In the Mediterranean region, migration is increasingly used by populists for political gains and purposes through fear-mongering, demonizing or migrant profiling. This narrative around migration establishes a clear link between migration and security, thereby legitimizing the securitization of migration policies, based on the grounds of national security interests. Most recently, the fear of political loss caused by a social backlash against the welcoming of migrants has led an increasing number of parties and institutions to adopt a similar language to demonstrate their protection of the interests of the local population first.

Thus, with the security agenda dominating the human and developmental priorities in the Mediterranean region, the lack of a comprehensive human security approach in addressing the migration-security nexus continues to impede effective and sustainable responses. In light of MDRS’s belief that migration requires courageous, dedicated, and comprehensive solutions inspired by shared values, this year’s workshop focused on local governance, youth and media as key actors in advancing new and alternative solutions to common challenges, based on shared responsibility, to tackle the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of mobility for local communities, nations, the region, and future generations.

This year’s workshop brought together 39 participants from eleven countries in the Mediterranean region, including members of the University of Sfax, the partner institution for this event, as well as representatives from governments, regional institutions, mayors and the civil society.

Based on the discussions and outcomes of the workshop, the MDRS formulated the following statement on the roles of local governance, youth and media related to migration and security.

---

1 The Mediterranean Discourse on Regional Security (MDRS) is a network of independent academics and professionals who, under the auspices of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, focus on security issues in the Mediterranean region. The MDRS aims to develop academic analysis and perspectives and to offer recommendations to our stakeholders. The guiding vision is that shared security challenges need shared solutions, based on shared responsibility.

2 This year's Workshop was organized in partnership with the University of Sfax, Tunisia.
THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Local governance structures such as municipalities should:

1. **Contribute to, and advocate for, changing the often negative perceptions of migration into a concept of global mobility that reflects the political, economic, and social changes of today’s world.**

   In the globalized world, it is imperative to change the perspective of migration as a security threat into that of global mobility, underlining opportunities rather than vulnerabilities from increased immigration. It is important for local governance to be actively involved and better heard in the management of mobility to complement the different levels of governance and to better ensure the welfare and prosperity of inclusive communities. Local government should have all the instruments available to create the conditions for inclusive communities and provide for safety and security for all: the local population and the newcomers.

2. **Support and promote already existing successful local governance mechanisms and initiatives for mobility management as best practices, and ensure other similar initiatives are encouraged and implemented.**

   Illustrative examples of existing initiatives for mobility management that should be promoted as best practices include the Charter of Palermo³, the Toulouse model for integration, or the Nicosia initiative.⁴ The Cities and Regions for Integration⁵ was established by the Committee of the Regions as a political platform for European mayors and regional leaders to share best practices of local and regional governance. Other initiatives such as the Municipal Integration and Development Initiative (MIDI)⁶ should be implemented for a more sustainable, citizen-friendly environment that would benefit all members of the community.

3. **Ensure that shared responsibility entails accountability measures.**

   Cooperation and proximity of close-knit networks at all levels is an effective way to track accountability of individual and collective actions. This would further ensure the safety of local authorities and actors that promote and work on global mobility. The media and civil society should play a more responsible role in creating a safe environment for local authorities to exercise their functions.

---

YOUTH AND MOBILITY

Youth make up a large proportion of migrants, but also a substantial portion of those opposed to human mobility in the region. Their role as key actors and stakeholders in migration and security issues requires a holistic approach as per the following:

4. **Expand legal migration pathways and facilitate regional mobility as a crucial measure for male and female youth from the Mediterranean region.**

Youth are mobilizers of their societies and local communities and have the potential to make a unique positive impact when provided with the right opportunities. Whilst the absence of jobs, the search for better educational and career opportunities and the presence of conflict or protracted crises are straightforward push factors for young people to migrate, other aspects should also be considered. Psychological factors and young people's perceptions about structural deficiencies at home that limit their opportunities to prosper such as corruption, *wasta* or nepotism, social pressures, and the prospects of gaining more personal and political freedoms, also play an important role in their decision to migrate.

5. **Promote access to reliable information amongst young people to assist them in making informed decisions about their future.**

Perceptions about personal freedoms, economic prosperity and a secure future encourage young people to migrate. The media's portrayal of everyday life in other countries, the images often depicted by returnees or the messages from migrants residing abroad, together with the limited access to reliable information about the process and challenges of migration, contribute to the notion of migration as the only option to pursue.

Similarly, the lack of awareness of the youth in host communities, not only in regards to the real impact of migration but also its positive contributions, is often overshadowed by inaccurate information and populist discourse, which generates a lack of trust and solidarity resulting in intolerance and bigotry. Tackling misinformation requires a holistic approach that involves media literacy, promoting alternative and positive narratives around migrants, and developing regional evidence-based information on the socioeconomic impact of migration.

6. **Advance and implement structural reforms to reduce insecurities and open up new opportunities for youth at home, with a particular focus on educational reforms.**

In order to facilitate the education-to-job transition, the development of the digital infrastructure, and 21st century skills required by global markets, educational reforms are urgently required in the Mediterranean region. Governments and national institutions should invest in the promotion of professional opportunities for male and female youth to avoid brain drain. Youth should be consulted as key stakeholders in shaping the future of education to better serve the needs of the labour market and emerging innovative employment trends.
THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN FRAMING THE MIGRATION–SECURITY NEXUS

The role of media in framing the migration-security nexus is crucial and requires the following:

7. **Encourage human-centered narratives that highlight the realities of migration across the Mediterranean.**

Media outlets, including newspapers, broadcasts, radio and internet, often disseminate messages that have negative impacts on societal attitudes, public opinion and policies. The media often narrates stories of mass movements as ones that are likely to disrupt the life of host communities, which negatively affect the perception about migrants, political discourse and policies surrounding migration that ultimately contribute to the securitization of migration. The development of parallel discourses that offer alternative narratives (story-telling, highlighting success stories) to reconceptualize the broad range of experiences of migration is an effective approach to transcend the fear and blame that is often used to depict migration.

8. **Promote media literacy to assist audiences to better understand the media and its role in policy-making.**

Media literacy should be promoted to allow people to access, critically evaluate, and thoughtfully analyze media practices, which may lead to a better understanding of the media and its role in immigration related policy-making.

9. **Increase access to more training opportunities for journalists on reporting migration, in addition to observing a code of ethics for a do-no-harm praxis.**

The positive role that some media outlets are playing in creating a culture of empathy, support and solidarity towards migrants through a humanitarian lens has aided in reshaping the public opinion surrounding migration in some countries and should be highlighted. Journalists should have access to regular training opportunities whereby their impartiality is emphasized as a quality and praxis for reporting on global mobility and its impact on the local level.