

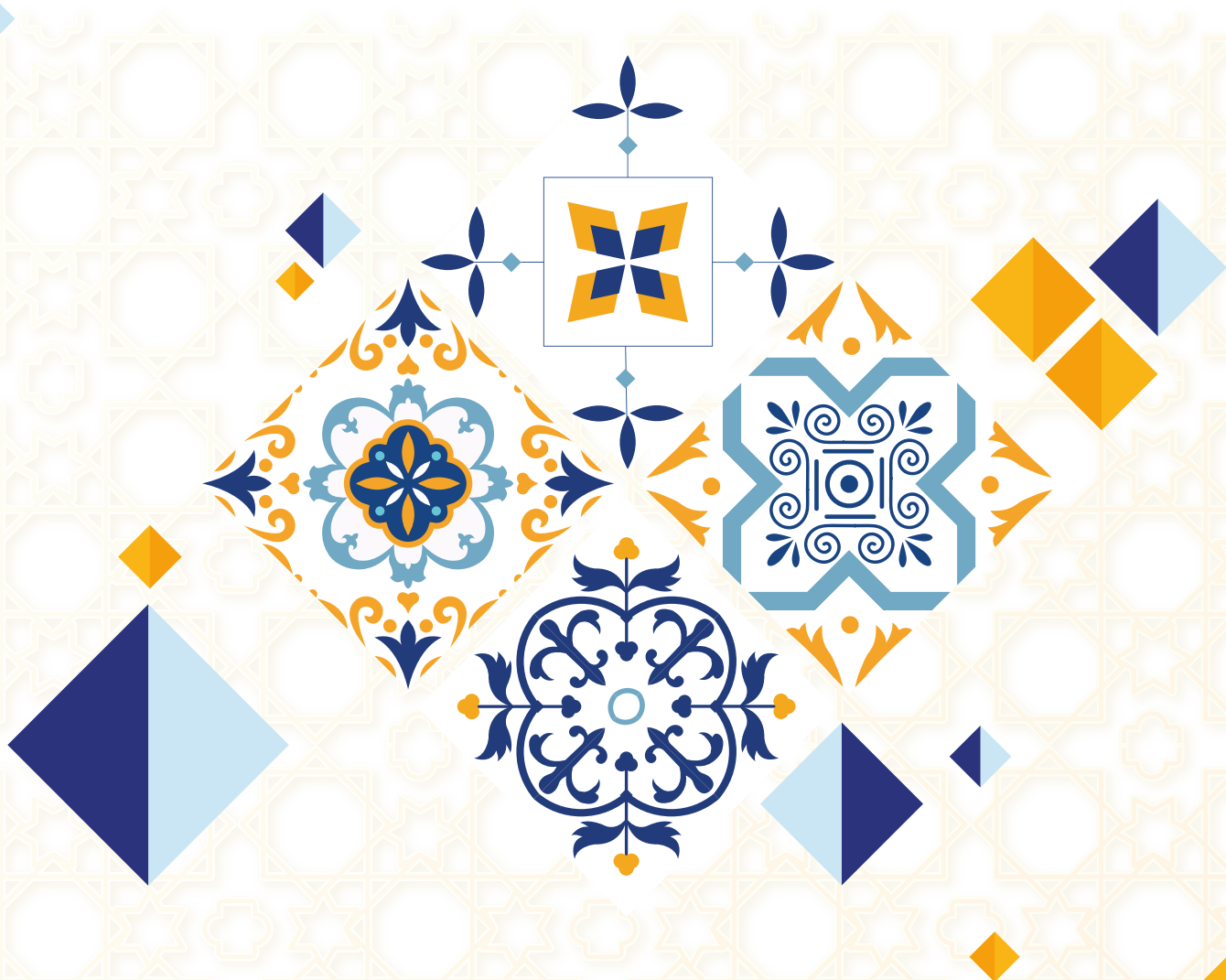
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# Re-balancing migration narratives: key lessons on communication from EUROMED Migration V

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# Executive summary

- ◆ This report overviews and discusses the key findings from the original research of the EUROMED Migration V programme on migration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
- ◆ As part of the programme, eight reports were published, each dedicated to a different facet of migration narratives and each offering an original contribution that can help communicators offer a more balanced set of migration narratives.
- ◆ A wide range of theoretical and empirical findings are offered on attitudes to immigration, propensity to emigrate, and the role of narratives in affecting both.
- ◆ Key recommendations include:
  1. Narratives are an inescapable part of humanity's attempts to understand their own reality. Policymakers and communicators should prioritise the effective use of narratives in their work to be understood and believed.
  2. As demand for understanding an issue increases, multiple, competing narratives may simultaneously become popular. As such, the popularity of narratives must be used as a gauge of public opinion with extreme caution.
  3. A narrative's popularity is partially reliant on its plausibility: both in terms of being internally theoretically logical and supported externally with evidence. In short, facts—when combined with compelling emotions and motivation values—do matter.
  4. Communicators and policymakers should construct their narratives and make their points around the recipients' own pre-existing cognitive pillars rather than challenge them or try to recreate them from scratch.
  5. Regarding attitudes to immigration, appealing to common interest rather than self-interest, appealing to conformity rather than diversity, emphasising common ground, and eliciting empathy are most consistently shown to be effective narrative frames. A range of less effective approaches are also highlighted.
  6. Emotions, when carefully selected, can be used in communication to make one's messages and narratives more resonant and impactful on both attitudes and behaviours, supporting policy objectives via persuasion.
  7. Regarding the predictors of regular and irregular emigration, objective economic indicators like income and employment are shown to have weak predictive power when other factors are controlled for, highlighting the importance of thinking beyond just economics when designing policy interventions.
  8. The predictive power of psychological variables and narratives is demonstrated, which should be incorporated into policy design.
  9. When communicating on emigration, move from a security awareness-raising approach to a values-appeal persuasive approach because migrants: (1) vastly overestimate their chance of fatality while migrating, so awareness-raising is likely to increase the chance of irregular migration; (2) come from situations of security risk, making security-based arguments relatively weak; (3) likely highly value self-direction and other openness and self-enhancement values.
  10. Policymakers should begin to collect data on the values-basis of would-be irregular migrants using existing academic psychological schema. Doing so will allow for the creation and testing—both beforehand and during impact assessment (Dennison, 2020)—of more persuasive messaging.



# Immigration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region: what people believe and why

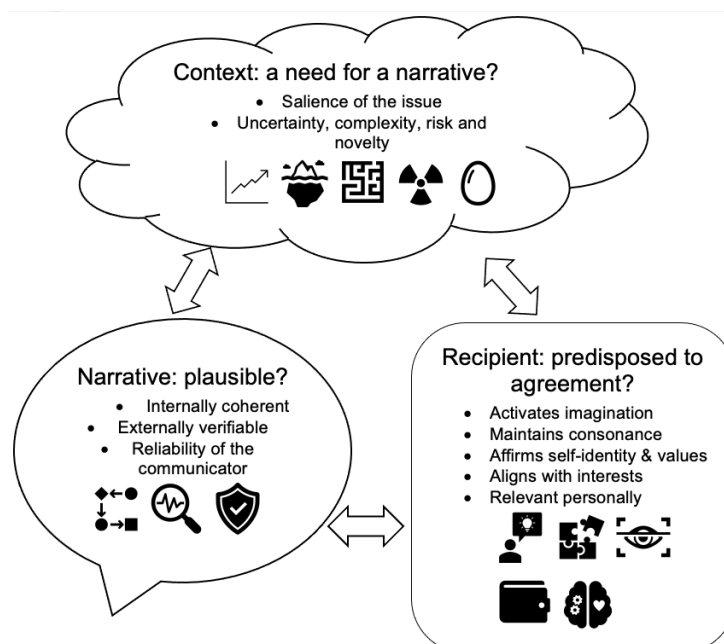
The first report (Dennison, 2021a; also, 2021b) asked what narratives are, which immigration narratives people living in the Mediterranean believe, and why. Narratives are increasingly cited by international organisations, NGOs and governments as one of the most important topics in migration policymaking today. Moreover, narratives are assumed to strongly affect public opinion and behaviour. However, the concept of narratives is typically underspecified, with relatively little known about why some narratives become popular and what narratives people actually believe.

This report drew on recent scholarly advances to better specify what narratives are and to explain variation in their popularity before considering how their effects on migration policy preferences varies. Narratives are defined as: *selective depictions of reality across at least two points in time that include a causal claim*. Furthermore, narratives are:

- ◆ Necessary for humans to make sense of and give meaning to complex reality;
- ◆ Generalisable and applicable to multiple situations, unlike specific stories;
- ◆ Distinct from related concepts such as frames and discourses;
- ◆ Implicitly or explicitly normative, in terms of efficacy or justice
- ◆ Essentially limitless in number, but with few gaining widespread popularity

A novel theoretical framework was then offered to explain variation in the popularity—in terms of the proportion of individuals believing them—of narratives (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the popularity of narratives (from Dennison, 2021b: 9)



The report then considered the popularity of eight simple migration narratives in ten countries across the Euro-Mediterranean region<sup>1</sup> today using recent World Values Survey data. These eight narratives—four positive, four negative—are that immigration has had the following respective effects on respondents' countries:

1. "Filled important job vacancies"
2. "Strengthened cultural diversity"
3. "Offered people from poor countries a better living"
4. "Given asylum to political refugees who are persecuted elsewhere"
5. "Increased the crime rate"
6. "Increased the risk of terrorism"
7. "Increased unemployment"
8. "Lead to social conflict"

While all eight of these *tend* to be believed by respondents, there are important, and perhaps surprising, national and regional differences in the extent. Finally, the extent to which belief in each of these narratives affects one's preferred immigration policy is tested. With some national exceptions, five of the narratives are particularly impactful—one positive: that immigration has "strengthened cultural diversity"—and three negative: that immigration has "increased terrorism", "increased the crime rate", "lead to social conflict"; "increased unemployment. The other three—on helping people from poorer countries, filling jobs and asylum—make far less difference.

*This report recommended that:*

1. Narratives are an inescapable part of humanity's attempts to understand their own reality. As such, policymakers and communicators must prioritise the effective use of narratives in their work to be understood and believed.
2. As demand for understanding an issue increases, multiple, competing narratives may simultaneously become popular. As such, the popularity of narratives must be used as a gauge of public opinion with extreme caution.
3. A narrative's popularity is partially reliant on its plausibility: both in terms of being internally theoretically logical and supported externally with evidence. In short, facts—when combined with compelling logic—*do* matter.
4. However, other factors matter too: communicators and policymakers must construct their narratives and make their points around the recipients' own pre-existing cognitive pillars rather than challenge them or try to recreate them from scratch.
5. Individuals across the Euro-Mediterranean are likely to agree with most *plausible* positive and negative narratives on migration simultaneously. However, only some narratives effectively change preferences: from this preliminary evidence emphasising (or, more difficult, debunking) the five selected narratives is probably the quickest way to change policy preferences.
6. Future research should robustly test these effects and those of other narratives on political attitudes and behaviour (including *emigration* preferences and behaviour, including via the use of experimental evidence or more complex narratives and storytelling.

This report on immigration narratives built on several previous ICMPD reports on attitudes to immigration that have overviewed the available data across the region and the central theories of attitudinal formation (Dennison and Dražanová, 2018), looking at how attitudes to immigration affect immigration politics in both Europe (Dennison, 2019a) and the Southern Partner Countries (Dennison and Nasr, 2020), how migration communicators can use values to affect attitudes (Dennison, 2020a) and how policymakers can measure the impact of interventions, including to do with public attitudes (Dennison, 2020b).

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<sup>1</sup> The group of countries participating in the ICMPD's EuroMed Migration V programme, including the European Union and the "Southern Partner Countries" of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Lebanon, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Republic of Tunisia



# Strategic Communication for Migration Policymakers: Lessons from the State of the Science

The second report (Dennison, 2021c; also, 2022a) asked what the state of the science could teach us about what approaches to strategic communication on migration are likely to be more or less effective. The need for strategic communication in migration policymaking is increasingly widely recognised. Whereas until recently there was relatively little academic evidence on what forms of migration communication are effective, the past few years have seen a large amount of new experimental evidence based on the robust testing of various migration communication strategies. This report overviewed 84 recent experimental studies on how communication interventions affect attitudes to immigration, the vast majority published since 2015 and a large proportion since 2020. It categorises their findings into nine strategies.

Appealing to common interest rather than self-interest, appealing to conformity rather than diversity, emphasising common ground, and eliciting empathy are consistently shown to be effective. Fact-checking on the effects of migration and eliciting emotions are mostly shown to be effective, though there is some contrary evidence, as is appealing to identity, although this is not always applicable. By contrast, emphasising diversity is consistently shown to be ineffective, while correcting information about migrant flows and appeals to self-interest in migration are mostly shown to be ineffective.

These findings—as well as more specific findings regarding when such effects may take place or be more powerful, how they mediate other effects and so on—are summarised in Table 1. The effects of certain types of messengers and eliciting empathy have been relatively understudied, despite the emphasis placed upon them outside of academia. Other strategies emphasised outside of academia that remain relatively under-tested include: focussing on personal (rather than political) values; focusing on hope, positivity, and solutions; avoiding repeating opposing ideas; and the use of storytelling (though some studies listed above have tangentially looked into this). Future research should robustly test these theories as well as considering how such effects vary by type of media, such as social media.

**Table 1. Overview of experimental findings on migration communication strategies**

Strategy	Evidence on effectiveness	Contingencies, mediations, and specificities
Correcting information on stocks/flows	mostly ineffective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shown to be ineffective when combined with immigrant's unemployment rate or revenue information.</li><li>• More effective when exposure was longer.</li><li>• Information on flows shown to lead to greater negativity than stocks.</li></ul>
Fact checking on effects of migration	mostly effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More effective when exposure was longer.</li></ul>



Eliciting emotions	mostly effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•More effective when exposure was longer.</li><li>•Shown to be more powerful than information</li><li>•Correcting information works less when emotions have been elicited</li><li>•Anxiety amplifies effects of negative news</li><li>•Emotive language shown to have effects</li></ul>
Appealing to self-interest	mostly ineffective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•“Self-interest” economic concerns are primarily via concerns on fiscal or welfare burdens, rather than job competition.</li></ul>
Appealing to common interest	effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Both economic and otherwise are shown to be effective, if framed as good for country / fellow citizens</li></ul>
Emphasise diversity	ineffective	
Emphasise conformity	effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Migrants shown to be attempting to integrate more powerful than already integrated migrants.</li><li>•Social integration, language and food shown to matter</li></ul>
Types of migrants	effective (when applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Attributes matter less than adherence to rules (regularity) or sense of fairness</li></ul>
Emphasising common ground	effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Bridging shown to be more effective than appeals to political values or information</li></ul>
Eliciting empathy	effective (understudied)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Humanitarian messages shown to elicit empathy</li><li>•Communication based on individuals shown to be more effective than groups or statistics</li></ul>
Messenger effects	mostly ineffective (understudied)	
Appealing to identity	Mostly effective (when applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Contingent on (1) assumptions behind the identity and (2) migrants holding that identity</li></ul>

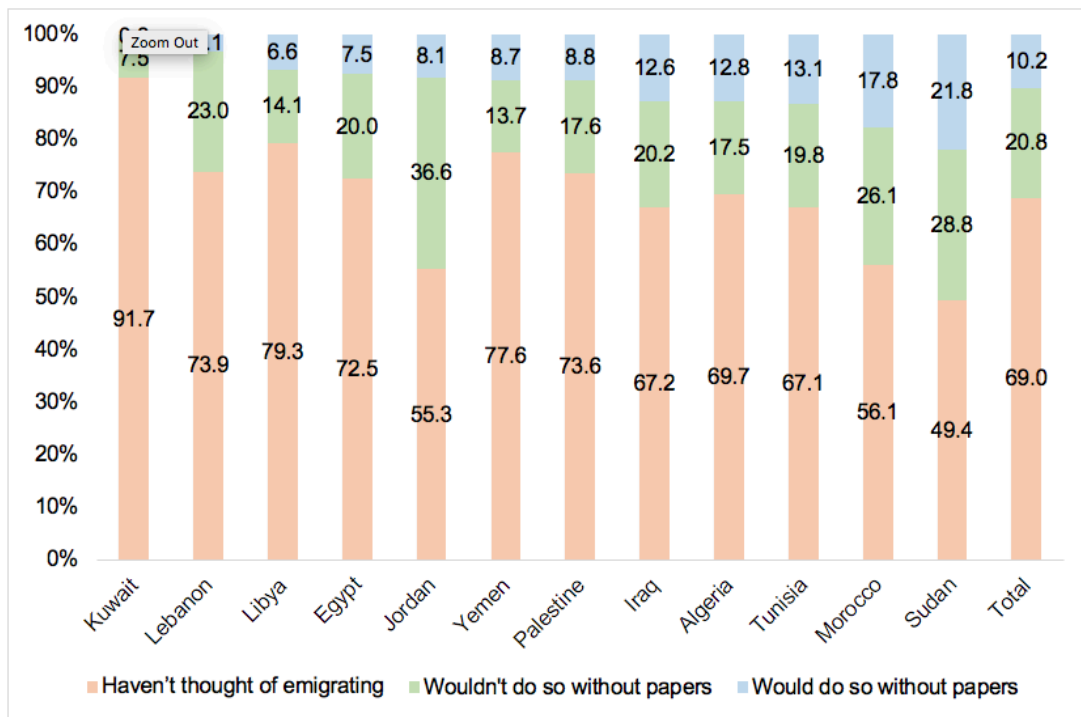




# Re-thinking the drivers of regular and irregular migration: evidence from the Euro-Mediterranean

The third report (Dennison, 2022b; also, 2022c) asked what were the causes of both regular and irregular migration. Understanding the causes of both regular and irregular migration is a key step towards achieving the goals of safe, orderly, and regular migration. This report provided a comprehensive description (e.g. Figure 2) and explanation of both forms of migration across the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond.

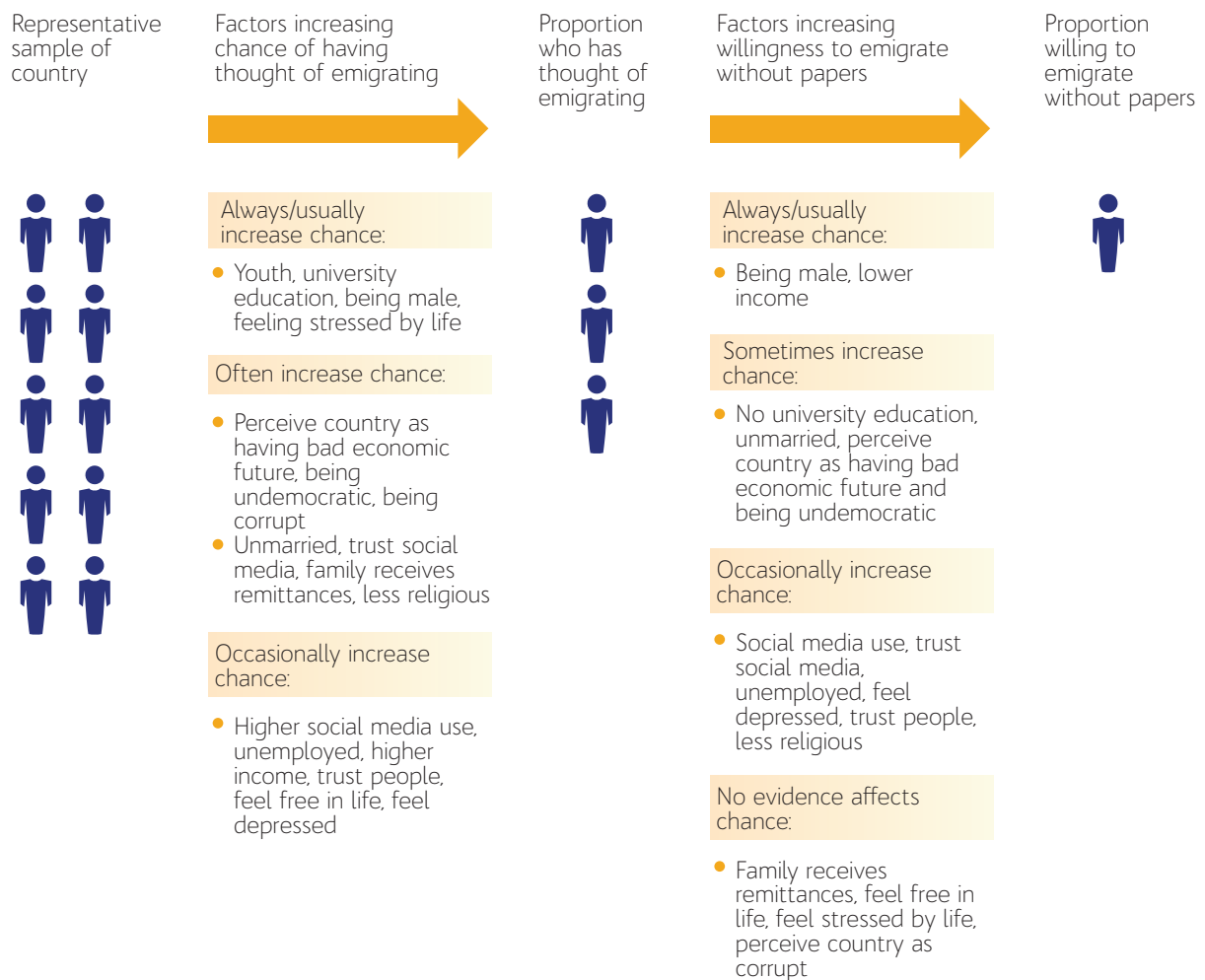
Figure 2. Distribution of desire to emigrate and willingness to do so without papers by country, 2018/19



Notes: Arab Barometer, 2018/19. Weighted. See Fig. 1 for question on desire to emigrate. Those who responded "yes" were then asked "Would you consider leaving [COUNTRY] even if you didn't have the required papers that officially allowed you to leave?". "Total" figure country-level average.

Existing academic explanations for emigration tend to focus on (1) micro-level socio-demographic variables, (2) meso-level facilitating or inhibiting variables, such as access to migrant networks, or (3) macro-level factors such as the host country's economic and political context. To these, this report proposed novel (4) psychological factors, which unlike the other variables are likely to be of particular use to practitioners and communicators. High quality, nationally representative Arab Barometer data across 12 countries—including the ICMPD's Southern Partner Countries of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, and Tunisia—is presented and used to both describe and explain regular and irregular migration (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Factors increasing chance of having thought of emigrating and factors increasing willingness to emigrate without papers, across the MENA region



Overall, the report made five contributions and recommendations:

1. Irregular migration can be conceived of as a two-step process: first wanting to emigrate in general and second being willing to do so irregularly. By doing this, this study disentangles the determinants of each of them.
2. By covering 12 countries the study highlights the commonalities across country contexts and provide a generalisable model of the two-step process, demonstrating which variables measuring each of the four theoretical approaches are shown to affect migration.
3. Objective economic indicators like income and employment are shown to have weak predictive power when other factors are controlled for, highlighting the importance of thinking beyond just economics when designing policy interventions.
4. The predictive power of psychological variables is highlighted, which should be incorporated into policy design and further investigated.
5. Most countries are shown to have *typical* determinants of emigration but those that have suffered war or are extremely rich are shown to be atypical in that the effects of socio-demographics are weakened or even reversed in these situations.

# Using emotions in migration policy communication

The fourth report (Dennison, 2023a; also, 2023b) asked how emotions can be used to make strategic communication more effective. Emotions are regularly cited as vital components of effective strategic communication in the world of migration and beyond. However, until this report, there was relatively little guidance about how emotions should be used in migration policy communication. Emotions are vital to persuasion because attitudes have a cognitive (thinking) component and an emotional (feeling) component. Moreover, eliciting emotions causes involuntary but predictable physiological and behavioural reactions. Emotions can be used in communication to make one's messages more resonant and impactful on both attitudes and behaviours, supporting policy objectives via persuasion.

Communicators should choose the desired emotional reaction according to the desired physiological and behavioural reaction using existing psychological schema, one of which (Figure 4) this report analyses with 32 separate emotions and physiological reactions. Eliciting unsuitable emotions may have adverse reactions from audiences. Communicators can use this report's recommendation and framework to ensure that the emotions, and physiological and desired behaviours of their campaigns are aligned and thus effective. Narratives, personal-based messages, facial expressions and body language, and aesthetics can be used to create emotional resonance and reduce psychological distance. Frames, ordering ("emotional flow"), intensities, and combinations certain combinations can also be used to elicit different emotions with predictable outcomes.

Emotions should be used to make one's argument more resonant but the argument should not be simply based on the emotional reaction—the "appeal to emotion" logical fallacy. Indeed, for emotion-based communication to work it should also use facts, values, identities, and efficacy. Emotion-based communication in the field of migration, although widely used, is largely untested—communicators should test different approaches but also can take lessons from other fields such as corporate, health, and climate change communications. This report critically analysed 10 examples of good emotion-based migration communication, highlighting the different emotions and physiological reactions that they are likely to induce, and to what extent these are in line with the communication campaign's stated objectives.



Figure 4. Plutchik's 1980 "wheel of emotions"

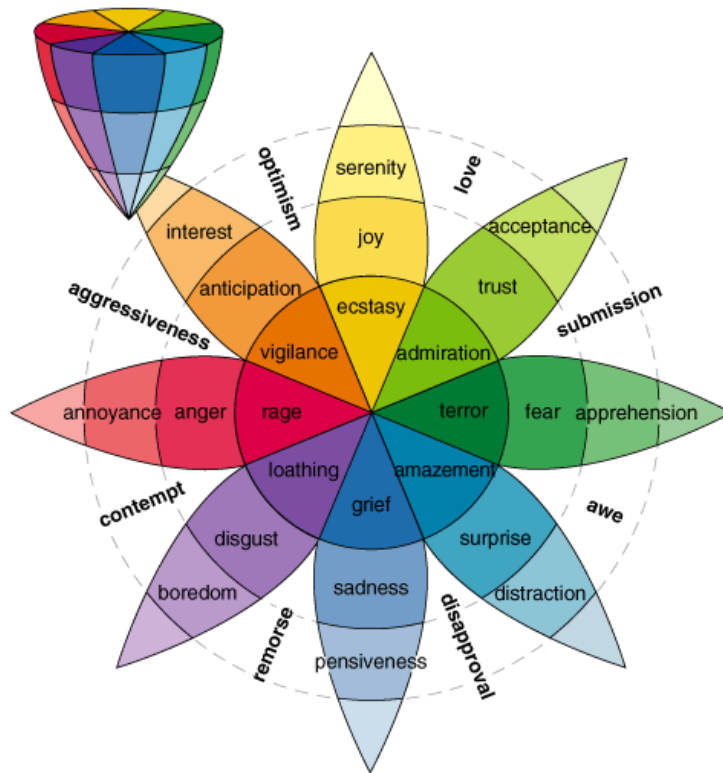
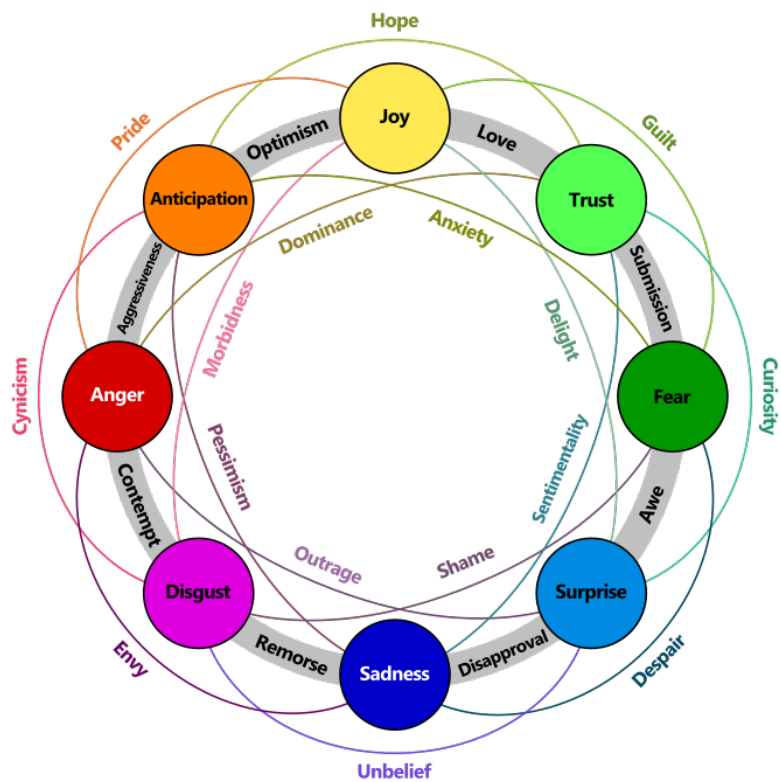


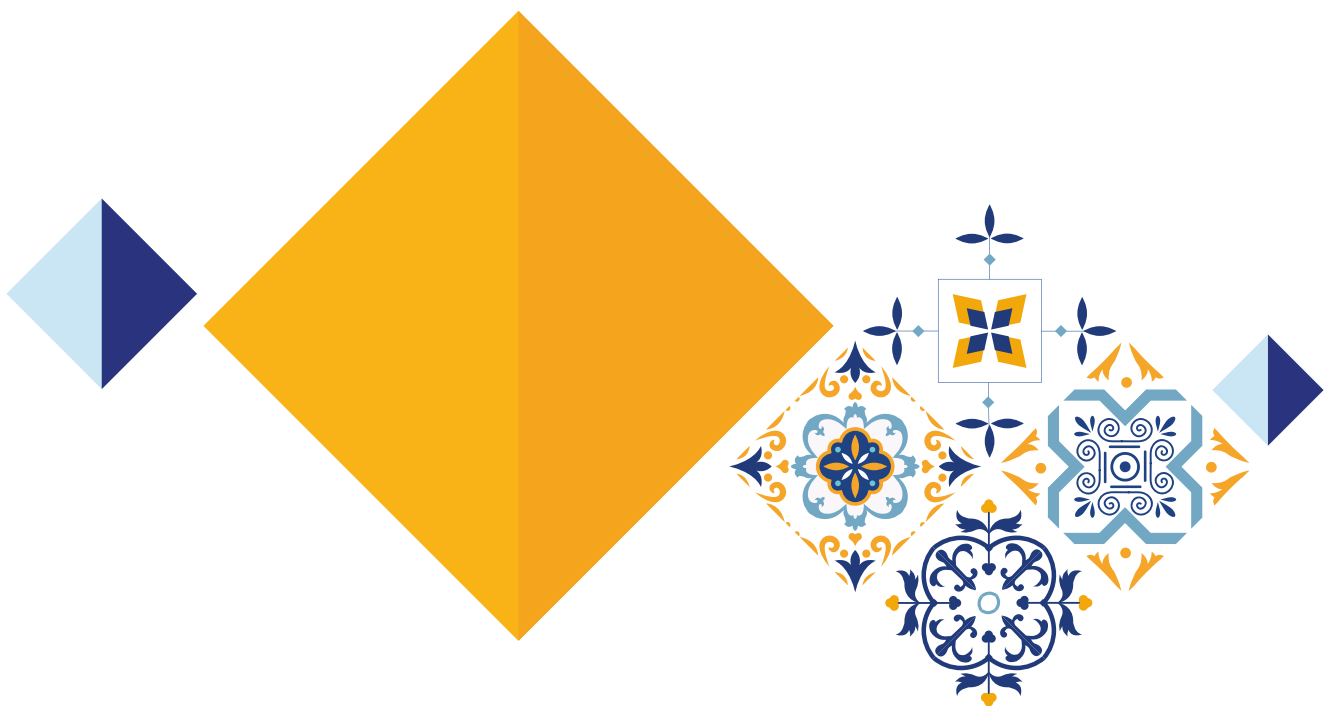
Figure 5. "Dyad" Emotions



Moreover, just as each of the eight primary emotions above have their opposites, so too do the physiological reactions to each of the emotional states, as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Eight opposing primary emotions and their respective physiological reactions**

Plutchik's opposing primary emotions	Opposing physiological reactions
Joy versus sadness	Connect versus withdraw
Fear versus anger	Feel small versus feel big
Anticipation versus surprise	Examine versus jump back
Disgust versus trust	Reject versus embrace



# Communication on irregular migration

The fifth report (Dennison, 2023c) asked how we can achieve a step-change in persuasive communication on irregular migration. Border management is increasingly expensive, complex, contested, and diffuse, occurring more than ever both before and after physical borders. As such, public communication is today a prevalent tool used by actors seeking to achieve migration policy objectives via information, persuasion, and motivating behaviour. Yet we still know relatively little about how public communication can be most effectively used to uphold rights and safety, reduce irregularity, smuggling, and trafficking, and achieve other policy objectives.

Identified current weaknesses of current approaches include poor understanding of target audiences, naïve informative contents, and a lack of impact assessment. As such, this report applied theory and examples to advise policymakers to:

1. Move from a security awareness-raising to a values-appeal persuasive approach because migrants:
  - I. vastly overestimate their chance of fatality while migrating, so awareness-raising is likely to increase the chance of irregular migration
  - II. come from situations of security risk, making security-based arguments relatively weak
  - III. likely highly value self-direction and other openness and self-enhancement values.
2. Collect data on the value-basis of would-be irregular migrants using existing academic psychological schema.
3. Offer alternatives when attempting to change behaviour in general and particularly alternatives that appeal to the values of one's target audience.
4. Persuade with cognitive (thinking) and emotive (feeling) components together and align emotional basis with physiological and behavioural objectives based on existing psychological schema. Recognise limits of fear-based messaging.
5. Use narrative-based messaging that is supported by relevant facts, delivered by trusted messengers, and, where possible, is interactive and audience-lead. Frame messages in understandable, generalisable causal narrative form.
6. Incorporate impact assessment from the beginning using basic, first-principles steps that results in clear and open measured impact on objectives, using existing guides (eg. Dennison, 202).
7. Use such impact assessments to also test for unintended consequences that may impinge on parallel policy objectives, in terms of safe, orderly, and regular migration and the upholding of rights and obligations.

# Communication and Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

The sixth report (Dennison, 2024a) asked how policymakers can communicate most effectively about Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR). AVRR programmes have emerged as a migration governance tool used by many national governments and supranational organisations in the 21st century. They fund—typically but not only irregular or stranded—migrants to return to their origin countries whereafter they provide support aimed at “sustainable reintegration”. AVRR reintegration support is measured by the International Organization for Migration, which administers around 95% of AVRR programmes globally, as “economic”, “social”, and “psycho-social”.

The number of individuals being returned by AVRR schemes from EU member states fell in the years following the 2015-16 ‘migration crisis’ and the Covid pandemic and remains a tiny fraction—around 1 per cent—of the total number of individuals found to be illegally present and around 2.5 per cent of those ordered to return. However, for migratory, political, policy, economic, and diplomatic reasons it is likely to be increasingly used across the Euro-Mediterranean in coming years (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Trends in irregular migration in Europe over time, Eurostat (2023)



AVRR programmes have received several criticisms from academics and activists, outlined in the report. The academic literatures on measuring reintegration, identifying the causes of reintegration success, and identifying the causes of AVRR participation are nascent but provide a basis by which policymakers can understand how to improve AVRR outcomes. Communication has the potential to contribute to at least three AVRR objectives: Increasing participation; Improving programme outcomes; and Affecting public perceptions.

Indeed, communication forms part of EU, IOM, and national governments' AVRR strategies. Effective communication strategies should follow the logic of "describe", "explain", "intervene" regarding the desired object of change. Effective strategies can be deduced according to whether the communication objective is to "inform", "persuade", or "motivate behaviour"—with the former the stated objective of most AVRR communication aimed at potential participants. Previous studies have shown the centrality of "values", "emotions", "narratives", and "impact assessments" to effective migration communication.

This report considers how each of these strategies can be used for reaching each of the three AVRR objectives. In particular, by showing which distinct values communicators should appeal to (such as self-direction, stimulation, universalism, tradition, security, conformity) according to which audience is being targeted (would-be participants or public) and which of the three objectives is being pursued. Which emotions should be elicited and when (trust, anticipation, optimism, and hope, especially).

Furthermore, real-world examples are offered of each type. Given the sensitivity and criticisms of AVRR, communicators need to prioritise clarity, individual rights and agency, and honesty. Further research should robustly test various strategies outlined here and beyond and test real-world AVRR communication in the field to produce quantifiable, bottom-line impact assessments by utilising expertise at the ICMPD and beyond.





# Migration Communication Campaigns: The state of the practice and an open database

The seventh report (Dennison et al, 2024a) offers a theoretical framework and presents an open database of migration communication campaigns. Every year governments, international organisations, and civil society associations produce communications campaigns designed to affect numerous facets of migration. Despite their increasing ubiquity, resources, and—possibly—impact, as well as their profound scientific relevance, such campaigns remain understudied, and existing practice and research is disjointed across various sectors and disciplines. As such, policymakers wishing to design migration communication campaigns (MCCs) have no central pool of experience or expertise to draw upon.

**Table 3. Migration Communication Campaign typology**

Objective	Object of change	Typical specific MCC objectives
Inform	Awareness	Awareness raising of risks of irregular emigration and/or promotion of safe options for migrants and prospective migrants
	Misinformation	Fact-checking; “myth-busting”; correct information on emigration/immigration
Persuade	Individual beliefs	Decrease prejudice; change perceived effects of immigration/emigration; narrative change
	Public preferences	Affect support for migration policies
Motivate	Behaviours	Affect propensity to migrate; promote integration initiatives; act for/against migrants

This report took three steps to overcoming this shortcoming by proposing and starting a unified, inter-disciplinary practitioner and research agenda on migration communication campaigns (MCCs). It, first, overviewed the increased substantive importance and scientific interest of MCCs and outline six themes of research and a typology of MCCs. It then presented a open-access, collaborative database of 301 migration communication campaigns conducted in Europe between 2012 and 2022. The Migration Communication Campaigns Database (MCCD) codes each campaign according to the following—theoretically-justified—variables:

- ◆ Demographics (“when, where, by and for whom?”): time, location, platform, subject actor (institution or person) and impact assessment
- ◆ Objective (“why?”): type, object of change, specific objective, and target audience of the campaign
- ◆ Substantive content (“what?”): topic and subject of interest
- ◆ Message (“how?”): strategies, values, and emotions

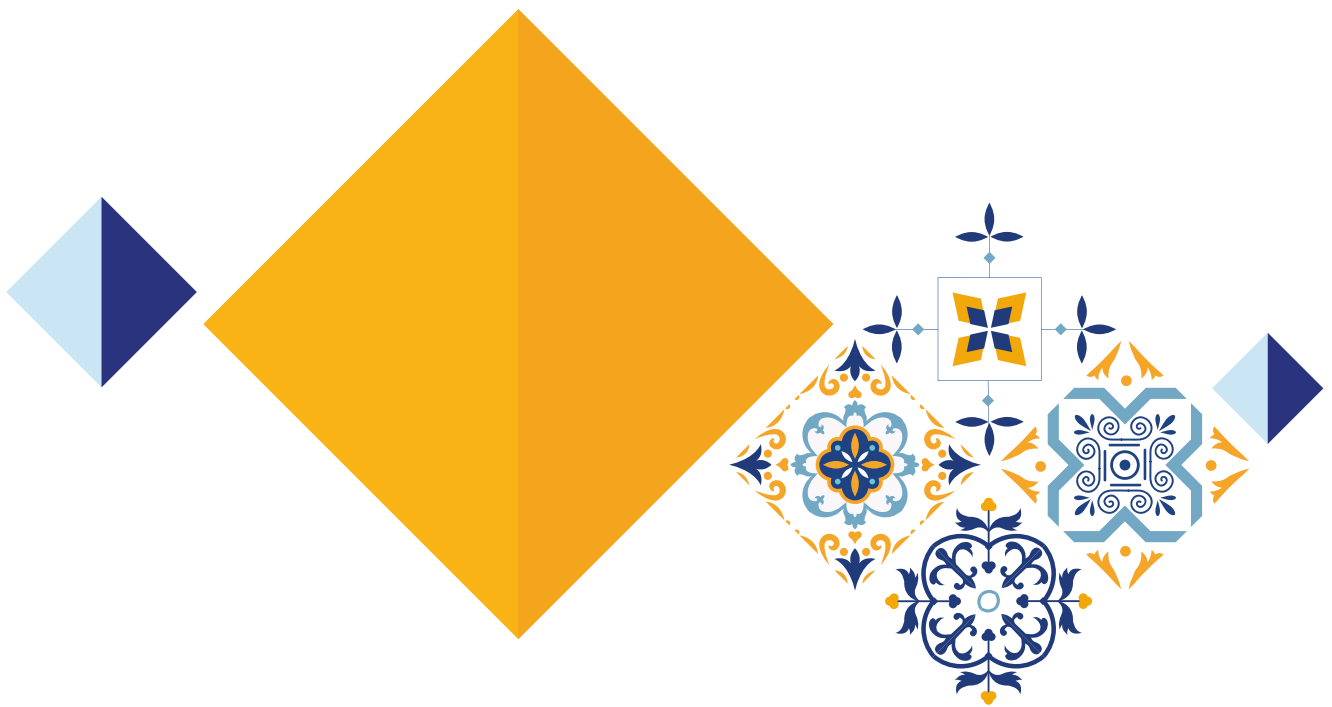


Initial analyses of how the above factors vary amongst the MCCs is then provided, as well as example observations. Findings include that the values-basis of the appeals are most commonly “universalism” and then “stimulation” while the most common emotional appeal is “sadness” (in both cases, contra the recommendations of Dennison, 2020 and 2023b, respectively). Finally, it is argued that the MCCD provides practical understanding of MCCs to practitioners and an opportunity to begin more systematic research in this field. The live MCD can be found at: <https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/the-migration-campaigns-dataset-4/>

Figure 7. Example campaign from the Migration Communication Campaign Database No Walls But Bridges



- ◆ Name: No Walls But Bridges
- ◆ Description: An international grassroots campaign and an open dialogue on social media on sustainable solutions for the integration of migrants, developed in the Migrant Integration Lab Device, a global mechanism for sustainable integration
- ◆ Website: <http://s230464179.onlinehome.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-05-23-Final-Report-Campaign-No-Walls-but-bridges-Migrant-Sustainable-Integration-Le-Guern-Petrache.pdf>
- ◆ Email: [contact@b1-akt.com](mailto:contact@b1-akt.com)
- ◆ Language: English
- ◆ Number of years: 1
- ◆ Year: 2019
- ◆ Number of countries: 1
- ◆ Country: France
- ◆ Geographical coverage: National
- ◆ Media: billboard; social network
- ◆ Subject actor type: Academic institution; private company;
- ◆ Subject actor name: B1-Akt; Ecole des Ponts Business School
- ◆ Objective type: inform; persuade
- ◆ Object of change: awareness; beliefs and perceptions
- ◆ Target audience: population of destination country
- ◆ Content: incorporation; diversity
- ◆ Subject of interest: immigration
- ◆ Strategy: inform



# Emigration narratives: what migrants believe and why it matters

The eighth report (Dennison, 2024b) asks why do some people choose to migrate and some people not? Why are some willing to do so via irregular channels and some unwilling? Answering these questions allows us to design better interventions to achieve migration policy objectives such as “safe, regular, and orderly migration”. It also helps us answer profound scientific questions using the timeless yet increasingly important case of migration.

Given the salience, uncertainty, complexity, risk and novelty of migration—as well as its emotive and value-driven nature—we can expect narratives to play a powerful and rich role in emigration decisions. This report built on recent findings and cutting-edge data to investigate the role of narratives in affecting variation in various forms of migration behaviour. It uses the Swiss-Subsaharan Migration Network’s *S-SAM Survey – Health, Migration, and Uncertainty* (Adetutu et al, 2021), which asks individuals in major origin countries about their migration plans and narrative beliefs, amongst other things.

**Table 4: Migration propensities: aspirations, plans, preparations**

	Overall	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa
No aspiration	96	92	31	168
Aspiration but no plans	80	110	26	106
Plans but no preparation	504	484	529	499
Preparation	320	314	414	227
Total	1000	1000	1000	1000

**Table 5: Irregularity willingness and method**

	Overall	Aspiration only	Plans only	Preparation
Willing to travel without documents	73	29	59	106
Unwilling to travel without documents	927	971	941	895
Total	1000	1000	1000	1001
Method ( <i>“willing” only</i> )				
Irregular border crossing	215	273	234	193
Bribing officials	121	00	85	162
Overstaying Visa	543	546	553	534
Making a false asylum claim	380	273	362	404

Despite widespread migration aspirations, plans, and preparations (Table 4), relatively few (73 per cent overall) in any country would be willing to travelling without papers (Table 5). The report overviews the various methods by which individuals plan to migrate irregularly, before considering motivations, push factors and challenges. Notably, minorities believe they will be deported (even amongst those who plan to migrate irregularly, though the proportion is higher) and fewer expect exposure to any health risk during the journey

The report then outlines the twenty narratives and the extent to which they are believed by various groups. Models are run—first, without narratives—that consider various socio-demographic, economic, and psychological determinants of emigration and irregularity. Models showing the effects of the 20 narratives on migration behaviour and irregularity are then presented. These models not only confirm the strong effects of narratives on emigration decision making, but suggest which narratives communicators should emphasise or undermine to affect the recipients' behaviour.

The most powerful narrative to increase migration propensity is 'Coming from [country], I have a right to asylum in Europe and the USA' whereas for irregularity it is 'It's easy to get to Europe overland'. By contrast, the most powerful narrative to decrease migration propensity is 'Home is home, even if I'm not rich' whereas few narratives have a negative effect on irregularity.' Moving forward, practitioners should test the extent to which belief in the narratives that they wish to use are associated with the migratory behaviours that they wish to change, not least because several of the narratives tested here are shown to—in some cases, surprisingly—have little effect whereas others have strong effects. Academics and practitioners should cooperate to produce further research that experimentally tests the effects of narratives and communications that use them given the grave importance of the subject matter and its scientifically profound implications. Furthermore, the relationship between the belief in narratives and broader psychological predispositions and emotions should also be investigated.



# Discussion

This report overviewed and discusses the key findings from the original research of the EuroMed V programme on migration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region. As part of the programme, eight reports were published, each dedicated to a different facet of migration narratives and each offering an original contribution that can help communicators offer a more balanced set of migration narratives. A wide range of theoretical and empirical findings are offered on attitudes to immigration, propensity to emigrate, and the role of narratives in affecting both.

Furthermore, the report produced a large number of key recommendations. Narratives are an inescapable part of humanity's attempts to understand their own reality. Policymakers and communicators should prioritise the effective use of narratives in their work to be understood and believed. As demand for understanding an issue increases, multiple, competing narratives may simultaneously become popular. As such, the popularity of narratives must be used as a gauge of public opinion with extreme caution. A narrative's popularity is partially reliant on its plausibility: both in terms of being internally theoretically logical and supported externally with evidence. In short, facts—when combined with compelling emotions and motivation values—*do* matter. Communicators and policymakers should construct their narratives and make their points around the recipients' own pre-existing cognitive pillars rather than challenge them or try to recreate them from scratch.

Regarding attitudes to immigration, appealing to common interest rather than self-interest, appealing to conformity rather than diversity, emphasising common ground, and eliciting empathy are most consistently shown to be effective narrative frames. A range of less effective approaches are also highlighted. Emotions, when carefully selected, can be used in communication to make one's messages and narratives more resonant and impactful on both attitudes and behaviours, supporting policy objectives via persuasion.

Regarding the predictors of regular and irregular emigration, objective economic indicators like income and employment are shown to have weak predictive power when other factors are controlled for, highlighting the importance of thinking beyond just economics when designing policy interventions. The predictive power of psychological variables and narratives is demonstrated, which should be incorporated into policy design. When communicating on emigration, move from a security awareness-raising approach to a values-appeal persuasive approach because migrants: (1) vastly overestimate their chance of fatality while migrating, so awareness-raising is likely to increase the chance of irregular migration; (2) come from situations of security risk, making security-based arguments relatively weak; (3) likely highly value self-direction and other openness and self-enhancement values.

Policymakers should begin to collect data on the values-basis of would-be irregular migrants using existing academic psychological schema. Doing so will allow for the creation and testing—both beforehand and during impact assessment (Dennison, 2020)—of more persuasive messaging.

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