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# **THE CRISIS THAT ISN'T** 6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD ON MIGRATION

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL  
MEETING ON MIGRATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Migration is a centuries-old phenomenon which has brought nations and people together throughout history, contributing to the development of culture, science, mathematics and governance models. Today – as ever – migrants bring talent, skills, business and art to the countries which welcome them. Most are peaceful, industrious and proud of their adopted homelands. And yet, in many nations, the debate on migration has become entangled in often-toxic and negative diatribes disseminated by Far Right populists and increasingly embraced by mainstream political parties. As human mobility in the 21st century increasingly calls for managing migration flows, can a new narrative be written?

The New York Declaration of 2016 has been a start in the right direction. By agreeing to negotiate two new global compacts on migration and refugees, the world has agreed on the importance of regulating migration under a set of guiding principles. While the focus in Europe has very much been on its own ‘crisis’, this intergovernmentally-negotiated agreement shows that the challenges of dealing with human mobility are global in scope.

With the global compacts in mind, over 30 senior stakeholders in the fields of migration and refugees gathered on the side-lines of Friends of Europe’s annual State of Europe high-level roundtable under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan to identify recommendations for dealing with the key challenges. This summary report highlights key recommendations made at the meeting.



# 1. A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT DEVELOPMENT AIMS TO ACHIEVE

Current discourse makes a strong link between development aid and migration. Although there is a widely held belief that development aid prevents people from migrating, economic migrants arriving in Europe come more and more from countries that are starting to do well. Broader development initiatives should take into account infrastructure, the importance of facilitating enterprise and incentives for private sector development and creating the conditions for more entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, broader development in terms of infrastructure and education can have the effect of accelerating people's ambitions and making them want to do better, faster.

More attention must be paid to strengthening systems of governance. The two most common words used in conjunction with migration over the last 25 years have been crisis and emergency. Tackling the migration crisis is a problem of governance. In other words, people will continue to migrate as long as the governance systems in their home countries do not support, serve and protect them.

External actors must strike a delicate balance in dealing with weak – and often authoritarian – governments. EU trade and aid is not easy with many countries – such as South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea – which are home to many of the migrants seeking shelter in Europe. This does not, of course, mean that there should be no efforts to reduce poverty and improve conditions in these nations but that there should a greater awareness of the challenges and the fact that this will not necessarily stop migration. Indeed, 'leaving no one behind' is the overarching principle of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and states must abide by these commitments.

## 2. CLEARER TERMINOLOGY

It was felt that the terms of the debate should be clearer and there was a view that there should be no mixing of the terms *migrant* and *refugee*. These are different groups of people for whom different push factors have caused them to leave their homes. As such, they have different needs which must be addressed independently. Policymakers and practitioners must make the conceptual difference between these terms. Thus it is important to understand the different push and pull factors that affect refugees and migrants. One term cannot serve as a proxy for the other out of a desire for simplicity.

In efforts to reflect the modern circumstances that give rise to migration and the state of becoming a refugee, it is important not to lose sight of legislation as well as international declarations and statements on the status of refugees. Indeed, it is particularly important to distinguish between the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. They are intentionally being formulated as separate compacts because their intent is to address different issues.

As we differentiate between these two groups on the move, we must go further. There must be further distinctions made between *permanent migration* and *human mobility*, as well as between *illegal* and *legal* migration. By discussing these concepts separately, we will be better able to identify and respond to the specific needs of each group.

## 3. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

While there has been much talk surrounding the global compacts, there is little clarity over how they will be financed. There is wide agreement that fundamentals like economic resilience and access to water and health services are important. But there is still a question of finding the momentum for these actions.

Development banks have already begun to contemplate these realities. While grants were the financial avenues of the past, today there is a need for innovative and creative methods of financial blending and engineering. Indeed, the finance and investment environment is changing, and interest rates are now at the lowest they have been for many years, which begs the question of why private capital is not going more into poor countries given that the returns are likely to be higher.

At the same time, places such as the Levant and broader Middle East lack regional banks like Europe's European Investment Bank (EIB) and Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). With alms-giving already a part of society in many countries in the region, it could be mobilised in the form of a universal Zakat Fund to support refugee populations.





## 4. A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH MUST INCLUDE THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Addressing the current migration and refugee situations requires coordination and collaboration across all levels of governance and society. Indeed, the response to refugees and migrants requires a multi-stakeholder approach, combining the work of cities and municipalities, business, national and regional governments, civil society and beyond. Successful examples already exist, with Amsterdam as a prime illustration. It is vital, however, that stakeholders take a unified approach – if they do not communicate they risk an unnecessary, costly and often contradictory and counterproductive duplication of efforts.

With 78% of migrants to Europe of working age, and migration vital to future growth, the focus must be on jobs and skills. With its shrinking population, Europe needs to increase its supply of skilled workers. One solution could lie in tapping into the power of the private sector to bring companies and universities into source countries, allowing their populations to develop language and professional skills and then to migrate, if they so choose, to Europe, bringing their talents with them.

Beyond skills development, policymakers should look to how NGO and private sector initiatives are already working to help refugees and migrants – particularly by incorporating the digital element into their responses. The use of cell phones during the refugee influx to Europe was one example of the role of technology in improving information sharing and access.



## 5. INTEGRATION SOLUTIONS MUST BE LONG-TERM AND RESILIENCE-BASED

Integration is absolutely vital; however there is not yet consensus on whether to prioritise it over migration policies. While some believe that questions of migration must be solved before dealing with integration, others call for the opposite approach, with some advocating a two-track option which involves moving migration and integration policies forward simultaneously.

Of the two, it is possible that integration will be the more significant challenge, as successful assimilation is a generations-long effort. Indeed, it may be the case that continued integration of second and third generation immigrants, who are in reality European citizens, should be done through dedicated integration policymaking instead of via the migration track – although some would include the caveat that EU funds should not be allocated to integration or channelled through interior ministries.

Creating housing, education and health policies that are accessible to newcomers is essential; these are sectors where the work of cities and municipalities is of paramount importance.

Despite the need for integration, a realistic discussion needs to take place over the number of people that can be accepted by countries, regions and cities. After all, integration is a ‘two-way street’, through which both newcomers and host societies must be flexible and able to adapt, as with rights come responsibilities.





## 6. CHANGING THE NARRATIVE REQUIRES LEADERSHIP

Changing the negative rhetoric on migration remains a challenge. The discourse could become even more toxic if European politics move further to the right. The failure of European foreign and security policy to tackle the war and violence in the Middle East is one reason for the large number of refugees arriving in Europe. As policymakers look for solutions to today's challenges, they must recognise that they have constructed their way into the 'crisis'.

Also, given that there are no effective legal migration pathways to reach Europe, refugees and migrants opt for irregular migration via more dangerous routes. Indeed, policymakers have still not dealt with treacherous sea-crossings in an effective way. At the same time, while there is a clear need to improve border management, stricter frontier controls are not enough to stop the arrival of people.

Beyond Europe, national strategies in source countries may be a starting point. Countries in the MENA region, for instance, have to switch attention from looking after their diaspora to now focusing on refugees and migrants on their territory. These internal policies will need to be supported and encouraged by external partners, including the EU.

The creation of regional organisations in source regions may be another area for improvement. Indeed, countries like Jordan will only be able to help Europe with its current refugee management challenges if there is greater regional cooperation in the Levant to address the issues faced by the region's own refugee and migrant populations. This could include the creation of regional banks.

However, without effective political leadership, there will be no confidence in a new, more positive narrative, nor will there be a way to change this narrative. This requires working together and talking beyond policy 'bubbles' or 'silos'. Practitioners and policymakers will need to join forces.







## CONCLUSION

The ongoing refugee situation is neither a one-off occurrence nor a micro-‘crisis’. It is a long-term issue which should be addressed as such. Indeed, practitioners and policymakers must wake up to the fact that the current situation is just the beginning. Without a doubt, based on current patterns of migration and population growth, societies will continue to change over time. This will have an impact on demographics, cultural development and markets, as well as implications for matters of cohesion.

While many fear change, there is no need to panic over Europe’s future. The newcomers will fill in the growing economic gaps left by an aging and shrinking population, and it has been shown time and again that immigrants are some of the most industrious and entrepreneurial contributors to societies. This is not to say that the process will be without its difficulties. Full and proper integration will require a multi-stakeholder response across all levels of governance and society, and policymakers and practitioners will need to communicate outside their ‘silos’. The end result, however, will be a more coherent and prosperous Europe, capable of taking on the challenges of the future.

Friends of Europe’s role as a powerful convenor means that we will continue to push out data- and fact-based debates, in order to improve awareness of the effects of migration, refugees and integration. Our aim will be to raise public awareness of how governments are delivering in terms of their commitments and to continue to work to encourage cross-sectoral conversations among a diverse range of actors and to improve policy thinking and its practice.





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