing from persecutions, within trafficking networks, searching for better livelihoods, incomes and opportunities – so-called “**mixed migration flows**”.
- As mentioned, the irregular migration to European countries is often **risky and dangerous**, and it disproportionally affects the most vulnerable; it is certainly **driven by inequalities** between countries and regions, and by different levels of development and social-economic prosperity.
- In this framework, there is a great need, for all stakeholders, **to deepen their knowledge** and to correctly frame the migration debate within the effective scenario.



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- In increasingly complicated geopolitical developments, indeed, the **collaboration** between research bodies, governmental institutions and operational actors, such as IOM, can be pivotal to collect data and analyze trends.
- Research can provide objective views of root causes, supporting EU Member States **overcoming emergency attitudes** by approaching migration not merely as a “problem to solve” but as a *phenomenon* that shall be adequately managed.
- It is therefore essential to detain a set of **reliable ad updated data**, both quantitative and qualitative, describing the different migratory routes, the dimension of facts and the needs involved.
- In addition to that, not only providing answers to arriving migrants, the European Union should strengthen **relationships and cooperation with Countries of origin**, with the aim of **favoring legal channels**. In this view, Research could contribute understanding different contexts and backgrounds of third countries, on which basis building an open and constructive dialogue among States.

Migrants' Integration

- The positive management of migration flows is strictly connected with the implementation of policies aimed at fostering integration – the latter conceived as a **dynamic process** of socio-cultural change, involving a wide range of subjects and individual, both in Countries of origin and of destination.
- In this landscape, the research can do a lot. Firstly, it can help building a **real awareness** of migration: debunking false information, overcoming prejudices, scientifically proving social, economic and cultural contributions that migrants bring to European countries.



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- This is essential **to prevent and combat racism and discriminatory tendencies** in Europe, which are often based on misinterpretations or misleading beliefs.
- Furthermore, the evidence base to inform policy development and programme interventions is still very limited. Relatively little is known about migrants arriving in our Countries. In order to build concrete integration responses, the European Union should dedicate its efforts to **better know** the migrant population entering and living within Member States.
- Currently, the IOM Coordination Office for the Mediterranean is conducting a pilot study to build up a **detailed picture of the social and economic profiles of migrants** arriving in Italy.
- We are looking at their social, cultural and economic background, their expectations and false myths, their family and social links in Europe, motivations and causes behind the migratory process.
- Beside collecting information, this study is aimed at spreading innovative research approaches in the field of migration.
- One of the structural element of integration and protection of migrants' rights, in Europe, is indubitably related to the **labour market**.
- Indeed, even if the vast majority of migrants productively contributes to the countries they are living and working in, too often they are exposed to serious **risks**.
- When rights are not respected, when workers are abused or compelled to accept terms and conditions that are unacceptable, instead of generating great benefits, migration generates great costs, both social and economic, both for migrants and for nationals. Even if they appear attractive in the short term, indeed, low



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standards of rights within the labour market are not sustainable and bring to “social-dumping” tendencies.

- Next future Research will have to focus on this topic - involving enterprises and multinationals, providing juridical protection, identifying innovative tools.
- Finally, we have to acknowledge that, in the last years, European Member States have done a lot to promote and support integration within their countries, developing and implementing virtuous policies, programmes and actions.
- However, despite efforts in this direction have been made, there is still a need for a more systematic **exchange of best integration policies and practices on a global scale**.
- By analyzing how different countries approach integration of migrants, successful results can be applied and adapted to different local contexts, therefore rationalizing resources and accelerating processes in a shared dimension. In this view, through the collection of inputs and by providing recommendations on positive experiences, the Research can act as a facilitator of the European integration path.

Migration and development

- The third area in which the Research can play a crucial role is related to the increasing awareness that **migration is a key component of sustainable development**.
- Movements of individuals, within and across States and Continents, foster the circulation of skills, competencies and expertise; it creates the basis for innovative *contaminations* that significantly influence economic and social development of countries of origin and host societies.



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- Historically, the choice to migrate has always been conceived as a poverty reduction strategy for individuals and families. The experience of the European emigration is not an exception. However, despite very ancient roots, studies and analysis on the complex relationship between human mobility and development are relatively recent.
- On this regard, a major step forward has been within the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, where migration has been explicitly associated to the decreasing of inequalities, decent work, gender equality and peaceful societies.
- In particular, **SDG Target 10.7** is devoted to *facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies*.
- Moving from this recent achievement, the Research can give significant contribution to both **understand and value migrants' role as agent for development**, disclosing all grounds and sectors in which governments should intervene to not undermine enormous potentialities.
- In relation to the SDGs specifically, **migration-related indicators** need to be straightforward to apply and demonstrate how it is contributing to the realization of the SDGs in different areas – ideally beyond the Target 10.7.
- Furthermore, the Research may foster the integration of **migration into development planning** and support all States to develop effective policies and to take incisive actions, in order to value the positive contribution of migrants for sustainable development.
- A specific focus should be dedicated to **remittances**, which have been estimated at 440 Billion USD in 2015. On this field, **innovative financial instruments and**



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products could still be identified in order to effectively turn diaspora into a mayor actor in trade, development, cultural exchange, dialogue – for the benefit of both countries of origin and destination.

Conclusions

- In conclusion, we can certainly affirm that there is not only space but also **need to strengthen the Research's role on migration**, supporting **interdisciplinary approaches** to foster transversal thinking and to disclose connections among events and crosscutting dimensions.
- The Research has also to be aware of the enormous potential that arise from **new information and communication technologies** (ICT). These innovative tools are completely revolutionizing exchanges among individuals, in all sectors; they create opportunities for social, economic and cultural growth – thanks to a fast and global sharing of information.
- IOM is paying great attention to **bring the Research into the policy debate**, also by strengthening **cooperation with research bodies**. Worldwide, today, IOM closely collaborates with local and international universities, research institutes and statistical centers. These partners support our efforts to integrate migration into national and supranational action, both in countries of origin and destination, for the identification of evidence-based policies.
- There is a great need of **innovative thinking within the migration debate**. Through comparative studies and unconventional reasoning, the Research can develop **policy-oriented and operational studies**, to stimulate a change of perspectives and to inspire original strategies. Furthermore, I am convinced that research, analysis and data should boost all sectors and dimensions of our action.