

## 5<sup>th</sup> EUROMED Migration Workshop for public communicators

### *Understanding the governance of migration narratives in the Euro-Mediterranean region*

10-11 November 2022

Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco

Session 3– *Professionalisation: views of academia on communication and migration narratives:*  
***It's all about content – for a sustainable today and tomorrow***

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My presentation is not just *academic* although I have produced 17 books, all interpreting issues for publics, practitioners, and policy-makers. It reflects 47 years full time *professional* experience at local, national, regional and international levels, in *professionalized* executive roles in migration, refugees, human rights, integration, and governance –from cooperating with the city of Seattle to achieve highly successful integration of an entire refugee community to leading campaigning that brought the International Convention on rights of migrant workers into force, now with 58 States Parties –including our host country and 11 others represented here. --and a majority of States on this continent. I've been a migrant worker by definition for 33 years. And a migrant family entrepreneur, currently with responsibility for operations and assets on two continents.

So I see it not just from academia, but from a life of narrative building and communicating –working with press, radio, TV, local government, civil society, migrant and refugee groups, national officials, and international organizations.

An essential component of my work over all these years has been articulating narrative – the story and stories to communicate and explain reality, history and what to do to make it right.

So, my key message is: on migration narrative and communication, it's all about content. First and foremost all actors need to convey messages with values-based, accurate, comprehensive content. Here the medium is not the message... the message is the message.

The GMPA team has been engaged in a 6-year research effort with UNESCO and ECCAR (European Coalition of Cities Against Racism) comprising global law policy and practice review, detailed examination of 22 cities across Europe and review of actions in more than 40 cities.<sup>1</sup> We found that the critical ingredients –call it *content*– of the *welcoming city* migration narrative comprise 8 essential elements:<sup>2</sup>

1. assertion of fundamental human rights of all and inclusive sustainable-city *values*;
2. an accurate and comprehensive portrayal of *reality*;
3. emphasis on migrant and refugee *contributions* to sustainable cities and communities;
4. *inclusion* of migrants and refugees and their participation in shaping the narrative;
5. clear *responses* to fears and apprehensions;
6. *explanations* of city government and other actor action and results;
7. convincing *discourse and action* by leadership; and
8. ample whole-of-city *strategic communications*.

The starting point is that it is all about all actors: all people in the neighborhoods, the city, the country. All are **stakeholders**, they all know it, and they believe it whether they get it right or wrong. They all have opinions and many if not most have personal stories –their own or in their family histories. The narrative must include them and respond to real concerns and apprehensions. This narrative and communications are about the *whole of society* and *whole of government*. That means communicating that it is all about people, their situations and their concerns. That means likewise referring to values, rights, security, sustainability, well-being of all.

1 See: Kadysheva, O. (2022). Cities and migration: comprehensive study of cities welcoming migrants and refugees. *Revista Tecnológica - Espol*, 34(1). <http://www.rte.espol.edu.ec/index.php/tecnologica/article/view/919>

2 Taran, Neves de Lima and Kadysheva (2016). *Cities welcoming refugees and migrants: enhancing effective urban governance in an age of migration*. UNESCO-ECCAR-GMPA. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002465/246558e.pdf>

What I miss in such conferences is two of the most fundamental elements of reality—thus of narrative:  
1) migrants are people with rights, identities, skills, schooling, and socio-cultural values and riches.  
2) what migrants –immigrants, migrant workers, refugees-- hugely contribute to where they reside: building economies, sustaining development, providing essential services, enriching societies, and providing for well-being well-fare of entire populations.

Immigrants and refugees built countries and cities everywhere in this region. I can give you examples from right here in Rabat. Migrants and refugees are sustaining economies and development across the developed world –and in most countries in the global South as well.

14% of population across all high income countries is born abroad<sup>3</sup>; they are *international migrants* by UN statistical definition. It is nearly double that percent taking into account people of “immigrant origin” – the foreign-born plus those with foreign-born parent or parents. The proportion is higher in work forces and in enterprise creation: a quarter to a half in some Euromed countries, certainly in many cities on the European side.

The value of migrant contributions to the economies and well being of the countries where they reside can be estimated at at least 4.7 trillion (not billion) dollars equivalent annually, measured just by their remuneration.<sup>4</sup> That remuneration derives from employment of skills, education and labour power for the most part developed and paid for by countries of origin –that countries of employment didn’t have to pay for but got ‘for free’ by immigration. For comparison, that figure is greater than the total global annual value of international trade in petroleum, gas and derivatives.

If we want to support public communicators, these essential points must be put at the top and underlined in bold; they are the foundation for all effective and successful communications –especially for wary publics subjected to so much fake news and threatening imagery. If we don’t get it right on the content of the narrative, better communications technology and skills simply mean enhancing ability to do more damage. And hugely serious damage to ‘*our way of life.*’

Communications form and process are important to reach people –but with what? News media and social media are very effective at using latest techniques and technology but I see dominance of images, language and messages of migrants as threats, indeed existential ones. Those who are reaching the people do have narrative message and are effective at communicating it, in news headlines and graphic TV stories as well as viral social media posts.

What did a leader of a Western government say recently about migrants? “an invasion on our southern coast.” News in the same country reported, referring to migrants “independent government inspectors said they saw families sleeping on floors in prison-like conditions that presented fire and health hazards. The inspectors warned of the risk of outbreaks after cases of scabies, diphtheria and other conditions were reported.”<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, in another region, a prominent regional news chain featured a headline last Monday: “*Singapore rescues 300 suspected migrants from sinking boat*”<sup>6</sup>. The logical sequel to those story narratives, also effectively communicated, is *send them all back to Africa – or Mexico, Turkey or Sri Lanka--* no matter where they came from or why. When that is done formally by government, the narrative is unmistakable. For all concerned.

So what’s at stake? Such narratives are sustaining, justifying, indeed driving policy that threatens Europe, the Euromed region and countries elsewhere. It’s not an anodyne threat, it is literally the threat of economic suicide.

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3 UNDESA (2019). *International Migration 2019: Report*.  
[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/InternationalMigration2019\\_Report.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/InternationalMigration2019_Report.pdf)

4 See Taran, P. (2022). *Migration, Human Rights & Sustainable Economies: A Century 21 Agenda*. Revista Tecnológica - Espol, 34(1), pp.193-217. <http://www.rte.espol.edu.ec/index.php/tecnologica/article/view/917>

5 “Prison-like center puts focus on UK’s response to migrants”. ABC News, 5 November 2022  
<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/prison-center-puts-focus-uks-response-migrants-92700953>

6 <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/singapore-rescues-300-suspected-migrants-sinking-boat-3051231>

In France, 368,000 unfilled posts were reported in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2022 --unfillable from the current work force.<sup>7</sup> Employers across EU were struggling to fill 1.2 million posts early this year. By 2030: 6 million more workers will be needed in Germany<sup>8</sup>, 3 million in Italy, 700,000 in small Switzerland.<sup>9</sup> Work forces in the Baltic countries have already declined by from 10 to 20%. In the USA, 11 million jobs are going begging, many more than the total number of 6.5 million persons registered as unemployed, relatively few of whom having the new and evolving skills needed by employers.

Read the business press! Labour shortages and their impacts are a large factor in the 10.2% inflation in the Eurozone and near 8% in the USA, while catastrophic labour shortages in such places as Russia, Singapore and elsewhere have hobbled entire economies, already since last year. I quote: *Even if the impact of the current deficit of workers varies by region and sectors, it is without doubt **one of the biggest challenges of modern history**. A persistent labour and skills deficit will largely hobble global capacity for post-pandemic recovery.*<sup>10</sup>

The EU population -even with net immigration-- shrank in both 2020 and 2021<sup>11</sup>. That trend will continue. All countries across Europe are below or well below 'zero population growth' (ZPG) fertility rate. Departures from work forces in all these countries are accelerating contrasted with ever smaller numbers of youth entrants. Note: Lebanon, Tunisia, Turkey as well as Israel are below ZPG, also are nearly all GCC countries, Morocco is approaching.

Yet many countries have powerful political movements as well as government leaders proposing --with plenty of narrative and communications-- to stop immigration, deport migrants, install regimes of no immigration, and *if* needed, admit only temporary contract workers.

A few countries are acting --and talking-- differently: Canada just announced 1 November its *New Levels Plan* for 465,000 permanent residencies in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025.<sup>12</sup> To quote the indeed appropriate migration communications *narrative* of the minister:

"Last year, we welcomed the most newcomers in a single year in our history. This year's immigration levels plan will help businesses find the workers they need, set Canada on a path that will contribute to our long-term success, and allow us to make good on key commitments to vulnerable people fleeing violence, war and persecution."

– Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

To quote the workforce unions' similarly appropriate discourse::

"Canada's Building Trades Unions are pleased with today's announcement to increase immigration levels in Canada. Historically it has been through immigration that we have been able to grow our workforce, fill our union halls and build Canada's infrastructure. Increased economic immigration is an important step to addressing labour availability across the country and we look forward to continuing to work closely with Minister Fraser and the federal government to find the solutions we need going forward."

– Sean Strickland, Executive Director of Canada's Building Trades Union (CBTU).

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7 Ranstad: Pénurie mondiale de main d'œuvre : causes et impact du manque de travailleurs. France. 17 août 2022 <https://www.randstad.fr/recruteurs/magazine-instant-rh/ressources-humaines/penurie-mondiale-main-doeuvre-causes-impact/>

8 Schattenberg, M. and Bräuninger, D. (2019). Marked decline in the German labour force despite substantial immigration. Deutsche Bank Research. July 5, 2019 [https://www.dbresearch.com/servlet/reweb2.ReWEB;REWEBSESSIONID=C754EA601B1A8D9B98CE5271DDAE963E?rwsite=RPS\\_EN-PROD&rwobj=ReDisplay.Start.class&document=PROD000000000496399](https://www.dbresearch.com/servlet/reweb2.ReWEB;REWEBSESSIONID=C754EA601B1A8D9B98CE5271DDAE963E?rwsite=RPS_EN-PROD&rwobj=ReDisplay.Start.class&document=PROD000000000496399)

9 Swissinfo (2020). "Switzerland could 'lack 700,000 workers' in decade's time" SWI Swissinfo, Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. January 24, 2020. [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/labour-market\\_switzerland-could--lack-700-000-workers--in-decade-s-time/45515066](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/labour-market_switzerland-could--lack-700-000-workers--in-decade-s-time/45515066)

10 Op. cit. Ranstad.

11 See: Eurostat: *EU population continues to decrease for a second year*. 7 November 2022. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/fr/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220711-1>

12 *An Immigration Plan to Grow the Economy*. Government of Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship). Toronto, Nov 1 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>

Add another key factor: “Canada’s aging population means that the worker-to-retiree ratio is expected to shift from 7 to 1 50 years ago to 2 to 1 by 2035.”<sup>13</sup> The trend is similar in the EU and in China as well.

I heard a notion here of *governance of narrative*. That would be a wrong answer on my exam. Governments, certainly those that are democratic and operate under the rule of law, have a governing responsibility to both lead the way on the narrative and to set regulatory parameters to encourage positive discourse and sanction hostile, discriminatory, and exclusionary discourse, especially to repress *hate speech*, xenophobia, and incitement to violence. Desisting from acts and policy of hostility and repression –even violence-- against migrants and refugees is a big part.

There was reference in a previous session to *problematic divides*. I don’t see it so much between levels, rather divides between contending economic interests and political agendas. Migration offers golden opportunities to recruit cheap labour –at all skills levels-- all the more if people are deliberately drawn into or left in unauthorized, unprotected situations. Simultaneously, the topic provides a perfect scapegoat to externalize all problems – many of which are instead driven by policies and practices of governments and their allies and directly impact people, such as reduced social services, deteriorating health care, unemployment of youth and older workers – native and immigrant alike – who are displaced by technological evolution and changes in the location of work.

The so called Populist Right --with high degrees of influence and hands in many governments—hardly represents a divide between levels, rather it has growing convergence local to global. Now with 25 to 40 % or more of the vote in many Western counties –higher in some localities-- also in several BRICS.

Here, I celebrate a country and sing praises to heroes who did get it right –on narrative, policy and communications-- for two decades of significant immigration and growing visible diversity. With two major results: the economy thrived to the extent it was called a tiger economy and social peace reigned.

That country is Ireland. The communications heroes include Presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese along with leadership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish Business and Employers Federation who, together with the Equality Authority and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, welcomed, celebrated and defended immigrants and refugees year round, notably during the annual Irish Anti-Racism Workplace Week of nationwide events, launched each year by a national Presidential address.

Two attributable consequences of that narrative: economic growth approached double digits over a decade with high employment and no racist killings, no attacks on migrant housing or businesses, no anti-immigration populist party getting any traction for twenty years of significant immigration.

The overall narrative, also articulated in the *Ireland National Action Plan against racism, discrimination and xenophobia* was clear, powerful, effective and heard across society in the entire nation.<sup>14</sup> The narrative and actions were integrated with cities and towns while international organizations, notably the ILO, were invited to provide expertise and perspective. The narrative reached every corner of the country –and across the border to the North-- by all media, generating buy-in by mainstream news and buzz in emerging social media.

My brief conclusion –from academic-scientific knowledge, from a century of cities practice, and from my half-century of professional experience: There is no time to loose to ‘get it together’ for a rights-based, inclusive migration narrative and its effective communication to revitalize and sustain economies, development, and social cohesion. Across the Euro-Mediterranean region and everywhere else.

Thank you.

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13 Ibid

14 See government notice re consultations for the new National Plan: <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/017c9-towards-a-national-action-plan-against-racism-for-ireland-public-consultation-2021/>