



GFMD OECD PROCESS CONSULTATION Mayors Mechanism Overview and Key Messages from Thematic Breakout Sessions

September 2020

Introduction

Migration is part of the DNA of cities and an integral part of what it means to be and manage a city; cities are often first responders to the needs of migrants and displaced people. It is therefore essential for effective governance of migration that cities are enabled to contribute to international and national policy making processes.

Indeed, with the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), mayors strongly affirmed that *'Cities are a force for change, and their efforts and active participation are essential to achieving the GCM and the GCR objectives. A structured dialogue with local governments on migration issues at national and international levels is fundamental to ensure adequate responses and guarantee the implementation of the GCM and GCR.'*

With the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the role and contribution of cities in the governance of migration has been formally acknowledged through their inclusion in the implementation and review structures of those compacts. Local and regional authorities have also been recognized as a key stakeholder in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) process, resulting in the creation of a **Mayors Mechanism** in December 2018. The 6th Mayoral Forum in Quito in

The GFMD Mayors Mechanism

Established in 2018, the Mayors Mechanism – co-steered [by United Cities and Local Governments \(UCLG\)](#), [The Mayors Migration Council \(MMC\)](#) and [The International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) – aims at including local and regional authorities within the GFMD process, bringing their voices and expertise into state-led deliberations, and intensifying the dialogue between different levels of government and different stakeholder groups.

January 2020 was the first-time mayors and city leaders were formally integrated in the annual GFMD Summit.

The GFMD 2020 – Chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates

The current GFMD Chair, United Arab Emirates (UAE), has planned six regional online consultations which aim to inform the discussions and background papers of the GFMD Summit, planned for 11 – 15 January 2021 in Dubai. In this [yearlong process](#), the Chair has prioritized 6 thematic areas (labour migration, skills, new technologies, migrant protection, irregular migration and partnerships), which will ‘direct the course of 2020 activities towards a conversation that is future-focused and partnership-oriented’.

The GFMD Regional Consultations in a nutshell

Objective: Discuss the GFMD 2020 thematic areas from a regional perspective.

Outputs: Identify common challenges, possible solutions, and new partnerships on specific themes to be captured by a ‘thematic expert’ in a final outcome paper.

Participation: National governments, local authorities, civil society, UN Agencies, the private sector.

Structure: Each consultation consists of an opening plenary call, thematic webinars (3 per region) and a closing plenary.

OECD CONSULTATIONS

The GFMD OECD Consultation series is organized by the UAE the OECD. This means the event itself was a GFMD event, with invitations extended by the OECD Development Centre to OECD member states. OECD has also selected the three priority topics from the list of 6 themes (see above) identified by the UAE.

The three topics that were discussed in the OECD Consultations were:

- [The governance of labour migration in the context of changing employment landscapes](#)
- [Skilling Migrants for Employment](#)
- [Fostering partnerships to realise migration-related goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda and managing the future of human mobility](#)

The Mayors Mechanism, in coordination with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Eurocities, identified a list of Local and Regional Authority (LRA) representatives to participate in the specific sessions.

In addition, two city representatives participated in the Opening and Closing sessions:

- GFMD OECD Opening Plenary: [Speech](#) by Lord Mayor Carola Gunnarsson, Mayor of Sala, Sweden and Vice President of UCLG for Europe
- GFMD OECD Closing Plenary: [Speech](#) by Gabriella De Francesco, Councilor, City of Mechelen, Belgium

Overview of Key Messages Delivered by LRAs

In their contributions throughout the consultations, LRA representatives referred to a number of advocacy documents, such as the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), adopted in 2018.

Topic 1 – Labour Migration

LRA representatives:

- Sandra Federici, Coordinator of ‘Snapshots from the Borders’, Municipality of Lampedusa

Key Takeaways:

- Cities highlighted that migrants and refugees directly contribute their skills and resources to the preparedness, emergency and recovery phases of this crisis, including as health care workers, sanitation and construction workers, grocers, farmers, and postal workers, among others. Many of these jobs that are labelled requiring low skills, are considered **essential** in order to **tackle the pandemic**. This means migrants are more likely to need to keep working despite the risks of becoming ill. For undocumented migrant workers, who do not qualify for social protection, sick pay or unemployment benefits, the situation is even more precarious. Cities therefore encourage national governments to
 - remove restrictions for migrant workers to work regularly and to expand regular pathways for migrants across all skill levels as the best strategy to keep communities safe
 - to ensure that information shared with health care workers will not be shared with immigration officials
 - to expand national financial support packages to migrants
- Local authorities mentioned they have a key role to improve the dominant **narrative on migration**, which often portrays migrants as ‘coming over to steal jobs’. They have emphasized the need to inform the local population of the wider context in which migration occurs, and of how migration will benefit the entire community if effectively managed. Working with the **private sector** will be an important factor of success here. Border communities face particular challenges and cities have called for increased exchange and peer-learning between cities and communities on the borders of Europe, building on the example from the project ‘[Snapshots from the Borders](#)’.

‘Through ‘Snapshots from the Borders’, Lampedusa has pushed for the creation of a network that brings together border communities, with a view to improve the critical understanding of European, national and local decision makers and of public opinion about global interdependencies determining migration flows towards European borders.’ (Sandra Federici, Lampedusa)

'It is our duty, also, to showcase how migrants can contribute to our local economic development. The role of the local fabric and administration is to support newcomers and enable them to contribute to the local economy' (Lord Mayor Carola Gunnarsson, Sala, quote from statement in the Session Opening Plenary)

- Cities showcased how they work to foster economic integration of migrants, e.g. through providing local trainings and capacity building opportunities. At the same time, they stressed that any action the cities undertake to foster economic (and social) integration, will need to **take into account the needs and realities** of the local communities.

Topic 2 – Skilling Migrants for Employment

LRA representatives:

- Christelle Sermon, Director, Bureau of Assistance to newcomers, Brussels, Belgium
- Lea Champagne, Project Officer, IncluCities

Key Takeaways:

- Cities recognized the importance of promoting **dialogue between the different stakeholders, including trade unions, employers, and local authorities** to discuss local labour migration practices. Such platforms can serve to promote access to formal employment of migrants and refugees, and to discuss qualification frameworks.

We work closely with the local employment office, which is an important entry point for us to inform and connect to employers. This connection is important to provide correct information with regards to employing migrants, and to tackle discrimination and existing prejudice. (Christelle Sermon, Brussels)

- In light of the current pandemic cities indicated the strong recognition that jobs which were previously labelled as low skilled, have shown to be essential in combatting this crisis. Recognizing this reality, they welcomed member states having **removed residence restrictions** so that 'low skilled' migrant workers can serve in the response to COVID-19.
- Cities emphasized the importance of offering **individual accompaniment** of every migrant upon arrival, regardless of the type of work she or he will be engaged in. Aside from work-related information, migrants need information about e.g. the housing market and the broader cultural context of their host community. Individual accompaniment at local level is necessary to fit the migrant's specific needs.
- Cities expressed worry about the lack of **recognition of diplomas**, there is important effort that needs to happen in that area. But also, beyond formal diplomas, cities recommend setting up a system that allows recognition of informal or soft skills and capacities that migrants have.
- Cities explained that the increased **digitalization** of government services, in particular in the era of COVID-19, risks leaving out migrants that lack the skills or resources to navigate the digital world. Local governments are setting up measures to address this such as trainings and computer workshops.

Topic 3 – Partnerships

LRA representatives:

- Rainer Kern, Special Advisor Global and UN Affairs, Mannheim, Germany
- Carlos Mascarell Vilar, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Key Takeaways:

- Cities expressed the value of **city-to-city partnerships** as essential tools to increase understanding and opportunities for learning at local level. For cities this also means a need to focus city efforts more to facilitate mutual learning between cities, for example through appointing city focal points for partnerships. City networks are also effective platforms through which cities can be engaged in regional policy development, for example at the level of the European Union.
- Cities emphasized that national and regional migration policies need to be designed **in coordination with all stakeholders**, including local and regional authorities, the diaspora and civil society and the private sector. Partnerships between the national government and local authorities are essential. They also pointed to the need to **test new partnerships** where cities **work directly** with humanitarian and development actors and can access technical support and financing. This also includes the need of cities to directly access EU funding to develop their integration strategies.

‘In an era characterized by increased urbanization and increased migration to cities, the mechanisms that direct federal to local funding are outdated and need to be rethought’ (Rainer Kern, Mannheim)

- Cities emphasized to bring more focus to the need to form partnerships that look at **integration**, including at the national and international level. This doesn’t seem to be the focus of national policy agendas but is really the core business of cities in governing migration locally. An example that was mentioned to advance the dialogue on integration was the **Urban Agenda for the EU** which participants expressed to be an excellent way of bringing all stakeholders (including local and national governments, EU institutions, and stakeholders) to the table to talk about integration, and how to improve European regulation, foster knowledge exchange and generate access to funding. There is city interest to scale this up to for example other regional processes or to international spaces such as the GFMD and the GCM.
 - **Partnership on Narratives:** Local and regional governments explained that changing the narrative on migration is central to their role, and that they work to shift existing harmful narratives to narratives that put forward migrants as neighbours that live and work in our cities. Such work on narratives is most effective when build up in partnership, with civil society, the private sector, journalists and local communities. In that sense cities welcomed the **GFMD Ad Hoc Working Group on Narratives** which is co-chaired by the government of Canada and the Mayors Mechanism, and of which the **city of Mechelen** is a member.
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Migration flows have shaped our territories, and is a phenomenon that continuously shapes our towns, cities and regions. The growth, the evolution, and the development of Europe is inextricably linked to the people that come from all parts of the world. (Lord Mayor Carola Gunnarsson, Sala in the Session Opening Plenary)