



## Lisbon Forum 2016

### Migration and human rights How to structure effective collective action?

Best practices and shared knowledge in the  
Mediterranean and European space

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Ismaili Centre, Lisbon

### Recommendations

Towards Strengthened Democratic Governance in the Southern Mediterranean

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## **I – CONTEXT**

- 1.** An annual event since it was established in 1994 by the North South Centre (NSC) of the Council of Europe (CoE), the Lisbon Forum (LF) is gathering since then high level participants from the Quadrilogue (representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society) from Europe, the Mediterranean and other neighbouring regions, as well as other continents, to discuss different topics related to the priorities and agenda of the CoE.
- 2.** Recent editions of the LF, supported by the EU/CoE Programme “Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood” (South Programme) have sought to address key challenges faced by the Mediterranean and European spaces and, through a comprehensive and an intercultural dialogue, to explore possibilities for a stronger and effective cooperation between the two regions. With this goal in mind, the LF2016 tackled “Migration and Human Rights: how to structure effective collective action? Best practices and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space”
- 3.** An unprecedented number of people are on the move fleeing from war, tyranny, poverty and even climate change, among other root causes, looking for a chance of survival and for a better life. Without falling in the risk of blurring the terms migrants and refugees, we need to ensure that the human rights of all displaced people are ensured and respected. Sharing prosperity and fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) will largely contribute to guarantee migrant and refugees from all over the world better access to human rights in the different categories: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- 4.** Since global interdependence lies at the core of the displacement crisis all countries from, through and to which a migrant or refugee may travel must cooperate and coordinate their actions in order to develop common approaches to prevent, address and manage not only the root causes of this phenomenon but also to deal with the overall issues related to mobility, regular and irregular migration, border management, readmission and return. A coherent migration policy relies on a triangle-based dialogue approach on the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.
- 5.** The current complex fluxes of population also revealed the need for strategic contingency plans coordinating all the actors involved in managing this humanitarian crisis. Governments cannot face the situation alone. All levels of governance should be involved from Local and Regional Authorities to a wide range of non-state actors, including civil society, religious and faith-based institutions, cultural and sports organizations, as well as the private sector. To work together effectively we need to recognize and emphasize the role of the different actors involved and how to best coordinate with public bodies to ensure that all are working towards the same ends.
- 6.** Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) and Civil Society Organisations, particularly those on the southern borders, have been in the frontline when it comes to receiving and protecting migrants and refugees, providing them with shelter, food, healthcare, etc., sometimes coordinating, other times filling the gap that was left by national and international actors. They play also a crucial role in providing migrants and refugees with opportunities for their long-term social and economic integration. They also need to invest in refugees’ long-term inclusion by dealing with the media and the public opinion, managing potential conflicts, combatting discrimination and ensuring that migrants and refugees have the possibility to realize their aspirations and make a meaningful contribution to the local community.

7. We have also experienced that collective action on the field of migration has been largely facilitated by thousands of volunteers, donors and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). We have seen vast numbers of people who, individually or in association, have fulfilled a fundamental role in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms of displaced people - especially rights at stake of specific vulnerable groups like children, youth, women, elderly or disabled people. It is fundamental for these groups to find immediate assistance with professionals such as social workers, health care professionals, justice officers, administrative and police agents. It is therefore essential to establish gender-based and other specific-based refugee, migrant and asylum policies.

8. Migrants and refugees often have difficulties in accessing their fundamental rights not only in terms of legislation and bureaucracy but also in enjoying their universal rights. In this sense, it is important to reach out to them to identify ways to advocate for their rights and to support them in their countries of origin, to protect them on their way to new places and to improve better integration in the societies where they arrive to.

9. Meaningful integration requires smart policies to foster and promote inclusive societies. In managing diversity, all the stake holders should engage in a two-way process that involves both migrants and refugees and the host society. Without policies that promote mutual understanding and respect, parallel societies and social fragmentation may emerge, often leading to tension, violence and instability. Misconceptions about migrants and refugees significantly endanger their integration. It is essential to portray an honest picture of the benefits that migrants bring to the different countries they reside in. Inclusion, as advocated by Intercultural Cities , should be based on the “diversity advantage” concept - that any person, wherever he/she comes from and whatever background he/she has, has something to offer to the society he/she chooses to live in.

10. In sum, in view of the current migration flows, which entails a need **i)** for discussion the root causes of the problem, **ii)** for dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination, and **iii)** for a collective action involving national and local responses, both governmental and non-governmental, through a multilevel effective coordination, access to human rights and successful integration, the LF 2016 aimed at, in promoting the core values and principles of the CoE on this matter, **iv)** increasing awareness and understanding of global interdependence in relation to the migration crisis **v)** strengthening multi-level and multilateral cooperation by encouraging the creation of regional, national and transmed networks and platforms and **vi)** establishing operational recommendations targeting different actors from the quadrilogue, individually or in coordination, and in particular the NSC, to set up an Action Plan that, within its mission, can bring added value to a comprehensive, lasting and interdependent solution to this current North South humanitarian and management crisis of migrants and refugees.

## **II - RECOMMENDATIONS**

**National authorities** should:

1. Understand that the current migration and refugees’ crisis need a clear political solution according to International and European legal framework and within existing multilateral, supranational and national instruments.

2. Implement and promote the contents of International and European Law on migration, refugees and asylum seekers with a view to become more effective in their daily lives and revise them as

appropriate to face new challenges, in particular the specificities of minorities, vulnerable groups such as children and women or even climate refugees.

3. Foresee long-term solutions, either by providing support such as orientation before the migrants and refugees departure to host countries or through integration programmes in the destination countries, while coordinating humanitarian aid emergency responses.
4. Establish legal and safe routes for migrants and refugees in order to save human lives and to fight human trafficking.
5. Capitalize on the existing mechanisms of coordination, identify best practices to be up scaled, share with other actors confronted with the phenomenon, and allocate limited funds in a cooperative and complementary result oriented sustainable goal.
6. Acknowledge the fact that national authorities cannot face the situation alone and must structure a dialogue among the different levels of governance from local and regional authorities to a wide-range of non-state actors including civil society as well as the private sector.
7. Recognize the relevance of the role of Civil Society Organisations, enabling them a conducive environment of their work in particular protecting human rights defenders i.e. whether individuals or groups.
8. Develop capacity-building mechanisms for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police, health and social workers, teachers, journalists, representatives of local communities and diaspora, volunteers, etc, on the basis of an intercultural dialogue in order to be ready to welcome and deal with migrants and refugees.
9. Facilitate and speed up the access to justice and provide rapid responses for human rights violations.
10. Create mechanisms for safe and dignified return of migrants and refugees to their countries of origin, on a voluntary basis and after a risk assessment.

**Parliamentarian Assemblies** should:

11. Elaborate and approve legislation conducive to facilitate, speed up and create the necessary conditions to process the full integration of the migrants and refugees in the host country.
12. Develop specific policies for diasporas as they build bridges between the countries of origin and of destination and facilitate the process of peaceful inclusive societies.

**Local and Regional Authorities** should:

13. Be the best positioned bodies to facilitate two-way process that involves both migrants and refugees and the host society for the sake of inclusive societies i.e. building trust and social cohesion but also addressing other challenges such as access to housing, social and health services, education and employment.

14. Challenge traditional education through innovation and new technologies to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees, in particular the youngest and the children.
15. Accept without reservations the involvement of all stakeholders from Civil Society taking particular attention to urban planning, faith institutions and cultural and sports events.
16. Pay special attention to the dialogue with diasporas, minorities, migrants and refugees in a permanent consultative decision-making processes.
17. Enhance the dialogue between other Local and Regional Authorities in countries of origin, transit and destination and be encouraged to join transmed networks and platforms like *Intercultural Cities* of the Council of Europe.
18. Avoid discrimination of migrants and refugees in relocation and resettlement mechanisms.

**Civil Society Organisations** should:

19. Reinforce coordination among different NGOs working towards a same goal, transforming the competition into cooperation and creating synergies and complementarities between their different target groups and outreach, expertise and groups of volunteers;
20. Continue to empower people both in terms of diversity and vulnerability by informing them about their rights, providing them with assistance and denouncing in cases of violation.
21. Emphasize the role of the media in raising awareness, helping empowering public opinion and social monitoring.
22. Encourage young people in awareness and advocacy, bringing added value to the grassroots and to the decision making process.

### **III - Strategic Partnerships**

23. Platforms and networks gathering wide spectrum of stakeholders from international organisations to state entities and civil society actors, foundations, faith-based and religious organisations, academia and think-tanks, the private sector and volunteer and community-based groups should be promoted and supported to develop and maintain bonds of cooperation, adopting a silo-free approach in the spirit of supporting collective action in a multi-level effort and reaching common objectives.
24. In accordance with the Global Agenda, an in particular Goal 17, governments and stakeholders should revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development, including through development co-operation and disbursement of funding. Global partnerships should be promoted to mobilise policies, knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources that countries can apply to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda and eradicate global poverty, thus reducing one of the root causes of migration.
25. Diaspora communities should be seen as strategic partners for inclusion. The numerous accomplishments of migrant and diaspora communities are successful stories of double integration which encourage both the countries of origin and destination to view migration not as a problem but as

an opportunity forged on a common ground, opening avenues for development and dialogue between them and respective cultures.

**26.** Refugee self-organised initiatives and organisations should be financially supported while being recognised as opportunities for dialogue, for peaceful inclusion and for improvement of the decision-making process.

**27.** All actors of the quadrilogue should join efforts to develop campaigns and projects with the aim to raise awareness, uphold migrants and refugees rights and develop inclusion programmes, thus contributing to eradicate some of the effects of a deregulated global interdependent world, where the current migrant and refugee crisis lies at the moment, putting in jeopardy basic human rights.

**28.** The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe should continue to enhance the capacities for dialogue among all state and non-state actors of the quadrilogue from origin, transit and destination countries, integrating its expertise in the fields of youth, women and global education in order to set up an Action Plan that, within its mission and aligned with the CoE goals, can bring added value to a comprehensive, lasting and interdependent solution to this current North South humanitarian and management crisis of migrants and refugees.