

Report

VMC2022

Europe's leading forum on migration

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Impressions of Vienna
Migration Conference 2022

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Impacts of the
war in Ukraine

3

Forces shaping international
migration and cooperation



ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development



Vienna Migration Conference—Europe's leading forum on migration

Once a year, the Vienna Migration Conference provides an indispensable opportunity for thought leaders, decision-makers and frontrunners in the migration sphere to **convene**, **connect**, and **engage** in high-level discussions on migration in Europe and beyond.

 **VMC2022**
Vienna Migration Conference

Vienna Migration Conference 2022

Day 1

Tuesday, 11 October 2022

09.30 – 10.05	Conference opening	14.05 – 14.20	Film screening* On Freedom of Movement (Wi De Muv)
10.05 – 10.15	A short introduction to VMC2022	14.30 – 15.00	In conversation Migration and displacement dynamics: What is driving change in Africa?
10.15 – 10.45	In the spotlight Climate change and migration: Do we find ourselves at a crossroads?	15.00 – 16.15	Panel discussion Same but different: Global perspectives on migration challenges
10.50 – 11.00	ICMPD flash presentations* How is incubating skills partnerships beneficial to migrants as well as origin and destination countries?	16.20 – 16.30	ICMPD flash presentations* What the Migration Partnership Facility can do for you
11.05 – 11.15	For efficient returns and more sustainable reintegration	16.35 – 16.45	How do migrants decide to migrate?
11.15 – 12.45	High-level panel Managing migration in turbulent times: Key perspectives from Europe	16.45 – 17.30	In the spotlight Migration as a geopolitical weapon? How powerful a force in international relations?
13.20 – 13.55	Side event Beyond the short term: How to address vulnerability to trafficking in persons in the context of lasting crises?	17.30 – 20.00	Reception upon invitation of the Mayor and Governor of Vienna, Dr Michael Ludwig

*Presented in Herrensaal and not live-streamed.

Day 2

Wednesday, 12 October 2022

09.00 – 09.30	In the spotlight Ukraine, South-Eastern Europe and the future of European integration	11.30 – 12.45	Panel discussion European migration and asylum policy reform: Are we breaking gridlocks?
09.30 – 11.00	Panel discussion Regional perspectives and priorities: Finding the right political and policy formula for successful partnerships	12.45 – 13.00	Conference closing
11.05 – 11.15	ICMPD flash presentations* The future of professionalised capacity development		
11.20 – 11.30	For more impactful diaspora-development ecosystems		

The organisation of Vienna Migration Conference 2022 was made possible by the support of



The Vienna Migration Conference is ICMPD's annual flagship event, and its organisation is the sum of efforts by the organisation's best and brightest across teams and locations.

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Welcome

Vienna Migration Conference 2022 (VMC2022) gathered European and global leaders at the Palais Niederösterreich on 11–12 October 2022, against a backdrop of persistent, multifaceted, and global crises.



The seventh edition of ICMPD's flagship annual event took place nearly eight months following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with governments and societies grappling with the global fallout on food security, energy prices, and migratory flows.

The world also continues to cope with protracted conflicts and instability, post-pandemic labour shortages and supply shocks, and an array of environmental impacts. The severe flooding in Pakistan that displaced millions of people and destroyed property underscores the salience of climate change as a threat multiplier.

VMC provides a forum for experts, stakeholders, and officials from governments, international organisations, and civil society to assess these shared challenges and devise strategies and partnerships for tackling them. This joint work takes place during plenary sessions, side events, and informal meetings.

At VMC2022, conference participants reaffirmed the value of cooperation, as demonstrated by the effective EU response to the instrumentalisation of migration by Belarus and the conflict in Ukraine. The activation and implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive has seen



partnerships take shape within and across national boundaries over the past year to facilitate the protection, integration, and employment of new arrivals from Ukraine.

Discussions at VMC2022 scrutinised the best ways forward to respond to migratory flows and balance competing political priorities amid crises. No country can develop and implement an effective migration policy alone. Holistic arrangements are needed to ensure all partners receive assistance to confront the challenges they face, be it addressing the root causes of migration, combatting criminal smuggling rings, or providing relevant services to refugees. Migration policy officials, moreover, must be better prepared to step out of their silos and engage in interagency and cross border measures much more than they used to.

VMC2022 also discussed the importance of expanding labour mobility opportunities and harnessing migrant talent as a solution to worker shortages and ageing populations. Nevertheless, a robust approach to irregular migration is a pre-condition for broader political acceptance of labour migration.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum remains a key item on the EU agenda. Europe still must get the balance right between solidarity and border enforcement. Reaching a compromise will require bridging the internal and external dimensions of migration to win over sceptical leaders and gain the backing of publics.

Over the course of two days, VMC2022 hosted 13 sessions with 34 panellists. The conference also included a slate of innovative offerings this year including flash presentations about ICMPD's work, a side event on human trafficking and vulnerability, and a film screening. More than 250 people participated at the venue and nearly 1,300 people joined virtually.

This conference report synthesises the central insights and perspectives from these exchanges. Ten session summaries put a spotlight on our distinguished expert panellists and their inputs on a range of topics, from dealing with the repercussions of climate change on migration to changing migration and displacement dynamics in Africa amid turbulent global events. Three expert commentaries further reflect on this backdrop, shed light on best practices, and put forward strategic recommendations and pragmatic steps that Europe and its partners should pursue to improve migration governance together.

Director General of ICMPD

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Migration Futures Dinner



In 2021, ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger inaugurated the Migration Futures Dinner (MFD), in partnership with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. Held on the eve before the Vienna Migration Conference, the event brings together high-level stakeholders and decision-makers from across the spectrum to reflect on the most important developments in migration policy and informally exchange perspectives and ideas for the future. To stimulate debate, the second iteration of the MFD kicked off with an armchair discussion with European Commission Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life Margaritis Schinas immediately following his series of diplomatic visits to Western Balkan countries aimed at addressing a sharp rise in irregular migration via this region in 2022.

In conversation with Suzanne Lynch, Chief Brussels Correspondent for Politico Europe, the Vice-President was by turns frank, tough, and optimistic. He underlined the EU's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a 'success story', particularly the Union's rapid decision in early March 2022 to open its borders to some 7 million people fleeing the war. Schinas pointed to the ability of EU Member States to reach unanimous agreement within ten days following the launch of hostilities as a defining achievement, especially against a European backdrop where discussions on migration can often prove intractable. He further welcomed the EU's decision to provide arrivals from Ukraine with immediate and unconditional access to schools, medical facilities, and the labour market. More broadly, he stressed that Russia's invasion was not only an attack on Ukraine but also the EU itself and the European democratic model. But contrary to the Kremlin's expectations, he noted that Russia's aggression has, in fact, brought EU Member States closer together, as demonstrated by their unprecedented cohesion on temporary protection but also on issues like energy security. With bombs falling on Ukraine every day, he maintained his optimistic belief that this resolve will hold.

Commenting on his whistle stop visit to the Western Balkan region over the preceding week, the Vice-President identified the steep rise in irregular crossings along the Western



❶ Former Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration Eduard Gnesa in conversation with Raphaëla Schweiger, Program Director Migration, Robert Bosch Stiftung

❷ ICMPD Director Ralph Genetzke in conversation with Marta Youth, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State, and Pierre Vimont, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe





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Welcoming words by

1 ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger and

2 Raphaela Schweiger, Program Director Migration, Robert Bosch Stiftung

3 EC Vice-President Margaritis Schinas talking to ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger

Balkan route as a ‘source of concern’. He attributed this uptick, in part, to a return to global mobility as the world transitions away from pandemic era lockdowns. He characterised his visit to the region as intended to remind partners there that they are part of the European family, but that this relationship must be accompanied with ‘honesty, trust, and straight talk’. He also reiterated the EU’s commitment to supporting the Western Balkans through border management, reception, and assistance with administrative and operational capacities. These governments, for their part, he said, have agreed to align their visa policies with the EU towards third countries, coordinate an expanded Frontex presence across the Western Balkans, and combat human smugglers. The visa alignment policy, he added, gained the support of Serbia as an important transit country, with commitments secured at the highest political levels. Schinas was clear: countries enjoying visa-free access to the EU cannot then also offer visa-free travel to countries outside Europe that are typically sources of irregular migration pressure to the Union.

“When Team Europe plays as a team, we are unbeatable.”

Margaritis Schinas

As the EU responds to new and emerging developments, the Vice-President said this Commission’s main focus will be to apply a ‘Team Europe’ approach. He underscored the EU’s successful diplomacy regarding Belarus’ instrumentalisation of migrants as a case in point. By leveraging the Union’s political and market power in countries of origin and transit, the EU was able to quickly convince key countries and airline companies to stymie movements to Belarus, and prevent the weaponisation of desperate people for geopolitical purposes. He stressed the Union must apply more assertive approaches when it makes sense to do so, calling for an end of “the age of naivety”. This applies, for example, to ensuring development aid funds targeted towards Africa benefit ordinary people and not merely elites. The Vice-President proposed the prioritisation of youth employment schemes, women’s employment, the fight against corruption, efforts to combat smug-

glers, and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of ordinary people as all important to addressing the root causes of migration. Such a focus, he argued, will help dissuade people from putting their lives in the hands of smugglers.

While a Team Europe approach can deliver results, the EU response to the Syrian conflict underlined shortcomings of the bloc’s migration architecture at the time. Schinas noted that the EU lacked an external border system during the 2014-2016 period, with Frontex’s mandate limited and the bloc’s “hotspot” approach not yet developed. He added that the situation also taught the EU that it could not rely merely on legal mechanisms, like the creation of a relocation scheme based on a qualified majority vote, but that it also needed to ensure the broader political viability of such ideas.

The Vice-President also sounded a note of optimism on prospects for the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine cultivating a more constructive climate for EU Member State cooperation. Any compromise, he suggested, will be predicated on finding an appropriate balance between responsibility and solidarity. Responsibility, notably, will entail an emphasis on adequate border procedures, controls, returns, departure, and Frontex. Solidarity, for its part, will mean the inclusion of burden sharing principles in a way that makes sense for all Member States. A final component, he said, will involve bolstering partnerships with countries of origin. While numerous EU countries are facing delicate political situations, he argued that governments remain firmly rooted in the ideas of the EU and that joint interests will continue to steer them towards more cooperation rather than less. Pointing specifically to his own up-close experiences with migration facilities in Greece and witnessing cooperation between Brussels and Athens to improve the quality of these services, he stressed that the EU is critical to building resilience and averting future crises across the continent.



❶ ICMPD Director Martijn Plum in conversation with Michele Amedeo, Deputy Head of EC DG NEAR Migration Unit and Ilias Chatzis, Head of UNODC's Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section

❷ Kelly M. Greenhill, Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Tufts University, talking to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Security Selmo Cikotić

❸ Armen Ghazaryan from the Armenian State Migration Service in conversation with Lithuanian Vice-Minister of the Interior Arnoldas Abramavičius

❹ Iain Galea, Team Leader of the Frontex International and European Cooperation Division talking to Vladimír Šimoňák, Director at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

❺ ICMPD Deputy Director General Lukas Gehrke talking to Secretary General for Migration Policy Patroklos Georgiadis and Michail Kosmidis, Head of Migration Policy Department, Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum

❻ Director-General of the Belgian Immigration Office Freddy Roosemont talking to ORS CEO Jürg Rötheli





❶ Director Molly Groom of the IGC Secretariat in conversation with Ilias Chatzis, Head of UNODC's Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section

❷ Lithuanian Vice-Minister of the Interior Arnoldas Abramavičius and State Secretary of Interior of North Macedonia Magdalena Nestorovska

❸ EC DG Home Return Coordinator Mari Juritsch talking to Deputy Director of Home Affairs Guy Stessens, Council of the European Union

❹ – ❺ Armchair discussion between EC Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and Suzanne Lynch, Chief Brussels Correspondent, Politico Europe





11 – 12 October 2022
Palais Niederösterreich
Herrengasse 13
Vienna's historic city centre

The 7th edition of the Vienna Migration Conference took place at Palais Niederösterreich, a historic residence in the heart of Vienna, on 11 – 12 October 2022.





- ❶ ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger, Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior Gerhard Karner, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Security Selmo Cikotić, Moldovan Minister of Internal Affairs Ana Revenco, Lithuanian Vice-Minister of the Interior Arnoldas Abramavičius, German Parliamentary State Secretary Mahmut Özdemir, African Union Commissioner Minata Samate Cessouma, Amira Elfadil, Head of ICESCO's Partnership and Cooperation Sector, Turkish President of Migration Management Savaş Ünlü
- ❷ Member of the City Council of Vienna Kurt Stürzenbecher opening the reception
- ❸ ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger and ICMPD Deputy Director General Lukas Gehrke talking to Turkish President of Migration Management Savaş Ünlü
- ❹ ICMPD Head of Policy Malin Frankenhäuser in conversation with Romanian Counsellor of State Maria Madalina Turza





❶ EEAS Special Envoy for External Aspects of Migration Luigi Soreca in conversation with EUAA Senior Advisor Alexander Sorel and Elisabeth Wenger-Donig, Head of Return and Reintegration Department, Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior

❷ Head of the Joint Cooperation Platform, Austria, Berndt Körner talking to Ulan Nogoibaev, Deputy Head of the Kyrgyz Council for Migration, Compatriots and Diasporas Abroad

❸ Mahmut Özdemir, Parliamentary State Secretary, German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community



❹ EC DG Home International Relations Officer Gisela Spreitzhofer talking to ICMPD Senior Project Manager Jennifer Tangney

❺ ICMPD Director Ralph Genetzke talking to former Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration Eduard Gnesa

❻ Special Envoy for Migration Joost Klarenbeek from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs talking to Turkish President of Migration Management Savaş Ünlü





❶ Raphaela Schweiger, Program Director Migration, Robert Bosch Stiftung talking to EC DG Home Return Coordinator Mari Juritsch

❷ Julien Simon, ICMPD Head of Mediterranean Region, in conversation with ICMPD Senior Strategic Advisor Hugo Brady



❸ Environmental journalist, author and UCL Senior Research Fellow Gaia Vince talking to Director General of the Migration Department Minna Hulkkonen, Finnish Ministry of the Interior

❹ Belgian Special Envoy for Migration and Asylum Lieven De la Marche talking to First Secretary Julien Wolff, Belgian Embassy in Vienna





❶ ICMPD Head of Strategy, Knowledge, Evaluation, and Impact Jacqueline Berman talking to Ainara Dorremochea Fernandez, Deputy Director General of the Spanish State Secretariat for Migration

❷ WMCES Senior Research Officer Vít Novotný talking to DGAP Associate Researcher Alia Fakhry

❸ Lithuanian Vice-Minister of the Interior Arnoldas Abramavičius in conversation with delegates of the Polish Office for Foreigners: Head of Office Jarosław Szajner and Department Director Tomasz Cytrynowicz

❹ Director General for Migration, Refugees and Return Policy Ulrich Weinbrenner, German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community greeting Policy Advisor General of the Migration Department Minna Hulkkonen, Finnish Ministry of the Interior

❺ MMC Acting Director Roberto Forin talking to ICMPD Senior Policy Advisor Martin Wagner and ICMPD Senior Advisor Sergo Mananashvili

❻ ORS CEO Jürg Rötheli and ORS COO Claude-Marcel Gummy in conversation with CEO and Founder of One Million Orphans Jeanne Celestine



VMC venues



- 2016 Vienna, Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and Hofburg Palace
- 2017 Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences
- 2018 – Vienna, Aula of Sciences
- 2019
- 2020 Online, broadcasted from BrainTrust studios in Vienna
- 2021 – Vienna, Palais Niederösterreich
- 2022 and online, live-streamed on dedicated virtual platform

1 GIZ Policy Advisor Benjamin Thomas talking to First Secretary Thomas Anthony Muscat, Maltese Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade

2 Mariana Tosheva, Chairperson of the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees with the Council of the Ministers in conversation with ORS Head of Communications and Public Affairs Lutz Hahn



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INTRO- DUCTION



Opening Remarks

Raising the curtain on Vienna Migration Conference 2022, ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger emphasised the tumultuous backdrop facing the world. Challenges include the enduring effects of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the instrumentalisation of migrants by Belarus, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing displacement of millions of people, and severe flooding and devastation across Pakistan displacing millions. The global fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the disruption of supply chains, and climate change impacts, Spindelegger added, have left millions of people on the brink of famine as food and energy prices soar. A potentially looming global recession, moreover, could further endanger stability, social progress, and economic development.

In setting the stage for the conference, Spindelegger, though, also sounded a note of optimism. One year on, the EU's robust and unified response, in cooperation with non-European partners, to the instrumentalisation of migrants by Belarus has put a halt to these callous actions. Likewise, the EU's activation of the Temporary Protection Directive has averted another border crisis and provided millions of Ukrainians with immediate access to protection, the job market, and other support. And recovery and reconstruction talks are already well underway between Kyiv and its international partners. Branching out, the EU made headway on talent partnerships and forged progress on reform of the European migration and asylum policy through the development of a voluntary solidarity mechanism and reinforced border procedures.

Challenges, undoubtedly, remain that will need to be tackled. Spindelegger, for instance, pointed to a steep increase in asylum applications and irregular border crossings along the Western Balkan routes as particularly pressing matters. He also said Europe must do a better job of addressing the continent's labour shortages amid its ageing demographics and the economic and social implications of these developments.

The turbulent geopolitical context and its repercussions on migration underline the continuing pertinence of VMC as one of the most important international platforms for high-level discussions on migration policy in Europe and beyond. By convening migration experts, officials, and practitioners across multiple connected regions, VMC plays an integral role in

“Our world faces numerous crises that are interacting with increasing velocity.”

Michael Spindelegger
ICMPD



“It is important that people find protection as close as possible to their home without having to cross continents and risk their own lives.”

Gerhard Karner
Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior

fostering open and frank discussions that are the foundation for effective cooperation, reliable partnerships, and better migration governance.

The opening remarks delivered by Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior Gerhard Karner contextualised recent migration developments and the approaches that Austria and its partners have adopted in response. Karner lauded the swift EU response to helping Ukrainians and stressed the importance of providing safe and orderly protection to people as close as feasible to their homes, with 80 000 displaced persons from Ukraine finding refuge in Austria.

Yet he also warned that the world is facing alarming developments including a global rise in migratory flows, with the situations in Afghanistan and Iran both tense. This comes as partner countries, like Türkiye, long ago reached their capacity constraints amid long-standing crises such as the Syrian civil war. Austria, he said, had already received 56 000 asylum applications as of August 2022 – or a 200 per cent rise compared to the year prior. He added that the country now processes among the highest number of asylum applications per capita across Europe. These flows, all combined, have tested the capacities of government and civil society including their ability to provide adequate housing and assistance to migrants.

The situation has recently been compounded by a sharp uptick in asylum applications from Tunisian and Indian nationals transiting across visa-free travel routes via the Western Balkans. To this end, Karner said Austria is seeking to enhance cooperation with Hungary and Serbia to put a halt to this new route that is generally used by migrants with limited prospects for their asylum applications to be granted. Vienna, furthermore, aims to align the visa policies of partner countries to EU rules to avoid the creation of new migratory routes. He also called for broadening cooperation out along migration routes that run through the Western Balkans, Türkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, and Tunisia. Additionally, these partnerships should focus on ensuring prospects for people in their regions of origin, combatting migrant smuggling, and facilitating return procedures. Through such joint approaches, Karner emphasised, the EU and its partners can stem irregular migration and improve livelihoods.

“Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine has not only led to the largest displacement crisis since the Second World War in Europe but also created massive secondary impacts on food, energy, and insecurity that will affect migration over the long term.”

Vít Rakušan
Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of the Interior



Joining by video conference, Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Vít Rakušan, representing the Czech EU Council presidency, also assessed the current geopolitical state of the world and its repercussions on migration flows. Rakušan voiced a fervent appeal for international unity in the face of the many challenges, current and future, that countries are confronting. He reminded the conference room about the implications of the pandemic including the increased vulnerability it placed on migrants and host countries. He further highlighted the instrumentalisation of migrants, the Taliban, and Russia’s unprovoked aggression against Ukraine as pressing concerns. The Kremlin’s belligerent actions, he noted, have created the largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War and contributed to significant secondary impacts on food, energy, and security that will likely engender consequences on migration over the long term. Rakušan also spotlighted old challenges that continue to persist including civil war in Syria and political unrest in Libya. Standing at the helm of the EU Council, he called for international cooperation to respond to these situations and said the EU will deploy both short- and long-term measures to do its part.

The scene now set, Lukas Gehrke, ICMPD Deputy Director General and Director for Policy, Research, and Strategy, and Malin Frankenhaeuser, ICMPD Head of Policy and VMC Lead, took the stage to lay out the conference agenda.

“VMC is about providing a platform where decision makers can voice concerns and where we, together, can identify opportunities and find common ground to move policy and practice forward.”

Lukas Gehrke
ICMPD

“VMC is about two things. It is about the people in the room and the debates taking place on stage. It is vital for us to hold the right debates on the pressing issues with those who set the agenda.”

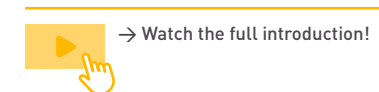
Malin Frankenhaeuser
ICMPD



Frankenhaeuser said VMC2022 was designed to elicit key information about the state of migration in the world and central developments driving these dynamics. Spotlight panels are targeted towards exploring topical global debates and stimulating ideas about these issues. These sessions, she added, would include deep dives scrutinising climate change, instrumentalisation, and Ukraine and the future of Europe.

An intriguing change, meanwhile, involved the absence of a one-off conference theme. Frankenhaeuser rather noted that VMC, in fact, has always featured certain core recurring themes, namely promoting dialogue and debate about pressing issues. She added that VMC is a platform where participants can voice their concerns and identify opportunities and where all, together, can identify ways to find common ground and move policy forward. At VMC, differing views are welcome and diversity is a priority matter, as was confirmed by gender parity among the conference speakers and discussants.

The pair, finally, introduced new conference features debuting to the 250 participants and nearly 1,300 online viewers. VMC, in fact, pre-commenced for the first time in the summer with a special event on temporary protection in Berlin. These pre-conference activities continued a day before the formal start of VMC with a Migration Futures Dinner featuring European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas. Additional novelties would include a side programme during breaks encompassing a panel on human trafficking, a film screening, and flash presentations spotlighting various ICMPD initiatives and projects.



② THE DISCUSSIONS





In the spotlight

Climate change and migration: Do we find ourselves at a crossroads?

On stage Gaia Vince, Environmental Journalist, Author and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University College London
Aurélie Sgro, ICMPD Senior Project Manager

Across all regions, the worsening effects of climate change are compelling millions of people every year to move. So far, disaster displacement has mainly taken place internally. If no immediate climate action is taken, climate and weather-related events and processes will keep increasing in frequency and intensity, driving even more displacement in the future. Yet, current migration and asylum governance and infrastructure are not prepared for the full spectrum of consequences from these migratory flows.

Against this backdrop and after an apocalyptic summer, the first VMC2022 spotlight session underscored the interconnections between the climate crisis and migration and broadened the debate about strategies for dealing with the repercussions.

Award-winning science writer Gaia Vince invited the room to come to terms with a dramatically changing world shaped by climate change and seize it as an opportunity to build more resilient and inclusive societies. The session was moderated by Aurélie Sgro, ICMPD Senior Project Manager.

To set the scene, Sgro pointed out that an alarming 44 people have been displaced by climate-related factors every minute over the past ten years – or four times more than conflict-induced migration. Vince recalled that climate change acts as a “threat multiplier” that exacerbates conflict, poverty, and famine. The world’s poorest countries are hit harder, even though developed countries have been responsible for the largest contributions of greenhouse gases over the past couple centuries.

Even as human societies seek to mitigate climate change, increase preparedness and response capacity, and develop adaptation measures, some disasters will prove intractable. Although they have received marginal attention until now, planned relocation and migration provide a fall-back

option to people living in areas that become uninhabitable due to climate change impacts. Such solutions will be increasingly required, within a country or across borders, as large areas of the planet are already near their adaptation limits. To be effective though, according to Vince, an emphasis should be placed on fostering a managed migratory system as opposed to veering from crisis to crisis. Through anticipatory action, including by preparing new infrastructure, some countries have alleviated adverse effects of climate change. Bangladesh’s effective management of internally displaced persons is instructive in adapting policies and designing future-proof cities. Dhaka, for example, has lessened the strain on services in the capital by equipping smaller cities with the physical and social infrastructure necessary for migrants. Programmes, additionally, have been set up to train migrants – many of them from agricultural backgrounds – for relevant jobs in their new communities.

Broad and innovative migration partnerships will be paramount to meeting this complex and ever-changing challenge. Vince pointed to successful partnership initiatives on education, training, and job placements, like those between the United States and the Philippines in the medical profession, as a promising strategy. The mutually beneficial programmes help close

skills gaps in both destination and origin countries to address workforce needs. She also singled out the EU's joint response to migration flows from Ukraine as an effective model to draw on as officials prepare for future crises including climate-related catastrophes. But she warned that governments will need to make significant investments not only in housing, healthcare and infrastructure but also efforts towards fostering social inclusion and cohesion.

Since most climate-driven migration takes place internally at the moment, especially in the 'Global South', international cooperation is imperative for supporting these regions for developing their adaptive capacities. At the same time, the 'Global North' must come to embrace international migration as a solution that can solve problems like the demographic crisis plaguing their economies. Rejection of migrants will merely trap migrants in informal work and the black-market economy, a suboptimal outcome for all. Migration, undoubtedly, remains a contentious political issue as social tipping points are repeatedly breached. But Vince emphasised that it is the job of responsible public officials to prepare government agencies and populations alike for this unescapable future. These leaders should also correct the record on misinformation about the impact of migration on crime rates, unemployment,



“Climate is the fabric on which we live and build our lives. When that is dramatically altered, everything changes.”

Gaia Vince

and wages. The public, in turn, must begin to confront questions concerning how best to manage migration rather than debates about whether migration should be permitted or not.

A window is still open but difficult discussions lie ahead. The starting point, Vince suggests, begins by firstly acknowledging that climate-fuelled migration is inevitable and secondly recognising this represents a development and economic challenge – beyond a humanitarian one – that can be collectively managed. Once this common accord is established, policymakers and experts can carry on with the thorny task of devising dedicated legal pathways and developing inclusive and resilient cities that accept migration as an opportunity rather than a burden. Ensuring the self-reliance of migrants and a whole-of-society approach will be key.

Voices of VMC2022

“The exchange of innovative ideas at VMC enriches our own work and the development of common future activities with colleagues.”

Berndt Körner
Head of the Joint Coordination Platform,
Federal Ministry of the Interior, Austria

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



High-level panel

Managing migration in turbulent times: Key perspectives from Europe

On stage **Selmo Cikotić**, Minister of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ana Revenco, Minister of Internal Affairs, Moldova
Arnoldas Abramavičius, Vice-Minister of the Interior, Lithuania
Mahmut Özdemir, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, Germany
Moderation **Michael Spindelegger**, Director General, ICMPD



Europe is experiencing some of its most challenging times in recent history, from the Russian military aggression against Ukraine to the instrumentalisation of migrants at the EU's external borders. These types of multifaceted crises have upended migration governance and underscored the increasing complexity of flows in the 21st century. They have also spurred European governments and societies to revisit and rethink the tools and strategies at their disposal for managing migration.

During this high-level panel, senior European politicians discussed where the continent currently stands and outlined their visions for migration governance. The session, moderated by ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger, included as panellists Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Security, Selmo Cikotić; Moldovan Minister of Internal Affairs, Ana Revenco; Lithuania's Vice-Minister of the Interior, Arnoldas Abramavičius; and Mahmut Özdemir, Germany's Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community.

The panellists all took stock of the complex migration landscape in the neighbourhood and beyond, including a staggering 200 per cent rise in irregular crossings via the Western Balkans route over the past couple years as the pandemic has subsided. These flows have been prompted by precarious economic and political situations in host and/or transit countries including Türkiye, Tunisia, and Libya. The use of migrants as a tactic of hybrid war on multiple occasions, nevertheless, is a particularly insidious development. Abramavičius noted that Europe was blindsided by Lukashenko's abhorrent move to exploit the plight of migrants, primarily from Iraq, at the Belarus-Poland and Belarus-Lithuania borders in a 'revenge' political ploy. This attempt to weaponise migrants we now know was only the opening salvo of a hybrid attack culminating in Russia's invasion of Ukraine

that has forced millions of people to flee. Both Minsk and Moscow, Abramavičius pointed out, have sought to foster and exploit friction and tension within Western societies between those preferring to keep borders shut in the name of security and those favouring more solidarity.

The panellists broadly agreed that an effective response to these types of appalling tactics must always include a humanitarian dimension that recognises the dignity of people fleeing war or persecution. Özdemir said that the German government is accordingly now seeking to reform its immigration system by passing legislation to expedite and improve asylum procedures and court proceedings and provide independent legal counselling to refugees. The German government is also pursuing a

"In a world of multiple over-lapping crises, we can no longer merely work in vertical silos. We need to work in mixed teams. Synchronisation should also extend beyond the borders of just one state."

Ana Revenco



"We don't need to disseminate an atmosphere of fear connected to migration. We should rather focus on our capabilities and our capacity to effectively control, manage, and govern migration for the benefit of our citizens, countries, regions, and those who elect to come and stay or pass through our territories."

Selmo Cikotić

new direction on integration. While asylum seekers' access to integration benefits is currently predicated on their right to stay in Germany, the proposed reforms would open access to integration courses to all asylum seekers. Cikotić, meanwhile, noted that Bosnia and Herzegovina's more welcoming approach to refugees in recent years has fostered trust and encouraged migrants to cooperate, for example, on the sharing of identity information.

At the same time, Abramavičius and Özdemir also stressed the need for balanced approaches attuned to fairness, the rule of law, and security concerns. These priorities must be addressed too if sustained public buy-in is to be secured for more open migration policies. Özdemir, on this point, called for stricter enforcement of return procedures for people not entitled to stay. Abramavičius noted that, through cooperation with Frontex, Lithuania was able to partner with Iraq to secure the voluntary return of 25 per cent of migrants. Cikotić similarly touted the success of Bosnia and Herzegovina's bilateral readmission agreements with source countries like Pakistan in identifying and processing the return of irregular migrants. Yet Özdemir emphasised that governments should also give a fair shake to migrants and build on the diversity and skills of newcomers to address

skills shortages and develop more inclusive societies. Germany, for example, is seeking to facilitate and expand legal immigration pathways through a modern points-based system and expanded use of the blue card mechanism.

Another recurring panel theme concerned the need for migration governance actors to step out of their silos by coordinating measures between different agencies and on different issues within and across borders. The dynamics of cross-cutting crises, such as climate change and hybrid conflicts, mean that interior ministries can no longer operate merely within their traditional remit. Response protocols rather must be redesigned with an emphasis on training directed at responding and adapting to contexts that may dramatically change over the course of a month or even day. Revenco added that cooperation should also involve holistic strategies that address different contingencies and the needs of migrants and host countries including accommodation, energy, and safe transportation.

Voices of VMC2022

"The eclectic mix of people is the greatest added value to VMC – it is not confined to just EU countries or any particular region. VMC rather brings together people from all regions relevant to migration management and helps shed light on important topics."

Franziska Kandolf
Deputy Director General, Directorate General for Migration and International Affairs, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Austria

The joint operations between interior ministry officials, border patrol officers, migration specialists, and local police departments in managing the arrival of people and goods across the extensive Moldova-Ukraine border are an example of the types of inter-office cooperation necessary. Cikotić additionally asserted that security issues like organised crime, illicit human trafficking, cyber threats, and corruption must be core focal points if migration is to be curtailed. He pointed, by way of illustration, to significant drops in irregular migration transiting Bosnia and Herzegovina once authorities began routinely apprehending human smugglers.

Cikotić and Revenco both stressed that support from the EU and other partners is essential for effective and mutually beneficial migration governance. Revenco underscored the considerable strain that Moldova is now facing in providing services to 80 000 refugees – around half of whom are children. Particular stress has been placed on maternity care, education, transportation, housing, and energy supplies. Moldovan asylum case workers, meanwhile, have seen a dramatic rise in applications, from an average of 100 a year to a now astounding 10 000 applications this year. And Moldova is facing increased irregular flows across its border following the closure of marine routes in the Black Sea due to the conflict. Without outside assistance, the government will struggle to meet the needs of its population and secure its borders. Cikotić, for his part, pointed to the critical role that EU resources have played in enabling Bosnia and Herzegovina to police its borders, identify human trafficking networks, and manage migration and arrivals of people in need of international protection. Without these capacities, migrants would be far more likely to continue their journeys onward to the EU. Özdemir, accentuating this point, argued that the collapse of Serbia's shared visa regime with Europe and ensuing movements of people transiting through the country is testament to the problems that crop up when partnerships are taken lightly.

“We do need to find a good balance between security and solidarity. It hasn't happened yet, but we're heading in that direction.”

Arnoldas Abramavičius

Solidarity indeed must continue to be the word of the day. Belarus' brutal treatment of migrants for instrumental purposes and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have upended migration governance. These crises, however, have also reminded Europe about the importance of prioritizing the dignity of all people and ensuring adequate protection for people fleeing war and persecution. Collaboration will be key too – Revenco heralded a working group on border management and internal security as a promising opportunity to synchronise national approaches on migration and partner together on addressing threats like organised crime that will be exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine and cross-border flows. By modernising its immigration systems and forging these types of cooperative pacts now, Europe can gain the clout and capacities it needs to become a more responsive and capable migration governance actor.



“We need an immigration approach that balances security, freedom, and dignity. We need to fight crime through border controls. But we also need to ensure people have chances. That's a European idea.”

Mahmut Özdemir

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



Side event

Beyond the short term: How to address vulnerability to trafficking in persons in the context of lasting crises?

On stage Ana Revenco, Minister of Internal Affairs Moldova
 Ilias Chatzis, Head of Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
 Jeanne Celestine, Survivor Leader and Award-Winning Author
 Moderation Melita Gruevska-Graham, Head of Anti-Trafficking Programme, ICMPD

Under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), this side event discussed vulnerabilities fuelling trafficking in persons for those who have fled conflict areas, often in haste and in situations of destitution or high precarity.

The conversation put a spotlight on effective operational responses in ensuring that the immediate and long-term protection needs of displaced and refugee populations are met. Panellists debated current practices and strategies and the medium- to long-term challenges they foresee. The panel included contributions from Ana Revenco, Moldovan Minister of Internal Affairs; Ilias Chatzis, Head of the Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Jeanne Celestine, Survivor Leader and Award-Winning Author. The session was moderated by Melita Gruevska-Graham, ICMPD Head of Anti-Trafficking Programme.

The speakers all fervently underlined the urgency of tackling human trafficking in a world now home to more than 80 million displaced persons and millions more in need of humanitarian aid. Chatzis stressed that the displacement of people, alarmingly, creates conditions conducive to human trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerable people. The illicit trafficking of organs and the illegal adoption of children are two particularly abhorrent consequences. The present grim situation has been only further exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the significant flows of women and children across borders that have ensued. Against this current backdrop and courageously speaking as a survivor of both the genocide in Rwanda and trafficking for forced marriage, Celestine reminded the audience that rape all too often becomes a heinous tactic of war in conflict zones. This sexual violence, in turn, leaves behind physical and psychological trauma among survivors.



“Instead of referring to people as victims, we need to call them survivors. Give them a voice, listen to their stories, and empower them. As I share my life experience, it has really shed away a lot of the pain that we experienced. We're survivors and not victims. We're resilient.”

Jeanne Celestine

Despite these grave repercussions, human trafficking has not always been granted the due attention it deserves, hindering efforts to foster cooperation that is critical to combatting the problem. Chatzis asserted that the issue should be elevated to the same level of importance assigned to other problems like terrorism and drugs trafficking. Revenco similarly suggested that, as exists in the field of disaster risk management, a similar response mechanism for migration and security issues may yield positive results, one that is flexible and adaptable enough to be quickly implemented by the international community when such situations emerge. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, nevertheless, has been instructive

“It is very important that we all understand, from small children to the elderly population and even remote communities, that solidarity defines us. There are no strangers or foreigners.”

Ana Revenco

for future practice. Unlike the Syrian, Sahel, and Rohingya crises, the identification of victims of human trafficking and capacity training has been effectively prioritised from the get-go in engaging with refugee populations and flows. ICAT, for example, has been instrumental in foregrounding and mainstreaming human trafficking awareness among 31 UN agencies that are delivering food, medical, and other assistance. Other efforts underway include an agreement between Kyiv and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict that seeks to investigate human trafficking in the context of the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Similar measures have been implemented in Moldova, which is currently hosting tens of thousands of people that have fled the Russian invasion. Revenco indeed outlined a three-pillar approach that Chişinău has deployed to address the risks of human trafficking among displaced persons. The introduction, firstly, of effective and accessible reporting instruments has been essential. Moldova has achieved this through its 112-emergency service staffed in both Ukrainian and Russian languages, a specialised call centre within the Moldovan Bureau of Migration and Asylum and an online platform managed by Ukrainians. These mechanisms not only provide critical information about services and relocation programmes, but they also give a means for refugees in distress to report crimes and seek emergency interventions. A second pillar has focused on prevention mechanisms including safety checks in areas around refugee accommodation centres,

the creation of information billboards at border crossing points and refugee camps, and the participation of NGOs specialised in assisting women and children at risk in these processes. This policing and community involvement has provided a strong deterrent against potential criminals and an outlet to seek out help for those in need of protection. The prevention of trafficking, smuggling, and the exploitation of children has stood out as a priority given the relative ease through which teenagers older than 16 can now cross Ukrainian borders without a guardian. Revenco touted special operating procedures put in place at the border in coordination with UNICEF and NGOs as a promising tool that adds secondary checks including screening and assistance to children. This cooperation extended to Interpol in a case where children went missing. A third pillar, finally, is directed at organising solidarity events that foster dialogue, trust, and engagement between families and local communities. These events have helped integrate refugees and steer communities towards embracing them.

Long-term strategies, meanwhile, must place education, employment, permanent housing, and healthcare access front and centre. Celestine, channelling Nelson Mandela and reflecting on her own personal empowerment story, spoke to the role that

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“VMC involves people challenging existing approaches and approaching certain issues from a different angle and perspective.”

Jürg Rötheli
Chief Executive Officer, ORS Group



education can play in opening opportunities for refugees and vulnerable migrants to integrate in their new countries. This education further emboldens refugees to share and deploy their stories for constructive change. Celestine also suggests prioritising mental health and recovery from psychological trauma and PTSD among survivors. As an important lesson learned from prior conflicts, it is critical that counselling focus on ongoing assessment rather than one-off counselling opportunities that often result in the retraumatization of victims. Through sustained support, though, refugees can gain a sense of purpose and confidence and come to terms with the fact that they are not to blame for their experiences.

“It’s amazing how sometimes simple things in cooperation between countries are missing, despite all the resources we put, despite all the efforts we make.”

Ilias Chatzis

The military aggression in Ukraine, that said, stands out as a distinct crisis as far human trafficking is concerned. Chatzis acknowledged that Europe’s relatively effective response has been made possible by its plethora of resources and robust institutional structures. The role of the international community, in this regard, has been to plug gaps, bridge missing elements, and address the repercussions in other regions. Though the EU’s advantages, in fact, are absent in most other regions, it is imperative that the world learn to replicate its successes to better avert and respond to human trafficking in conflict zones in the future.



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“VMC goes beyond the interest of the European Union and ICMPD. It is for all of us.”

Amira Elfadil
Head, Partnership and International Cooperation Sector, ICESCO

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In conversation

Migration and displacement dynamics: What is driving change in Africa?

On stage Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, African Union Commission
Mojisola Sodeinde, Head of Region, West Africa, ICMPD



The African Union (AU) has warned that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine risks stoking a multi-year food crisis, as the conflict drives up the price of food and energy in parts of the world far removed from the war. These elevated costs have further exacerbated the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and challenged ongoing recovery efforts.

In a one-on-one conversation, Minata Samate Cessouma, African Union Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, discussed key developments across the region and their impact on migration and displacement within and from Africa. She also shared her views on how partnerships can be further strengthened to address new challenges. The interview was conducted by Mojisola Sodeinde, ICMPD Head of Region, West Africa.

Africa now finds itself responding to multiple, overlapping crises, underscoring the increasing interconnectedness both within the continent and between the region and the rest of the world. Though Africa has weathered COVID-19 relatively well in terms of health outcomes, Samate Cessouma noted that the pandemic left it in a precarious economic situation. Against this backdrop, she stressed that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has further hurt Africa’s agricultural sector, including subsistence farmers, through its knock-on effects on fertiliser and grain supply. Though the Commissioner cautioned that Russia’s aggression has not yet contributed to an immediate surge in migration flows within

or out of the continent, there is a risk that it may do so if solutions are not found to pressing problems, such as food shortages, generated by the war. Climate change, meanwhile, continues to fuel droughts and floods, compounding stress on food producers and compelling people to leave their homes. While these crises all act as threat multipliers, Samate Cessouma emphasised that the root causes of migration are still present, including persistent food insecurity, terrorism, and local conflicts.

Yet migration, if managed well, also holds tremendous promise in bolstering the region’s economy, security, and long-term development goals, in accordance with the AU Agenda 2063. The Commissioner particularly heralded the success of immigration pioneers, like the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in introducing comprehensive free movement regimes, including the right to residence and establishment, at the sub-regional level. This mobility is critical to deepening economic integration, enhancing the labour market, and promoting business investment for a continent that is predominantly youthful (over 75 per cent of Africans are below the age of 35).



“There is a need to promote equitable responsibility and burden sharing in international protection. Strengthening continent-to-continent cooperation will be essential to enabling us to work together on key priorities.”

Minata Samate Cessouma

Now impetus is needed to upscale these plans continent-wide, as envisioned by the 2018 Free Movement of Persons signed in Addis Ababa in January 2018. The full ratification of the agreement, however, has been held up in nearly every country. Disputes and unresolved issues pertaining to free movement including the treatment of displaced persons and security concerns, such as elevated terrorist activity in some countries, still need to be tackled. Making headway is critical also to brokering final agreement on the free movement of goods and services (via the African Continental Free Trade Area, or AfCFTA), a deal that is vital to the economic prospects of the continent.

While Samate Cessouma was adamant that Africa must be the leader in coming up with solutions for the problems its citizens face, she placed much importance on the role of partnerships and cooperation in developing and achieving progress on different initiatives. The African Union, to this end, this past May hosted its Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference in Malabo, targeted at addressing the current humanitarian situation and the forced displacement of persons across the continent through action rather than mere talk. Other projects in development include an African humanitarian institution and working groups tasked with solving problems like food insecurity. And the continent is still seeking to implement the Malabo Declaration, targeting a quota of ten per cent of national budgetary spending on agriculture and spearheading additional initiatives aimed at, for example, promoting the consumption of locally produced cassava rather than imported wheat during a time of problematic inflation.

The African Union emerged from the pandemic buoyed by the proven track record of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) – illustrating that the continent could leverage partnerships to promote optimal outcomes for its citizens. It now, according to Samate

Cessouma, needs to harness this same cooperative spirit to get the job done on recovery and combatting the root causes of violence including lingering conflicts in the region and terrorist threats. While some challenges may benefit from home-grown solutions, Africa will also require willing partners in Europe and the rest of the world. The Commissioner welcomed further partnership between the AU and the EU in sharing best practices and experiences to expand free movement across Africa and working together to address mobility and irregular migration. She also called for enhanced continent-to-continent cooperation to ensure equitable responsibility-sharing in the provision of international protection – highlighting that the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees are two key frameworks to build on to get there. It is this type of cooperation that can get Africa past these turbulent times and turn the continent instead towards embracing the social and economic value that migration promises over the coming decades.

→ Watch the full panel discussion!

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“VMC brings together many insightful people from different regions – this environment allows you to have numerous constructive conversations in a short period of time.”

Vincenzo Mascioli
Vice Director, State Secretariat for Migration, Switzerland



Panel discussion

Same but different: Global perspectives on migration challenges

We live in times beset by global challenges, including natural disasters linked to climate change, rising living costs, the eruption of new conflicts (and the persistence of longstanding ones), an economic slow-down, and acute labour shortages. This panel explored how responsive migration policies can help mitigate some of the consequences of these challenges, including those related to asylum, resettlement, and labour migration. Speakers shared perspectives and recent initiatives from Australia, the EU, and the United States as three of the most sought-after global migration destinations.

On stage Marta Youth, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, U.S. Department of State, United States
 Andrew Rose, Minister Counsellor, Home Affairs, Australian Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva
 Luigi Soreca, Ambassador-at-Large, Special Envoy for External Aspects of Migration, European External Action Service
 Pierre Vimont, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe
 Moderation Ralph Genetzke, Director, Brussels Mission, ICMPD

To dive into these different perspectives and experiences moderator Ralph Genetzke, ICMPD Brussels Mission Director, was joined by Marta Youth, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at the U.S. Department of State; Andrew Rose, Minister Counsellor, Home Affairs at the Australian Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva; Luigi Soreca, Ambassador-at-Large and Special Envoy for External Aspects of Migration at the European External Action Service; and Pierre Vimont, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe.

The concept of holistic migration governance, the panellists said, should especially guide decision-making amid today's complex crises. The current backdrop indeed demands that policy communities step out of their silos and coordinate measures across different issue areas and borders. Take climate change – Rose pointed out that governments can bolster their responses if environmental and migration experts cooperate on disaster risk reduction initiatives and forced displacement. Acknowledging these changing dynamics, Youth stressed that the US would be sending migration teams to the COP27 climate summit, with an emphasis on enhancing the adaptability and resilience

“Migration is not a topic where one country can develop its own policy without working with all other countries in the region... The whole idea of this comprehensive approach is that we all work together.”

Marta Youth

of communities. Comprehensive migration governance also means focusing on a range of interconnected processes including asylum procedures, border management, crisis preparedness, legal pathways, visa policies, root causes, and border security. The EU's smooth implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive following Russia's invasion of Ukraine is testament to the merits of this approach. Soreca pointed out that the EU's swift and effective action can be attributed to Ukraine's participation in the Schengen Area's visa-free travel regime since 2017. Turning to Australia, the Minister Counsellor similarly suggested that Canberra's robust measures against irregular migration have provided the country with the public trust and political manoeuvring space necessary to liberalise its visa policies and expand its permanent migration programme to recruit needed talent for the labour market.

Comprehensive approaches must also incorporate a partnership component with an emphasis on regional and global cooperation. As pointed out by Youth, in considering the myriad of migration routes and different push and pull factors, it is not plausible for any country to effectively go it alone. For this reason, the United States is cooperating regionally with 21 countries through the Summit of the Americas



platform to improve socio-economic conditions in countries of origin, create conditions for safe, regular migration, and strengthen frameworks for international protection along migration routes. Rose similarly touted the contribution of Australia's joint disaster risk reduction initiatives to developing resilience in Asia-Pacific communities vulnerable to climate change. Finally, in the EU, Soreca asserted that the Team Europe approach has been pivotal in ensuring the bloc can effectively implement its migration policy externally. He pointed to the role that cooperation has played in boosting Albania's border protection and reception capacities and putting the country on a path towards EU membership.

"We are looking for external partnership without really trying to understand and analyse the migration dynamics in different countries and the root causes."

Pierre Vimont

"Team Europe on the ground is not a concept, it is a necessity. You cannot achieve results without the Member States being on board."

Luigi Soreca

While comprehensive migration governance can help build effective coalitions that can leverage distinct and collective capacities to respond to different developments, recent crises have underscored the increasingly complex dynamics of global events and their repercussions. Even while Ukraine has captured the West's primary attention, Vimont reminded everyone that instability continues to mire Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, and Libya. He added that the current global geopolitical situation could be a source of political turmoil fuelling migration in the years and decades to come. Governments, consequently, must place greater emphasis on developing their foresight capabilities to anticipate the consequences of potential crises and the most optimal strategies for responding to them now, rather than reacting to instability after the fact. Two innovative approaches adopted by the United States include streamlining asylum applications by delegating rapid approval authority to border officials and embracing a sponsorship model (also tried and tested in Australia and Canada) that pairs volunteer sponsors with Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. In the EU, Member States have been generally reluctant to launch much needed national discussions and parliamentary debates regarding legal pathways and migration reform, where presumed tepid public support for such initiatives and inevitable pushback from populist parties remain chief concerns. For this reason, according to Vimont, the EU

has been unable to scale up its migration governance apart from the most immediately pressing issues, like return and readmission and asylum policies. Though the EU's swift response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the use of the Temporary Protection Directive is laudable, he emphasised that Ukraine benefitted from its geopolitical proximity to Europe and that this cooperation will be the exception rather than the norm until these difficult discussions take place.

Many destination countries are facing demographic challenges as populations age and greater financial burdens fall on shrinking working-age populations. The world is also coping with persistent labour shortages following two years of the pandemic and related border closures. Herein lies further impetus for the global race for talent. The above challenges, in fact, may provide a conducive opening to broach the topic of migration with wary publics. Youth noted that an infusion of productive and motivated young people will serve as an economic boon for Colombia, Ecuador, and other countries in the Americas. The development of mutually beneficial circular migration pathways, meanwhile, can bolster seasonal sectors like agriculture and deter irregular migration by providing alternative legal options for labour mobility. Australia, for its part, is looking to

"Displaced individuals should not have to choose between their vulnerability and their talent. There is a need to open up opportunities for these individuals to give them greater agency and allow them to create their own futures."

Andrew Rose

address rapidly growing needs in the health and aged care sectors by working to further expand its skilled migration programmes where it is already a global frontrunner. Refugee labour mobility, notably, is on the table too. It is only prudent, Rose suggested, for governments to use this 'complementary pathway' to expand their talent pools and simultaneously empower refugees to fulfil their career goals and build sustainable futures for themselves. If the EU is going to compete and bolster its digital and green transitions, it too will need to step up its game and harness these migration pathways to foster economic growth, all the while minimising the vulnerability of migrants.

Through it all, solidarity and inclusion must be more than mere buzzwords. For Australia, this means fostering social cohesion and building on the country's multicultural foundations. EU Member States, meanwhile, must make headway on balancing greater shared community responsibility towards migrants and refugees and the different national attitudes of European societies. Partnerships, furthermore, must place all participants on an equal footing and heed the concerns of the Global South. Any efforts to recruit talent from developing countries, importantly, must be offset with programmes targeted at training the next generation with relevant skills. Development assistance, moreover, must be directed towards addressing the root causes of migration, including food insecurity. It is critical that international organisations and donors also lend a helping hand where surges in migrants and refugees appear. This solidarity will be the cornerstone towards bringing societies onboard in supporting regional protection schemes, respecting the dignity of asylum seekers, and embracing migration amid our shared turbulent times.



Voices of VMC2022

"By providing a venue to discover new ideas from experts, VMC invites participants to reconsider some of their beliefs and strategies."

Neveen El-Husseiny
Deputy Assistant Minister for Migration, Refugees and Combatting Human Trafficking, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



In the spotlight

Migration as a geopolitical weapon? How powerful a force in international relations?

On stage Kelly M. Greenhill, Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Tufts University
Hugo Brady, Senior Strategic Advisor, ICMPD



In 2010, Kelly M. Greenhill published *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion and Foreign Policy*, citing “the intentional creation, manipulation, and exploitation of migration and refugee crises” by rogue states and other actors seeking to bend stronger countries to their will. Greenhill documented dozens of such cases that have occurred since the 1951 UN Refugee Convention came into force, including early threats in 2002 and 2004 by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to “flood the European Union with asylum seekers” if it failed to meet his demands.

With events at EU external borders in 2021 clearly validating the prescience of her work, the Harvard and Tufts University academic addressed VMC2022 on a form of political extortion that is becoming more common. Questions she delved into included why liberal democracies are not always necessarily the passive victim; how perpetrators can miscalculate; and whether these hybrid attacks can be deterred by policy makers. The session was moderated by Hugo Brady, ICMPD Senior Strategic Advisor.

The instrumentalisation of migration is not a new development – it is a strategy that has rather been deployed across time and geographies, ranging from Ancient Babylon to East Germany in the 1980s. Motivations and tactics vary from regime to regime. Greenhill described four distinct forms of instrumentalisation typically used by nefarious actors. These include: (1) ‘dispossession engineered migration’ directed at inducing mass migration to seize property or the territory of a particular group, (2) ‘exportive engineered migration’ designed to defame domestic dissidents or in extreme cases destabilise potential target states, (3) ‘militarised engineered migration’ aimed at real or threatened mass movements of people to gain a battlefield advantage and (4) ‘coercive engineered migration’ intended to use real or threatened outward migration to extract concessions – economic, military, or political – from a target state or states.

Malign actors, moreover, generally apply one of two strategies in a bid to get their way. The first pertains to the use of what Greenhill calls ‘capacity swamping’ – this mechanism rests on using threats and/or actions to overwhelm the ability of target states to respond to the arrival of a large group of displaced people. The second, meanwhile, concerns ‘political agitation’ or extortion that aims to undermine the willingness of governments and societies to accommodate new arrivals. Politicians may become wary about the impact of migration on public opinion and their election prospects. Additionally, certain force multipliers may come into play and bolster coercion



Voices of VMC2022

“VMC is an indispensable annual event on migration policy in Europe that brings together stakeholders from governments and all relevant fields of expertise.”

Vladimír Šimoňák
Director, Crisis Management
Department, Ministry of Foreign and
European Affairs, Slovakia



efforts, according to Greenhill. Hypocrisy costs – the external and internal pressure placed on liberal democracies to act in accordance with their values – are one such vulnerability that can be exploited to stoke friction between societal groups with different views on migration within the target state. Targeted governments face a conundrum between meeting their human rights commitments and public pressure to protect their borders.

Yet the instrumentalisation of migration is not typically a tool of first resort, Greenhill argued, but rather more often a last-ditch attempt to capture the attention of a more powerful country that is unwilling or uninterested in engaging with the perpetrating regime. The strategy, to this end, is deployed to level the playing field and pressure the targeted party to come to the negotiating table. And these manoeuvres often yield success – 57 per cent of cases that Greenhill analysed in her book saw the targeted state cede to the demands of the coercer state, at least to some degree. In the mid-1980s, for instance, the East German Democratic Republic used newspaper ads to encourage people in South Asia and the Middle East to take flights to East Berlin under the premise that they would be able to transit into West Germany. Following

“We continue to forget the lessons of past crises and, therefore, cripple ourselves in terms of combatting or deterring future crises.”

Kelly M. Greenhill

a 109 per cent rise in asylum applications between 1984 and 1985, West Germany ultimately caved in with several economic and technical concessions to East Germany. Turning to the present, Greenhill pointed to Cuba-Nicaragua as a case to keep on the radar. Nicaragua, notably, has recently liberalised its visa regime with Cuba, leading to significant out-migration from Cuba to the US via Nicaragua. As border crossings into the US swell and political pressure on Washington escalates to stem these movements, Havana and Managua both may similarly seek to exploit the matter to extract economic and political concessions.

The targeted states, though, need not be passive victims. While there is no silver bullet, she said, they also have a range of tools at their disposal to deploy in response to instrumentalisation attempts. Apart

from acquiescing to the demands of the offending state, governments face the choice either to permit the respective migrants to cross into the country or close their borders completely, although this implies a moral conundrum of ignoring human rights obligations in order to prevent their weaponisation by authoritarian or rogue regimes. The recent instrumentalisation of migration by Belarus on its borders with Lithuania and Poland, moreover, is a case in point which also illustrated the possibility to circumvent or mitigate such hard choices via a whole-of-route approach. The EU used its leverage to apply pressure on airlines carrying migrants to Minsk to close or strictly monitor these flights, and also worked with destination countries to restrict the activities of Belarusian consulates. Recognising the risks to their significant interest in the European aviation market, the airlines were quick to comply.

That said, Greenhill stressed that she believes the prudent path forward is to engage in diplomacy through backchannels as soon as disgruntled actors signal they may consider using instrumentalisation as a tactic. A surprising conclusion from Greenhill’s work indeed is that it is better for liberal democracies to enter into negotiations with a potential coercer early and before any threats are manifested. Though some critics may say this is akin to giving in to extortion, she noted that the governments eventually must sit down together to resolve a crisis. She also cautioned governments to heed potential scenarios that could lead to secondary instrumentalisation down the road where the threat to cease existing cooperation is deployed unless new concessions are made. For instance, the island of Nauru, which hosts irregular migrants destined for Australia, has periodically requested significant financial payments from Australia, including for its university sector. Apart from economic enticements, some instrumentalising states may also be seeking to silence criticism of their human rights records by liberal democracies. The geopolitical stakes are high. In one of

the most high profile examples, Greenhill addressed in some detail the rise and fall of former President Aristide in Haiti in the 1990s and 2000s. While multiple threats and/or the use of boats by migrants from Haiti was a motivating factor for the Clinton administration to help quash a coup and reinstall Aristide into office, the same concerns also contributed to Aristide’s later ouster and forced exile in 2004. Despite these major repercussions and the pertinence of instrumentalisation, Greenhill warned that societies and governments tend to forget the lessons of past crises rather easily. In so doing, they greatly increase the likelihood of mistakes and mishaps in deterring and responding to new crisis situations. Moving forward, governments should become more adept at identifying specific instances of instrumentalisation and applying best practices to prevent and/or respond to their use.

→ Watch the full panel discussion!

Voices of VMC2022

“VMC is a particularly constructive vehicle for launching and steering much-needed conversations on migration issues in Europe. It provides inspiration that may guide actors to think more strategically about migration through a long-term vision and from a broader perspective.”

Pierre Vimont
Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe



In the spotlight

Ukraine, South-Eastern Europe and the future of European integration

The repercussions of Russia's invasion of Ukraine have rippled through the global economy in the form of inflation, food insecurity, and geopolitical instability. In Europe, meanwhile, the war has heightened the urgency for policymakers to make key decisions about the future of European integration and EU enlargement.

On stage Misha Glenny, Rector, Institute for Human Sciences
Lukas Gehrke, Deputy Director General and Director, Policy, Research and Strategy, ICMPD

Providing insights on what victory or defeat for Ukraine will mean for the region and the globe, veteran broadcaster and journalist Misha Glenny opened Day 2 of VMC2022.

Glenny is one of Europe's foremost authorities on Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Western Balkans, where he covered the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and its aftermath for *The Guardian* and the BBC. In 2022, he became Rector of the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, host to some of Eastern Europe's most prominent liberal and dissenting thinkers. The session was moderated by Lukas Gehrke, ICMPD Deputy Director General and Director for Policy, Research and Strategy.

The interview took place as the Ukrainian military began to make major breakthroughs in both the eastern and southern battlefields in its campaign to recapture territory. It also came a mere two days following vicious Russian attacks on critical infrastructure across Ukraine aimed at crippling its energy and power grid as winter approaches. Channelling former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Glenny said the war and its implications can best be characterised as having "known unknowns" and "unknown unknowns". And citing Britain's Digital Intelligence Service, the Rector wondered whether the intensity of Russia's military machinery can hold. This comes as domestic unrest in Russia becomes a more and more relevant factor. Tensions have been stoked across the country but none more so than areas like Dagestan with large ethnic minority populations – these groups have been forced to do the bulk of the fighting in Ukraine.

As this domestic turmoil festers, Glenny pointed out that the international humiliations and losses continue to pile up too. From President Xi Jinping and President Modi distancing themselves from Putin to central Asian leaders expressing open contempt towards the Kremlin, Russia now faces a diminished international

stature. The world importantly must heed the implications: recent flareups between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and the breakdown of a peace deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia underline that other actors should be prepared to mediate and manage instability that emerges in the region.

The global political, economic, and social repercussions are also vast. From the outset, reductions in grain and fertiliser exports from Ukraine and Russia due to blockades and sanctions have disrupted food supply chains and the agricultural industry. Paired with supply chain constraints fuelled by pandemic lockdowns in China, the world stands at the precipice of a series of economic shocks and potential upheaval. Spotlighting Brazil's nearly 70 per cent dependence on Russian fertiliser pre-war, Glenny stressed that shortages have already pressed the country over the medium term to contemplate potash mining operations that could jeopardise the already over-exploited Amazon Rain Forest. Apart from Brazil, he expressed concern about political fissures that have surfaced in the United States and Europe amid heated election campaigns. The transatlantic community must respond, he said, by returning to the unity achieved immediately after Russia launched hostilities.

"While the war is inflicting devastating consequences, it is also strengthening Ukrainian national identity in ways Putin didn't intend."

Misha Glenny

The war is further recharting the political map of Europe. Though the EU has faced long-standing criticism that Central and Eastern European countries are not treated as equal members of the club, Glenny emphasised that Russia's belligerent actions have increased the clout of the CEE region. Apart from Budapest, Central and Eastern European governments have by and large been more resolute in their support for Ukraine than Western Europe. The region

has also gained relevance as a security contributor, especially following the UK's exit from the EU and the loss of a direct EU membership link to the Five Eyes intelligence alliance. The economic growth of the region, finally, has put some countries on a path towards becoming net contributors to the EU budget, another important shift. Yet, hobbled by democratic backsliding in Poland and Hungary and rising polarisation, Glenny warned that Central and Eastern European countries have failed to fully seize their potential to exert influence in the EU.

The spotlight is now also turning to the EU accession prospects of the Western Balkan countries, in addition to Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Here, the EU needs to recognise the paramount security significance of the region and avoid turning off allies that have become increasingly disgruntled by the protracted application process. If the EU continues to kick the can down the road, Glenny suggested disillusioned publics may become more receptive to the influence efforts of Russia and China. But if the EU puts its weight behind absorbing new members, the bloc could thwart these manoeuvres by authoritarian governments. By embracing EU membership for South-Eastern European countries, the Union could also nudge Serbia, whose



government has sought to play both sides geopolitically. Though Belgrade has, at times, condemned Russia's action, it has also resisted joining sanctions against Russia. But as the dominoes fall in the region and the outcome of the war becomes clearer, President Aleksandar Vučić may ultimately face no choice but to relent.

A swift end of the war is vital to the interests of all. Yet Glenny cautioned that Putin's proclivities may direct him towards ramping up the war effort and lashing out the more he feels personally threatened. Any use of a tactical nuclear weapon would represent a dramatic escalation that would seriously erode the first use nuclear taboo and leave the world in a more precarious and fragile place. Putin is pinning his hopes on the prospect that these fears will fragment Germany and other European countries. Finding an off-ramp, nonetheless, will prove difficult despite the best efforts of European leaders. But off-ramp or not, Europe can take solace from the fact that cooperation across the continent is accelerating, with even prospects for a future reintegration of the UK back into the European economic area on the rise.



Voices of VMC2022

“There is no other place where I can find so many colleagues to discuss current migration issues while also picking up insights about the subject.”

Joost Klarenbeek
Special Envoy for Migration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



Panel discussion

Regional perspectives and priorities: Finding the right political and policy formula for successful partnerships



On stage Savaş Ünlü, President, Presidency of Migration Management, Ministry of Interior, Türkiye
Neveen El-Husseiny, Ambassador Deputy Assistant Minister for Migration, Refugees and Combatting Human Trafficking Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt
Amir Saeed, Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Vienna
Beate Gminder, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
Moderation Jennifer Tangney, Senior Project Manager, ICMPD

As the EU and its partners face new and persistent migration challenges, including a rise in forced displacement and irregular migration, effective cooperation along migration routes is critical. This panel discussed where interests and strategies converge and diverge, with a view to identifying priorities and finding the right formula for building stronger migration partnerships.

Amid a shifting geopolitical landscape, climate change, a sputtering global economy, and a food crisis, the panel provided insights on how we should work together to better manage migration and support opportunities for practical cooperation. Speakers included Savaş Ünlü, President of Migration Management at the Turkish Ministry of Interior; Neveen El-Husseiny, Deputy Assistant Minister for Migration, Refugees and Combatting Human Trafficking at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Amir Saeed, Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Vienna; and Beate Gminder, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission. The session was moderated by Jennifer Tangney, ICMPD Senior Project Manager.

Context is key – the scale of the challenge faced by many countries of origin, transit and destination is immense. During the panel, the audience heard from officials about the arduous task facing governments. Egypt, for one, has seen a 50 per cent rise in its migrant population over the past four years, growing from 6 million to 9 million. According to El-Husseiny, these recent arrivals primarily include women and children forced to flee protracted crises ranging from conflict and political instability in

Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Libya to severe challenges related to food, water, and security in the Horn of Africa. Islamabad, similarly, is grappling with crisis upon crisis as the pandemic, turmoil in Afghanistan, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and devastating floods that destroyed one million homes in Pakistan have created what Saeed called a ‘perfect storm’ of disasters. These crises have forced the displacement of millions of people from, within and to Pakistan including 1.3 million Afghans. While the panelists said their governments are prioritising refugee access to healthcare, education, and the job market, they stressed that the economic downturn and food and energy inflation have placed extraordinary strain on their budgetary resources. Ünlü added that heightened labour market competition has dampened employment prospects for the large youth populations in the region.

If the vast needs of origin, transit, and host countries go unmet, additional multidimensional challenges will appear downstream, human trafficking chief among them. According to El-Husseiny, around 15 per cent of migrants in Egypt are socio-economically vulnerable and 16 per cent still plan to journey onward to reach their final destination (i.e. Europe). As migrants struggle to eke out a living in Egypt and elsewhere, smugglers preying on their plight may prompt them to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean. These comments were echoed by Ünlü, who identified instability in Syria and Lebanon and a lack of economic opportunity as factors nudging migrants to attempt perilous routes to Europe. The migrants, regrettably, often run straight into the hands of criminal smuggling networks who are aided by security vacuums in some transit countries.

The response to these mounting challenges must begin with robust partnerships and shared resolve. According to Saeed, collaboration on collecting data and combatting irregular migration routes, establishing readmission agreements, and raising awareness about the risks of irregular

“If host countries are not supported, then the vulnerability of migrants and refugees will increase. Secondary movements will follow and we could see more disasters in the Mediterranean and other places.”

Neeven
El-Husseiny



migration are all critical to curbing flows and breaking up illegal trafficking rings. But to be true partnerships, this cooperation must be reciprocal through and through. Developing countries, despite their capacity constraints, now host 84 per cent of refugees in the world, according to El-Husseiny. The governments of these countries, therefore, genuinely require assistance – financial and non-financial alike – to help them address the needs of displaced persons on their territories. In this context, Ünlü called for the West to step up its solidarity through relocation and resettlement schemes to balance the responsibility of hosting refugees more evenly. This view was shared by El-Husseiny who pointed out that only 10 per cent of newly registered refugees gain the opportunity to resettle abroad despite Egypt’s resource limitations.

Though it may prove tempting to rely merely on securitization tools, a renewed emphasis must also be placed on bolstering legal migration pathways and addressing root causes if sustainable change is to be secured. The panelists all took note of the “win-win” potential here – destination countries can address their labour shortfalls and source countries can build up their resilience and strengthen their economies, all while smugglers are removed from the equation. An Austrian-Pakistani partnership, for instance, is directed at strengthening technical education infrastructure at Pakistani universities to ensure that

“Though there are many crises in different parts of the world, it doesn’t mean that migration management must be only reactive. We can still develop and implement proactive migration management policies both inside our country and jointly through regional and global perspectives.”

Savaş Ünlü

“There may come a time when it is not conflict that leads to mass displacement but rather climate change. We have this crisis staring us in the face in Pakistan.”

Amir Saeed

students graduate with skills that align with labour market needs in the country or elsewhere. Saeed suggested that a similar strategy could be applied to the healthcare sector, where nursing schools could provide training aimed at preparing people for overseas jobs. Such initiatives would cultivate a pool of skilled labour well suited to labour market demands at home, in Europe, and globally and provide people with economic mobility opportunities.

Yet these solutions should not benefit high-income countries at the expense of low- and middle-income peers, especially as it concerns the global talent race. Gminder indicated circular migration schemes could provide a promising approach that circumvents this talent depreciation or ‘brain drain’ problem in low- and middle-income countries. The EU, she said, has begun piloting ‘talent partnerships’ in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt to this end. The scheme enables people from partner countries to work and train on a temporary basis in Europe before returning and applying their skills in their home countries.

And while the EU boasts a blue card system for attracting highly qualified talent, she also suggested the bloc should contemplate a US-style green card system too, with its more expansive open door to different categories of migrants.

As part of a whole-of-society approach to migration governance, these arrangements can help address the root causes of migration including economic deprivation and youth unemployment. They also go hand in hand with the EU's €300 billion Global Gateway Initiative aimed at fostering smart, clean, and secure links in the digital, energy, and transport sectors and strengthening health, education, and research systems globally. Food security has especially been elevated on the agenda this year. Gminder, in this regard, spotlighted the EU's €600 million four-pillar approach focused on providing emergency relief, enhancing sustainable agricultural production and resilience, facilitating food trade (especially with respect to Ukrainian exports), and promoting effective multilateralism through cooperation with partner countries and international organisations.

"No size fits all – we need to work in partnership. We need to develop the best toolbox possible for every country and region. We are willing to continue this work with every region around the world in a constructive and comprehensive spirit."

Beate Gminder



The EU's recently announced measures indeed are reassuring against a global backdrop where donor fatigue could set in as new crises absorb resources and attention. The panellists stressed that the uncertain economic climate, in fact, presents an ideal moment for governments to embrace enhanced partnerships to optimise their limited resources and avoid unnecessary duplications. On migration, this means whole-of-route and all-of-society approaches. The Global Compact for Migration, as Gminder reminded the room, commits the world to facilitating the safe, orderly, and regular migration and mobility of people. But as Ünlü warned, refugees will be here to stay until the international community ensures every corner of the world is safe. Concerted efforts, consequently, are now needed to alleviate insecurity driving people to migrate in the first place, combat trafficking and organised crime, and develop more inclusive and resilient societies.



Voices of VMC2022

"Representing a condensed learning experience, VMC takes participants on a journey of discovery about migration issues in just a few hours, for a task that would otherwise necessitate hundreds of pages of reading."

Gisela Spreitzhofer
International Relations Officer,
International Affairs, EC DG HOME

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



Panel discussion

European migration and asylum policy reform: Are we breaking gridlocks?

On stage Elena Yoncheva, Member of the European Parliament
Jean Mafart, Director, Directorate of European and International Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, France
Beate Gminder, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
Suzanne Lynch, Chief Brussels Correspondent Politico Europe
Moderation Sarah Schlaeger, Senior Lead, Policy and Liaison, ICMPD



The road to a comprehensive EU approach on migration, as envisioned in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, has encountered many challenges. Multiple crises – such as the instrumentalisation of migrants for geopolitical gains at EU external borders and the reception of people fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine – have affected EU collective identity and shaped the prospects for progress and mutual responses on migration.

The final VMC2022 panel brought together European government officials and a Brussels-based journalist to discuss the necessary steps for securing EU asylum reform during the 2019-2024 EU term. Panellists included Elena Yoncheva, Member of the European Parliament; Jean Mafart, Director of the Directorate of European and International Affairs at the French Ministry of the Interior; Beate Gminder, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission; and Suzanne Lynch, Chief Brussels Correspondent at Politico Europe. The session was moderated by Sarah Schlaeger, ICMPD Senior Lead, Policy and Liaison.

Fresh off a newly enforced mandate for the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) in early 2022, there appears to be a window of opportunity for a political deal on further reform to Europe's migration and asylum system. According to Yoncheva, the state of seemingly permanent crisis the EU finds itself in – ranging from the pandemic, conflicts in the neighbourhood, and economic downturns to climate change – underscores the need for a comprehensive set of tools to manage migration. Though the Temporary Protection Directive has served the EU well in responding to the mass displacement of people fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine, Gminder noted that it has also reminded the bloc

about the need to update its crisis tools. The recent uptick in arrivals via the Western Balkans, Lynch added, has particularly spurred heightened interest in putting migration on the agenda, with larger Member States increasingly alarmed. Mafart echoed this sentiment – when cross-border movements are low, like in 2021, it is difficult to get migration on the agenda, with political leaders unwilling to expend political capital on a thorny topic. But as numbers rise, this dynamic changes – witness the strengthening of Frontex's mandate in 2015.

As an important step towards further developing the new proposed migration framework, the EU would be prudent to

“If the choice is between everything and nothing, then the outcome will be nothing. The gradual approach we took to migration reform was directed at pragmatically achieving progress without dismantling the entire package.”

Jean Mafart

assess what is working and what is not. Gminder stressed that the EU's introduction of robust measures on data collection over the past decade has put the bloc in a firm starting place towards responding to crises. By promoting data exchange, via the Blueprint system, for example, the EU has fostered better situational awareness and facilitated decision-making during crises. She similarly pointed to successes of the Commission's Taskforce Migration Management in coordinating different EU

And the EU's multiple sets of overlapping rules – some old, some new – mean that governments are not always sure which to apply. This ambiguity may also leave partner countries outside the EU and migrants and refugees in the dark.

An agreed migration and asylum pact, the panellists said, should be targeted towards making responses more agile and better fit for purpose for the decades to come, especially with an emphasis on improving



“Like everything in the EU, the story on migration reform is really about politics. You can hide behind the technicalities and the policy, which are very important, but there are always different governments coming and going and different leaders shaping the way policy is formed.”

Suzanne Lynch

agencies and pooling resources to step up assistance to Member States facing undue strain. The taskforce, for instance, has been able to aid Greece and Cyprus in clearing asylum application backlogs and facilitating returns where appropriate. Yet Gminder warned that the EU's migration and asylum system is threatened by a lack of clarity with respect to its border policies and asylum procedures. Member States too often apply the rules unevenly.

Voices of VMC2022

“The messages on stage are very important but equally important are the informal discussions that people have with each other at VMC – these sometimes lead to concrete results for projects and programmes.”

Eduard Gnesa
former Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration and former Special Envoy for International Cooperation on Migration Issues, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs



“We are much better prepared than we were 10 years ago. It starts with effective data collection and sharing. Our agencies and Member States are now cruising at full speed. But what’s still lacking is clarity.”

Beate Gminder

operational responses to concrete situations. While equipping EU agencies with technical tools and fostering cooperation are crucial to addressing challenges, the speakers asserted that politics will ultimately dictate whether a deal is realised or not. Lynch sounded an optimistic note that the upcoming Swedish and Spanish EU presidencies may foster progress on the EU migration pact, though she cautioned that recent and upcoming national elections may still change this equation. Meanwhile, Yoncheva spotlighted the agreement on

a joint roadmap towards migration and asylum policy reform between the EU Parliament and five EU Council presidencies as a promising commitment that will facilitate negotiations and enable compromises to be forged. According to Lynch, even Central and Eastern Europe, buoyed by their leadership position in welcoming disproportionately high numbers of Ukrainian refugees, now has skin in the game.

The matter of relocation and responsibility sharing between EU Member States to assist those most affected by migratory movements, the panellists emphasised, remains a sticking point but one that must be addressed to foster a sense of joint responsibility and solidarity. To this end, speakers called for the development of a comprehensive and holistic approach to migration reform that can overcome gridlocks by responding to the disparate concerns of different Member States. Mafart, though, said that compromises would need to include a voluntary solidarity mechanism supported by EU Member States. A corresponding declaration was signed by 18 Member States and 3 associated countries during the French EU Presidency but still lacks uniform backing. Nevertheless, an incremental approach, he argued, is better than

nothing at all. Meanwhile, robust screening and asylum procedures and regulations, he stressed, are necessary to bolster the EU’s external border and curb irregular migration. This strengthened border, in turn, he argued, would make any solidarity mechanism more politically palatable for sceptical Member States, especially after they see how it works in practice.

A modern EU immigration system must also better deal with complexity and emerging challenges. The panellists all agreed that more labour migration is needed as part of any grand bargain. Legal migratory pathways should be bolstered – to address labour shortages, mitigate the need for migrants to turn to dangerous irregular routes controlled by smugglers, and reduce the strain on border crossings. Lynch,

nevertheless, identified a lack of affordable housing as one such problem that could challenge efforts to integrate new arrivals and satiate the concerns of residents. And Yoncheva noted that asylum officials should also heed the integration prospects for refugees in different host countries – she said that language and cultural familiarity, for example, has facilitated the integration of Ukrainians in Bulgaria. Finally, Yoncheva called for the EU and partners to redouble their efforts on combatting the root causes driving people to migrate in the first place. Migration experts, in other words, must step out of their silos and coordinate their work with other agencies and governments. This type of collaboration will be a key hallmark to any effective and comprehensive approach to migration management adopted in the 21st century.



Voices of VMC2022

“The special added value of VMC comes through its recognition that migration is ever-changing and we need to address it – and this is exactly what the conference does.”

Nina Gregori
Executive Director, European Union Agency for Asylum



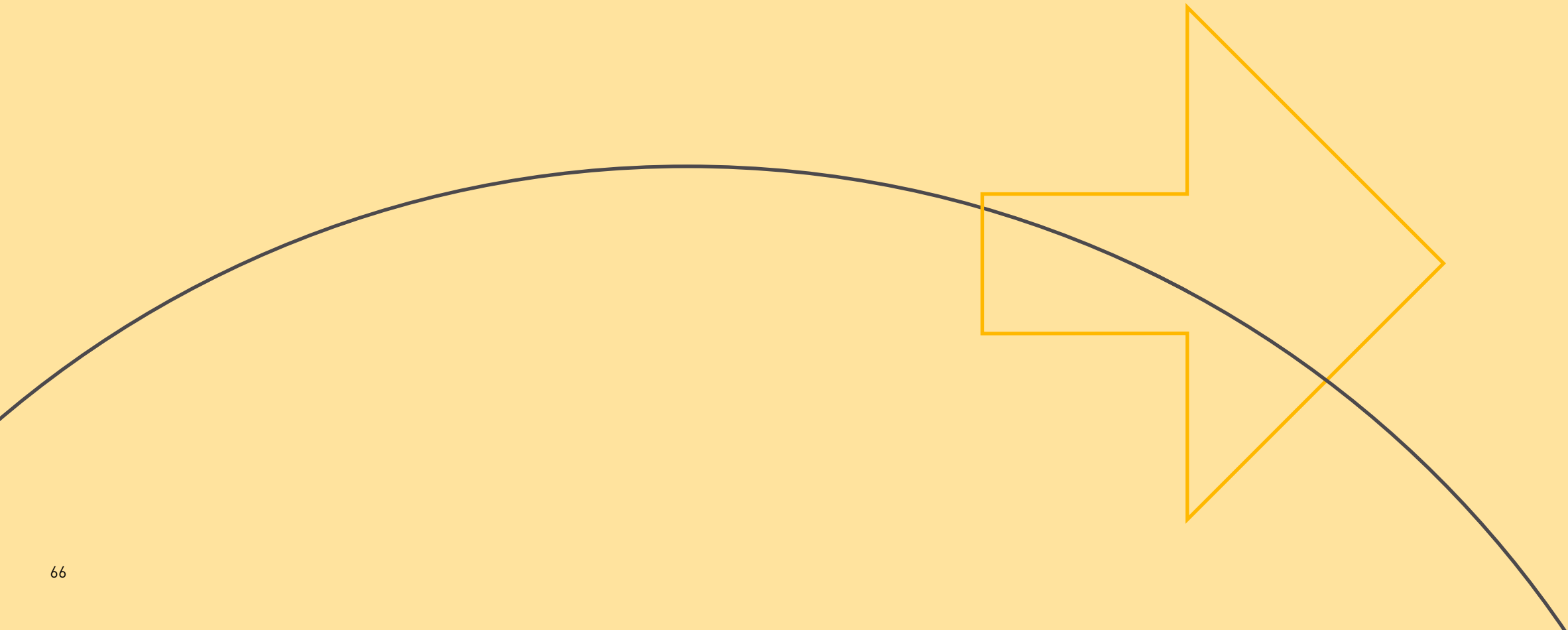
“It is critical that this discussion on migration reform not turn into a battlefield targeted at politicising every single domestic or external dimension of migration.”

Elena Yoncheva

→ Watch the full panel discussion!



③ SPEAKERS





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ICMPD strives to ensure an inclusive working environment and be attentive to gender diversity and the plurality of voices represented in our initiatives. When this is not reflected in our events, it is due to the unavailability of speakers or challenges in identifying suitable profiles in our network.

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4

REFLECTIONS

Seven takeaways for migration governance in turbulent times

VMC2022 featured two days of intensive and wide-ranging discussions exploring new and old factors shaping the movement of people and how policymakers and other actors could respond. During the discussion, participants shared a variety of experiences, perspectives, and recommendations for the future.



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2022 has proven to be a turbulent year for Europe and the world alike: new and persisting conflicts, large-scale displacement, natural disasters linked to climate change, rising living costs, acute labour shortages, and an economic slowdown, all amid continued consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February has underscored our global interconnectedness, with the repercussions of events in Eastern Europe felt in parts of the world far removed from the battlespace. Russia's military aggression has not only caused the displacement of millions of people – the fastest and largest displacement in Europe since World War II – but it has also had global political and economic consequences. These dynamics will no doubt influence migration flows in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Much has been said about the numerous and complex challenges we find ourselves faced with, but perhaps less attention has been paid to the bright spots in this difficult year. In Europe, these include EU cooperation to put a halt to Belarus' engineering of migration for geopolitical aims, as well as the first-ever activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, which has provided millions of people fleeing Ukraine with immediate access to protection, key integration-related services, and employment eligibility. Against this backdrop, negotiations on the New Pact should reflect and take into account the lessons learned from the Ukraine response.

Here are 7 takeaways from the discussions that we found particularly insightful.

Seven takeaways

1 Rapid responses and holistic approaches reduce risks for vulnerable groups.

While the world may face shared and interconnected challenges, their severity and impact can differ significantly. In the context of climate change, regions and countries that have contributed relatively little to carbon emissions find themselves bearing a disproportionate brunt of the consequences. At a more granular level, vulnerable groups have become even more at risk in the context of climate change and other challenges including COVID-19, inflation, and conflict.

The displacement of people heightens the risks of human trafficking and exploitation to which vulnerable people are exposed. Yet human trafficking is typically not granted the attention it deserves and should be prioritised more highly by governments. However, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, effective and holistic approaches to fight human trafficking have emerged. For instance, Moldova initiated a three-pillar approach to reduce the risk of human trafficking among displaced persons: prevention mechanisms, effective and accessible reporting instruments, and events that foster dialogue, trust, and engagement among local communities. This prompt and resolute approach, prioritising the fight against human trafficking, has been essential in mitigating risks in Europe – as seen by the relatively low number of trafficking victims. In the long term, education, labour market opportunities, health-care, and long-term counselling should be put front and centre in efforts to support vulnerable individuals.

The conflict in Ukraine stands out as a unique situation – not only with regard to the human trafficking response, but also the willingness of countries and publics to receive Ukrainians and provide immediate access to work and services for those fleeing the war. Remarkably, nine months into the conflict, public acceptance remains relatively high. Temporary protection provisions, in providing legal status, access to the formal labour market, and mobility rights, make this group less vulnerable to human trafficking and other abuses compared to other displaced populations. This should provide food for thought when responding to other emergencies.

2 Balancing competing priorities remains difficult but essential.

Large-scale displacement from Ukraine changed the starting point for dialogue on migration in the EU, as Member States in Central and Eastern Europe play a more important role than ever. Recognising the valuable role of EU membership in both symbolic and practical ways, Ukraine and Moldova were granted candidate status in June, four months into the conflict. While much attention has understandably been paid to the accession of these countries, it is important not to neglect the prospects of Western Balkan countries, who have long waited to join the bloc. In fact, the EU stands to gain more influence in the Western Balkans if it focuses more determinedly on the integration of countries in the region.

At the same time, Pakistan, Türkiye, and other countries that have long hosted sizable refugee populations shared serious concerns that the situation of displaced persons in their countries is untenable, meaning that cooperation and support are critical for meeting immediate needs and improving the situation. Europe would thus be prudent to continue engaging beyond its direct neighbourhood. It is to our collective detriment to

only focus on one issue or situation and neglect others; there will always be competing priorities, meaning that balance is key. Partnerships are the channel through which we can hear others' priorities and address them.

3 Global partnership is vital but regional solutions are paramount.

Ongoing and emerging challenges often extend beyond borders, including (among others) climate change, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling – pointing to the need for continued and strengthened cooperation. Given the severe and interconnected challenges that the world is facing, participants emphasised the importance of international – and particularly regional – cooperation as part of a comprehensive approach. A relevant example is the EU's swift activation of the Temporary Protection Directive as a regional response to large-scale displacement from Ukraine. The United States is also thinking regionally when it comes to migration management, where it is working with other countries in the Americas to respond in a comprehensive manner, including strengthening asylum systems to provide protection along migration routes and promoting circular migration schemes within the region. Meanwhile, Australia is working to provide migration options for those in the region affected by climate change as part of its response to the challenge. And the African Union Commissioner echoed her predecessor, stressing the importance of finding African solutions to African problems, including when it comes to assisting displaced persons on the continent.

Successful policies will always require good regional cooperation and in many cases also good global cooperation.

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4 Migration policy is not only about responding to crises – it should also be forward looking.

This year is not the only year in which crises have taken centre stage in conversations on migration – indeed, we often seem to jump from crisis to crisis. In the case of instrumentalisation, it is important to remember that such strategies are not new and we can look to the past to inform effective responses. But this does not mean that migration policy is only reactive; forward-looking approaches are essential. Here, partnerships and dialogue can be helpful in preventing heavy-handed tactics. As stressed already in VMC2021, migration cooperation should be a priority in both times of crisis and stability.

Unfortunately, proactive approaches are often overshadowed by crises (in terms of both time and attention), meaning Europe cannot always stay ahead of the game – as we can see, for instance, with regard to climate change. With the increased intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters as well as slow-onset impacts such as drought, options for adapting are shrinking in many parts of the world, forcing many to instead move out of harm's way. Disasters are already displacing more people within countries than conflicts do. As our knowledge about the connections between climate change and migration advances, so too must our interventions. Efforts are required to scale up adaptation measures and resilience building. In addition, relocation, traditionally and understandably seen as a last resort, might become the only feasible option for a larger group of people.

5 Stepping out of silos is essential.

The types of multi-faceted challenges and cross-cutting crises the world now faces demand that policymakers adjust their strategies and tools. Migration officials, for one, need to be trained to respond and adapt to rapidly changing events. It is no longer sufficient for interior ministries to operate solely within their traditional remit in a world beset by hybrid conflicts, human trafficking, and climate change. The Ukraine war has compelled Moldovan migration officers, for example, to coordinate more closely with local government officials to develop necessary transportation, medical, and housing infrastructure for refugees. The climate crisis, meanwhile, necessitates increased cooperation between migration and environmental stakeholders focused on anticipating migratory flows – and indeed a whole-of-society approach – bolstering the resilience of vulnerable communities to environmental threats and implementing plans to mitigate displacement and facilitate integration when and where migration and displacement occurs.

From cybersecurity to the instrumentalisation of migrants, there is a growing need for new cross-border and inter-agency arrangements to develop effective responses and strategies.



6 Labour mobility opportunities should be expanded and mutually beneficial.

Another increasingly visible item on the agenda is the 'global race for talent', particularly in light of acute labour shortages. A growing number of countries and regions are seeking to attract international workers, and this is expected to intensify in the future. Although the EU and its Member States have initiated various measures and bilateral agreements to attract (highly) skilled workers, to be a successful competitor, it is clear that Europe will have to step up its game. The VMC2022 audience heard from Australia, a country that already ranks highly with regard to talent attraction and is ramping up efforts to attract needed workers. Interestingly, this front-runner is not only working to increase permanent migration, where it is prioritising skilled migration in the health and education sectors – but it has also commissioned a review of its migration system and is leveraging innovative approaches such as refugee labour mobility (otherwise known as 'complementary pathways') to expand its pool of talent. Legal pathways are crucial not only for filling vacancies but also for strengthening migration partnerships. For these to be effective, they need to be scaled up to better meet local and global needs and be more beneficial to all parties.

Refugee labour mobility is a perfect example of a pathway that can provide a triple win: Displaced persons earn a living and build a sustainable future; employers and receiving countries benefit from their skills; and host countries reduce the pressure on their systems. There is a need to adapt existing labour migration channels or launch tailored programs that take into account the needs of displaced persons in order to better take advantage of the potential of such pathways. This way, people do not have to choose between talent and vulnerability when looking for a migration pathway.

Another promising approach can be found in Pakistan, where an Austrian-Pakistani partnership works to strengthen technical education infrastructure so that students graduate with skills that align with labour market needs in the country or elsewhere. A similar strategy could be applied to the healthcare sector, where nursing schools could provide training aimed at preparing people for overseas jobs. Such initiatives would cultivate a pool of skilled labour well suited to labour market demands in Europe and globally, while creating more livelihood opportunities for individuals. Circular migration schemes could enrich the labour force in both origin and destination countries.

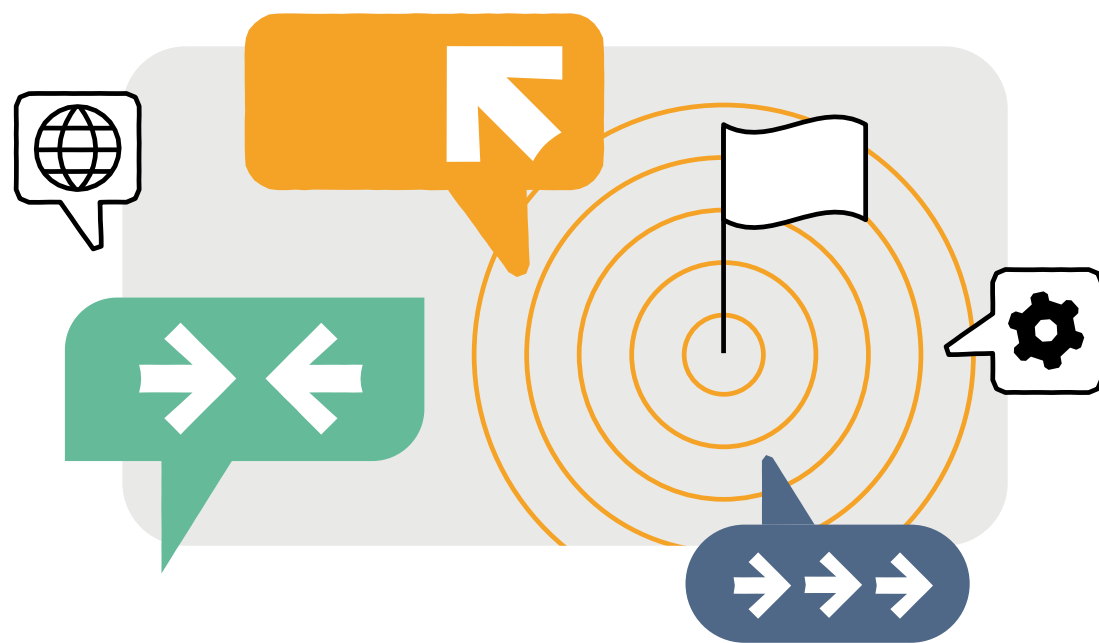
7 Communicating honestly with the public is difficult but necessary.

While migration policy is technical, it is also very political – and this shapes the way it is formed. An underlying theme throughout the VMC2022 discussions was the role that narratives play in shaping public opinion and political room for manoeuvre. Some European governments remain reluctant to engage in a robust debate on migration, largely due to the difficulty of the task and the inevitable pressure from populist parties. Public support is essential for an effective and sustainable migration policy and should be taken into account when communicating about the issue. However, a secure and robust migration management system can help to win public confidence and create political space for the government to be open regarding, for instance, labour migration.



Same but different: Strategies in the global race for talent

In the global race for talent, the EU is struggling to keep up with frontrunners like Canada and Australia. Despite their differences, the EU and its Member States could turn to leading nations for inspiration on attracting and retaining global talent.



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Photo: Marissa Weigle ©TU Dresden, Michael Kretschmar

The global race for talent is on and the frontrunners are easily identifiable: Canada, Australia, and the US lead the way on talent attractiveness, according to OECD indicators. Though some European countries (like Sweden, Germany, and Finland) also rank at the top, the EU overall finds itself trailing far behind. Despite attempts to provide more attractive conditions for highly skilled workers, the EU27 is nowhere close to catching up in what is sometimes considered not just a race, but a ‘war’ for talent, as the Australian Minister for Home Affairs Clare O’Neil put it recently.

While visa and labour policies are important components to promoting labour migration, additional factors include the overall environment (such as the openness of respective societies), diaspora engagement, cultural aspects, and other circumstances related to integration. Although policies that favour labour migration are not alone sufficient to attract talent, disadvantageous policies could certainly deter individuals. The EU, consequently, could stand to benefit from adapting its migration management system and pursuing a different battle strategy in the race for talent. For inspiration, why not turn to those who excel in this area?

Rethinking the definition of talent

There is no single definition of what is considered high-, medium-, or low-skilled work, and the notion of talent continues to evolve as the qualifications that are most sought after change. This dynamic contributes to varying immigration policies both over time and across different countries. Hence, countries like Australia and Canada, and even various EU Member States, each have distinct lists of occupations which are considered to require (highly) skilled workers. The categories, though, are usually defined by level of university education and/or work experience. In an effort to harmonise visa policies, an EU-wide definition for high-skilled migration was introduced under the Blue Card Directive. However, for their national schemes, Member States continue to use varying criteria.

While global talent attraction efforts have typically been directed at higher skilled migrants, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a shift in perceptions about relevant talent. The pandemic exacerbated labour shortages in many countries

across nearly all sectors and at all skill levels. Australia and Canada have since started to broaden their notion of talent and labour migration policies to also encompass lower skilled workers. The Australian government is currently adapting all programmes under the ‘Pacific Australia Labour Mobility’ (PALM) scheme for lower skilled seasonal workers to increase their attractiveness by moving away from temporary migration towards permanency and citizenship. Similarly, Canada’s latest Workforce Solutions Road Map for the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, launched in April 2022, promotes lower skilled migration by, for example, raising the cap on the proportion of low-wage temporary foreign workers that employers can hire. In the EU, the Seasonal Workers Directive and the new Talent Partnerships are ways in which employers in Member States can recruit medium- and lower skilled workers – particularly important given current labour shortages.

The EU’s challenging hunt for talent

Notwithstanding the multifaceted notion of global talent, what are the underlying reasons behind the Union’s struggles in attaining it? While the EU shares competences on migration, border, and asylum policies with its Member States, labour market policies remain under national jurisdiction; the same applies to admission conditions and labour migrant quotas. While fragmentation on labour migration is a challenging starting position, the EU has made it a priority to promote the attraction of international talent: In her latest State of the Union speech, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that 2023 would be the “European Year of Skills”. One of the EU’s defined goals is to strengthen its workforce to match the skills needs of EU labour markets, including by attracting skilled workers from outside the bloc.

The EU’s focus on talent, however, is not new. For more than a decade, the Union has tried to attract and retain highly qualified workers by harmonising Member State conditions for entry and residence for certain categories of third country nationals (TCNs). This includes, for example, the EU Blue Card Directive – an EU-wide admission system aimed at easing immigration procedures, facilitating intra-EU mobility, and granting broad access to the

EU labour market – or the Single Permit Directive, which introduced a single application procedure for residence and work permits for TCNs. In practice, however, the potential of all of these Directives remains under-exploited, as the 2019 evaluation of the EU legal migration system (‘fitness check’) showed.

The EU Blue Card, for example, has been under-utilised by most Member States, as it is often seen as more restrictive than national work and residence permits. Through the latter, Member States seek to maintain their respective comparative advantages over their EU peers. Some countries also prefer the fact that a national permitting system heeds their different political views on migration. To render a European solution more attractive to both Member States and migrants, the EU Blue Card Directive was revised in 2021 (changes that are to be transposed into national law by November 2023). The reforms introduce simplified procedures, lower requirements, and more favourable conditions, including better use of the EU’s main selling point: intra-EU mobility benefits. Similarly, the recasting of the Single Permit Directive (which is currently still under discussion) aims to broaden its scope and improve migrant worker protections against exploitation.

However, the current figures remain sobering: In 2021, first residence permits issued for employment-related reasons hit a record high of 1.3 million, with only 24,500 Blue Cards issued across the EU for highly skilled workers. Yet labour needs are nowhere close to being met, even when taking additional national schemes into consideration. Combined with the average job vacancy rate in the EU at 2.6 per cent by the end of 2021, the numbers seem downright trivial, painting a rather pessimistic picture of the EU’s capabilities of attracting in-demand workers – especially in comparison to Australia and Canada. While workforce needs in both Australia and Canada are not nearly saturated, they have an excellent track record of attracting talent, which has recently further improved. In September 2022, Australia adjusted its planning levels upwards by 30 per cent, leading to a total of 142,400 visas for skilled labour in the upcoming year. In November 2022, Canada announced new plans to expand its highly skilled workforce by making over 300,000 visas available to highly skilled migrants through its federal Express Entry Programme between 2023 and 2025. The aim of those adjusted visa programmes is

to address labour shortages, especially in healthcare, manufacturing, engineering, and trade. Overall, both Australia and Canada have been particularly successful in attracting talent in accordance with their defined targets.

What are the strategies with which these frontrunners have managed to maintain their pole position in the race for global talent? And which of these can serve as inspiration for the EU and its Member States?

Finding the perfect match: Points-based ranking systems

Australia and Canada both use an Expression of Interest (EoI) system, with an integrated points-based ranking for certain visa categories, as a central pillar in their strategy for attracting highly skilled workers. These systems are used to classify potential immigrants according to their job and integration potential and their likely benefit to the economy. By collecting candidate data on previous experience and education, they also allow countries to identify potential migrants that are a good fit for their labour market needs and potentially match them with future employers. Furthermore, EoI systems increase the transparency and predictability of the application procedure for migrants.

Some components of implementing such an EoI system have already been adopted by the EU or are currently planned. The EU Skills Profile Tool enables the collection of TCNs’ skills, qualifications, and experience via an online questionnaire. Additionally, the EU Talent Pool, an EU-wide job matching mechanism, is in its pilot phase. The platform brings together a pool of candidates from non-EU countries and employers, national public employment services, and private employment agencies across the EU. Candidates can then be selected on the basis of their indicated specific skills levels and other relevant criteria. However, given the EU’s lack of competences in this area, participation in the Talent Pool is voluntary. This mechanism will most likely not reap the benefits that a points-based immigration system could deliver.

An EoI system, however, is currently under discussion in Germany and is expected to be adopted

in the first quarter of 2023. The criteria Germany introduced for workers, as well as the quotas and conditions which are set each year (related to which industries are most in need of workers), resemble the Canadian system. Yet the latter remains more refined. Other EU countries have also tested or put in place comparable systems to attract labour. Denmark used a comparable points-based scheme, but repealed it in 2016. However, on 1 January 2023, the country re-introduced a different system to tackle skill shortages by using a Positive List for professions in need of additional labour (similar to Canada’s National Occupational Classification). Austria combines these approaches and offers its Red-White-Red Card, a points-based system for skilled workers in occupations where there is a shortage. These examples underline the fact that Member States tend to stick with national regulations in this area to address their skills shortages. They have preferred to align their migration strategies more closely to their respective needs, including specific requirements regarding language or education.

Tapping into refugees’ potential

Displaced persons can offer significant skills to European and other labour markets, but their potential remains largely untapped. In this regard, Australia’s and Canada’s investments in refugees’ potential are relevant to consider; both countries have made their labour markets accessible for vulnerable yet skilled individuals and are piloting labour mobility schemes (Australia’s Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot and Canada’s Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot). Under these pilots, beneficiaries of international protection in another country are admitted based on a job offer or sector-specific labour shortage. Both countries also collaborate with the NGO Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) as well as within the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, providing refugees with access to skilled migration pathways as a complementary solution to resettlement. In terms of numbers, these pathways are neither significant nor the right tool to singlehandedly counter labour shortages. However, they provide concrete mechanisms that enable refugees to make better use of their talent – for their benefit and that of receiving economies. The EU’s recent promotion of complementary pathways, which includes new funding streams and a recent

High-Level Forum on Legal Pathways to Protection and Resettlement, can hence only be welcomed. This currently untapped skill potential, however, does not solely refer to attracting skilled individuals under international protection who are currently outside of the EU, but it also includes those who are already residing within the Union. As Andrew Rose from the Australian Permanent Mission to the UN asked at Vienna Migration Conference 2022, “why deprive yourself of a large pool of talent when we have labour shortages?” The key to making full use of this potential is to better recognise foreign qualifications as well as re- or upskilling opportunities for refugees and other migrants. Refugees from Ukraine and the favourable work regulations under the Temporary Protection Directive represent an example for the possible swift integration of refugees into the European labour market.

The way forward

Despite the leading role of Canada and Australia, it is apparent that not all strategies may be a perfect fit for the EU or all of its diverse Member States. The language barrier could be one issue – while Canada and Australia are predominantly English-speaking countries, the EU is home to 24 different official languages. Furthermore, it is easier to coordinate labour policies within a single country than for a union of 27 countries, each with its own procedures, labour needs, and skills requirements. In this context and given the competition among Member States when it comes to the race for talent, it is not surprising that they do not want to surrender their competences and position in the driver’s seat. Yet the EU’s substantial internal market, as well as intra-EU mobility, offer distinctive opportunities to attract talent that should neither remain unexploited nor unadvertised. Canada and Australia both have deployed very effective marketing strategies which the EU could emulate. Incorporating coordinated ranking and matching systems, as well as exploring new pathways, should be a priority if the EU wants to catch up in the global race for talent.



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A perfect storm of crises: Why refugee-hosting countries need more support

Low- and middle-income countries hosting refugees are facing unprecedented challenges: A slew of interlocking crises, including regional instability, economic recessions, climate change, and natural disasters, have created a devastating cocktail. Collective action, premised on the principles of solidarity and responsibility sharing, is required to develop new and creative solutions.



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Many refugee-hosting countries, including Türkiye and Pakistan, are facing a perfect storm of crises – regional instability, economic difficulties, climate change, and natural disasters – that are compounding existing challenges. According to UNHCR, the vast majority (71 per cent) of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Yet the costs of multi-year (or even -decade) commitments to hosting refugees are not shared equally, with host countries unable to manage the needs of refugees on their own. International solidarity and cooperation is needed now more than ever to jointly respond to these challenges.

Worsening and renewed conflicts next door

Long-lasting conflicts around the globe have reduced the prospects for refugees to return to their countries of origin. Protracted refugee stays, typically in neighbouring countries to conflicts, can persist over lengthy periods, with durable solutions often proving elusive. A lack of third-country solutions, such as resettlement and true local integration, has left many refugees in limbo, rendering them largely dependent on humanitarian assistance as they have little to no access to formal labour markets and livelihood opportunities in many low- and middle-income host countries. Furthermore, international support for these hosting states has shrunk over time: As new conflicts have cropped up, resources and attention have been, to some extent, diverted away from protracted displacement situations. The decline in external support for host countries is also linked to donor fatigue triggered by the proliferation of conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world. Consequently, host countries, without adequate external resources, have struggled to attain the considerable funding needed to host refugees, which has made the provision of social services, infrastructure, livelihood opportunities, housing, and other essential services to refugees and host communities challenging.

Türkiye remains the world's largest refugee-hosting country with over 3.6 million refugees, primarily Syrians who have fled a lengthy conflict. Pakistan, similarly, has faced intense and persistent migratory pressures – in this case for more than four decades, stemming from conflict and instability in neighbouring Afghanistan. The August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan compelled roughly 300,000 Afghans to flee to Pakistan, the latest episode in a long series of displacements, adding to the 3 million Afghans already in Pakistan, the majority of whom live in precarious socioeconomic conditions.

The economic and social costs of hosting refugees, coupled with unabated and renewed conflicts and political instability in neighbouring countries, have influenced the refugee policy approaches of these host countries considerably. The Turkish government has adopted a policy that leans broadly towards the provision of temporary protection for Syrians and their repatriation, despite concerns over their safe return. In the face of new refugee arrivals, meanwhile, Pakistan has significantly restricted the protection regime for incoming Afghans, refusing to recognise them as refugees, with authorities stating that support from the international community has significantly dwindled. A trend of increasingly restrictive policies and measures targeting refugees has gathered pace among low- and middle-income refugee-hosting states as a response to limited international solidarity and a shrinking funding landscape, particularly for protracted displacement situations that persist for years. Restrictive measures are also

being spurred by increasing perceptions that refugee movements are a threat to national security and a source of instability that could potentially spill over to the host state.

Economic fallout of COVID-19 compounded by Russia's invasion of Ukraine

The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted a devastating socio-economic impact on economies across the board. It has profoundly affected refugee populations and vulnerable segments of host communities, deepening poverty, worsening food insecurity, and stripping away livelihoods. Türkiye is facing a socio-economic downturn, partly due to the pandemic, in addition to a financial recession and soaring inflation. Pakistan, for its part, is attempting to recover from the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, deep political instability that brought the country to the brink of an economic crisis, and floods that have adversely affected agricultural production and reduced demand from its export markets.

With no respite in sight, the economic fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also hit these countries hard. This aggression has disrupted energy and food markets and catapulted the price of food and energy higher. Türkiye's economy has been severely impacted by Russia's actions in Ukraine, as the country is highly dependent on Russia for its energy supply and relies on both Russia and Ukraine for its wheat imports. Pakistan has faced a wheat supply crisis of its own, on top of steep inflation, plunging many parts of the country into food insecurity and poverty.

The twin threats of climate change and natural disasters

Though they account only for a small share of carbon emissions, low- and middle-income countries are bearing the brunt of the consequences of climate change. It is widely recognised that climate change may increase the frequency, intensity, and severity of extreme weather events and natural disasters, interacting with other socio-economic drivers of migration and displacement. Vulnerability is heightened in low- and middle-income countries by rapid population growth, high poverty rates, weak governance, limited resources, and a diminished capacity to respond to either sudden or slow-onset natural disasters and adapt to climate change.

Pakistan is a primary example of a host country hit hard by climate change, with the disastrous floods in the country in the summer of 2022 causing a humanitarian crisis that impacted around 1 in 7 people (approximately 33 million) and destroyed livelihoods and property. The disaster also internally displaced 7.9 million Pakistanis and many Afghan refugees. More than 420,000 Afghans live in the most-affected Pakistani districts, illustrating that such disasters can displace refugees multiple times, alongside members of host communities.

The recent and devastating earthquakes hitting Türkiye and Syria are also a clear demonstration of how a sudden-onset natural disaster can wreak devastation on persons displaced inside and outside of their origin country, along with local

populations. The earthquakes have resulted in large-scale casualties, the destruction of property, and widespread displacement – additionally uprooting refugees living in affected areas. In particular, the earthquake-affected areas of Türkiye, such as Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, and Hatay, host sizable Syrian refugee populations. These localities already faced enormous challenges meeting the needs of Syrian refugees and their own constituencies and are now confronted with vast humanitarian needs caused by the earthquakes.

Natural disasters do not differentiate between refugees and host communities. At the same time, they inflict more severe consequences on those who are most vulnerable, such as those living in poor quality housing or exposed areas of a city. The catastrophes in Türkiye and Pakistan, moreover, are likely to exacerbate rural-to-urban movement as households seek to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. This dynamic will place further pressure on strained urban public services – as these areas already tend to host significant refugee populations.

The disasters in Türkiye and Pakistan drastically underscore how natural disasters and climate change complicate the ability of refugee-hosting countries to ensure adequate standards of protection for refugee populations alongside their own socio-economically vulnerable communities. These response gaps may compound existing tensions between different groups of people, a point that was echoed by Amir Saeed, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, at VMC2022. He noted that “the public tends to be selfish in times of difficulty,” with “kindness in short supply” and the “patience and willingness to be generous towards strangers” negatively impacted. The outpouring of public support that followed the floods in Pakistan and the organisation of ad hoc aid operations by ordinary citizens and volunteer groups in Türkiye in the aftermath of the recent earthquakes, however, provide some cause for optimism.

What can be done to support host countries?

The challenges of Türkiye and Pakistan are emblematic of the problems faced by major refugee-hosting countries more broadly. Both have had their already thin resources stretched to the limit, constraining the ability of authorities to respond effectively to the myriad of crises they face at present. This backdrop has hindered their ability to provide basic social services and ensure an adequate safety net for refugee and domestic populations alike – pointing to the need to strengthen regional and international cooperation. Greater international assistance is crucial to ensuring that the needs of refugees are met.

Cooperation means working towards developing new, resilient, and adaptive solutions to the consequences of climate change. Refugees are more vulnerable and less resilient in the face of climate change and natural disasters, as they already confront precarious conditions and have limited access to services. In this regard, recovery and reconstruction responses to natural disasters such as the floods in Pakistan and earthquakes in Türkiye should include tailored support to affected communities, inclusive of refugees. While the agreement to establish a loss and damage fund at COP27 was a step in the right direction, in the context of refugee-hosting countries, safeguards should be put in place to ensure that resources reach both vulnerable host communities and refugees. To ameliorate

the situation of refugees living in low- and middle-income countries and to avoid pushing refugees and vulnerable segments of the host population into further precarity, a surge in financing, possibly in the form of energy subsidies and targeted cash transfers to refugee and vulnerable host community households, is needed to cushion the blow and support recovery.

While traditional durable solutions to cross-border displacement need to be reinvigorated, they alone are not silver bullets for host states, refugees, and host communities. The need for alternative, creative solutions cannot be understated if these states are to weather the perfect storm of interconnected crises. New ideas and approaches will be needed that address the following questions: How can we mitigate the negative ripple effects of crises like the Russian invasion of Ukraine? How can we incorporate the needs of refugee host states, refugee populations, and host communities facing heightened climatic risks into COP thinking and decision-making? How can the needs and capabilities of refugees be factored into the disaster risk reduction policies and strategies as well as emergency responses of host states? These are just some of the questions that need to be answered if low- and middle-income host countries are to navigate the multi-faceted challenges facing them.

Though the plight of Ukrainian refugees has now garnered the global spotlight, it is important that older displacement crises and the continued efforts of host states in this regard remain in view, too. There needs to be a renewed impetus towards ensuring that the responsibility for hosting refugees is fairly distributed and shared by the international community. Refugee-hosting countries can be bolstered in responding to 'the perfect storm' they are facing if all states recognise their interdependence and pursue policies that emphasise solidarity and cooperation aimed at managing interconnected crises.



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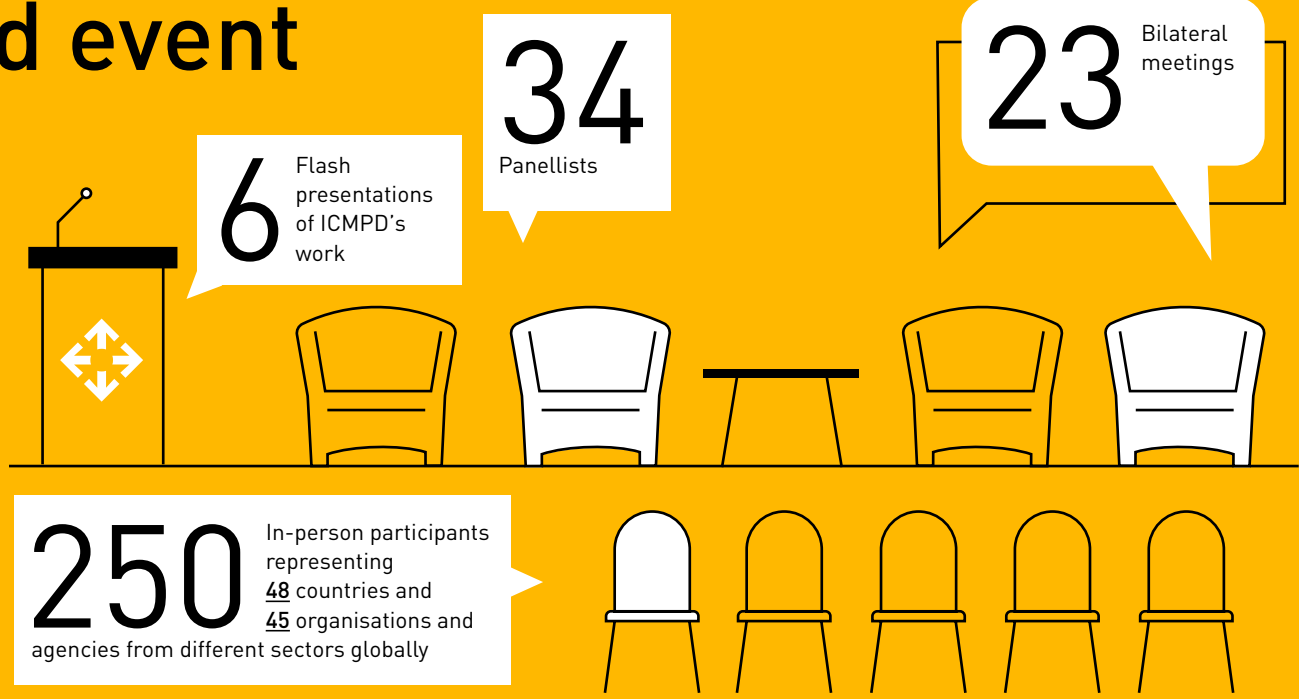


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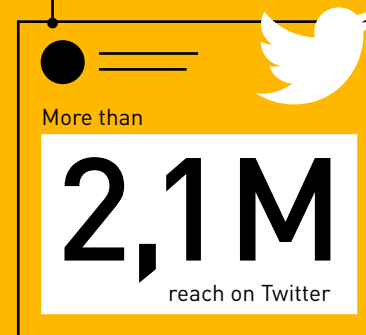
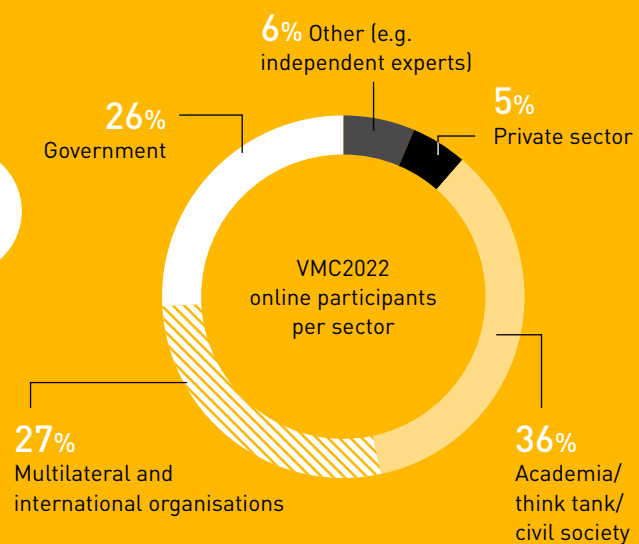


VMC2022 as a hybrid event

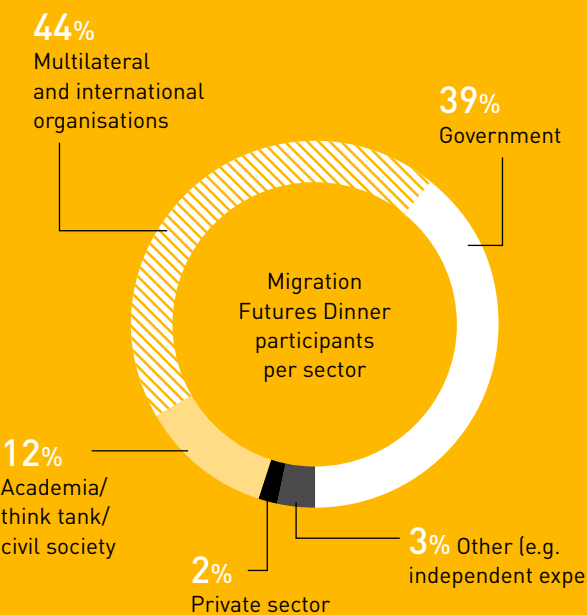


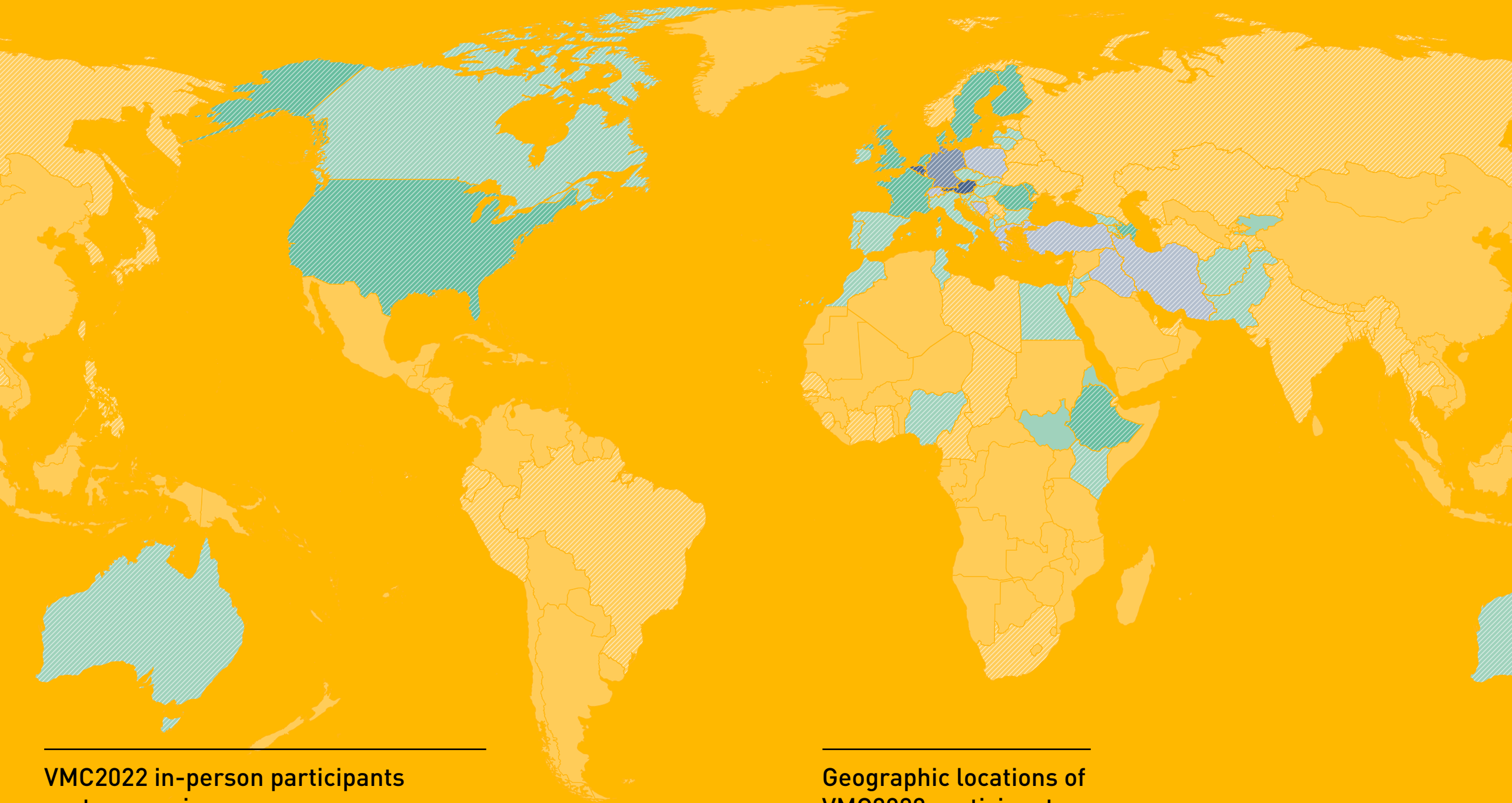
At the venue

Online



At the Migration Futures Dinner

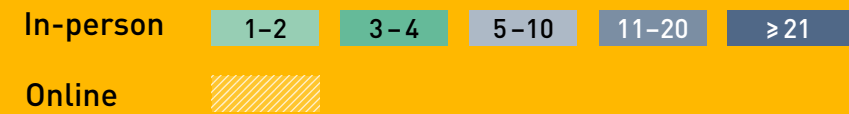




VMC2022 in-person participants sector overview



Geographic locations of VMC2022 participants



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This report condenses the main highlights of VMC2022; as such, it is not an exhaustive summary of the discussions. The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinion of ICMPD.

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We build **evidence-driven** migration policy options and governance systems that engage and equip our partners with **effective, forward-leaning** responses to opportunities and pragmatic solutions to complex, regional migration, and mobility challenges.



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The International Centre for Migration Policy Development is an international intergovernmental organisation purposed with fostering evidence-driven, innovative, and effective solutions to migration challenges.

For nearly 30 years, ICMPD has advised and supported its Member States and partners by developing migration policy inputs and innovative practices, while promoting broad, multisectoral cooperation on migration and mobility governance. ICMPD has served as an essential partner to its Member States, associated countries, as well as partners and collaborators in Europe, along migration routes and in key regions connected by migration. ICMPD provides platforms for dialogue and engagement, delivers expertise and evidence, and supports the development of sound, innovative migration policies, and governance systems.

Its headquarters is in Vienna, with a mission in Brussels, regional offices in Malta and Türkiye, and 28 field and project offices. ICMPD has nearly 485 staff members and is active in over 90 countries.

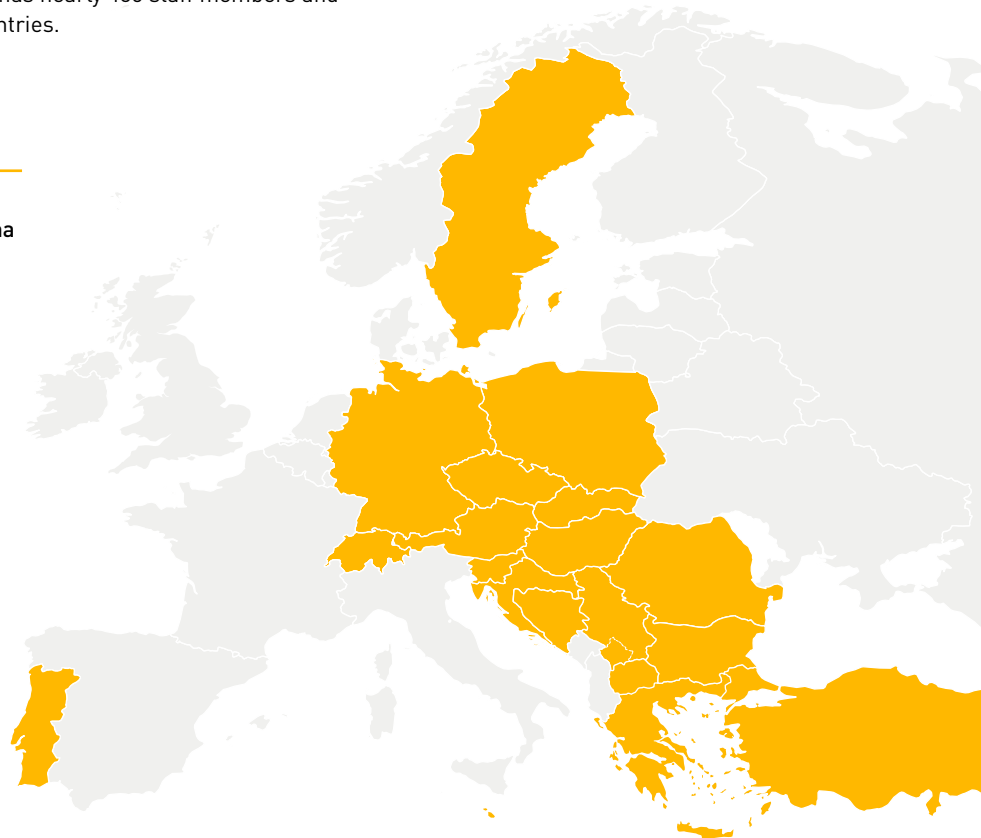
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Member states

 **485**
staff members

 **28**
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- Türkiye



VMC Team

The Vienna Migration Conference is ICMPD's annual flagship event, and its culmination is the sum of efforts from the organisation's best and brightest across teams and locations.

The core organising team, under the leadership of the Policy Unit, is situated within the Directorate for Policy, Research and Strategy. The Brussels Mission and Regional Offices, furthermore, contribute strategic support.



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The Vienna Migration Conference is ICMPD's annual flagship event and a premier platform for high-level discussion on migration in Europe and beyond.

Every autumn VMC offers an indispensable opportunity to discuss unfolding geopolitical dynamics, global trends, and the current EU migration agenda.

Making use of ICMPD's wide-ranging expertise and global network, VMC convenes politicians, senior officials, experts, and practitioners from governments, international organisations, civil society, academia, the private sector, and the media to debate the most pressing issues of migration governance.

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