



# PRIORITISING PEOPLE: A PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE FOR MIGRATION



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## PRIORITISING PEOPLE: A PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE FOR MIGRATION

The number of people on the move in the world is increasing, but this is not a crisis. In the years to come there will be more migration, be it internal – from rural areas to urban ones – or cross-border. Driven by fear, need or opportunity, people will continue to do what they have always done for thousands of years: moving in search of a better place, a better life, or simply in search of their own safety and that of their loved ones. This is incontrovertible, but the numbers alone show us how important it is to avoid the distorted interpretations favoured by certain politicians and media.

According to United Nations statistics published in December 2017, the total number of migrants in the world amount to 258 million people, or 3.4% of the global population. This may appear to be very large, but it does not represent those actually on the move today, but only the total number of people living in a country that is not their country of birth, no matter how long ago they left home. Looking more closely at the data shows that in 2017, net world migration amounted to around 10 million people, or just 0.13% of world population, a much more manageable number, but still one which, if misrepresented, can and does feed irrational narratives about stability, security, identity, impoverishment, and inner peace.

While the facts indicate that there is no massive crisis, migration-related concerns should not be disregarded as **migration is not about numbers; it is, first and foremost, about people**. Behind the numbers presented daily by media, politicians, scholars and statisticians, there are men, women, children, the elderly and the young, each with their own unique set of feelings, experiences, fears, hopes, ambitions, stories and personal heritage; each with their dignity and their right to strive for a better life (a right that few in the so-called Global North would ever question, were it to be applied to citizens of the same Global North). Moreover, migrants are people who often do not hesitate to undertake perilous and deadly journeys, as the number of fatalities on migration routes tragically underlines.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2,323 from January to July 2018, of which 1,514 in the Mediterranean Sea. Source: [www.missingmigrants.iom.int](http://www.missingmigrants.iom.int) (accessed 2 August 2018).



**Migration is also about the host communities** within which migrants settle in the countries of destinations. Depending on the intensity of the inflows, on the meaningful opportunities to find jobs and to interact positively with and integrate into the local communities and on the effectiveness of the policies and measures adopted by the public authorities to ease the process of integration, or their lack thereof, the presence of migrants may generate tensions and divisive conflicts within the receiving societies.

As the way we deal with migration will affect, on the one hand, people's rights to move and lead a decent life, and, on the other hand, the stability and cohesion of the host communities, it follows that **migration and integration policies must be grounded first and foremost in humanity and solidarity.**

At a more conceptual level the data tell us that **migration is to be understood as a structural and ordinary feature of our contemporary world** – indeed as a structural and ordinary feature of human history – **even though it may be reaching unprecedented levels in the present global context for a variety of enduring reasons.** This is not an emergency calling simply for short-term measures, for we are not dealing with a problem, so much as with a natural characteristic of the human condition. Temporary, simplistic, short-term and narrow policy responses, not only will not “solve the problem”, but will likely make the consequences of mismanagement more severe. For this reason, a thorough understanding of the dynamics and realities of migration is necessary to tackle this phenomenon effectively and humanely and manage the safe, orderly and regular movement of people.

Migration involves multiple dimensions – global, national and local – and its roots are to be found in uneven development among regions of the world, in the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth, in the conflicts, persecutions, massive violations of human rights that affect too many countries, and in the ravages of

nature and climate change. Only by broadening the analytical framework and deepening our understanding of globalisation and development will we be able to better address the issue. **Migration and development must be approached as interconnected variables and their mutual relationship must be addressed from a multidimensional perspective**, encompassing economic, political, social, environmental, cultural, ethnic, gender, geographical, and demographic factors.

Such a wide-ranging approach is beyond the capability and capacity of any individual state and requires ample international cooperation, strong global governance and innovative partnerships. States seem little prepared to internationalise this issue, however, in spite of declarations and notwithstanding the fact that unilateral approaches, mainly focusing on the security aspects of migration, have proven inadequate, producing limited and controversial results.

We strongly support the attempt of the United Nations to deliver on this by promoting the negotiations by the international community of the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** (GCM), which will be adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies is strongly committed to the implementation of the GCM – a document that has, in our opinion, an unprecedented progressive scope – from both a top- down and bottom-up approach.

This paper is the result of two workshops, held in Rome, Italy (1-2 March 2018) and Dakar, Senegal (16-18 May 2018). It was drafted with the active contribution of academics and experts from Australia, Canada, India, Mexico, Senegal, and several European countries, and it aims for two main goals. Firstly, to provide a frame of reference – based on the principles of solidarity, respect for human rights and dignity, freedom and the rule of law – for progressive forces all over the world in dealing with what has become, in many countries, one of the most divisive issues in international and domestic politics. Secondly, to offer the active contribution of European progressive foundations to the implementation of the Global Compact, in the hope that its adoption will not be an end in itself but will represent the beginning of an era of positive international cooperation for the common good of countries of origin, transit and destination, and which, to begin with, will induce a growing number of stakeholders to ratify those international instruments related to migration and migrants that already exist.



## 1. Protecting the rights of the migrants

**A progressive vision on migration must be based unequivocally on freedom, respect for human rights and human dignity, and the principles of equality and solidarity.** Without such commitment to their own fundamental values, progressive forces would surely question their own *raison d'être*. For this must imply the protection of the rights and well-being of migrants, regardless of their status, gender, race, religion, condition, country of origin, age, etc., throughout their journey to their final destination, and of newcomers in their host society; it necessarily also implies the utter rejection of measures, initiatives and practices that can harm human dignity.

Special attention and protection are due to the most vulnerable migrants, including children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, etc. Children must be protected against deportation and detention and should never be imprisoned, and the principle of the best interests of the child and the right to family reunification must always be respected.

Special attention is no less due to the gendered dimensions of people moving between states. In particular, the migration of women is by no means limited to domestic workers and victims of trafficking (for whom international law explicitly requires special protection). **Women are not to be considered as a peripheral population group, a minority, but as full human beings, with a voice of their own as advocates for their rights and as agents of change. Current migration policies that create, contribute or promote exclusion, inequality and violation of rights, putting women at risk and in vulnerable situations must be addressed and changed.**

## 2. Demystifying migration

In many Western European countries and in other parts of the wealthier Global North the fear of incoming migrants is rapidly turning into a collective obsession. Fed by unscrupulous propaganda, proliferating fake news, daily unfiltered information, an increasing number of people believe that if governments do not stop migration flows for good (little or no difference is made between refugees, regular or irregular migrants), migrants will storm their territory, stealing their jobs

and corrupting their cultures. Some even believe that the coasts of North Africa are literally crowded with people ready to embark to Europe and invade the Old Continent as part of an obscure “globalist” conspiracy that aims at replacing European labour with cheaper Africans workers.

Exposing the reality, unveiling the myths that circulate about migration and supporting facts and evidence-based information is crucial if we want to formulate and adopt policies aimed at governing the flows of migrants in a humane and efficient way. Yet today fact-based evidence is no longer enough, for **information can be and often is manipulated or misrepresented**. Indeed, in many Western countries politics even seems to be moving away from the rational to enter the parallel universe of “alternative facts”. Against this backdrop, **the support of incisive drivers of information, including policymakers or influencers, can be decisive**. We must bring the facts to them and widen the constituencies that speak about migration with full knowledge of the facts.

The fear of the supposed tidal wave of migrants ready to leave North African shores to invade Europe, for example, seems to be supported by projections of the increase in world population, according to which three quarters of that increase will be concentrated in the African continent by 2050, most notably and significantly in the least-developed countries. This (correct) piece of information, however, is rarely accompanied by the no less relevant and correct data that demonstrates the extent to which migrants do, or do not, tend to move from the Global South to the Global North of the world. In fact, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), “in 2015, South-South migration exceeded South-North migration by two percentage points, representing 37 per cent of the total international migrant stock”.<sup>2</sup> Historically migrants from the Sahel, for example, move to states in the Gulf of Guinea, such as Ivory Coast, and 90% of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa prefer other African countries where they can find relatives or fellow countrymen.

Going back to the question of population growth, it must be underlined that, in itself, **fertility is not a direct cause of migration**. Rather it is a long-term factor

<sup>2</sup> South-North migration amounted to 35 %, North-North migration to 23% and North-South 5%. IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre GMDAC, *2015 Global Migration Trends Factsheet*, available on [www.publications.iom.int/system/files/global\\_migration\\_trends\\_2015\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.publications.iom.int/system/files/global_migration_trends_2015_factsheet.pdf).



than can affect it and, if fertility rates do not decline rapidly, the risks of instability are high. But it will be the African continent that will first bear the responsibility and the cost, and not Europe, as scaremongers would suggest.

The data also reveal a very little known fact (beyond the sphere of practitioners): **many African states are at one and the same time countries of origin, transit and destination.** Indeed, the same can be said of most countries of the world, which share more interests in a global approach to migration that one would usually think. The problem is that a superficial analysis of migration flows and of the specificities of each kind of migration could lead to the adoption of inadequate and inappropriate measures that exacerbate tensions, rather than help to solve problems. Moreover, a global approach to migration has more benefits than an “us versus them outlook”. For this reason **paying due attention to all kinds of migration**, rather than focusing solely on the South-North dimension, would help identify the most appropriate policies to govern migration flows in the interest of all states and, above all, to meet peoples’ needs and aspirations.

Misperceptions also abound regarding the presence of refugees, regular and irregular migrants in host countries. Recent research and surveys show that citizens in countries of destination know very little about newcomers. The number of migrants in any particular state is largely overestimated by local citizens, who are also commonly misinformed as to the religion of most migrants, their country of origin, level of education, how much they contribute to the economy of the host country, and conversely how much they receive in welfare services or transfers from the government, largely underrating the former and overestimating the latter.<sup>3</sup> In fact, migrants pay into welfare systems more than they receive, contribute in an above average manner to the economy of the country of destination, and have a positive impact on its demographic trends, while very little or nothing is spent on their education, which is mainly obtained in the country of origin.

Such **misperceptions of reality** not only arouse apprehensions, fuel tensions and undermine the process of integration but **can also have serious implications for the support – and consequently adoption – of adequate and appropriate**

<sup>3</sup> See for example, *the Special Eurobarometer 469 “Integration of immigrants in the European Union”*, April 2018, or A. Alesina, A. Milano, S. Stantcheva, *Immigration and redistribution*, NBER Working Paper 24733 (revised July 2018).

**measures in several policy areas such as education, taxation or redistributive policies** that interest society at large.

Thus, the **contribution that migrants** offer to host countries is usually largely underestimated when not ignored altogether. If the nexus between migration and the potential for development is not yet fully clear, more and more research is being undertaken to analyse and understand the correlation, and there is a growing consensus on the very positive role – in financial, labour, skills, intellectual, cultural and social terms – that migrants play for countries of destination, but also for countries of transit and origin.

In terms of contribution, it must also be stressed that **the needs of ageing societies, the consequent shortfall in local labour, and the survival of national welfare systems can be addressed through migration. Despite the challenges, migration policies are considerably easier to manage and control** – particularly in the short-term – **than attempting policy initiatives to stimulate demographic growth**, by increasing fertility and slowing human mortality. The general public needs to be made more aware of the interplay between demographic projections and social and economic sustainability.

If public debates are always filled with more or less informed arguments on the impact of migration inflows on countries of destination, little or no attention is usually given to the effects that outflows have on countries of origin, and superficial judgements can easily lead to its advantages being greatly overestimated and its economic and social costs correspondingly underestimated. Remittances, for example, are usually considered as an element of development. Unfortunately this is not always the case. As they are spent – understandably – more for pure consumption than for investments, they often contribute little to the development of the community. Furthermore, remittances tend to create dependency within receiving families, in this way fostering a new generation of migrant workers and sometimes even hindering a migrant's return project. These tendencies are to be taken into account when devising projects aimed at incentivising longer-term productive investments.



Beyond the question of remittances (that touch upon other issues, such as the high transaction costs), countries of origin face **huge economic and social costs**, deriving from the so-called **brain and workforce drain**. Last but not least, **the massive social and psychological effects** suffered by those who remain are seldom taken into consideration: for example, the constant struggle of the “left-behind” members of the family against the lack of social support and loneliness.

Communities of origin are often a neglected side in the migration discourse. Yet, they play a significant role in the individual decision to leave or stay, as well as in the decision of the migrant to return to his or her country of birth. It is necessary to develop strategies aimed at **strengthening the resilience of the communities of origin** and here diaspora associations can play an important role, as they have a unique social and cultural bond, and have often acquired the know-how and the financial means to support local development projects. This will require the development and implementation of appropriate instruments and incentives to **turn remittances into capital and investments** and to promote circular mobility, not just for the unskilled migrants, but mostly for those qualified, who may be ready to return after some years.

Another widespread misconception is that as poverty is supposedly a main driver of migration, simply reducing it by means of stronger assistance could reduce outmigration. The issue is far more complex, however. Indeed, studies suggest that the choice and ability to leave are linked to a certain basic level of education, information and financial resources. Migration originates, for the most part, not from the poorest countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Niger, Chad, Ethiopia), but from those with a somewhat higher level of development (Senegal, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana). **Transnational mobility is irrepressible and will indeed grow with the development of education and information and the comparative situation on level of income.** This needs to be factored into development thinking and planning, so that mobility can best be “captured” in the interest of all, for example, through education, skills transfer, and experiential learning.

**It is morally right to provide development assistance, irrespective of its impact on migration. At the same time, we need to manage mobility effectively and also “use” it to foster development.** Corruption and bad governance are systematic obstacles in the development process, and must be tackled simultaneously with the provision of aids and funds.

### **3. Promoting safe, orderly and regular migration**

Making the case for regular migration today seems to be more difficult than ever, given the many misconceptions about migration discussed above and the current political backdrop that leads many Western countries to adopt extremely strict immigration policies and even to disregard international law and humanitarian obligations.

The current trend can be reversed, however, and **strengthening and increasing the legal possibilities** for migrants to reach their countries of destinations safely is not only a moral duty, if we assume, as we do, that migrating and searching for a better life elsewhere is a right, **but a necessary precondition to dealing effectively with irregular migration**, smuggling and trafficking, and in order to prevent people dying on long and dangerous routes.

Migration per se is an extremely divisive theme, capable of polarising a state’s internal political debate, because it juxtaposes human-right related issues, on the one hand, and the question of democracy and sovereignty on the other (in particular, the role of the state to protect its citizens by, among other things, deciding who can or cannot enter the national territory). In democratic systems, it is the people who are ultimately the holders of sovereignty, choosing their representatives through free and fair elections. It is this tension between human rights and citizens’ rights that is difficult to reconcile<sup>4</sup> in the present context of sovereign states, whose limits and capacities are defined by borders.

Borders, not even “closed borders”, are not the impassable barriers that people commonly assume. They do not exist in nature, but are conventions that serve

<sup>4</sup> C. Mancina, *A shared migration strategy*, in *The Progressive Post*, 9/2018.



exactly the purpose of manifesting states' power and sovereignty over a certain territory vis-à-vis other states. They are created to reassure those who live within and to keep the "others" out; they assert the distinction between "us" and "them". Yet, birds and wildlife regularly ignore them, as do diseases, and, interestingly, financial capital. Despite all the obstacles, people always respond with imagination and resourcefulness to overcome them, particularly when they are driven by fear for themselves and their dear ones.

We need now to rethink the very idea of borders, and rediscover and relearn that states are communities, and communities can be exclusive and inclusive. We must find a way **to reconcile the protection of one community's space with the moral duty to be responsive to the humanitarian needs** of those in search for protection, assistance and/or a decent life.

The Syrian civil war and the ensuing massive flows of asylum seekers have fuelled nationalist outbursts in parts of the Global North and have also exacerbated national and transnational divisions on the question of migration (particularly within the European Union). Grafted onto the conditions generated by a deep and long economic and financial crisis, the discourse on migration thus has become one of the main topics of electoral campaigns in many Western states, and has been successfully hijacked and exploited by right-wing and populist parties and politicians.

**It is therefore urgent to formulate an alternative common and progressive narrative on migration, based on the defence of the fundamental human rights of the people on the move and on the fundamental principle of solidarity.** Such a narrative must also articulate the capacity of destination countries to offer work, housing, services and a decent life. This approach will require a robust coordination within the framework of international organisations and, in Europe, of the European Union, and will need to be accompanied at national level by measures aimed at mending those social and political cleavages that divide our societies, affecting in particular the socialist and social democratic constituencies.

Among citizens, the perception of disorder, and hence insecurity, which attaches to migrants provides a ready basis for extremist political parties and the media to press for criminalisation and security-based policies, even though migrants themselves may be but the “positive carriers” of cultural, linguistic or religious differences. Everywhere, conservative and right-wing parties claim that they alone have the capabilities to ensure the protection of citizens against the alleged threats coming from abroad. Far from believing that an approach largely based on the idea of security and control of borders is effective or humane in the management of migration flows, we believe that citizens’ perceptions – well-founded or not – must be considered and addressed if the fundamental democratic and social fabric of the countries of destination is to be preserved.

For this reason, **a first priority in (re)constructing the narrative and the practice of migration is to turn disorder into order.** The perception of order needs to lie at the very heart of any migration policy. **The state needs to be in control and to be perceived as being in control.** Being in control, however, does not mean closing borders, resorting to arbitrary detention, or arbitrarily expelling newcomers. Rather, it means **developing and managing legal migration channels, efficient asylum policies and practices, and border controls.** It means having in place and implementing precise rules and smooth functioning procedures that are clear and transparent for all, migrants and law enforcers, in the full respect of the rule of law and of the rights of the migrants, and in a context of political accountability.

A positive case for regular and orderly migration, however, will also be supported by the proven ability of the state **to return irregular migrants humanely and effectively to their countries of origin,** in order to remove at last one of the incentives for irregular movements, and to dismantle smuggler and trafficker networks.

Return policies must be accompanied by the establishment of **channels for regular migration,** and presuppose the negotiation of **fair and equitable mobility** pacts that give due consideration to the interests and needs of the countries of origin and offer them both practical and beneficial outcomes.



**Better management can be achieved, but only if it has a solid base in protection, mutual trust, and solidarity, together with a sound orientation towards development.** In this context, humane return policies will then become a regular aspect of a normalised regime of migration management, rather than the too-frequent manifestation of brutal state power.

Moreover, from the same perspective of an orderly management of migration flows, cooperation among states should be directed to building **a common policy of organised mobility between countries of departure, transit and arrival** through co-management of flows so as to prevent tragic trips and undermine the people-smuggling business model.

Strongly related to the question of order versus disorder is that of **“the legal versus the illegal”**. Addressing illegality does not mean and must not result in persecuting irregular migrants – indeed we strongly believe in the need to prevent any form of criminalisation of migrants. On the contrary it refers to the struggle against all forms of exploitation of migrants by ruthless traffickers and smugglers as well as crooked employers.

Such a policy will contribute to the perception of order, allow the **promotion of rights-based employment against the risk of social dumping** (thereby addressing a deep seated fear among traditional labour) and prevent the enrolment of the irregular newcomers in criminal activities.

Another narrative building block entails **countering the exclusion with inclusion**. This implies overcoming the idea that newcomers and local populations are all competing for limited resources, whether they are jobs, services, housing, benefits, or wealth. In our view, both newcomers and local populations share the same interest in overcoming inequalities.

The **economy is not a zero-sum game**, in which a job that goes to a migrant is a job lost for a local worker. Rather than a narrative that plays one group against the other one, we must show that both are on the same side in the face of economic

and corporate globalisation that has generated and benefits from divisions and inequalities. What is to be changed is the balance in the share between labour and capital. **What is to be changed is the current global architecture, within which migration is one of many interrelated factors.**

This presupposes that we can and will move away from the equation “migrants = growing inequalities and decline of the Welfare state”, which is currently gaining ground in many Western states, emphasising instead that the true drivers of the current global crisis, affecting population both in the North and in the South, are neoliberal policies. We will then move the discourse to another equation: **“neoliberal policies = growing social inequalities and the decline of the Welfare state”**. Therefore, **policies and measures aimed at reducing inequalities for all and at increasing labour’s share of profits need to be introduced**. Such an approach will respond to the traditional argument put forward by the conservative right, that newcomers “steal jobs”.

Last but not least, it will be essential to **move from an approach focused on migration to one focused on migrants**. Both tragic pictures and individual instances of success, when presented to the public at large, tend to influence the very same areas of deep emotion that are stimulated by populist/conservative arguments, as experience in Canada suggests. Turning from collective to individual approaches not only serves a narrative purpose, but is also at the core of a more effective approach to migration management in all its aspects.

#### **4. Promoting an inclusive identity**

The relationship between national identity and migration is among the most slippery and controversial topics for progressives. It presumes the existence of some “mystical unity” in today’s democracies; it predicts an inevitable tension between identity and migration, and indeed among different national identities; it entails the seeds of cultural conflicts; it feeds that sense of insecurity that governments are called to address. Moreover, the very term “identity” may be dangerous as it equates the nation with an ethnic, cultural and/or religious group



– while **a nation is never made up of a single ethnic, cultural or religious group**. Also, the phrase “national identity” is aggressively promoted in the rhetoric of the conservative right, so as to imply actual or potential incompatibility between newcomers’ social standards, conventions, practices and customs on the one hand, and democratic societies on the other. Some practices are indeed utterly incompatible with the political and legal framework of liberal democracy; others, however, mainly require intercultural adaptation.

It follows that, in spite of the difficulties, a discourse on migration cannot but take into consideration the interaction between different identities; the impact of differences on host communities will not be lessened in the future, but, on the contrary, will be accentuated by globalisation.

**Feelings of insecurity and hostility among host communities are unlikely ever to go away entirely, but may be lessened** by, among others, greater confidence in the capacity of the government to manage all aspects of the migration phenomenon fairly and effectively. Currently, the evidence of management failure is everywhere and much of the discourse has been hijacked by the proponents of control, to the exclusion of other considerations and more progressive thinking. An alternative picture is needed, based on the idea that **migration can be normalised**, and that national, regional and international cooperation can achieve results, across the broad field of development, alternative income streams, education, investments, and returns.

The reflections above suggest that cohabitation between newcomers and hosting communities is always challenging. To ease these challenges, it could firstly be useful to **move the discussion away from doctrinal incompatibility and to focus instead on social standards**. There can be no question of these disappearing or changing in their entirety – for one thing, tradition is just too strong. Gradual change of individual rules and standards is occurring all the time, however, and although it can be disturbing and unpleasant, the process need not be traumatic. It is essential to recognise and accept the postulate that changes cannot and must not be unilateral. In fact, **differences are to be accommodated to the needs and shared rules and values of a pluralistic polity**.

Nevertheless, the action of “making room for different traditions” must be supported by public authorities at all levels, for example by promoting tolerance and inclusion, **making differences visible** in the public sphere, thereby legitimising them and allowing people to become familiar with them, and by **involving citizens** in discussions **and debates** in appropriate public fora. Such support is also called for at the local level, for communities are often the first entities that have to respond to the arrival of newcomers, in order to promote the integration of refugees and migrants. Here, it is essential to increase the **democratic political participation of the different stakeholders** – representatives of politics, business, NGOs, migrants and refugees – in the decision-making process, particularly in the preparation of strategies for integration and for development of the local communities.

A matching system between the needs of newcomers and those of the municipalities and civil societies should be established, with the goal of balancing measures between the two and **producing more equality and social justice for all**. Any such system requires national and international support, aimed at **fostering the communities’ resilience, which is a necessary precondition for the implementation of a successful integration strategy**.

The above-mentioned measures represent a long-term strategy to promote integration within host communities and peaceful cohabitation between newcomers and local population. They represent a positive and progressive alternative to repression, which has been promoted in the past as a short cut to establish a sense of order. Yet, **repression, instead of achieving the intended results, tends to encourage illegality and the black economy even further**, exacerbating the sense of exclusion and alienation of the migrants, and the feeling of insecurity of the local population.

We should therefore move towards **the development of legislative approaches that work at the individual, rather than the collective level**, on the one hand, with the aim of motivating irregular migrants to leave the shadows, and on the other, of moving past repressive strategies targeting migrants towards **strategies targeting employers who benefit from irregular labour**.



**Criminalisation of migrants must be avoided entirely.** The so-called “crimmigration” has pernicious effects at different levels: on the discourse on migration, on the use of criminal law in the field of migration, on the use of detention against migrants (even against minors), on separating migrant children from their family, and, on perverting the use of language.

The **equation migrant = criminal** has devastating effects, because migrants are easily turned into the scapegoats for recurring crises. Highly exploited by the xenophobic right, this kind of discourse has benefited it politically.

**The promotion of a pattern of identity that is inclusive** rather than exclusive – based on exclusive characteristics, such as ethnicity or religion – is a difficult process, but is highly worthwhile undertaking. **Such an inclusive identity is religion- and colour-blind**, made of citizens who join a community in an exercise of free will. The use of legislation to prohibit, prevent and condemn racism and xenophobia is a prerequisite for such a cultural transformation, which is not a “corruption” to fear but an “enrichment” to welcome.

## Conclusion

The question of migration encompasses so many elements and touches upon so many political concerns that developing a coherent and comprehensive migration policy is especially challenging. Any such policy must seek a synthesis between solidarity and reality; the needs of the migrants and the apprehensions of the citizens; the interests of the countries of origin and those of the countries of destination; the duty to protect human rights and the limits imposed by a sovereign state; the necessity to integrate and the wish to preserve the integrity of a culture. It is an extremely difficult task, but it is not impossible.

Indeed, it is only by taking into consideration all those variables that we can finally reach a synthesis that is, perhaps not perfect, but fairer and more effective than either the security-oriented solutions that are proliferating, or the walls that irresponsible governments are building under the illusion that they can stop migrant flows once and for all.

We will aim above all for the **normalisation of the idea of migration**, moving the focus to the idea of organising transnational mobility. We refuse to see the current reality as an emergency, a crisis, a threat, and start to consider it as an opportunity for growth and development for all, migrants and local communities; countries of origin, transit and destination.

To this end, we will do our utmost to **demystify migration**, exposing the many misperceptions and blatant lies that characterise the discourse today. To be afraid of the unknown and to wish to preserve one own traditions are human and understandable feelings, which can be overcome by a better comprehension of the facts and a deeper knowledge of the others. In the “post-truth” era this may be hard, but it must be done, and urgently, as in many countries we see the serious risk that xenophobic and racist movements, which have found a successful political message in the fear of migrants and in the protection of an ill-defined national identity, will continue to gain ground, threatening the very democracy they pretend to preserve.



An effective, humane and sustainable migration policy must also be the result of a **comprehensive dialogue among countries of origin, transit and destination**. Looking at this phenomenon from a single perspective – usually that of the countries of destination in the Global North – will only lead to a partial, one-sided and inadequate response. Most countries of the world are, at the same time, countries of origin, transit and destination. This awareness may help build partnerships on the basis of shared interests.

Last but not least, we will recognise that the phenomenon of migration is reaching unprecedented levels due to the **uneven development between regions of the world**. Addressing development, however, is an end in itself, a moral duty, and it is not to be conditioned on the introduction of repressive migration policies aimed at stemming flows. Moreover, it must be designed in such a way that it will indeed create the conditions for people to choose freely and on an individual basis whether to stay in their own countries or to leave, independently of forcible drivers and as a pure and simple expression of their right to move.

The adoption of the Global Compact for Migration represents an outstanding opportunity to raise UN Member States' awareness of the global dimension of migration, of its global drivers and global implications, and of the incontrovertible fact that **it is only at the global level that migration can be effectively governed**. It is also a unique opportunity to prioritise people, because we will never forget that this is what migrants ultimately are: like us, human beings.

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