



Needs Assessment for the Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub

Prepared by the Migration Policy Institute¹ for the UN Migration Network

I. Introduction: Why Data and Information Matter to Migration Governance

The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) in December 2018 created an important opportunity to move international cooperation forward on migration issues. An overarching framework for international migration could, among other things, contribute to better planning for migration and displacement situations and potential crises before they arise; facilitate collaboration to address large-scale challenges that are beyond the capacity of any one government to address alone; and identify areas for collective action that extend beyond the normal short-term political cycle. One key ingredient to achieving these goals is trustworthy evidence and data on which to base migration decision-making, research, and service provision.

Knowledge and data² serve various purposes at different points along the migration arc and for different stakeholders. For example, information on the composition and characteristics of immigrant groups is needed to design and deliver services; information on evolving routes and patterns of “mixed flows” of asylum seekers and migrants is needed to manage borders, build functioning asylum systems, and ensure protection for vulnerable groups; knowledge on host country conditions informs the adjudication of refugee claims; and evidence on the long-term socioeconomic outcomes of migrants is an important ingredient in designing integration systems that work. Recognizing this, Objective 1 of the GCM urges states to “collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.”³ Support for this principle was one of the consistent areas of widespread consensus in an otherwise contentious set of negotiations. However, there is less clarity on the mechanics of how this should be done: who should be collecting and interpreting this information, what standards and metrics should be used, and how it should be consolidated and shared are still open questions.

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² For the purposes of this report, we define knowledge as: “the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject as a result of experience or study.” Data is defined as “information, especially facts or numbers, collected to be examined and considered and used to help decision-making.”

³ United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018: Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” January 11, 2019, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_73_19_5.pdf.

Two additional factors complicate this task: first, migration has become a highly emotionally charged and polarizing issue, creating visible fault lines through societies that complicate neutral policy discussions. And second, the way our societies absorb information has itself changed. With the proliferation of new technologies and media, and an environment of questioning experts and elites, facts themselves are under attack.⁴ People today have more information at their fingertips than ever before, but information can be questioned, cherry-picked, and distorted over the waves of social media and by political opponents. Even information delivered by established and neutral actors may be subject to increased scrutiny and mistrust. And it has become nearly impossible to be aware of all the sources that exist and how to access them.

While many stakeholders recognize the deep need for more evidence on migration to educate policymakers, service providers, employers and the broader public (see Figure 1), there is no consensus as to *who* should be coordinating this effort. There is no single, trusted ‘arbiter’ of information; instead, a panoply of actors provides competing and sometimes contradictory data, often with self-serving aims, placing the onus on consumers to vet and filter the large volume of information at their fingertips. As UN Member States seek a shared repository of knowledge to inform migration policy and practices, as well as to support the implementation of the GCM, questions of how to ensure that information is both accessible and credible are paramount. How do we develop the tools to assess, compare, and vet new information in an environment of inherent mistrust and skepticism toward facts writ large? How can knowledge be better consolidated in one place?

The Knowledge Platform (KP) and Connection Hub (CH) being launched at the request of UN Member States (under the Capacity-Building Mechanism established under the UN Migration Network) seek to advance these goals by serving as a “repository of existing evidence, practices and initiatives” and “facilitating the accessibility of knowledge and sharing of solutions.”⁵ It seeks to consolidate the existing evidence base and “ensure that relevant knowledge, experience and expertise can be drawn from in developing tailor-made solutions in response to Member State requests.”⁶ The KP and CH also provide a mechanism through which to pursue the GCM goal of “provid[ing] all our citizens with access to objective, evidence-based, clear information about the benefits and challenges of migration, with a view to dispelling misleading narratives.”⁷

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) has conducted a needs assessment on behalf of the UN Network on Migration to inform this effort, with the goal of identifying gaps in existing evidence and limitations in government capacity to use information effectively for migration governance. MPI has interviewed policymakers and other stakeholders from around the world, reflecting the GCM’s “whole of society” approach, to ask how they currently use and absorb evidence. Our analysis sheds light on the form, content, and character of knowledge and data gaps, looking at the broader role of information in the decision-making process and what tools and resources could improve the quality of migration policymaking and governance more broadly.

MPI conducted in-depth interviews (both in person and over telephone) with 31 individuals drawn from government, civil society, and international organizations. In consultation with the UN

⁴ Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, *When Facts Don’t Matter: How to Communicate More Effectively about Immigration’s Costs and Benefits* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2018), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/when-facts-dont-matter-immigration>

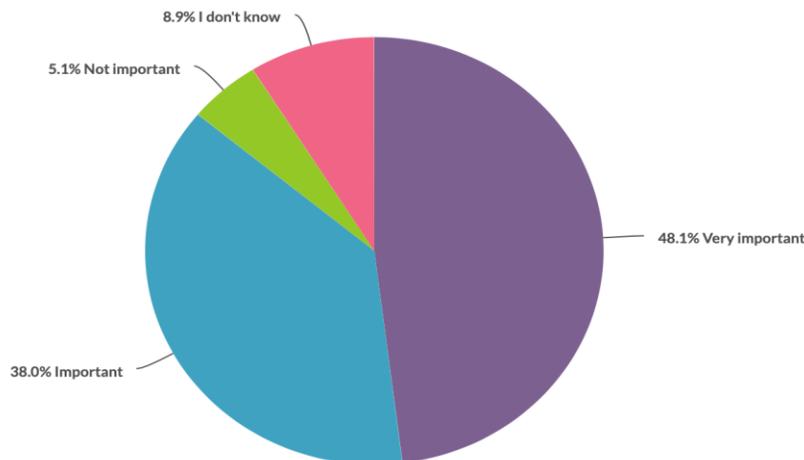
⁵ United Nations General Assembly, “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.”

⁶ United Nations Network on Migration, “United Nations Network on Migration Workplan,” July 2019, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://migrationnetwork.un.org/about/united-nations-network-migration-workplan>

⁷ United Nations General Assembly, “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.”

Network and IOM, we identified and reached out to 5-7 potential interviewees in each of the seven major world regions (N=46), to ensure a geographic balance. Our principal targets were government officials (given their role as the main implementers of the GCM), but we also included civil society, academia, and international organizations in our sample. Because migration is a cross-cutting topic, we reached out to officials in all parts of government, including ministries of interior, foreign affairs, development, and national statistics offices.⁸ Out of 46 interview requests sent in November and December 2019, we were able to complete 31 interviews within the timeframe of this report. We spoke with stakeholders from: Europe (8), Africa (7), Central and South America (4), North America (8), Oceania (2), Asia (1), and the Middle East (1).⁹ We also developed an online survey to reach more government and non-government voices, which was widely disseminated by the UN Migration Network. We received a total of 123 responses.¹⁰ This sample is not representative of the broad range of migration actors around the world, but we present the results as indicative of trends among these stakeholders. This report distills what we learned from these sources.

Figure 1: When you gather migration data and information via online platforms and portals, how important is this evidence to the decision-making process at your organization/department (e.g. in the case of a new project, policy, or awareness-building initiative)? (n=79)



II. How Stakeholders Find Information and Data on Migration

All the migration actors consulted for this assessment agreed that they relied on migration information in their everyday work. The majority of the survey respondents shared that they

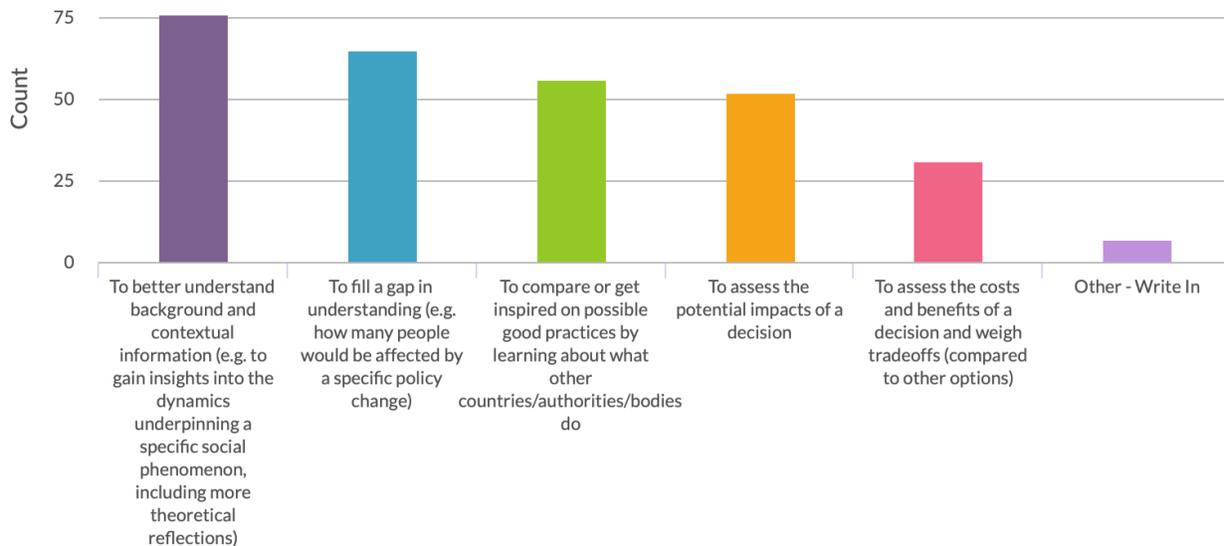
⁸ We relied on MPI and IOM networks to make the first contact within each government. While we chose a diverse mix of ministries and departments for these first approaches, we also followed the recommendations of the officials themselves as to who would be the best interlocutor, and were often referred to colleagues in other agencies or departments.

⁹ In the course of this project, MPI interviewed representatives from 15 governments (Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Bangladesh, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Zambia, Mali, Uganda), with some of these interviews involving multiple officials from different agencies within the government (for example, we spoke with six Canadian officials in a focus-group format); 4 representatives from an international organization (IOM, African Union, UN Women, and UNITAR); 5 non-governmental organizations from 4 different regions; and 2 actors who were involved in the drafting and the negotiations of the GCM.

¹⁰ This includes 70 complete surveys and 53 partial surveys. Out of the 123 participants, 53 represent national governments, 1 represent a subnational government, 20 represent international organizations, 29 represent non-government organizations, and 4 represent a trade union. Representatives from government came from various Ministries, such as the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security and the Ministry of Health in Malta, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in New Zealand, Ministry of Labor in Togo, or Ministry of Justice in Sweden.

looked for migration information at least once a week.¹¹ According to the survey, respondents primarily look for data and information in order to inform the design of a new policy, project, legislation, or campaign,¹² but also to improve existing initiatives,¹³ for public outreach,¹⁴ and to monitor or evaluate a previous action.¹⁵ The chart below shows what this migration information is then used for: out of the 91 migration actors interviewed, 76 rely on this data to better understand the context, 65 to fill a gap in understanding, and 56 to learn about good practices.

Figure 2: How do you use the migration data and information you find? (Multiple choice, n=91)



A. What are the most trusted sources of information, and how is information used for policymaking?

Although the type of information people search for drives what sources they consult, migration actors (government officials, CSO actors, and staff of international organizations) described three principal avenues through which they obtain data and information on migration, listed in the order in which they are typically consulted:

¹¹ Out of 91 respondents to the question “In your position, how regularly do you look for additional migration data and information” (multiple choice), 40 answered “several times a week” and 22 said it was “once a week”. Only three respondents said they looked for migration data less than once a month.

¹² Out of 89 respondents to the question “Why do you typically seek out data and information about migration?, and how often” (multiple choice), 83 answered that they did “to inform the design of a new policy, project, legislation, or campaign”. 37 said they did so “often” and 26 answered they did so “very often”.

¹³ Out of 89 respondents to the question “Why do you typically seek out data and information about migration?, and how often” (multiple choice), 87 answered that they did “to improve existing policies, projects, legislation, or campaigns”. 39 said they did so “often” and 25 answered they did so “very often”.

¹⁴ Out of 89 respondents to the question “Why do you typically seek out data and information about migration?, and how often” (multiple choice), 81 answered that they did “for public outreach”. 32 said they did so “often” and 18 answered they did so “very often”.

¹⁵ Out of 89 respondents to the question “Why do you typically seek out data and information about migration?, and how often” (multiple choice), 77 answered that they did “to monitor or evaluate an initiative”. 32 said they did so “often” and 17 answered they did so “very often”.

1. Internal government data and statistics: Information generated by migration agencies and national statistics agencies.¹⁶

Government sources are usually the first stop for information.¹⁷ Key sources include administrative data collected by government agencies (such as visa application information or security or health assessments) and information compiled by national statistics offices (or another central office playing this coordination role). This may be gathered from other government bodies or through survey-based tools, like a population census. Some departments or ministries also have teams that produce regular data fact sheets or reports on recent migration developments, such as compiling weekly data on arrivals of asylum seekers.¹⁸ Where these sources exist, they are seen as the most reliable. But they are typically limited in scope¹⁹ and restricted to data available at national level. These databases also require significant resources to develop and maintain. Many low- and middle-income countries lack solid statistical services, and thus need to triangulate their data with other sources to improve its reliability.

But data collection is not a job for national statistics offices alone; it requires collaboration among a broad range of actors to be successful (including information sharing among all parts of government that come into contact with or provide services to migrants, from health to education to border management). Relying solely on data captured by one agency or ministry will likely only provide one piece of a larger puzzle that needs to be put into context. Data collected at border crossings, for example, can provide an incomplete picture of how many migrants are in the country if borders are porous and allow for irregular entries. Cross-checking this information against public health, education or social security records can provide a fuller picture.²⁰ But collaboration across government is sometimes limited or ad hoc, even if it has improved in recent years with many countries setting up national coordination mechanisms on migration.²¹ Information sharing remains, however, a problem for countries that experience rapid influxes of mixed flows and need to gather and process large amounts of data on tight timelines. It also requires cooperation with municipalities, as some data are only collected at the local level. This can be challenging when local actors do not have the capacity to collect this information in real-time and are not accustomed (or required) to share it with the central government.

2. Bilateral and multilateral information-sharing: Information obtained from bilateral relationships with governments, either informally (most often) or through formal information-sharing mechanisms or information requests.

¹⁶ Sometimes statistics agencies amalgamate data from different departments that deal with different aspects of migration (e.g. ministries of Labor and Home Affairs in Spain).

¹⁷ Based on the in-depth qualitative interviews and also the results of the survey. Out of 77 government respondents to the question “When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first” (3 choices), “country-based socioeconomic and administrative statistics” was among the top 3 sources of information of 52 of the respondents. 43 respondents also mentioned “internal datasets (e.g. data produced by your own department or statistical office” as one of their top 3 sources of information.

¹⁸ For instance, the BMZ official interviewed noted that he receives weekly reports with data on recent developments on migration and arrival numbers produced within BMZ or the Foreign Ministry.

¹⁹ In terms of scope, one critique from CSOs is that governments make unilateral decisions on what information to collect, and thus the resulting information may not reflect the needs or priorities of the research community or service providers. For example, government data may fail to capture things like rights violations, or it may not disaggregate based on legal status or gender.

²⁰ They can see, for example, that hundreds of thousands more migrants are registered in the social security system (which does not ask for proof of legal status) than have been counted at official border crossings.

²¹ For instance, Niger’s Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration.

Many migration actors said they also seek information from **partner countries' national statistics agencies or government ministries** (for example a German official reported checking the website of the Italian Ministry of the Interior on their daily updates regarding recent maritime arrivals). Countries that have a shared interest in developing a joint approach to a migration issue can set up formal or ad hoc information-sharing mechanisms. NGOs and international organizations can sometimes get access to this internal (and sometimes confidential) data if officials involve them in the drafting or implementation. But some governments said they have trouble accessing data from neighboring countries, particularly when this data is sensitive and can lead to diverging political responses. This is the case, for instance, for data on secondary movements from one country to the next in Europe, which is a highly political issue between countries in the Schengen area. One Central American official also reported barriers to accessing official data from neighboring countries regarding inflows of Nicaraguan and Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers, which would have been critical to their crisis response.

Government officials and other actors also rely on regional reports, for instance information from the EU on how flows are shifting. Some stakeholders receive information through **bilateral or multilateral channels**, such as meeting requests with ministers or at forums like the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).²² Some of these forums are inter-continental; for instance, African and EU countries meet every few months under the Khartoum and Rabat processes, to exchange on best practices and the progress of the Valetta Action Plan.²³ Some officials also noted that they **compare and consult with like-minded countries** through their participation in the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC)²⁴ and the Five Country Conference (FCC),²⁵ which can open avenues to exchange ideas and good practices.

Finally, many respondents reported **relying on personal networks** to obtain the information they need (whether a dataset or a piece of analysis), particularly after their query progresses past the preliminary information-gathering stage. Rather than look up information online, some prefer to pick up the phone and engage trusted interlocutors directly when they need a specific piece of information, particularly regarding things that are typically difficult to find online, like policy developments in other countries. These networks include colleagues in other departments or in their embassies or field offices abroad, counterparts in other governments, international organizations and NGOs, or on-the-ground partners in target countries.²⁶ As one CSO respondent said: "Most of the information I trust, I receive informally." A development agency official noted that it is necessary to interact with authorities on the ground to understand what the needs are. Another official agreed, saying factsheets are useful in getting a 'first look', to inform ministers or programming in a very early stage, "but as soon as we need to dig deeper, we collect information on our own." However, the risk of relying on personal networks is that these sources of information may not be sustainable over the long term; channels may close when trusted interlocutors change

²² See: Global Forum on Migration & Development, "About the GFMD," accessed February 11, 2020. See: <https://www.gfmd.org/>.

²³ See: Valletta Summit on Migration, "[Valletta Summit Action Plan](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf)," [November 11-12, 2015](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf). See: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf.

²⁴ See: IOM UN Migration, "[IGC](https://www.iom.int/igc)," accessed February 11, 2020. See: <https://www.iom.int/igc>

²⁵ See: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Five Country Joint Enrollment and Information-Sharing Project (FCC)," updated May 10, 2019. See: <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/five-country-joint-enrollment-and-information-sharing-project-fcc>

²⁶ As one European government official explained: "What I do in cases where I find there is an information gap is I turn to our own government officials and our networks across Europe to provide me with that information. For example, there was a recent new legislation in France on asylum that I needed to know something about, so rather than going online, I just called our representative there and said what I needed. So for me, it's mainly personal connections."

jobs or leave government and these relationships thus need to be constantly nurtured and occasionally rebuilt.

3. **International organizations, including UN agencies:** Information obtained from third parties, including large international organizations as well as NGOs and experts.

The most trusted *external* sources were large international organizations and UN agencies, particularly for broad international migration trends and data on flows and displacement.²⁷

The sources specifically cited by our interviewees included IOM, UNHCR, OECD, World Bank, and for migration actors working in the European context, Frontex, Eurostat, and European Commission Integrated Situational Awareness and Analysis (ISAA) reports. Large organizations such as these were praised for being trustworthy and distilling key data and trends in easy-to-use formats. Officials from low-income countries sometimes rely on these reports to fill gaps in their own country's data collection; for example, an official from an Africa country praised IOM's efforts to create a database on his nationals abroad as critical to their efforts to inform policymaking. A Central American government representative also described working in partnership with IOM to analyze data on mixed flows and refugees, particularly in the context of large outflows from Nicaragua.

For deeper analysis, some respondents (usually in high-income countries) also cited well-established international research organizations like the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Centre for Global Development (CGD), and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).²⁸ Some officials and researchers noted that specialized NGOs with a foot on the ground are also helpful, particularly when they release reports based on their experience in the field.²⁹ However, many respondents expressed concerns about the reliability and impartiality of smaller NGOs and research institutes. This is especially true in the case of institutions that are known for their advocacy agenda or lesser-known organizations that could be relying on a flawed research approach. To avoid running that risk, most government representatives said they prefer to rely on official sources, especially to inform policy papers and briefings with high-level officials.³⁰

Another avenue to obtaining information is to **engage directly with external experts**, including academics and respected researchers.³¹ Both high- and middle-income governments, for example, described regularly inviting national and international experts to deliver in-person briefings to officials in multiple departments, and even teach seminars. However, this is resource-intensive, and also depends on personal relationships between these experts and researchers and policymakers.

²⁷ Based on the in-depth interviews conducted by MPI and the results of the survey. Out of 77 respondents to the question "When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first?", 85 answered "publications by international organizations" among their three top choices. (53 said it was their first choice.)

²⁸ Based on the in-depth interviews conducted by MPI and the results of the survey. Out of 77 respondents to the question "When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first?" (3 choices), 58 mentioned "publications by think tanks or research institutes" among their three top choices.

²⁹ Out of 77 respondents to the question "When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first?" (3 choices), 45 mentioned "publications by non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations" among their three top choices. (only 14 said it was their first choice).

³⁰ Some government officials noted there is a hierarchy in recognition of sources; if staff cite IOM or OECD in a report to senior management, it is more likely to be accepted as 'evidence' than if they cite academics or NGOs.

³¹ Based on the in-depth interviews conducted by MPI and the results of the survey. Out of 77 respondents to the question "When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first?" (3 choices), 41 mentioned "migration experts" among their top three sources.

Other countries have explored multiple formats for engaging with outside experts and curating informant from external sources. The Costa Rican government explored creating a migration observatory at the University of Costa Rica to help analyze data—in recognition of the need to interpret trends and put all information together in one place—but this has not been done yet. Some European countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands actually have set up councils or committees made of researchers that help inform the design and impact evaluation of migration policies.³² In 2018, academics from universities around the world also called for the creation of an international consultative committee to monitor migration.³³

B. What formats are preferred?

Beyond the difficulty of identifying and accessing data and information, there is also the challenge of easily navigating the wealth of existing information that is published or made available online. Whether information is presented in a user friendly and easily digestible format is more than a cosmetic detail; it has in fact become a key variable in whether information actually reaches and is used by those who need it.

The vast majority of interviewees expressed a preference for **succinct documents**, with analysis in an accessible format (like an executive summary that combines key points with data and graphics, rather than a long report).³⁴ As one policymaker noted, most political decisions have to happen quickly, as policy cycles are “shorter than we would like,” and reliable analyses could save time (for instance on hot-button topics like climate change and migration). However, it is critical that these come from established and trusted sources.

Respondents also insisted **visual elements** (like infographics and tables, or visual representations of things like shifting migratory routes) were critical to make the information accessible and quick to absorb. As a European official explained: “Most people are visual; they prefer to see information at a glance.” This is particularly the case for policymakers who have many demands on their time and are not able to digest lengthy reports. For this reason, several government officials say they primarily seek out charts, figures, and statistics.

Data and factsheets are also sometimes seen as more trustworthy and less susceptible to distortion. In this vein, some government interviewees preferred to access raw data—where “it is clear what the information actually depicts and says, and where it came from”—and have their own teams conduct the analysis themselves.³⁵ But this depends on capacity. Other stakeholders are looking for clear and succinct syntheses and interpretation of existing data to “close the circle” between statistics and trends. Finding the right balance between quantitative information and analysis on implications is particularly important if users are generalists rather than data specialists.

³² Dutch Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs, Migration Advisory Committee in the UK.

³³ Groupe International d’Experts sur les Migrations et l’Asile (GIEMA), “[REPENSER LES POLITIQUES MIGRATOIRES: POUR UN « GIEC » DES MIGRATIONS ET DE L’ASILE](https://www.sciencespo.fr/fr/actualites/actualite/C3%A9s/pour-un-%C2%AB-giec-%C2%BB-des-migrations-et-de-l%E2%80%99asile/3893),” updated December 10, 2018.)

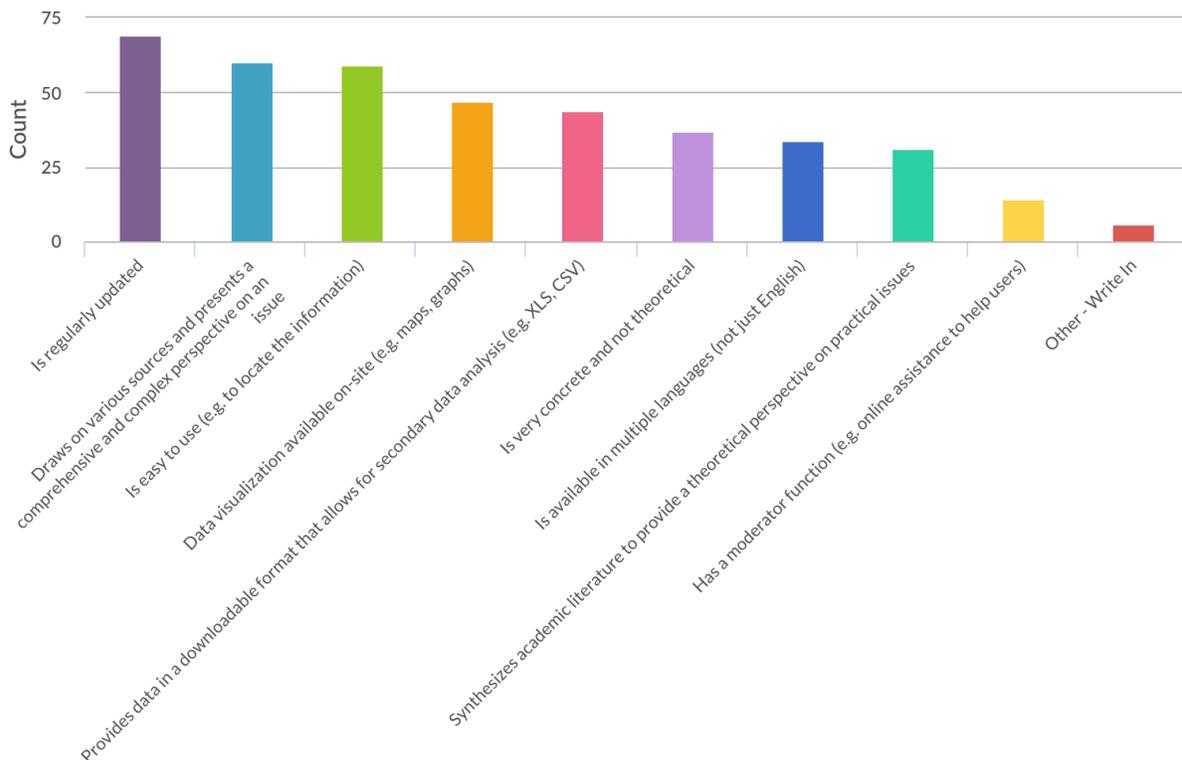
³⁴ Based on the in-depth interviews conducted by MPI and the survey. In the survey, out of 86 respondents to the question “In general, when you look for migration data or information, what type of format do you favour?” (3 choices), 76 interviewees mentioned “Policy briefs with examples of policy innovations or practices or initiatives that have worked in other countries” and 68 referred to “short analytical reports” among their top three choices. (respectively 36 and 37 respondents said it was their first choice).

³⁵ As one government official state: “It would be a journey before we trust ready-made analysis.” Out of 85 respondents to the question “In your opinion, what makes a migration platform or data hub the most reliable” (multiple choice), 31 answered that it “contains raw data for users to interpret as they see fit”.

C. What are the most important qualities/characteristics of information that people access online?

A general consensus emerged in our sample around the most important criteria for migration knowledge and information: whether it is **up to date, accurate, and easy to use**. The chart below summarizes what survey respondents assessed as the most useful features for a migration platform or data hub. Out of 85 respondents, 69 said they preferred for the platform to “be regularly updated,” 60 answered it was important that it “draws on various sources,” and 59 mentioned it should be “easy to use.”

Figure 3: In your opinion, what makes a migration platform or data hub the most useful (Multiple choice, n=85)



The migration actors in our sample emphasized the critical importance of **information being kept up to date**. Many officials complained that when looking up information from other countries’ statistics agencies, migration data was sometimes more than five years old and even the references to migration policies were out-of-date.³⁶ International organizations like IOM and UNHCR have more capacity to gather and analyze data regularly, but they still face limitations as to how often they can update information.³⁷ This can become a pressing issue in times of crisis, when government actors need the most recent data to make informed decisions. A European government respondent noted that in the wake of the migration crisis, they were often looking for daily updates on arrivals across the Mediterranean and even IOM updating its portal every two weeks was not

³⁶ Several respondents from governments or international organizations thus noted that they struggled to find the latest policy documents for some countries where they had projects or intended to launch new initiatives.

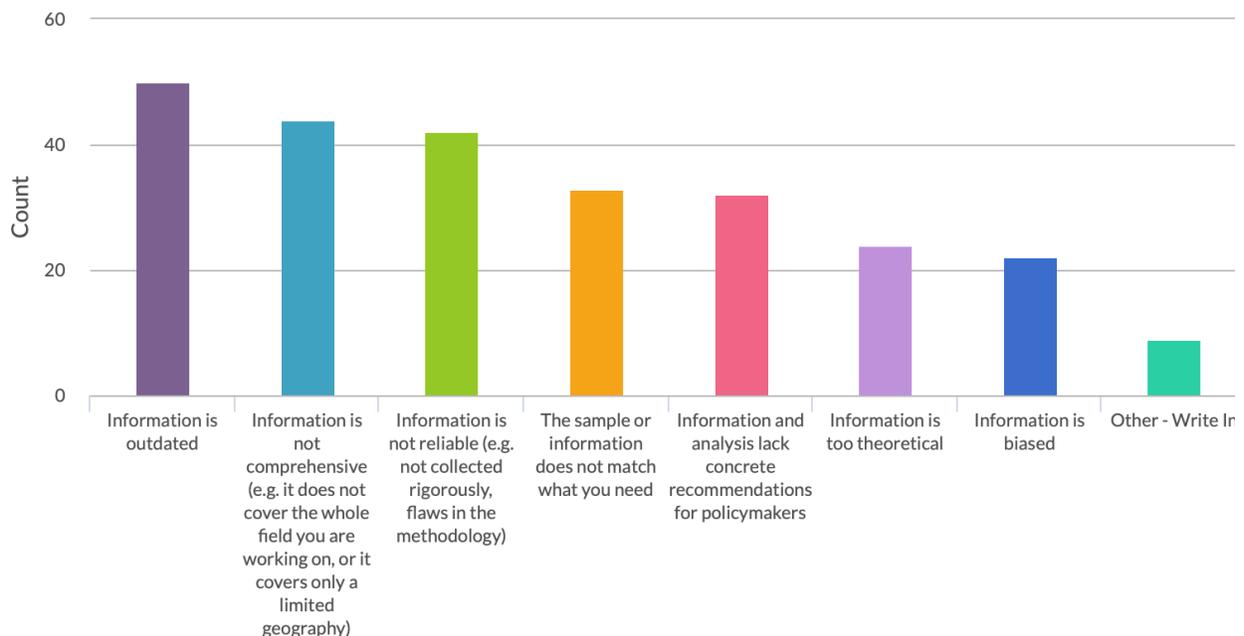
³⁷According to the IOM Migration Data Portal, some data is published “as new tools and data become available,” which can be several times a month, while thematic pages and blogs are updated every 1-3 months. Migration Data Portal, “[FAQs](#)”, accessed February 2, 2020.

enough. Besides, international organizations tend to focus on countries with active or visible crises, which means IOM country reports or migration profiles for countries that fall outside of global focus areas are sometimes out of date.

The second frequently cited priority is **full transparency on the source and origin** of the data they receive—including how, when, and by whom it was collected—before it can be considered trustworthy. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, 42 out of 85 respondents to the survey complained about migration information being unreliable. When relying on data from government sources, for example, migration actors said it was critical for them to understand who is collecting the data, particularly if there is limited capacity within the government or the relevant entity to take on these tasks. One interviewee suggested that there should be a better practice of publishing metadata: this could be, for instance, a running commentary alongside available statistics on how they were gathered and what definitions were used, so that the user can get a sense of whether the source is trustworthy and reliable. Several officials also described cross-checking their data to see if multiple sources (UN organizations, NGOs, Embassy contacts, etc.) could corroborate the same piece of information. In this sense, reliability emerged as even more important than timeliness—as information that is updated every day but not vetted (for instance a social media feed) would rarely be used for official purposes.

Finally, respondents said they needed platforms and portals that are **easy to use** and noted that existing ones did not always fully answer their questions. As illustrated below, out of 85 respondents, 44 complained that the information was “**not comprehensive**” and 33 said that the sample or information did “not match” what they needed.

Figure 4: In your opinion, what are the main limitations of these migration platforms/portals in terms of content (Multiple choice, n=85)



III. Gaps and Limitations in Current Data and Analysis on Migration

Lingering information and data gaps make it difficult for governments, civil society, and business to anticipate and adequately plan for the global movement of people. Existing repositories of global data are often issue- or geography-specific; certain regions and issues suffer from poor or infrequent data collection; and stakeholders who might benefit from these data may have trouble identifying, accessing, or interpreting them. In addition, it is difficult to find independent research that offers robust evaluation of “what works” in migration policy rather than merely highlighting good practices.

Our assessment found that there are specific areas of concern regarding data and analysis on migration: including certain regions and topics where there is a **dearth of data**—information is not collected or updated regularly, and there are fewer actors working on it—and areas where there is a **proliferation of data**, meaning there are multiple actors working in the same space, sometimes producing duplicative or even contradictory reports that can overwhelm stakeholders and make it difficult to know what information to trust.

A. Thematic Challenges: On what topics and regions is it most challenging to find reliable information?

One gap is the lack of data on **regional and global trends**. While many governments in Europe and North America are still focused on spontaneous flows and arrivals of asylum seekers into their countries, they have less information on how routes are shifting in the regions as a whole. Even for governments (usually in the global North) for whom collecting data reflecting one point in time or in a country’s immediate neighborhood is relatively straightforward to obtain through internal networks (combination of data collection by their own country and engagement with partner countries), obtaining a full picture of what is happening in their region, let alone globally, has proved challenging. This is also the case for officials we spoke to from Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa, where data on the patterns of movement and outcomes of intraregional migrants tends to be scarce. For instance, several respondents noted that migration data in free movement areas like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was limited because entries are not systematically recorded.

A related challenge is the lack of up-to-date information and data from countries with less capacity to collect data or report on policy developments, or with **informal systems** that do not lend themselves well to standard reporting. These countries may not have adequate instruments or capacity to collect data in a way that would allow it to be used as an international reference point. Multiple interviewees mentioned West Africa as a specific area of concern and one of the regions with the least developed data collection. For instance, one CSO respondent noted they were starting a project on internal migration in Mauritania, and the most recent information on migration she could find on the website of their national statistics agency, *Office National de la Statistique*, was from 2013. Officials from countries at the center of migration and forced displacement flows concurred that government data quickly go out of date, and especially in a crisis situation, should be updated monthly (or even more frequently).

Other gaps exist, unsurprisingly, around **information that is not straightforward to collect**. This includes information that does not appear in a census or population survey (such as the number, characteristics, and patterns of movement of undocumented migrants or internally displaced people (IDPs)). Many respondents, including officials and NGOs from countries in Central America,

Africa and Europe, noted that they struggle to find solid data on the volume, location, and profile of undocumented migrants. Information about IDPs can also be sensitive and data about this type of flows is not recorded as systematically as other movements. Migration actors, particularly from countries of origin, noted that data about diasporas is missing and several African officials shared that they would like to improve their level of knowledge about these communities. Some stakeholders, including in Africa, also reported they lack data about returns and reintegration, particularly on the number of voluntary and forced returns and the situation for the returnees after their return. Finally, several stakeholders also noted that gender-disaggregated data is often not available. Failure to design data collection systems that can capture information on vulnerable subgroups—in other words, looking at migrant populations only in the aggregate—undermines the potential to develop proactive solutions targeted to these populations (for eg, socially isolated women).

Another information gap exists in areas where there is **no research consensus, or the issue is in flux**. For instance, the nexus between climate change and migration is increasingly at the top of many countries' agendas, but the focus tends to be on predicting and quantifying future migration flows (especially from low-income countries). However, since climate change is only one factor among many other interlinked drivers, attempting to quantify its effects in different regions is complex and riddled with uncertainty. Attempts by different actors (including media) to estimate climate-induced migration have often produced contradictory results. Respondents, especially in Europe, also expressed a growing interest for foresight and scenario-building in the field of migration.³⁸ As noted by a government official, governments are good at examining what is happening in real time, but not how to put this into context to see emerging trends and how things have changed over time, and—crucially—what this means for future trends.

Finally, databases sometimes fail at capturing **the reality of how policies and projects are being implemented on the ground**. Some countries—particularly low-income countries—may have very comprehensive policies on paper that are not fully implemented; or conversely, no formal policy but good informal practices that are working. Sometimes, metrics have been defined to measure progress in one area, but they are insufficient. For instance, one may seek to try to get a picture of how many migrant children attend school, but school registration data may not mean they are actually attending. These types of nuances are very difficult to capture in a database, and governments will likely continue to rely on their personal networks to obtain this information.

B. Analytical challenges related to presentation and interpretation of data

Technical barriers may hamper how migration actors access and use migration data, even when it is available. The main challenges result from the lack of standardized definitions and data collection practices, the variability of the data proficiency skills of users, and also language barriers and the spread of information across several platforms.

Lack of common definitions makes it difficult to compare data/statistics across countries:

Several respondents noted that it can be difficult to compare data across countries because of the lack of standard terminology and definitions. Even the word “immigrant” or “refugee” may have a different legal meaning in different countries and for different organizations. Regions such as “West Africa” or the “Balkans” may be defined differently in different parts of the world. Policy actions

³⁸ See for instance: Council of the European Union, “[Evidence-Based and Forward-Looking Migration Policies](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/346020/attachment/data/2019/10/13/13222_en.pdf),” October 1, 2019. See for instance: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2019/oct/eu-council-presidency-evidence-based-migration-12608-19.pdf>

may also be defined differently, for instance when it comes to what constitutes an apprehension at the border or the use of public services for public charge rules. This is a problem even in regions like the European Union, where significant efforts have been deployed among EU Member States to standardize definitions and harmonize data collection processes.³⁹ One advantage of UN sources is that different agencies use similar terminology. Other sources would only be comparable if accompanied by a data dictionary or glossary to clearly define terminology being used by different countries and organizations. As one respondent noted, because each country has their own definition and concepts, you would need a “Rosetta stone” to explain how these translate into different contexts.

Data can be incomplete: Beyond the problem of standardization, another challenge is that what is published by governments, international organizations, and NGOs may be incomplete (also see Figure 5 above). A serious concern mentioned by both government officials and researchers is that because of the lack of transparency around data collection, it may not be clear that data is not comprehensive (“we don’t know what we don’t know”). End users may therefore be unaware they are receiving partial information, either because some has been redacted due to security or data privacy concerns, or because some information is simply not collected (due to capacity issues, or policy decisions not to collect data on race, gender, or LGBT status, for example). Inaccuracies due to self-reporting may also skew the data; for example, survey-based data may be thrown off if migrants are hesitant to disclose legal status. These vulnerabilities all point to the importance of being transparent about how data were collected (disclosing any caveats that may influence the interpretation) and what they can be used for.

Proliferation of migration information: The explosion of information—particularly on hot-button topics—also makes it hard to assess what is most reliable. For example, many sources publish information on certain aspects of climate change and displacement, but different actors are often working on different regions and different aspects of the issue—and some analyses are contradictory, creating a fragmented landscape of information. With so much unfiltered information, it is difficult to know which sources are the most authoritative. Interviewees noted that this situation is only likely to get worse, particularly with the upcoming follow-up meetings to the GCM and GCR. (For example, some respondents noted that the large amount of information uploaded to the Global Refugee Forum webpage in December 2019 was overwhelming.)

Information is spread across too many different platforms: There has also been a proliferation of platforms, with multiple agencies attempting to launch “one-stop-shops” for migration data and analysis, which in effect compete with each other and impede the goal of consolidation.⁴⁰ From the IOM GMDAC Migration Data Portal to the GFMD Platform for Partnerships to the newly launched Knowledge Hub on Migration and Sustainable Development⁴¹ and the European Commission’s Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography,⁴² different platforms are beginning to build a

³⁹ See for instance: [Cédric Mathiot, Jacques Pezet and Fabien Leboucq, "Demandes d'asile : Eurostat épingle la France pour avoir tronqué des statistiques," Libération, January 20, 2020.](https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2020/01/20/demandes-d-asile-eurostat-epingle-la-france-pour-avoir-tronque-des-statistiques) See for instance : https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2020/01/20/demandes-d-asile-eurostat-epingle-la-france-pour-avoir-tronque-des-statistiques_1773956

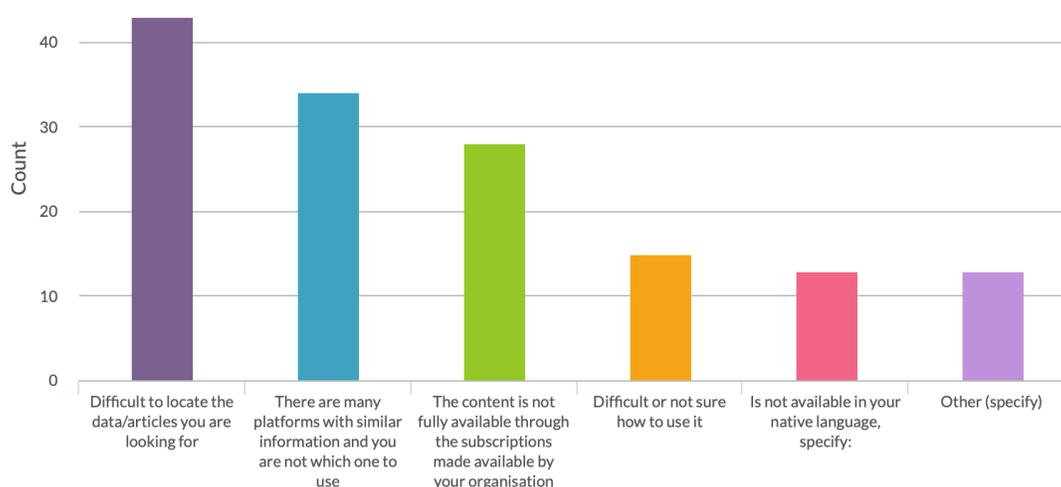
⁴⁰ Out of 85 respondents to the question “What is your general take on migration data platforms and portals?” (multiple choice), 38 interviewees commented that only a few of the existing platforms were useful to gather information and 24 commented that there were too many of these portals – while at the same time, 25 also welcomed this diversity, which suggests it is not necessarily problematic if stakeholders know how to use them.

⁴¹ This portal was launched in January 2020 at the GFMD in Quito. Global Forum on Migration & Development, “[Knowledge Hub on Migration & Sustainable Development, https://www.migration-learn.org/](https://www.migration-learn.org/),” accessed 10 February 2020.

⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/migration-demography_en

critical mass of data—but there is no single entity that covers it all, and little to no coordination among organizations curating similar content.⁴³ Even smaller NGOs and think tanks have launched data and knowledge portals in recent months (for example, MPI’s new Latin America and the Caribbean Data Portal).⁴⁴ Given this fragmented landscape, one respondent called “utopian” the idea of having all migration data in one place. In the absence of a central repository of information, officials described having to “jump around” between different sources to piece together the information they need, going from various UN websites (that are not linked together) to journals to NGOs to government sources. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, out of 85 respondents, 43 assessed it was difficult to locate the information they were looking for and 34 answered that there are too many platforms with similar content. The result is that information-gathering happens in an **ad hoc rather than systematic** way.

Figure 5: In your opinion, what are the main limitations of these migration platforms and portals in terms of accessibility and usage? (Multiple choice, n=85)



Language barriers: Most information in migration platforms and portals is available in English. But even when stakeholders are proficient in English, not having information in their native language creates a barrier to accessing information easily and quickly. One European government official noted that decision-makers in his government usually have over 60 policy briefs on their desks each day, so “it’s easier and a little bit faster” when it’s available in their native language. Several respondents pointed out that there is not enough translation into French, which particularly affects West African stakeholders. And even when information is translated, there may be a delay. So officials know that if they need the most recent, up-to-date information, they need to consult English sources. One suggestion is to have an algorithm built into any future portal to make it possible to translate information into different languages. (The website of the Global Forum for Refugees, for instance, had translations from English into other languages.)

⁴³ MPI interviews with IOM and UNHCR, for example, show that even UN agencies active within the newly created UN Migration Network have imperfect coordination on these issues. The Knowledge Hub on Migration and Sustainable Development, for example, includes some content that is duplicative of what the KP and CH seek to achieve, even though its core aim (to fill a gap by consolidating content on training and capacity-building) is distinct. But because the Knowledge Hub developed through a separate channel (it was commissioned from UNHCR by the Government of Ecuador rather than coming under the mandate of the UN Network), the two efforts developed in parallel rather than building on each other.

⁴⁴ <https://www.migrationportal.org/>

IV. Measuring Progress toward GCM Implementation

Some respondents noted that it would be helpful to have country-specific information on how the GCM is being implemented, who the main players are, and how the networks are evolving. However, if the CH takes on this role, it is unclear how it will distinguish itself from the effort that the GFMD has launched to solicit information on implementation. And at any rate, this information seems to still be in the early stages. Governments do not yet know what indicators could be used to measure progress, or what the global benchmarks are (the process that exists to measure progress toward attaining the SDGs, for example). One official pointed out some other international goals (reducing carbon emissions, improving health) are more easily quantifiable. It is less clear how to establish benchmarks for progress on things related to making migration more safe, orderly, and regular. (For instance, how would you “score” opening up more legal pathways?) Officials felt it is not yet established how to assess whether a country is moving toward those goals. Also, given the politically sensitive nature of GCM negotiations, some governments may hesitate to put activities under the banner of the GCM—even if they are fulfilling its objectives. And some officials we spoke with in the developing world had articulated their national action plans, but lacked funding or capacity to go further without IOM assistance.

But while the conversation on implementation shines a spotlight on how countries are developing new plans or measuring progress, there is also a larger story about how the **problem starts at the data collection phase**. There is some data that is simply not being collected (both due to lack of capacity and prioritization) that is critical to understanding whether GCM objectives are being met. Some researchers criticized governments for being deliberately opaque about certain data—for example, not collecting information on rights violations or gender-based violence (which may not be in a government’s interest to collect or disseminate). But if states do not collect data on violence against women (including mapping the policies in place to address it and monitoring whether these approaches are effective), it would be impossible to assess progress toward putting in place gender-responsive migration policies (one of the Compact’s objectives). Decisions made at an early stage about what data and information is relevant, in other words, can have significant repercussions in terms of policy outcomes.

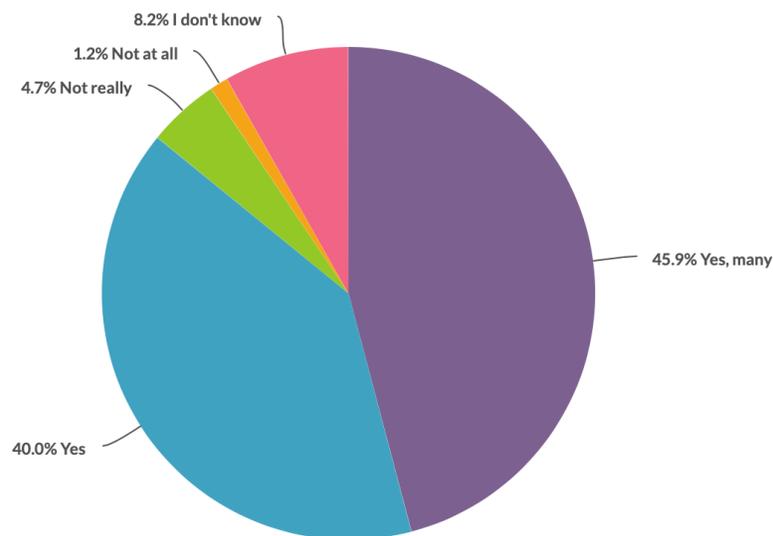
V. Ideas for the Future

At a time when more information than ever is at people’s fingertips, the task of identifying relevant, comprehensive, and accurate data and analysis on migration has become more difficult than ever. Sources have proliferated and information is scattered among different databases, portals and platforms. Countries rely on international sources to make sense of a phenomenon that by definition transcends borders, but definitions and standards are not comparable across countries; and the trust that exists within personal networks is difficult to replicate on a global scale.

With the proliferation of information has come greater fragmentation and uncertainty. Against this landscape, there were high expectations among interviewees that the new Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub (see Figure 6 below) would achieve three things: (a) consolidate the large volume of information already out there and “connect the dots” between existing databases, particularly between UN agencies; (b) help fill in existing information gaps by linking to raw data and presenting visual representations of key trends; and (c) create a repository of best practices when it comes to migration policies and initiatives, particularly those that support the implementation of the GCM’s 23 objectives.

The biggest risks are that: (a) the new portals will simply add to (and further crowd) the sea of existing databases rather than take a meaningful step forward toward consolidation; and that (b) a significant amount of resources will be needed to ensure the portals remain rigorously up to date and are able to vet the information they post; if information is not updated regularly and the methodology is not transparent, stakeholders will lose confidence quickly.

Figure 6: Do you see benefits of having a new Knowledge Platform as foreseen by the Global Compact for Migration? (n=85)



Several respondents noted that what the portal could do best is **provide an overview of global trends on migration** and make it possible for different stakeholders to see how everything fits together in the broader context (in some ways, an enhanced and expanded version of the IOM Migration Data Portal). As one respondent said, the KP should focus on “lifting its gaze toward the big picture.” The more detailed and nuanced information will always come from national sources and specialized agencies within each country; the Knowledge Platform should not compete with this, but instead provide a more global overview to help countries see and set priorities and understand how they compare with what other states are doing. One government official described that his agency has discrete pockets of information on specific regions in the world, and movements that are happening in these places, but this information is not “joined up” and placed in the context of all other migration trends (like legal flows) and other world regions.

Several respondents advocated for **creating a “one-stop shop”** where relevant migration knowledge is in the same place and the new portal connects the dots between existing databases. Stakeholders (including large well-resourced governments, small NGOs, and everyone in-between) are currently trying to do this themselves,⁴⁵ but the task quickly becomes overwhelming. It would be helpful to group existing information thematically in one place and “connect some of the dots.” Currently the proliferation of platforms means there is significant duplication as well as gaps—and a real tradeoff between creative energy and sustainability. There is a risk of creating “digital litter” when platforms that are tied to a specific funding cycle or initiative are abandoned at the end of the

⁴⁵ For example, Canadian officials reported that they created their own spreadsheet to collect reliable data on climate change and human mobility – but it quickly became unwieldy

project life cycle, only for out-of-date information to live on in perpetuity.⁴⁶ In order for a “platform of platforms” to emerge, it would have to be managed by one organization willing to invest significant resources to keeping it updated, and it needs to attract a critical amount of users. Yet most organizations are more interested in creating something new than in investing in the infrastructure that already exists. Yet if multiple platforms sprout up and then die out as enthusiasm wanes (as occurred in the wake of the 2015-2016 migration crisis), there is risk of not just inconvenience, but actual harm.

A. Key Features and Challenges for the New Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub

Interviewees emphasized that any new platform should include the following characteristics:

- **Easy-to-use and intuitive interface:** Respondents pleaded for the format to be more user friendly than current UN websites so “you don’t need a GPS to navigate it.” Several called for simple, intuitive headings, and multiple search options and tags, so that you don’t have to dig to find things. A critical feature is being able to filter information and search multiple ways (by country, by topic). The new platform should **ensure that data and information is easily searchable, sortable, and shareable**.
- **Visual representation of data:** Stakeholders seeking information don’t want to get “lost in a block of text.” Most people are seeking more visual representations of data, for instance heat maps showing that you can hover over to learn more about what policies are in place in each country, or the characteristics of certain migrant populations.
- **Regularly updated information:** As one respondent noted: “It makes no sense to make another platform if the data will not be updated or harmonized.” In an ideal world, this would mean the portals need to go beyond simply gathering information that already exists, and invest in more frequent and systematic data collection (including by funding capacity-building or operational support in countries that may not have the resources to undertake this themselves). Realistically, this calls for making hard choices on what to prioritize, as the new platform will not be able to plug all data gaps.
- **Data and source transparency:** The success of the KP is all about trust: the more confidence users have in the information that goes in, the better the chance of them using it as a primary source of information. This depends on setting out very clear definitions of what the knowledge products show and where the underlying information and data come from. This means including granular metadata on how data and information were collected and what assumptions the analysis was based on. Even when well-known international organizations report on data gathered in the field, end users need to be able to draw their own conclusions of how reliable or representative the analysis is (for example, if an organization is reporting on a shift in flows of irregular migrants, end users need to be able to know whether this was based on observations of N=100 or N=1000 people, over just one day or multiple weeks, etc.). Multiple sources for each piece of information would also enhance its credibility.
- **Ability to Correct:** Some respondents emphasized the need for an editable database that could be constantly updated and corrected—almost like a **Wikipedia** page, where people can both put in and take out. Government officials in particular noted examples where they had to correct published statistics about their own countries, or where they noticed

⁴⁶ Meghan Benton, “[Digital Litter: The Downside of Using Technology to Help Refugees](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/digital-litter-downside-using-technology-help-refugees),” Migration Policy Institute, June 20, 2019. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/digital-litter-downside-using-technology-help-refugees>

duplicates in data (for instance irregular border crossings or deaths at sea). The errors were able to be corrected by contacting the publishing organization directly. The ideal platform would be updateable “by the minute,” with users vetting and corroborating data in real time.

Based on the interviews, we can also identify several challenges to building the KP and CH:

- **Data privacy concerns:** Any platform trying to gather together all available information in one place will run into privacy concerns. Not all migration data can be shared, particularly data collected by governments and/or related to national security (eg, Mexican government has a joint database with OAS of crimes against migrants, but this is not publicly available). Some data will always need to be private.
- **Audience concerns:** The needs of different stakeholders may vary widely. Data specialists capable of manipulating raw statistics may be in search of more comprehensive datasets, whereas generalists who need ready-made analysis may be seeking more curated information in an accessible, user-friendly format. Different types of investments are needed for both these categories, and it is likely that both cannot be done (well) at once.
- **Data can be distorted in an era of fake news:** Governments need to make strategic choices about how they release sensitive data on migration, such as crime data. And they must decide what topics should be broken down by immigration status, as releasing these details could potentially be used to foment fear by opportunistic politicians.
- **Risk of duplication:** One of the biggest risks with any new platform is that it will simply overlap with or duplicate what already exists. This not only wastes the time and investment that goes into it, but actually further clutters the field and makes it even harder for stakeholders to find reliable information.
- **Difficulty of vetting and interpreting information and assessing its accuracy.** Bringing together ever more information on a controversial topic without having any real mechanisms in place to assess the quality of this information or reliability of sources creates a big challenge. One of the big questions is whether the organization(s) in charge of managing future meta-platforms have the capacity to vet data—let alone knowledge—on a global scale, and how they would mediate conflicts in the case of competing data or analyses (for example, if two UN agencies were to have different figures or positions on an issue). Particularly on sensitive topics, what is considered a “good practice” may differ dramatically depending on who is telling the story. Even “cut and dry” migration statistics need to be contextualized and interpreted by experts in order to tell an accurate story.⁴⁷

Finally, one of the biggest challenges is that the project’s success hinges on how ambitious it is and how wide its reach; but the more ambitious the task, the greater the risk of falling short. The ability of any one platform to become the “go-to” portal that supersedes all others hinges on breadth and consistency: maintaining reliable, high-quality data on most topics and regions. The moment it goes out of date, people will lose faith in it. This endeavor thus requires significant resources to manage and sustain over time. Some respondents expressed doubt this could be coordinated on a global level, arguing that it is more realistic to execute at the national or regional level: “The further away you go, the less tangible it becomes.” But then the question becomes how to distinguish this effort

⁴⁷ In Mexico, for example, sociologists and anthropologists join demographers to understand subtleties like whether unaccompanied minors are actually part of family units, or whether people are entering Mexico solely with an eye to traveling farther north; all things that cannot be detected through pure data alone.

from regional efforts (for eg, IOM Costa Rica creating a regional mobility platform in Central America, or even MPI's Latin American portal).

VI. Recommendations

In an environment of limited resources, the UN Network will have to make some hard choices on how to best target their resources to address (and improve upon) the current gaps and limitations in migration knowledge and information-sharing. Our research revealed clear discrepancies in what different actors need, and big questions about who or what to prioritize; the KP and CH will not be able to do everything or please everyone. Based on the needs identified through the interviews and survey, the authors of this assessment believe there are three principal models for how to prioritize resources and fill knowledge gaps that the new Knowledge Platform might consider:

1. Comprehensive Approach: Focus on aggregating large pools of information in real time

This model would provide better real-time access to raw data and information; it would act more like an algorithmic aggregator than a curated human-driven platform. This might be accomplished by simply linking to national statistics agencies, UN and other international organizations, and existing data portals. It could even include something like an RSS feed that automatically pulls from other data sources. This comprehensive approach would come at the expense of a user-driven, curated approach. It would also need to be updated regularly to maintain its position as the “go-to” place for migration information; for example, committing to weekly or monthly scans to ensure there are no broken links or outdated information.

More access to data would fill a distinct need expressed by many stakeholders. Government officials noted that it would be useful to have **open source data to be able to manipulate it in different ways**, not just be limited to how it is used in one report. This would allow users to have a “dialogue with the data,” and download and analyze what they need. One complaint is that even when thematic reports are published (for eg, on climate change-related displacement) the raw data underpinning the analysis not always easily accessible. Governments have also said they face political barriers to accessing data from other governments, even neighboring ones, particularly in a crisis.

Ideally, this could be accompanied by a **data handbook** to delineate (and ideally assess the reliability of) all the primary sources available. Respondents noted that currently they may not even know where there is raw data available, and where there is not. Database should also include **caveats**: transparent disclosure of where information is incomplete or could not be obtained, so that users can assign the proper weight to what they are reading.

2. Targeted Approach: Focus on curating and analyzing the most important information

This model would curate key information and present it in an accessible format—overlaid with interpretation and analysis of key issues and trends. This would come at the expense of the comprehensive scope described above, as the additional resources required to vet and filter information would mean the platform would have to set certain parameters on the scope based on its agreed-upon priorities. This “curated and slick” prototype would rely on in-house capacity (augmented by consultants) to curate information, provide a more dynamic and visual user

experience, and provide authoritative (yet concise) analysis. This serves a different audience than the option above; rather than people who want full datasets, this caters to time-limited public officials and other stakeholders who need data to be interpreted/placed into context, and also presented in an accessible format. This model would also endeavor to create a baseline of common metrics that everyone is using; a universal language so that users can compare ‘like with like’ and find a common understanding of success, particularly in light of GCM implementation.

Building an authoritative repository of information—particularly one that includes “policy primers” that offer background on key topics—is complicated by the lack of trust in evidence and lack of consensus as to who should be entrusted to tell sensitive stories in a non-ideological, yet authoritative way. Even collating information on different practices around the world requires both sufficient resources and sound judgment; but going one step further and drawing on existing research to assess policy impacts or outcomes—and doing so in an unbiased way—requires a unique set of expertise. Even highly trusted specialized UN agencies might be seen as promoting their own perspective or mandate rather than offering impartial analysis or vetting. One potential workaround is to build an advisory board of independent, credible experts on different aspects of migration (selected according to transparent criteria) who can vet and create content as needed.

Other agencies and organizations also need to be persuaded to contribute to this effort rather than compete with it by operating parallel platforms and portals. This buy-in will be key to the success of this model. The hook is that a trusted “uber platform” where the most relevant content can be showcased would offer much greater visibility than individual agencies are able to get on their own.

3. Capacity-building Approach: Investing resources where there is the greatest need

This model would invest in filling the biggest information gaps, which could mean working to actually build capacity for countries that need it most. Instead of running the risk of duplicating or competing with other platforms, this model would more directly try to plug knowledge gaps that have been identified. But this means directly prioritizing among a host of competing needs that can vary significantly by country and region. It also entails some ethical questions as to whether money is better spent by allocating equal resources to each region, or whether more investment is needed for under-resourced countries.

The emphasis on capacity-building creates an opportunity to rethink data collection from the ground up. This would improve international standardization and comparability; for instance if the platform created templates for countries to fill in so that inputs are standardized. This model would also improve data collection practices around the world, sharing best practices about things like how to include a gender-sensitive approach in the collection phase, for example—where templates and best practices already exist but are not widely used.

The Connection Hub might consider the following three key elements:

- 1. Providing a forum for exchange of ideas/Progress with GCM implementation**, perhaps modeled after the UNHCR CRRF platform.⁴⁸ The Hub could create an environment where the exchange of information and ideas can be facilitated and enabled. Some countries report they use the GFMD platform for partnerships, albeit infrequently and at an early stage in programming, but this platform has limited content and is not regularly updated. The

⁴⁸ United Nations General Assembly, ‘Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration’, January 11, 2019.

challenge with creating a new platform would be to ensure that there is enough buy-in where a portal like this would actually be used; currently, some states are wary of efforts to collect “good practices” as this can sometimes be seen as “naming and shaming” states with less resources and capacity. Also, it would have to go above and beyond what the GFMD platform was able to do. Any new database should also be able to filter by country/region, GCM objective, and different dimensions (gender, vulnerability, trafficking, etc.)

2. **A repository of projects/partners:** Some government officials noted that it is hard to know what exists on the ground through publicly available information, and thus it might be useful to have a “one-stop-shop” that collects all policy documents (as well as supporting material in other mediums, like audio and video) in one place. A database of partners and projects active in specific countries around the world would be useful to avoid duplication; particularly larger-scale initiatives in progress at the national level. Donor governments, for instance, often are unaware of which government or agency is active in a region they are investing in. A centralized database could avoid duplication among different actors, or projects that are counterproductive to each other, and potentially help create synergies among different actors (assuming they are not in competition). However, databases of projects and practices can be challenging to assemble because **reporting what exists on paper may not equate to what is happening on the ground**. A vetting system would need to be developed, for example outlining a set of guiding principles that an initiative needs to demonstrate it abides by before going into the website. Drawing on other media (even social media) to corroborate the story told by official policy documents could also mitigate this challenge.

2. **A connection hub or “help” button to connect countries with specific projects and partners.** Another idea (albeit a resource-intensive one) is to add a human dimension to this database to specifically match users with projects or partners who can help with a specific initiative or challenge. Rather than a static list of best practices that goes unused, a more dynamic interface could ensure that promising ideas are actually used.

Annexes

Questionnaire: Needs Assessment Survey

Name:	
Country:	
City:	
Institution:	<input type="radio"/> National government <input type="radio"/> Subnational government <input type="radio"/> International organisation <input type="radio"/> Non-governmental organisation <input type="radio"/> Private sector <input type="radio"/> Trade union <input type="radio"/> Other:
Name organisation / department / ministry:	
Title:	
Telephone number:	
Email:	
Other contact:	
Comment:	

I. Finding and using migration data and information

Why do you typically seek out data and information about migration? [*multiple choice, tick as relevant and select frequency*]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To inform the design of a new policy, project, legislation, or campaign (e.g. new migration policy, or project for migrant entrepreneurs in a city) 	<input type="radio"/> Very often <input type="radio"/> Often <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Very rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To improve existing policies, projects, legislation or campaigns (e.g. to make them more effective, or adapt them to new trends/realities) 	<input type="radio"/> Very often <input type="radio"/> Often <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Very rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. For public outreach (e.g. the head of department, or the mayor, or the Minister needs a specific piece of information for a speech, a newsletter for his / her constituency) 	<input type="radio"/> Very often <input type="radio"/> Often <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Very rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. To monitor or evaluate the implementation of a normative framework, a policy initiative or campaign (e.g. annual review of a policy, quarterly report for a project) 	<input type="radio"/> Very often <input type="radio"/> Often <input type="radio"/> Sometimes

	<input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Very rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5. Other (specify): 	<input type="radio"/> Very often <input type="radio"/> Often <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Very rarely <input type="radio"/> Never

6. When you look for migration data or analysis, which sources do you consult first? [*Rank your top three choices*]

- Publications by international organisation (e.g. UN organisations, OECD)
- Academic articles
- Publications by think tanks by think tanks or research institute
- Publications by non-governmental organisations & other civil society organisations
- Internal datasets (e.g. data produced by your own department or statistical office)
- Country-based socioeconomic and administrative statistics, such as administrative data, statistical surveys and censuses (e.g. country-based labour force and household surveys and censuses, country-based population registries, administrative records)
- Datasets of international or regional statistical bodies (e.g. data compiled by UN population division or Eurostat)
- Migration experts
- Other (specify):

7. In general, when you look for migration data or information, what type of format do you favour? [*Rank your top three choices*]

- Policy briefs with examples of policy innovation or practices or initiatives that have worked in other countries
- Survey or polling analysis
- Short analytical reports
- Evaluation/analysis of initiatives, best practices, policies
- Case studies (e.g. real-life stories that can be used in a speech)
- Academic articles or research
- In-person briefings by migration experts
- Other (specify):

8. In your position, how regularly do you look for additional migration data and information? [*one choice*]

- Several times a week
- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Less than once a month

9. How do you use the migration data and information you find? [*multiple choice*]

- To fill a gap in understanding (e.g. how many people would be affected by a specific policy change)
- To better understand background and contextual information (for e.g. gain insights into the dynamics underpinning a specific social phenomenon, including more theoretical reflections)

- To assess the costs and benefits of a decision and weigh tradeoffs (compared to other options)
- To assess the potential impacts of a decision
- To compare or get inspired on possible good practices by learning about what other countries / authorities/bodies do
- Other (specify):

II. Needs for the Connection Hub and Knowledge Platform

10. In your opinion, what makes a migration platform or data hub the most useful? [*multiple choice*]
- Draws on various sources and presents a comprehensive and complex perspective on an issue
 - Is regularly updated
 - Is very concrete and not theoretical
 - Synthesizes academic literature to provide a theoretical perspective on practical issues
 - Is easy to use (e.g. to locate the information)
 - Has a moderator function (e.g. online assistance to help users)
 - Is available in multiple languages (not just English)
 - Provides data in a downloadable format that allows for secondary data analysis (e.g. XLS, CSV)
 - Data visualization available on-site (e.g. maps, graphs)
 - Other (specify):
11. In your opinion, what makes a migration platform or data hub the most reliable? [*multiple choice*]
- Draws on data sources that are from an official body (e.g. local or national government body)
 - Is regularly updated and indicates when most recently updated
 - Contains raw data for users to interpret as they see fit
 - Draws from multiple sources to present a comprehensive and complex perspective on an issue
 - Other (specify):
12. In your opinion, what are the main limitations of these migration platforms / portals in terms of content? [*multiple choice*]
- Information is outdated
 - Information is not comprehensive (e.g., it does not cover the whole field you are working on, or it covers only a limited geography)
 - The sample or information does not match what you need
 - Information is too theoretical
 - Information and analysis lack concrete recommendations for policymakers
 - Information is not reliable (e.g. flaws in the methodology)
 - Information is biased
 - Other (specify):
13. In your opinion, what are the main limitations of these migration platforms / portals in terms of accessibility/usage? [*multiple choice*]
- There are many platforms with similar information and I am not sure which one to use

- The content is not fully available through the subscriptions made available by my organisation
 - Difficult to locate the data / articles you are looking for
 - Difficult or not sure how to use it
 - Is not available in my native language, specify: _____
 - Other (specify):
14. What is your general take on migration data platforms and portals? [*multiple choice*]
- This diversity of platforms and portals is very useful to gather data and information
 - Only a few of them are useful to gather data and information
 - There are too many of them and it is confusing
 - They are easy to use
 - They are difficult to use
 - They do not provide information and data in open access
 - Other (specify):
15. Do you see benefits of having a new knowledge platform? [*one choice*]
- Yes, many
 - Yes
 - Not really
 - Not at all
 - I don't know

16. Option to add a short comment to explain
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III. Current gaps in data and analysis on migration

17. Among these, what are the **three** main topics for which you often struggle to find reliable data using existing platforms and portals? [*three options*]
- Quantitative data
 - [*e.g. on the number of migrants in a country disaggregated by sex, age or migration status; on the number of irregular border crossings into a country; on the number of migrants who have died or gone missing attempting to cross international borders; on the number of migrants returned from a country (voluntarily and involuntarily); trends over time*]
 - Specify:
 - Legal analysis
 - [*e.g. on the compliance of labour migration, family reunification or returns measures with existing normative obligations*]
 - Specify:
 - Social analysis
 - [*e.g. analysis of the effects of labour migration policies on workers; of family reunification policies on migrant families; of social dynamics associated with smuggling and trafficking*]
 - Specify:
 - Economic analysis
 - [*e.g. on the effects of labour migrants on the national job market; on the effects of development aid in countries of origin*]

- Specify:
- Historical analysis
 - [e.g. on the history of migration in a country; on the history of a specific migrant population]
 - Specify:
- Geographic analysis
 - [e.g. on migration routes; on the effects of new transportation infrastructure on migration routes]
 - Specify:
- Other
 - Specify:

IV. Impact of migration data and information on decision-making process

18. When you gather migration data and information via online platforms and portals, how important is this evidence to the decision-making process at your organisation / department? (e.g. in the case of a new project, policy, or awareness-building initiative)? [*one choice*]
- Very important
 - Important
 - Not important
 - Not important at all
 - I don't know
19. In your experience, what source of evidence, data, or analysis has proved the most important to the decision-making process at your organisation / department (e.g. in the case of a new project, policy, awareness-building initiative)? [*multiple choice*]
- Talking to colleagues within my department
 - Talking to experts within my government/organisation
 - Talking to migration experts outside my government/organisation
 - Consulting online information (e.g. portals or platforms about migration)
 - Reviewing internal information (e.g. collected by internal statistical department)
 - Reading the press
 - Other (specify):

V. Information sharing and coordination through hubs that can connect actors

20. How do you typically share information (e.g. best practices, relevant data) internally (with other departments within your government/organisation)? [*multiple choice*]
- Online platforms or portals
 - For instance:
 - Bilateral meetings
 - Conferences or workshops
 - Newsletters
 - Other (specify):

21. Which of the following are challenges/gaps in sharing information internally and with external partners? [*multiple choice*]
- Lack of capacity (e.g. resources, time)
 - Lack of tools to do so (e.g. no common online platform)
 - Lack of opportunities (e.g. panels, conferences, calls, meetings) to do so
 - Difficulties to identify the counterpart at the right level
 - Other (specify):
22. Between 0 (very low) and 5 (very high), how could a connection hub (online platform that would connect the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the GCM) best help to address these challenges? [*one choice*]
- Filling gaps in migration data or analysis: 0 1 2 3 4 5
 - Sharing best practices and lessons learnt on how to implement the GCM: 0 1 2 3 4 5
 - Identification of implementing partners for the GCM, within and outside the UN system: 0 1 2 3 4 5
 - Identification of funding mechanisms to implement the GCM: 0 1 2 3 4 5

VI. Conclusions

23. To conclude, do you want to share your recommendations for the new platform to be established by the Migration Network (the Connection Hub and Global Knowledge Platform)?

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24. Which of the following are you and your colleagues aware of and / or use? [*tick as relevant*]

Platforms/Portals/Websites		
Check the boxes below if you have heard of or used the associated portal, webpage, or website	Name of portal/webpage/website	Organisation/Dept
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	International Migrant Stock	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	UNHCR Population Statistics (covering populations of concern)	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Child migration and displacement	United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it	UNODC Data Portal	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

<input type="checkbox"/> Used it		
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	UNHCR Population Statistics	UNHCR
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Global Internal Displacement Database	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Missing Migrants	International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (data hub on human trafficking)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Global Migration Data Portal	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Displacement Data Portal	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Flow Monitoring	
	Regional Knowledge Hub on Migration	IOM
	Environmental Migration Portal	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Regional Migration Data: MENA Mixed Migration Overview	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	<i>Plataforma Regional de Información sobre Migración (PRIMI)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Indicators of immigrant integration	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Database on immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	OECD International Migration Database	

<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	The Blue Hub (Data Catalogue or Dynamic Data Hub)	Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Eurostat	European Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	International Migration in Latin America (IMILA)	Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Footprints Database	Mixed Migration Hub (MHub)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Legislative/Legal Databases (EPLeX, IRLex, NATLEX, NORMLEX, LEGOSH)	International Labour Organization (ILO)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	ILOSTAT	

<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Global Forum on Migration and Development Platform for Partnerships (PFP)	Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD)	World Bank
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Migration Policy Institute	Migration Policy Institute
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Mixed Migration Centre	Mixed Migration Centre
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	LegislationOnline (Migration)	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Observatory on Migration	International Organisation for Migration (IOM) + 15 partners
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Caribbean Migration Consultations Platform	Caribbean countries, in coordination with IOM and UNHCR
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG)	International Migration Institute (IMI), University of Amsterdam

<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	M4D Net	UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with IOM, International Trade Centre-ILO, UNHCR, the UN Population Fund, the UN Institute for Training and Research, and UN Women
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	OECD Migration	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	MILEX (Database of Migration Legislation in the Americas)	Organisation of American States (OAS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	SICREMI (Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas)	Organisation of American States (OAS) in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	European Website on Integration	European Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD) Knowledge Portal	Led by the European Commission with partners
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	EMN Publications	European Migration Network (EMN)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Migration Research Hub	Consortium of 16 partners. Project leader: Erasmus University Rotterdam
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP)	Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Smuggling of Migrants Knowledge Portal (SHERLOC)	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	Compendium of Labour Market Policies	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
<input type="checkbox"/> Heard of it but have not used it <input type="checkbox"/> Used it	TEMPER (permanent and temporary migration) project	Consortium of universities and International Trade Centre-International Labour Organisation (ILO)

[<input type="checkbox"/>] Heard of it but have not used it [<input type="checkbox"/>] Used it	Other [<i>option to add a short comment</i>]	Other [<i>option to add a short comment</i>]
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