

# Chapter 6

## The Migration Initiatives encouraged by the Local and Regional Networks and their effects in the Euromed Cooperation



Gemma Aubarell Solduga

### 6.1 The Euro-Mediterranean context of the Migration Networking

Migration policies in the Mediterranean region were confronted with major crises that substantially and simultaneously affect all dimensions of migration strategies. A fundamental change was brought about by the migration crisis of 2015 with the increasing number of refugees caused due to conflicts in the Mediterranean region. From that point on, mobility management required new parameters of response following the request by citizens. Public opinion demanded different solutions to a human drama of the first magnitude. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has made the extreme situation even more relevant for those on the frontline of migration movements.

As a response to this situation, which transcends national management boundaries, the multilateral context provides global answers and instruments for regional consensus that could facilitate legal migration. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) launched in September 2018 sent a powerful political message: migration and refugee matters have become key issues squarely on the international agenda with a proposed framework to advance the recognition and guarantee of migrants' rights.<sup>1</sup> The commitment of all governments opens the door to a greater involvement of the regional and local institutions in the governance of migration. Local authorities, among other stakeholders, were included and

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<sup>1</sup>UN. 2018. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) *A/RES/73/195*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/migration/global-compact-safe-orderly-and-regular-migration-gcm>

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G. A. Solduga (✉)  
IEMed (European Institute for the Mediterranean), Barcelona, Spain  
e-mail: [gaubarell@iemed.org](mailto:gaubarell@iemed.org)

actively contributed to the global migration agenda.<sup>2</sup> Some of these local entities are the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Metropolis, Eurocities, Intercultural Cities, the UNESCO International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR), and the UN-Habitat.

When it comes to a regional level, the refugee and migration crisis highlights the shortcomings of the EU's own capacity to provide an effective and coordinated response to migration in terms of asylum management. The New Pact for Migration and Asylum launched by the EU in September 2020 puts forward its vision related to this complex policy area.<sup>3</sup> The priorities of the external dimension actions, outlined by this New Pact, expressed the importance of building economic opportunities and addressing the root causes of irregular migration. It also takes into account tackling migratory issues from an inclusive and social dimension standpoint, and not from a securitization perspective.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, local and regional bodies started to highlight the inefficiency of the measures adopted by the EU linked to migration. Specifically, the fact that further joint instruments were absent at the European level, including an appropriate distribution mechanism to relocate migrants.<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-five years after the Barcelona Process, policies in the North and South of the Mediterranean basin have deployed similar strategies when confronted with the reality that mobility is a trend. The EU has strengthened its cooperation with MENA states on migration, security, and development and has drawn on its external migration policy as a method of 'region-building' set to reconfigure a broader EU Mediterranean Neighbourhood (Fakhoury, 2021).<sup>6</sup>

Nowadays, in European relations with the Mediterranean, the balance of a partnership for mobility is non-existent. The governmental approach has not provided an effective answer, and migrations continue to present an unresolved issue. The Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood (a New Agenda for the Mediterranean) proposed by the European Commission in 2021,<sup>7</sup> underlined the

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<sup>2</sup>OECD. 2020. A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world. Local inclusion of migrants and refugees. <https://www.oecd.org/regional/Local-inclusion-Migrants-and-Refugees.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>European Commission. 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum *COM/2020/609 final*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

<sup>4</sup>European Commission (2020).

<sup>5</sup>The European Committee of the Regions (CoR). 2021. Opinion on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum *CIVEX-VII/005*. <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/european-committee-of-the-regions-critical-of-new-pact-on-migration-and-asylum-european-parliament-hearing.aspx>

<sup>6</sup>Fakhoury, T. 2021. The external dimension of EU migration policy as region-building? Refugee cooperation as contentious politics, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1972568>

<sup>7</sup>European Commission. 2021. Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. A new Agenda for the Mediterranean. *SWD (2021) 23 final*. [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint\\_communication\\_renewed\\_partnership\\_southern\\_neighbourhood.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf)

challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration and the need to facilitate safe and legal pathways for migration and mobility. However, this basic approach of easing restrictions on legal migration seeks to improve control through more effective return and readmission arrangements (Moran, 2021).<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, this new agenda recognizes the need for a more coordinated and enhanced policy where all stakeholders are involved, including the private sector, civil society, the city, and other local entities.<sup>9</sup> Regional authorities have welcomed the migration and mobility component of the new Agenda for the Mediterranean and call for greater involvement of local and regional authorities.<sup>10</sup> These authorities express a clear demand for EU cooperation on migration with third countries, in particular its Southern neighbours, against the instrumentalization of the EU's external development funds for migration control. At the same time, they express their readiness to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with local and regional authorities in migrants' countries of origin and transit countries.<sup>11</sup>

The deployment of these policies has led many public and civil society actors to feel increasingly more legitimized to contribute to this, until now, state-handled field of action. Before 2020, regions and cities held the main responsibility for arrival and integration. This is reflected in the border regions in the South of the EU, which are under greater pressure from migratory flows in the Mediterranean. The lack of an effective and equitable response by states to the crisis meant that regional and local authorities faced the need to innovate in the management of migratory flows that directly affected them.<sup>12</sup>

The traditional focus on nation-state migration management has shifted to an interest in the empowerment of non-state actors as policymakers. Local actors, such as cities, have drawn growing attention from international organizations who are in search of transnational partners beyond European borders (Lacroix & Desille, 2018).<sup>13</sup> To be more effective, the action of regional and local authorities has been coordinated with other actors, which in turn created sub-actors of governance: the networks of regions and cities (LRN). In the frame of the Mediterranean migration,

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<sup>8</sup>Moran, J. 2021. How new is the EU's new agenda for the Mediterranean? CEPS article 03/3/21. <https://www.ceps.eu/how-new-is-the-eus-new-agenda-for-the-mediterranean/>

<sup>9</sup>IEMed-ICMPD (2022) "Survey of migration experts in the EU Southern neighbourhood" "EMM5-EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey. [https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/57378/file/20220407\\_EMM5\\_Euromesco\\_survey\\_Online%2520EMM5%2520version.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/57378/file/20220407_EMM5_Euromesco_survey_Online%2520EMM5%2520version.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>ARLEM. 2022. Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly. Recommendations for 2022. [https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/ARLEM/Recommendations/Recommendations%20for%202022/ARLEM%20Recommendations%202022\\_EN%20\(cor-2022-00335-00-01-tcd-tran-en\).pdf](https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/ARLEM/Recommendations/Recommendations%20for%202022/ARLEM%20Recommendations%202022_EN%20(cor-2022-00335-00-01-tcd-tran-en).pdf)

<sup>11</sup>European Committee of the Regions. 2021. Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean. JOIN/2021/2 final.

<sup>12</sup>Chmielewska, A., Dragouni, O., Dicuonzo, V., et al. 2021. Territorial impact of migration on frontline regions and cities on the EU shores of the Mediterranean. European Committee of the Regions. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2863/627667>

<sup>13</sup>Lacroix, T and Desille, A. ed. 2018. International Migrations and Local Governance: A global perspective. Palgrave Macmillan.

regional and local actors have become part of the agenda of existing networks that embrace the issue of migration. The emergence of these networks is evidence of their ability to confront the migration challenge and bring the opportunity to the EU instruments to include them as relevant actors for the external dimension of the EU migration agenda.

## 6.2 Migration Network Typology Frame and Euromed Cooperation

There is a collective understanding among researchers who state how, in the last two decades, territorial Networks have emerged as key actors in the governance of globalization, linking local actors across nation-states as well as with supranational governance institutions (Lacroix & Desille, 2018).<sup>14</sup> Despite the lack of systematic studies into the scope and impact of governance networks, those have become a common and increasingly important governance mechanism at the local, regional, and transnational levels. In fact, they provide a new paradigm for understanding the emerging forms of multilateral action and pluricentric governance (Torfing & Sørensen, 2014).<sup>15</sup> This networking trend is linked to the process of globalization and the consolidation of external actions of LRAs, which in this context we can define as territorial diplomacy, including diverse formulations (para-diplomacy, local and regional diplomacy, and decentralized diplomacy among others) (Wassenberg, 2020).<sup>16</sup> This cooperation to bring together regions from different countries to build a shared vision has been encouraged by the EU through the cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation of its regional policies.<sup>17</sup>

The partnership between Europe and its neighbours in the Southern and Eastern part of the Mediterranean region during the last twenty years facilitates the implementation of large-scale international projects involving territorial actors. A great number of local and regional initiatives have been contributing to creating a consolidated network for the deployment of territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational, and lately macro-regional cooperation). This dense network of LRAs in cooperation with public administrations is firmly engaged in strengthening joint

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<sup>14</sup>Lacroix, T and Desille, A. ed. (2018).

<sup>15</sup>Torfing, J. and Sørensen, E. 2014. The European debate on governance networks: Towards a new and viable paradigm?, *Policy and Society*, 33:4, 329–344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2014.10.003>

<sup>16</sup>Birte Wassenberg.2020. Territorial Diplomacy. Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe [online], ISSN 2677–6588, published on 22/06/20, consulted on 18/05/2022. <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12259>

<sup>17</sup>European Union.2009. European Regional Policy, an inspiration for Countries outside the EU? <https://doi.org/10.2776/11830> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/international/external\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/international/external_en.pdf)

cross-border and transnational activities in many policy areas (sustainable use of water and agricultural resources, climate change, strategic urban planning, local economic development, tourism, education, and culture) (Noferini, 2021).<sup>18</sup> Macro-regionalization processes and multi-level governance in the region offer a joint framework that fosters synergies and complementarities among already existing initiatives, programs, and governance structures.<sup>19</sup> Such “relational networking” is constructing functional spaces of action that do not need to be locally connected: the networking can be built around a challenge or a physical border. In this context, LRAs are asked to participate in collaborative transnational models characterized by the presence of supranational, national, regional, and other local actors (Noferini, 2021).<sup>20</sup>

We know little about how these territorial networks participate to migration governance and how these alliances are operating in terms of Mediterranean cooperation (Zapata-Barrero, 2020a, b).<sup>21</sup> To contribute to this analysis, this work presents a policy framework, based on six outstanding migration initiatives led by a selected LRN. These initiatives are relevant because they transnationally address different aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean agenda previously described.

- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- MedCites
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)
- Assembly of European Regions (AER) Intercultural Regions Network
- EUROCITIES. Solidarity Cities
- Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants

The frame analysis methodology<sup>22</sup> helps us to better identify the policy problems and solutions proposed. Therefore, these migration networks are at the very beginning of their policy-making process in terms of external dimension, and they face a dynamic and interactive process that can be integrated into the frame analysis.<sup>23</sup> Our

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<sup>18</sup>Noferini, A. 2021. Going Macro-regional? Territorial cooperation, governance and regional and local authorities in the Mediterranean” Government of Catalonia and IEMed, Barcelona 2021. [https://exteriors.gencat.cat/ca/ambits-dactuacio/afers\\_exteriors/mediterrania/estrategia-medcat-2030/](https://exteriors.gencat.cat/ca/ambits-dactuacio/afers_exteriors/mediterrania/estrategia-medcat-2030/)

<sup>19</sup>Government of Catalonia and IEMed. 2021. Mediterranean +25. Priorities and recommendations. Contribution to the renewed Mediterranean Agenda. [https://exteriors.gencat.cat/web/content/saeue/afers\\_exteriors\\_cooperacio/04\\_arees\\_actuacio/Mediterrania/actualitat/prioritats-recomanacions-en.pdf](https://exteriors.gencat.cat/web/content/saeue/afers_exteriors_cooperacio/04_arees_actuacio/Mediterrania/actualitat/prioritats-recomanacions-en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup>Noferini (2021).

<sup>21</sup>Zapata-Barrero, R. 2020. Rescaling Mediterranean Migration Governance: Setting a Research Agenda that Establishes the Centrality of Cities for Region-Making.” EuroMedMig Working Paper Series, no. 3 (June): <http://hdl.handle.net/10230/44978>

<sup>22</sup>Rein, M., Schön, D. 1996. Frame-critical policy analysis and frame-reflective policy practice. *Knowledge and Policy* 9, 85–104. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02832235>

<sup>23</sup>Hulst, M. J., & Yanow, D. 2016. From Policy “Frames” to “Framing”: Theorizing a More Dynamic, Political Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 46(1), 92–112.

**Table 6.1** Frame analyses approach

Interaction factors		Mediterranean policies	
Networking	Actors involved	Topic approach	Policy actions
Project-oriented Network oriented	Bilateral North-South Stakeholders	Sectorial Policy	Exchange Advocacy Alternative policies
<b>Functional orientation</b>	<b>Multilevel Approach</b>	<b>Multi sectorial</b>	<b>Euromed agenda</b>

Source: Self-made by the author

interest is not to establish a typology, but to identify their political agenda, and in a similar fashion, the progressive establishment of common strategic representations.<sup>24</sup>

Following previous research (Caponio, 2019),<sup>25</sup> we are taking into account the relevance of the interaction factors in the elaboration of their collaborative strategies. In our approach, this has been done through a functional (networking) and multilevel (vertical and horizontal) perspective. On the other hand, the analyses of the Mediterranean agenda (policy actions) and the fields of action (multisector) allow us to identify tendencies in the policy interest of this research, the euromediterranean context (Table 6.1).

### ***6.2.1 Interaction Factors: Multilevel Approach and Functional Orientation***

One of the preliminary elements to take into consideration is how the migratory field is present in the network’s constituency (Table 6.2). When it comes to orientation, the network of Solidarity Cities is the only one that has been promoted exclusively to focus on migration work, and therefore, its ultimate purpose is to change current migratory policies. The second type of network is the one that promotes specific initiatives or platforms devoted to influencing migratory European policies. This is the case of the Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants (an institutional initiative gathering networks and territorial organizations) and the European Intercultural Regional network promoted by ARE. The rest of the networks are developing their migratory initiatives mainly by searching for opportunities within European projects. This “functional orientation” of the LRN becomes a challenge to assuring the long-term sustainability of their initiatives; all the while, the generation

<sup>24</sup>Tarkosky, A. 2018. <https://shared-digital.eu/from-policy-frames-to-framing-what-can-we-learn-from-an-academic-perspective-on-policy-frames/> <https://shared-digital.eu/author/alek/>

<sup>25</sup>Caponio, T. 2019. City Networks and the Multilevel governance of migration. Policy discourses and actions RSCAS 2019/08 Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Migration Policy Centre.

**Table 6.2** Interaction factors

	Networking Functional orientation	Actors involved Multilateral approach
CGLU	Global Local and Regional Network MC2CM EU funded project	Global networks mobilizing north-south 22 med cities and regions. The project is involving Euromed cities Inclusion of civil society and stakeholders
MedCites	Euro-Mediterranean city Network. Tanger Accueil EU-funded project	Euro-Med network of cities. Project involving bilateral partners (Tangiers, Barcelona) with links to other cities and the Intercultural Moroccan Cities network. Including public and private actors. Synergies with MCSCM project.
CPMR	European Network of Regions Taskforce on migrations Regions for Migrants and Refugees integration. (AMIF) EU-funded project	European Regions with Southern Mediterranean associated members. Southern members associated with the EU project. Synergies with Intercultural Regions Network
AER- Intercultural Regions Network	Intercultural Regions Network EU Belong. EU-funded project	European Networks of Regions Institutional partnership with Council of Europe. Synergies with Regin EU AMIF project
EUROCITIES-Solidarity Cities	European refugee cities network	European Cities
Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants	Cities and Regions integration Initiative	Platform engaging European LRN and stakeholders and private networks

Source: Self-made by the author

of new network platforms devoted to migration can be considered the main instrument when it comes to consolidating current territorial synergies.

From a multilevel governance perspective, this incidence in policymaking must be understood in both a horizontal dimension (involving local governance and other public, private, and social actors) and a vertical dimension (with other levels of government) (Zapata-Barrero, 2017).<sup>26</sup> In analysed networks, the policy-making impact is limited due to the lack of a consistent multilevel frame of their governance structure (Table 6.2). The relations between the networks are established through horizontal communities of regional and local authorities, which are not benefiting from the synergies of the most-governmental frame because they are acting independently of each other. Social and public stakeholders have limited structural participation, which is mainly prevalent during a program or a project

<sup>26</sup>Zapata-Barrero, R., Caponio, T. and Scholten, P. 2017. Theorizing the 'local governance turn' in a multilevel governance framework of analysis. A case study in immigrant policy', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 83(2): 241–246.

implementation. The weak involvement of other levels of government (vertical dimension) gets constrained in policymaking. Therefore, all these networks have developed their Mediterranean external policies mainly on their own. As has been deeply analysed by different studies in concrete cases of city networks, they are often regarded with enthusiasm and great expectations. Nonetheless, in terms of governance, it is not clear if and to what extent these networks will represent a venue for progressive dialogue and policy innovation on the politically sensitive migration issue (Caponio, 2019).<sup>27</sup>

To understand how outstanding initiatives are handling the issue of migration, we must acknowledge the fact that they do not always bring together actors from both North and the South of the Mediterranean (Table 6.2). Many of them are structured around lobbying in European policies with a moderate impact on the Southern regions. The interest of these networks is based on their ability to influence European policies and programs; however, they do not yet provide opportunities to include actors based in the South. One of the causes of this aforementioned situation can be interpreted as the ineffective multilateral impact of the Euro-Mediterranean migration strategy.

Other serious challenges which remain to be addressed are asymmetric institutional capacities, heterogeneity of interests among networks, and the lack of coherence among territorial programs and initiatives. Firstly, in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, while the situation varies from country to country, the autonomy of LRAs is very limited. Secondly, there is no clear partnership with an external approach. Even though the North-South division that until now has characterized the governance of international migration, is slowly fading. In our times, all countries have become emigration and immigration focal points and the management policies seem not been longer a Northern issue. Migratory patterns, experiences, and policies are changing; which creates a need for North-South comparisons, especially at the local level. The subnational level is key in decision-making; however, they do not control immigration policies.

### ***6.2.2 Mediterranean Policies: Multi-sectorial Approach and Euromed Agenda***

The **urban migratory agenda** is key in the action policy of the analysed LRA (Table 6.3). There is a real change in the agenda when it comes to outsourcing relations between cities and other actors since city networks that work on migration issues emphasize the increasing benefit of local experiences -which in turn links the Mediterranean dimension very clearly to the urban dimension- (Zapata-Barrero,

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<sup>27</sup> Caponio, T. 2019. City Networks and the Multilevel governance of migration. Policy discourses and actions RSCAS 2019/08 Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Migration Policy Centre.



**Table 6.3** Mediterranean policies

	Topic approach Multi sectorial	Action policy Euromed agenda
CGLU-MC2MC	Integration and Social Cohesion	Euromed Urban migration governance Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM) Dialogue
MedCités-Tangiers Accueil	Integration and Social Cohesion	Mediterranean City to City Migration programme ICMPD
CRPM-Task Force and Regin Project	Integration, multilevel governance, development, and external migration policies	The external dimension of the European territorial policies in the Mediterranean
AER- Intercultural Regions Network	Intercultural integration	Euromed Intercultural Dialogue
EUROCITIES-Solidarity Cities	Management of the refugee crisis	Refugee Crisis in the Mediterranean
Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants	Migrants and refugees' migration/narrative of solidarity	The external dimension of the European territorial policies

Source: Self-made by the author

2020a, b).<sup>28</sup> Cities are then crucial agents for the implementation of the SDGs and must be regarded as such by the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation actors. There is a context to underline the benefits of supporting more regional and decentralized cooperation, multiplying partnerships, synergies, and building alliances between regional stakeholders to foster the exchange of knowledge and experience, identify and promote best practices, building upon the work of existing networks.<sup>29</sup>

The World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (CGLU) launched the Mediterranean Cities Migration Project (MC2CM). This project has been founded by EC in conjunction with ICMPD and UN-Habitat in 2015 and is currently in its second phase (2018–2022). The MC2CM project is a practical laboratory that allows cities to exchange their experiences and share good practices favoring the inclusion of migrants involving around twenty Euro-Mediterranean cities. One of the major overcoming aspects of this project is bringing the exchange of good practices for more effective urban migration policies. This also affects directly the Euromed urban agenda by implying effective cooperation between North and Southern cities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Zapata-Barrero, R. 2020. Towards an Urban Mediterranean Migration Agenda on this 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process, *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, N. 30–31; 47–54. [https://www.upf.edu/documents/222586661/223539167/2020\\_Urban+Med\\_Agenda/fb625ba6-ed20-3099-dbf9-fff94f7cc18a](https://www.upf.edu/documents/222586661/223539167/2020_Urban+Med_Agenda/fb625ba6-ed20-3099-dbf9-fff94f7cc18a)

<sup>29</sup>Government of Catalonia and IEMed (2021).

<sup>30</sup>UNHABITAT. <https://unhabitat.org/project/mediterranean-city-to-city-migration-project-mc2cm>

MedCities, which is comprised of 63 municipalities from the two shores of the Mediterranean, has progressively integrated urban strategic programs that involve cities and metropolitan areas. Specific projects have been launched allowing the sharing of experiences and capacity-building initiatives about migration management. Namely, the Tanger Accueil project<sup>31</sup> aims to promote access for newcomers and migrants to guarantee their rights and services and facilitate their social integration. The bilateral approach of the project is having an effective Euromed potential due to the fact that is framed within the Mediterranean City to City Migration program implemented by ICMPD, funded by the European Union.

In terms of the topic approach (Table 6.3), **alternative migration** management should be underlined. Grassroots city networks reacted in response to the refugee crisis aim to receive and assist refugees and, crucially, guarantee their rights. While EU-supported networks have been driven by the integration agenda, the second ones responded to the national political limitations (Lacroix et al., 2020).<sup>32</sup> Many municipalities in Europe have joined Solidarity Cities, launched in the framework of the Eurocities network.<sup>33</sup> In this context of tension, this new generation of city networks, usually integrating civil society movements, appears to face the new upcoming situation of dramatic human challenges presented around the Mediterranean. This is the case of the Palermo Charter Migration Process, a militant and critical voice advocating for alternative migration management and the campaigns like Sea to City. Nonetheless, they still lack connexions with Southern and Eastern Mediterranean cities.

A second element to take into account in terms of policy action (Table 6.3), is Raising awareness of the migration in the European territorial policies. The EU is the major context in which LRAs are collaborating. Some initiatives are aiming to have a clear incidence in the policymaking process, lobbying for more presence of the regions and, for what is relevant to this study, increasing relations with the Mediterranean agenda. The CPMRs (peripheral and maritime regions) set up a task force on migration management in 2015 that has devoted its efforts to highlighting the importance of multi-level governance and a multi-sectoral approach to migration management. They have also raised awareness of the need for regional action in all areas; including those in which they have either formal competence in the field as well as those where regional action is needed to implement EU and national objectives. As the main initiative, this network of peripheral regions around all of Europe is actively promoting the inclusion of migration in the policy cooperative agenda of the regional stakeholders, and the European project REGIN has been its main instrument. As of late, the aforementioned network opened new discourses through global debates that affected regions in Europe such as climate change.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> MedCities. <https://medcities.org/ca/project/tangeraccueil/>

<sup>32</sup> Lacroix, T., et al. 2020. Migration and municipal militancy in the Mediterranean. EuromedMig Working Papers. Number 4 - September 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Solidarity Cities <https://solidaritycities.eu/home>

<sup>34</sup> CPMR. Regim Project <https://reginproject.eu/ca/> and <https://cpmr.org/wpdm-category/migration/>

Pluralism, inclusion, and recognition are emerging as drivers for building spaces addressing major social threats such as climate change, hate speech, conflict, disagreement, and xenophobia. The Intercultural Regions Network in 2019, promoted by the Assembly of European Regions (ARE),<sup>35</sup> serves as a support for regions to design, implement and evaluate diversity and inclusion strategies addressed to regional actors. Inspired by the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) of the Council of Europe, this Network aims to provide a platform for regions to share knowledge, resources, and experiences to promote intercultural integration at the regional level. There is a potential merging of interest in both CRPM and ARE, to create key crosscutting mechanisms to support partnerships and embedding regional intercultural strategies in clear relation to the intercultural dialogue agenda in the Region.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) provides a political platform for European mayors and regional leaders to showcase positive examples of integration of migrants and refugees, share relevant information and promote diversity as an added value to building inclusive cities and ensuring social cohesion. The partners of this initiative promoted by the CoR are significant networks such as EuroCities, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, Assembly of European Regions, SHARE Network, and the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions, and Cities.<sup>36</sup> Being acting in the EU framework, these networks are creating new platforms of structured collaboration in terms of trans-regional cooperation.

### 6.3 Networks as Catalysts of Migration Interest in the Mediterranean Region

Bearing in mind the relevance of the narrative in the policy-making process (Triandafyllidou & Fotiou, 1998)<sup>37</sup> once this policy frame has been identified in a second part, we analyse the discourses in the making of euromediterranean policies: what is intended and its implementation, especially through their specific projects.

Regarding the governance of the networks, even in the case of groups with divergent interests, they can present a stable narrative: a common history that defines key problems and proposes solutions that concern them (Torfin & Sørensen, 2014).<sup>38</sup> The emergence of a joint narrative of LRNs could be useful to demonstrate

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<sup>35</sup> AER. Intercultural Regions. <https://aer.eu/interculturalregions/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/cities-and-regions-for-integration.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> Triandafyllidou, A and Fotiou, A 1998, Sustainability and Modernity in the European Union: A Frame Theory Approach to Policy-Making. *Sociological Research Online*, Volume 3, Issue 1, March 1998, Pages 60–75. SAGE Publications and the British Sociological Association Article Reuse Guidelines. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.99>

<sup>38</sup> Torfin, J and Sorensen, E.2014. The European debate on governance networks: Towards a new and viable paradigm? *Policy and Society*, Volume 33, Issue 4, December 2014, Pages 329–344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2014.10.003>

the network's potential to play an increasingly key role in policymaking. What concerns us the most is if the analysed networks are disseminating policy models and good practices, through discourse creation and lobbying: are they developing a common understanding of emerging migratory policy problems? How far are they contributing to adjusting policies within a regional view? According to the narratives presented in the mission of their websites and brochures as well as through the initiatives developed by the analysed LRN, we can summarise three discursive areas around resources, solidarity, and externalization.

### **6.3.1 Resources**

As an immediate result of being at the forefront of this situation, they have embraced a clear stand position in demanding more resources and financial instruments to make their inclusion programs more effective. This narrative links to the challenges, which derive from the reception and integration of migrant people (education, health, social services, housing. . .).

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) has promoted a relevant policy action. This has been comprised of sending a letter urging the EU to adopt the EU budget and asking for sufficient financial and human resources to address the challenges posed by migration and asylum.<sup>39</sup>

More recently, the Committee of Regions promoted a deep analysis of the territorial impact of migration on frontline regions and cities (Chmielewska et al., 2021).<sup>40</sup> This document identifies the need to provide innovative solutions for migration management by LRA, and, in particular, for the critical challenges that they are facing when it comes to social services (education, housing, and accommodation) and the positive narrative about the socio-economic gains from a local perspective.

As of now, LRAs have started to be central on both sides of the Mediterranean. One of the reasons is because in the South, for example, rural-urban migrations and urban growth are already generating a strong demand for housing, facilities, and urban services. While in the Northern and Eastern Mediterranean, the local and regional authorities are key players in the internal dimension of migrations related to common challenges as the management of non-accompanied minors (Noferini, 2021).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> CPMR. <https://cpmr.org/wpdm-category/migration/>

<sup>40</sup> Chmielewska, A. et al. 2019. The contribution of local and regional authorities to regional integration in the Mediterranean. Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs, Committee of the Regions, Brussels. [https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/CoR\\_Regional-Integration\\_Med.pdf](https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/CoR_Regional-Integration_Med.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Noferini, A. 2021. "Going Macro-regional? Territorial cooperation, governance and regional and local authorities in the Mediterranean" Government of Catalonia and IEMed, Barcelona 2021.

Therefore, these demands have started to take into consideration some of Euromed's challenges. Committee of Regions recalled the EU to allocate sufficient funds for LRAs to roll out their integration and inclusion policies while welcoming the proposal of providing financial support to third countries. These are countries of origin or transit countries that are ready to develop joint policies on migrants.<sup>42</sup>

In this context, the LRNs appear asking to reinforce the role of the subnational actors and the potential engagement of the EU programs and financial instruments within the external dimension of the EU migration policy.<sup>43</sup> All these requests for more effective measures in EU funding are extremely relevant, considering that the networks are applying to these EU programs to implement their joint operations and projects. In this sense, the project-based funding used by the major part of the networks to implement their actions appears insufficient to financing long-term structural policies of inclusion. This is unable to support the objectives of networks' narrative discourse in the long term.

### 6.3.2 *Solidarity*

On the other hand, the role of networks as mobilizers of pragmatic solidarity responses to deal with humanitarian crises has become clear. This narrative is no longer supported solely by organized civil society in a voluntary sense, as it is also supported by LRAs, and therefore includes a new and institutional approach. The Solidarity Cities network and the Palermo Migration Process are very representatives of this trend. The appearance of narratives linked to solidarity for better public goodwill also means a break with the binomial responsibility-solidarity (Aubarell & Geha, 2021).<sup>44</sup> During this time, many initiatives promoted at a local and regional level, are ensuring that the "refugee crisis" becomes an opportunity to empower local governments, both in the North and the Southern Mediterranean. At the European level the network's mission, such as the Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants initiative, includes the support of the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as the contribution to presenting a stronger narrative of solidarity and countering disinformation in this field.<sup>45</sup> This will be achieved by encouraging cooperation between smaller localities, cities, and regions. Some authors regard the narrative linked to cities of refuge, cities of transit, cities of sanctuary, cities of

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<sup>42</sup>Comitee of the Regions.2021. Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. A new Agenda for the Mediterranean. CIVEX-VII/019. <https://mempportal.cor.europa.eu/Handlers/ViewDoc.ashx?doc=COR-2021-01952-00-01-PAC-TRA-EN.docx>

<sup>43</sup>CPMR.2019. The external dimension of the EU migration policy. Issue Paper CPMR Task Force on Migration March 2019.

<sup>44</sup>Aubarell,G and Geha,C.2021. Policy Conversations across the Mediteranean: Migratory governance. Europe and Lebanon in the spotlight. EuroMedMig Policy Papers Series n.7 (December).

<sup>45</sup>European Committee of the Regions. (n/d). Cities and Regions of Integration ofMigrants. <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/cities-and-regions-for-integration.aspx>

solidarity, and cultural cities as constituent parts of urban systems (regional cities) that, by themselves, build new specific ways of thinking about the Mediterranean (Zapata-Barrero, 2020a, b).<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, these initiatives remain at the European level and there is a lack of Euro-Mediterranean discursive approach. We cannot contemplate a common framework build on solidarity through institutional collaboration around health, education, civil liberties, and mobility in the Southern Mediterranean (Aubarell & Geha, 2021). To overcome this situation, there is a clear need to support programs with structural incentives rather than piecemeal projects. The former programs entice local government entities to design, finance, and implement inclusive programs that take care of refugees and host communities as fellow human beings (El-Mikawy, 2020).<sup>47</sup> Job creation schemes for refugees and host communities designed to help Southern countries keep refugees and migrants from crossing the Mediterranean could be part of a new transnational scheme of possibilities with enhanced educational opportunities and social protection schemes.

Some of the networks are including intercultural dimensions as a part of their inclusive and integrative approach (MC2CM, MedCites, CPMR). The Intercultural Regions Network promoted by ARE includes interculturality as a part of the narrative linked to supporting recognition of diversity and positive interactions. Through two AMIF projects (Regin and EU Belong)<sup>48</sup> CPMR and ARE are investing in regional integration strategies with a multilevel and multi-stakeholder framework leading transnational exchanges. In the case of MC2CM interculturality at the local level has been included as a part of the exchange between cities on both sides of the Mediterranean from a social cohesion point of view.<sup>49</sup> As of now, however, these intercultural relations promoted by these networks, are still in their infancy and have not yet been able to exploit local and regional spaces as Euromed laboratories of innovative social ideas.<sup>50</sup>

### 6.3.3 Externalisation

Finally, there are the internal and external dimensions of migration management, which are emerging as two sides of the same coin. Regional authorities have no legal competence in migration and asylum; however, they are networking by stressing their fundamental role in implementing several aspects and policies that are connected, directly or indirectly, to migration management. This situation will affect

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<sup>46</sup>Zapata-Barrero, R. (2022).

<sup>47</sup>El-Mikawy, N. 2020. From Risk to Opportunity: Local governance in the Southern.

<sup>48</sup>AER EU-BELONG <https://aer.eu/eu-belong/> and AER REGIN <https://reginproject.eu/ca/>

<sup>49</sup>Mediterranean City-to-City migration (M2CM). 2020. Cultural Policies: a vector for migrants' inclusion in urban context. Thematic learning report. <https://agenda21culture.net/news/mc2cm>

<sup>50</sup>Zapata-Barrero, R (2020).

the vision of external migration policies because they will add value to the cooperation dynamics. Another relevant challenge faced by the networks when come to building on a shared external dimension is the weak presence of LRA from neighbourhood countries in terms of networks membership, as well as the fact that there is a lack of joint initiatives aiming to promote a regional strategy on migration beyond the EU scenario.

The general approach of the LRN is much more open to collaboration and dialogue between inclusion and citizenship policies than those of management and control. Networking and decentralized cooperation through the implementation of European programs start to bring new spaces of possibilities. A great example of this, in terms of European programs, is the AMIF program. In the frame of the transnational actions of the programme, AMIF projects are not foreseen to apply to non-European partners but, because this need exists and they are implicated, the program should provide a way to facilitate the inclusion of the regional and local authorities and actors involved, as the Shababuna project.<sup>51</sup> There is the need to encourage operational frames of external cooperation when it comes to joint networks' interests and the coordination between European programmes, financial instruments, and multilateral cooperation is decisive (i.e MC2CM initiative) and can be a key instrument to reinforce the external dimension of the EU migration policy.

Coming to the new areas of interest, the Mediterranean region is not only the home of the conflict, which induces migration and increases the numbers of refugees and displaced people, but it also faces serious global challenges as the critical environmental situation that will increase the displacement of people (El-Mikawy, 2020).<sup>52</sup> Regarding climate change, we must look at solutions in the form of migration as an adaptation strategy and external cooperation to build resilience in vulnerable third countries. This is achieved by linking this to the contribution of regional authorities in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. Said approach is developed by the CRPM, which is asking for partnerships with Southern neighbouring countries on the issue of climate resilience-related migration. Some networks are encouraging the debate about the potential role of regional and local authorities in the coordination with the new AMIF with the new NDICI-Global Europe Instrument (priority of climate and environment). This interesting approach is including actions led by regions in the field of development cooperation tackling root causes of migration. Some of these are linked to improving climate resilience (food security or water management) among others.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Shababuna is an example project within the framework of the AMIF programme 2014–2020 of the UE coordinated by Catalonia and with the participation of Skane (Sweden). The main goal is to strengthen capacities of local and regional authorities in order to promote awareness-raising and information amongst youngsters in the Region of l'Oriental, Morocco.

<sup>52</sup> El-Mikawy, N. (2020).

<sup>53</sup> CPRM (2021) Climate Change and Migration. Policy brief. October 2021.

## 6.4 Conclusion

We have seen how a migratory crisis has opened the door to collaboration and networking between local and regional authorities. However, this territorial collaboration does not present a solid multilevel framework. One of the reasons is the low joint involvement of both areas, local and regional. The ARN also suffer from a lack of effective impact on state policies that continue to lead the management and control of migration policies. As a positive fact, we were able to observe how the dynamics of networking are related to the Mediterranean agenda and address issues of shared interest. Here we can highlight the urban agenda and inclusion. In this sense, a great difficulty observed is the lack of participation of Mediterranean actors from outside the European borders. In addition, we are seeing that difficulties with funds and projects are forcing the European retreat of new platforms and projects driven by this LRN. There is still to observe if the short-term projects where these networks are applying will become permanent platforms of collaboration. Despite the difficulties, the mobilization of these actors and their networks has led to the entry of a shared narrative on migration issues. The voice of local and regional authorities and their positions have been able to have a repercussion in current debates on migration (and in European regional institutions) through joint network actions. With a clear effect in terms of solidarity and refuge, two dimensions that are already part of the migration management. Some areas, like integration or interculturality, remain a difficult aspect to channel effectively at Euro-Mediterranean level. The emergence of global challenges such as climate change appears as an emerging field of interest in the LRN agenda in the Mediterranean. These global challenges, which affect common areas, are mobilizing networks to cooperate on both sides of the Mediterranean. Potential macro-regional and multi-lateral alliances beyond the European framework are an issue to be observed in the coming period.

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**Gemma Aubarell Solduga** is Director of Culture, Gender, and Civil Society at the IEMed (European Institute for the Mediterranean, Barcelona). Former Head of Programme and Networks Unit of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (Alexandria, Egypt) 2009–2016 and head of the Mediterranean Relations at the Government of Catalonia (2017–2022). She is associate researcher at GRITIM-UPF, associate professor at the School of Communication and International Relations at the Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University in Barcelona and member of the board of the Global Education Citizenship Fund (Barcelona). With extensive experience in the fields of Euro-Mediterranean relations, migration policies, civil society and intercultural dialogue, she has coordinated research teams, edited publications and directed European projects in the Arab world with a special focus on the issues of intercultural dialogue, civil society, education and youth.

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