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## THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF EU MIGRATION POLICY

### Working together: the regional strategy

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### Executive Report

Regions are increasingly relevant actors in migration governance, serving as a linkage between the local and the external dimension of migration in a context where the need for a territorial approach to migration is arising. While traditionally European regions have been mainly focused on the internal dimension of migration policies, they have accumulated a great deal of experience in the external dimension of migration and development in the framework of their international cooperation action which can be a potential asset in the European Union's external migration policy.

Following the CPMR Issue Paper on "[Migration and asylum in EU Regions: towards a multilevel governance approach](#)", the present Issue Paper focuses on the international component of EU Migration Policies. It analyses the external dimension of the EU Migration Agenda and its further development, paying attention to the role that regional authorities could play by linking this external dimension with the territorial dimension of migration policies. It aims to highlight the contribution that regional authorities could make, including through their cooperation and migration policies, as well as their role in EU programmes and policies regarding the external dimension of migration.

To do so, **Chapter 2** briefly presents the changes in the international migration management scenario since 2016. For the first time, the Sustainable Development Goals have included a mention of migration; and the United Nations have launched two Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the EU to analyse the external dimension of the EU policy, especially its political and financial instruments. The paper examines the main components of the EU political and operational approach, paying special attention to the role of regions.

**Chapter 4** emphasises what regions are currently doing in the international arena regarding migration. Regions are not new actors in these fields, and the chapter aims to present experiences in migration, asylum, cooperation and humanitarian assistance linked to human mobility. Identifying and highlighting actions that have been carried out so far is crucial to explore new opportunities.

Finally, **Chapter 5** aims to assess how multilevel governance can be advisable, and why. Fostering a regional strategy on migration, mobility and development to be encompassed within the EU external dimension of migration policies, should be done with the experience and voice of the

regions. Accordingly, a narrative for/from regions and a position on the future EU financial instrument to allow regions' contribution should be developed.

The role of regions and local entities is increasingly appearing in the context of Migration in the International agenda such as in the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. In this context there are **four areas of work** that should be further explored and developed in order to address how regions could strengthen their role in the external dimensions of EU Migration Policy which are as follows:

- **Welcoming and reception policies;**
- **The role of decentralised cooperation;**
- **Contributing to humanitarian assistance in migration and asylum;**
- **Participating in international and regional networks.**

As shown in previous CPMR works, regions are key actors of migration and refugee policies, particularly regarding welcoming, inclusion and integration policies. They do also play an increasing role in international cooperation and international relations. The Global Compact on Migration considers that migration, as a transversal issue, needs a **“whole-of-government approach”** a **“whole-of-society approach”** and **“multi-stakeholder partnerships”** to develop and implement effective migration policies and practices. Additionally, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point out the potential of migration to promote development. However, there seems to be a disagreement on the interpretation of the linkage between the two concepts as development policymakers focus on promoting the development potential of migration both in countries of origin and destination, while governments and the European Commission are increasingly focused on how development can have an impact in reducing some of the push factors of migration.

Due to their knowledge and experience, regions are useful and should be recognised as partners to develop an external dimension of EU migration policy. Member regions work actively on development strategies in their own territory and in the countries of origin, return programmes, and humanitarian work with refugees, that is in line with the goals of EU migration policy, the SDGs and the Global Compacts. Regions also face the basic needs of their de facto population and the challenges of facilitating their incorporation to the society. They should therefore work for increasing acknowledgement of their role on migration and asylum policies and action. Furthermore, EU regions are a resourceful asset in the field as they can provide a diverse point of view, strengthen relations with regions of origin and transit, easily mobilise local actors, and promote decentralised cooperation. The European Union has financial instruments dedicated to the issue of migration, including some in which the role of regions should be increased and strengthened.

Regarding labour issues, The European Commission<sup>1</sup> acknowledges that some of the challenges in the Western Mediterranean are linked to “high youth unemployment in several countries” due to a prolonged economic and financial crisis to environmental problems which has led us to an “employment paradox” where high youth employment coexists with the lack of profiles with necessary skills in the maritime business. Thus, in the Communication of the EC on the delivery of the European Agenda on Migration of 2017 the EC recognizes the need to strengthen legal migration channels with a focus on labour migration and announces the coordination and financing of projects addressing this issue and promoting more effective circular migration. In this context [The Mobility Partnership Facility II](#), implemented by ICMPD, is financing this typology of projects and is addressed

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. Communication on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration, COM (2017) 558 final

to public bodies, whereas, complementary, the AMIF call for proposals for Union Actions extends this priority to non-public bodies and actors.

Furthermore cross-border cooperation within the European Neighbourhood Instrument has the objective of “advancing cross-border integration” and aims to benefit both sides of EU’s external borders. Moreover, migration can become an effective way of promoting development in the countries of origin, if well managed. For the public entities such as regions which are developing decentralized cooperation for development programmes, mainstreaming migration into cooperation is key. Accordingly, **the European Commission programmes and financial instruments should open more room for the regions to reinforce their engagement within the external dimension of EU migration policy.**

With an overview and evaluation of the existing tools and mechanisms to include regions in EU external migration policy and considering their particular strengths with regard to migration management, regions should develop their own vision and strategy on how to work on migration and development. This approach should both foster the development potential of migrants and work with the tools of development policy to reduce some push factors of migration. Regions’ strategies could focus on the following actions:

- ☞ To **share information and relevant experience on migration and development nexus**, and to promote a better understanding of migration flows and migrants’ contribution to development. These processes should include information on the impact of migration-development actions and activities on goals and outcomes, as well as on sustainable development at large and citizen well-being.
- ☞ To **promote better coordination across levels of governments in the migration-development nexus**. National and sub-national governments, as well as global networks and national associations of local and regional governments, have an important role to play to facilitate the coordination and exchange of information, knowledge and experience. Improving cooperation also implies better evaluation and result-oriented actions and increasing transparency.
- ☞ To use **Decentralized Development Cooperation frameworks to improve local and regional policies** in partner and donor countries, and ultimately contribute to SDGs. Regions (and cities) are not just mere implementers of national policies and they could play a key role on promoting sustainable development and policy coherence at scale. Strengthening linkages with migration policies could be done via policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and practitioner experience, along with common projects and actions among others.
- ☞ **Linking development strategies to voluntary and active return**. Reintegration of people in the country of origin after a return (voluntary or forced) can be an opportunity to stimulate the positive effects of migration on development. Supporting the reintegration of migrants that have been returned can be done by fostering the creation and development of non-profit associations in the country of origin which can support the social inclusion of returnees and help them to use the new skills acquired in the EU. The evaluation of this experiences can give some important learnings on the best practices to be replicated.

- ☞ **The involvement of diasporas** in the development of the country of origin is a significant way to maximize the benefits of migrations for the development of the country (and region) of origin. This can be done by promoting a call addressed to migrants' organizations to develop projects that incorporate their skills to some development projects in their country of origin. Regions can be instrumental in recognising and promoting new international links and associated development opportunities.
- ☞ **Resettlement programmes** are a good opportunity to help some of the most vulnerable refugees living in developing countries to start a new life in a context of protection and new opportunities and reducing pressure on public services in countries with a large number of displaced people.
- ☞ **Exchange practices and relevant experiences in supporting refugees' self-reliance** and ending the 'refugee camps approach' in the neighbour countries in the areas from which they fled. That can include investments and job creation initiatives.
- ☞ **Promoting regional networks beyond the EU scenario to address migration challenges.** Regional dialogue to raise shared concerns and challenges and to improve knowledge transfer and identification of practices and initiatives could be useful to reinforce the role of regions regarding migration and asylum policies. Regional networks which include regions of origin, transit and destination could be an important framework to identify risks and provide solutions. It could be useful to achieve common position on specific topics and to transmit them to national (and EU) authorities. Furthermore, the CPMR could promote a political dialogue amongst the European Commission and the EU Member states to reinforce the role of regions on migration and asylum policies, including their external dimension.