



# Understanding Migration in the EU: past, present, future

Event: EMN 10 year anniversary conference

May 15, 2018 | Brussels, Belgium

## Key conclusions

**The following concluding remarks were drawn to summarise the main presentations and discussion:**

- ★ Migration cannot be managed by individual countries and from with borders. It is a global and sustainable issue and must be managed for the common good. All aspects of migration (legal migration, asylum, integration, irregular migration and return) are interconnected. Thus, effective migration management requires a **multilateral and holistic approach** looking at all aspects of migration and including cooperation and partnership with third countries;
- ★ In Europe and across the world, public emotions and sentiments towards migration are divided. And public opinion influences policy – this is a fact. **Public perceptions matter** and has to be taken into consideration by political leaders;
- ★ Migration policies require a **long term vision** to move on from the crisis of the last few years. The necessary work must be completed inside the EU, but the long term vision cannot afford to ignore external factors. Signposts to the unfolding crisis were apparent at every stage, but did not bring about the necessary responses. Future migration policies thus require **better contingency planning**. We cannot again afford to ignore external factors. A balance between **solidarity and responsibility** needs to be found within the EU; and
- ★ Migration policies must be **open to the outside world**, and **for the benefit of all**. The needs of third countries cannot be ignored. This is essential. The EU must be fully engaged in the negotiations of the Global Compact.

**A number of conclusions related specifically to the EMN and its future direction in the years ahead:**

- ★ The importance of the EMN was highlighted, and its 'moral duty' to remain what it is – a trusted source of impartial information on asylum and migration issues. It should maintain its commitment to inform policy-makers, practitioners and the wider public through **evidence-based information**;
- ★ The important role of the EMN in reinforcing a **culture of working together and sharing information** across the EU Member States was also acknowledged, through EU wide studies and reports, but also through day to day working tools, such as the EMN Ad-Hoc Query mechanism; and
- ★ For the future, it was recommended that the EMN **opens itself out beyond the EU to the outside world**, and embraces relevant third countries as partners in the network.

To mark the occasion of its 10 year anniversary, the European Migration Network hosted its conference 'Understanding Migration in the EU: past, present, future' in Brussels on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018, bringing together almost 200 policy makers, researchers and practitioners from EU and national governments, academic institutions, international organisations and from civil society.

The event was opened by **the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos**, who welcomed high level speakers and participants, at the forefront of migration and asylum policy, practice and research.

Considering that migration and asylum are amongst the most critical issues of our times, dominating the political agenda and public discourse across the EU and internationally, the presentations and discussions provided key insights into how we can move away from crisis management and towards future proof migration and asylum policies. Other areas of debate included the importance of solidarity, and why migration can only be managed by working together, and the importance of building stronger partnerships with third countries. The event also considered changing trends in public opinion, public trust in EU migration policy and the role of the media and wider communication approaches in shaping perceptions on migration and asylum in the EU.

During the keynote session *Migration-from crisis management to future proof asylum and migration policies*, **Commissioner Avramopoulos**, emphasized the need for a long term European migration policy which combines internal and external dimensions and for a resilient asylum system. **Mr. Milko Berner**, the Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria reminded participants that migration management remains a key priority for the Bulgarian Presidency which works intensively to pursue the CEAS reform. **Mr. Claude Moraes**, Member of European Parliament, highlighted the importance of migration, a deeply sensitive issue, speaking to the very identity of individuals. He stressed the urgent need to move policymaking forward to improve legal avenues for migration, considering that people will always, for a wide range of reasons, migrate. Furthermore, a structural change of the cooperation model of EU policies was stressed, and an urgent need for the EU not to be complacent, but to take a leadership role in what was a truly global issue. **Ms. Irune Aguirrezabal Quijera**, representing the European Bureau of the International Organization for Migration, welcomed the role of the EMN in providing evidence-based research, called for a sound approach to migration management that would mould rather than mirror public opinion, welcomed the Global Compact on Migration as an important tool, and called for a comprehensive approach where third countries were considered as partners rather than beneficiaries. In the same line, **Ms. Sophie Magennis** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) called for improvements to the current model by revising the concept of a 'safe country', by ensuring effective contingency planning, enhancing safe and legal pathways for migration and a stronger engagement outside of EU institutions. Migration must be addressed as a global issue.

During his address on *Why migration can only be managed by working together*, **Mr. Laurent Muschel**, Director of the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (European Commission) reflected on the multi-faceted nature of migration and the inherent risks in ineffective migration management. He reiterated the need to manage migration by working together, and underlined the contribution of the EMN in the design and implementation of EU and national policies, legislation and practices. He noted the constantly evolving migration situation, and invited the EMN to maintain its role in identifying issues and providing up to date information at the forefront of policy, media and public debate.

In the first session *Building stronger partnerships with third countries on migration*, all the speakers acknowledged the importance of instruments such as partnerships and global compacts on migration. Despite the difficulties already encountered and the required time, the Director-General of DG DEVCO, **Mr. Stefano Manservigi** urged the EU to build coherent and tailored partnerships. **Ms. Daniela Morari**, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova attested the effectiveness of the Mobility Partnership EU-Moldova, and welcomed the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). As a bridge between migration and development, anchored to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **Ms. Cécile Riallant** (IOM) also highlighted that whilst the GCM requires commitment, resources and policy change, it provides a balanced approach and a room for all actors at different level of governance. Agreeing on the relevance of the GCM, **Mr. Guido Bichisao** from the European Investment Bank brought to the fore the important role and expertise of Multilateral Development Banks in engaging in programmes related to economic migration and forced displacement across a range of countries and thematic areas, and in the important role of strong delivery organisations and evaluation to ensure expected impacts.

The second session focused on *Public opinion and trust in EU migration policy*. As a result of the migration crisis, confidence and trust in leaders in migration has suffered. Developing a narrative of trust based on facts and figures on migration and asylum and which acknowledges the irreversible role of migration in human development was emphasized by the European Commission Chief Spokesperson, **Mr. Margaritis Schinas**. Moreover, **Ms. Céline Schmitt** from UNHCR France stressed equally the need of political leadership to deliver unambiguous messages. She proposed alternative ways to reach out to the public and build trust, such as activities organised within schools, engaging with journalists but also with refugees in community projects. Finally, on the basis of her research on the UK media and on media coverage of migration in five European Member States, **Dr. Kerry Moore** (Cardiff University) discussed how migration policies are influenced by public opinion and broadly negative perceptions towards migration, and highlighted the key role of the media in shaping and influencing public opinion. Following the presentations, discussion focused on the importance of integration and contact with migrants in de-mystifying migration, with the implication that EU funding should also reach down to grass roots levels, and to use facts and evidence to inform debate rather than emotion arguments; however, it was accepted that whilst such measures could be helpful, perceptions work beyond facts and figures, and it will not be possible to fully depoliticise migration.

During the final session *The next 10 year in European migration policy: seizing opportunities and avoiding pitfalls*, **Dr. Andrew Geddes**, Director of the Migration Policy Centre (MPC), identified a new dividing line in European societies and political systems, driven by political reactions against immigration and European integration. However, the situation is complex, and according to a recent MPC survey in 14 European Member States, attitudes towards immigration have remained quite stable. Thus, their structures and drivers behind the division require better understanding and further research. From his side, **Dr. Thomas Spijkerboer**, Professor at the VU University Amsterdam, noted that EU policies have been based on incomplete empirical knowledge lacking the perspective of third countries. He proposed more 'blue-skies' thinking and independent research, plus the establishment of a European Research Council for Africa to improve the opportunities to collaborate with researchers from Africa and the Middle East. Finally, **Ms. Elisabeth Collett**, Director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, put forward that the next decade will be characterised by uncertainty, not only because of the demographic decline and political instability but also because the recent crisis had brought a kind of myopia, with the need to reconsider the core tenets of migration policies, not just the emphasis placed on certain aspects of their functioning. If we started again with migration policies, on which elements would EU governments now choose to collaborate? Ms. Collett also warned that the next migration crisis would not necessarily arise in the same way as the former one and would therefore require different and new policy actions. The debate came back to two challenges: first, the notion of "free-floating ideas" which could nourish migration policies while simultaneously providing relevant and factual information to the policy-makers and second, the ability to effectively channel these information and ideas to policy-makers.

Finally, all along the conference, the invaluable role of the EMN - committed to inform EU and national policy-makers - has been widely recognised by the various speakers including **Mr. Ioan-Dragos Tudorache** (European Commission) who concluded the event. During the last decade, the EMN had provided comparable and objective data and sound evidence-based analysis on all migration aspects both to the European institutions and to the national ones. By organising regular events at national and EU levels, the EMN had brought together researchers and practitioners from all over Europe helping them to understand and share good practices. In the future, the EMN has been invited to consolidate its added value by maintaining its objectivity and its comparative and factual data based analysis and by enlarging its audience. Cooperation with stakeholders from third countries should be also established to expose its work to new angles and perspectives.

#### **Keynote Speakers:**

- ★ **Dimitris Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, European Commission
- ★ **Milko Berner**, Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria
- ★ **Claude Moraes**, LIBE Chair, European Parliament

- ★ **Irune Aguirrezabal Quijera**, Head of policy and programme Division, International Organization for Migration
  - ★ **Sophie Magennis**, Head of the Policy and Legal Support Unit, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Bureau for Europe
  - ★ **Laurent Muschel**, Director, DG Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
  - ★ **Stefano Manservigi**, Director-General, DG for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission
  - ★ **Daniela Morari**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova
  - ★ **Cécile Riallant**, Senior Migration and Development Specialist, International Organization for Migration
  - ★ **Guido Bichisao**, Director of Institutional Strategy Dept., European Investment Bank
  - ★ **Margaritis Schinas**, Chief Spokesperson and Deputy Director-General, DG Communication, European Commission
  - ★ **Céline Schmitt**, Senior External Relations Officer and Spokesperson, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for France
  - ★ **Kerry Moore**, Senior Lecturer, School of Journalism, Media and Culture, Cardiff University
  - ★ **Andrew Geddes**, Professor of Migration Studies, European University Institute and Director, Migration Policy Centre
  - ★ **Thomas Spijkerboer**, Professor of Migration Law, VU University Amsterdam
  - ★ **Elizabeth Collett**, Director, Migration Policy Institute-Europe
  - ★ **Ioan-Dragos Tudorache**, Head of Unit, Irregular Migration and Return Policy, Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
- Moderator: Nicklas Wancke**, Yleisradio, Finnish Broadcasting Company