# GFMD 2019 Common Space

## Quito, Ecuador - 23 January 2020

## *"Integrated approaches to foster migrants' inclusion for sustainable development"*

### Theme 4 | Promoting migrants' inclusion in host communities: shaping narratives and combatting xenophobia

**Host:** Civil Society

**Thematic Expert:** IOM

Negative narratives on migration have been on the rise in the past few years in many countries and regions of the world. This phenomenon has contributed to a distorted perception of the complex reality of migration, significantly diminishing the visibility of positive impacts of migration within public discourse, while magnifying problems and often stigmatizing migrants as an imaginary homogeneous category of individuals.

In fact, the use of migration in public discourse is often imbued with misinformation, amplified by the reverberation effect of social media. As such, migration has evolved into a polarizing topic of discussion. Public discourse oscillates between discussion on the socio-economic benefits of migration or the national security impacts of migration. Consequently, absent from the mainstream narrative on migration are the varied stories of migration and social integration, both successes and failures. These skewered narratives polarize communities, exacerbate xenophobia, racism and a broad range of discriminatory practices that increase conflictual dynamics within society and hamper social cohesion.

Migration is a reality, whether countries are places of origin, transit or destination– and whether movements are linked to the search for better economic opportunities (including high-level business opportunities), crisis, climate change, or otherwise (research, science, sports). While the social and economic inclusion of migrants in host communities poses a number of challenges, there is ample evidence that migration and migrants contribute significantly to development and prosperity in host communities, as well as communities of origin. The background paper for roundtable 1.2 provides empirical evidence that migrants' social and economic inclusion contributes to social cohesion and prosperity.

It is important that balanced narratives are nurtured to ensure that sustainable models of development can be pursued consistently, and that social cohesion is not impacted by prejudice and misinformation, racism or xenophobia. Fostering trust between host communities and incoming

migrants, countering misinformation with verified facts and allaying the fears of host communities is a necessary focus of attention to create safe spaces for promoting social and economic inclusion.

In this context, it is necessary to explore strategies and partnerships that can be used to encourage objective narratives of migration and migrants, and will also result in more inclusive and harmonious communities. The background paper of the GFMD Government Roundtable 2.1 under the theme *Shaping public narratives on migration and migrants,* presented numerous examples of effective campaigns, strategies and tools to promote a balanced narrative on migration and migrants - developed at national level, or at community level - by cities, civil society groups and the business sector - or very often by multi-stakeholder partnerships among all these actors.

The GFMD Common Space is an opportune occasion to gather all relevant actors around the table to advance the inclusion of migrants in their host communities, not only in the interest of migrants alone, but one that equally serves this interest of the local communities in which they live, and where xenophobia plays no role. Beyond discussing best practices related to facilitating inclusion and building a fair and accurate narrative around migration, this session must examine the link and interface between combating xenophobia and promoting inclusion.

Each stakeholder has a specific role to play in shaping narratives and combatting xenophobia, in this session, the focus will be on how to harness the complementarities of these roles to enhance the inclusion of migrants for the benefit not only of the migrants, but also for the communities that host them.

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**Guiding questions**

**First round**

1. Could you share **one successful initiative** that has been used to counter negative narratives around migration and/or to promote a positive understanding of migration? What challenges or pushback have you faced in its effective implementation? While answering this question, make sure you take also into account the needs of disadvantaged local populations and address their insecurities and concerns.

**Second round**

2. What kind of **partnerships with other key stakeholders** could improve your work in the future to foster positive narratives around migration and migrants? What is, in particular, the role of local actors (including media) in promoting social cohesion, and how can they be supported by businesses, civil society, central and local/regional governments?