

Trust in people

Messaging migration with hope

Introduction (i)

New migration narratives

We need a new vocabulary for talking about people on the move, one that builds support for human-rights based migration policies.

Facts and figures alone will not work if they trigger fears and negative stereotypes that block support for human-rights based migration policies.

We know that a conversation on migration framed by crisis and borders reduces support for human rights, but to change the narrative we need to find different words, different concepts as well as different stories.

Telling people their fears are wrong will only reinforce those fears, instead we need to change the conversation altogether, making it

one of empathy, responsibility to care, shared humanity and hope.

We need to make the case for migration by talking about the core moral position – our worldview – that underpins what we are asking for. We then need to activate and spread support for those values and beliefs that if shared will drive more support for more compassionate migration policies.

Narrative: The way events or stories are connected and presented to form a new belief, a “common sense” understanding of what is happening.

Introduction (ii)

How to use this guide

This document presents positive, values-based messaging for talking about people on the move and migration policies.

It applies existing research on what works together with brainstorming about PICUM's core beliefs.

The messaging recommended here is a "living document", forming the basis for further discussion, testing and re-iteration, as well as adaptation to different audiences. The principle is that it starts with where we *want* the narrative to be, and the ideas we want people to share.

The next step is for our narrative change goals to be integrated into daily communications

strategy.

Groups working on migration can apply this messaging in various forms.

Above all, they can look for stories and moments that reinforce these narratives, and our belief about how the world works, and can work better if our policies are implemented.

In this document we will discuss the underlying worldview people use to understand migration trends, then the narratives that reinforce that worldview and finally some potential stories and words we can use every day.

Summary

Five shifts for hopeful migration narratives

This “hope-based” approach aims to focus our messaging on the values, policies and behaviours we want to promote, rather than only highlighting those we want to prevent.

To do this, we analyse our current negative messaging (on the left column) and then try to articulate what the opposite, positive points look like (the right column).

This means that our research and messaging will be based on promoting our values and our worldview. Anyone can apply these five shifts to their messaging.

Fear

From a world in crisis...

Hope

to an interconnected world.

Problem

Governments scapegoat and ignore people who move, denying them basic rights.

Solution

Governments earn our trust by treating all of us like human beings.

Against

Leaving people too few regular ways to move and denying them papers they need to live a life of dignity.

For

More humanity: Welcoming people who move and caring for the people who are here.

Threat

From a world where we are overwhelmed by crisis and putting up walls...

Opportunity

... to a world where we are becoming more connected than ever and finding ways to open doors.

Victim

From a world where we are scared of the other...

Hero

...to a world where people are acting on their conscience and mobilizing others to follow their lead.

Shift 1. From fear to hope

Worldview / Vision

A worldview is an underlying belief about how the world works. This understanding influences which narratives make sense to us and we use to interpret events and make decisions on debates. We should reinforce our worldview throughout all our communications - indeed, all our work. The text on this slide is an idea that we want to activate and bring to life in different ways, and should not be seen as the exact words we would use in final messages.

We are all connected

We live inter-connected lives, there are so many more things that unite us. It is so much easier for people to connect.

In order for us to all live together on this world, we need trust and care. Societies and cultures grow and evolve. People move. People welcome each other.

What we most need in this world is trust. We need to trust each other. And we need to be able to trust that governments will take care of people – whoever they are and wherever they come from.

As we become ever more connected in our shared humanity, we are also becoming more aware of each other's needs and differences. We are becoming more tolerant in ways that we never thought possible a few decades ago. Governments are getting better at meeting people's needs, and people themselves feel a greater need to see themselves as good people who care for each other.

Shift 2. From against to for Our values

Try to frame every conversation about migration with common shared values.

When we talk about our mission as migration organizations, use these values to explain the change we want to see, and how we and others can make it happen.

Trust

We believe governments should improve the lives of people regardless of document status. Treating people with compassion should be the goal of all government policy.

We want governments to protect freedom and fairness, to let people move to ensure better lives for themselves and their families – something all of us want.

We want decision-makers to hear the voices and stories of those around them. We are a bridge for communities to tell their stories to politicians.

The job of government is to provide services to people who need them. We want to make government more responsive to people's needs, for example through people-centered policy design.

Government and society work best when officials and authorities listen to people and make good, informed decisions.

Care

Society is built on our desire to live together. Solidarity makes our communities solid and whole.

In this inter-connected world, we all share a responsibility to care for each other. People are united by a desire to improve lives. It is important to treat others the way we want to be treated ourselves.

Our societies are full of people who brim with care for their fellow humans. We celebrate and support these acts of solidarity, because we share a human desire to choose where we live and work.

Our carers are the people who allow our societies to thrive.

The world is becoming more peaceful, more caring, more tolerant. We all have a part to play in maintaining that progress by keeping families together, and ensuring that nobody ever wants for basic assistance.

Welcome & Inclusion

Movement is something entirely human. Moving is something every human does, and every human should be free to do so.

We believe there is a need to nurture more inclusive, welcoming societies, not just for newcomers but for all us.

It is natural to move and also natural to welcome people who move. Humans are naturally open and welcoming to others – our job is to make sure fear does not overcome that welcoming instinct.

People who are proud of their homes and local communities want to share them with others.

We want to live in a welcoming world where people are free to move. A world characterised by mobility, and dynamism. Welcoming societies are richer for the diversity they enjoy.

When we work together we can handle anything – humanity is at its best when we work together.

Shift 3. From problem to solution Narratives

After years of crisis narrative, people need to be reassured that there is a process or system that can fix things.

Put the things we want in a wider context, not migration policy but a way of running society and looking after this world. It is about taking care of people who are here. It is about working together with people wherever they are.

Trust

“This is about whether we can trust our leaders to act with humanity. We want our leaders to earn our trust by taking a common sense approach.

We need leadership that listens to people before acting. People move trusting governments to treat them fairly. Every interaction with the government builds or weakens trust. Build systems people trust and they will work well.

Caring government is sensible government. But many decisions about people moving are extreme, impractical measures that limit opportunities to work and live full lives.

We all know the stress and anguish paperwork can cause – those things should be a headache not a heartache.

We can have laws that create a fair system, that create opportunities for people to choose where to live and work.

We need governments to make that process work for people – for all of us - by doing simple things like issuing documents that allow people on the move become part of society.”

Care

“This is about how we treat each other as human beings in this inter-connected world. As humans we are also programmed to care and look out for one another.

This means recognizing the people who are already here, making sure they have the same basic paperwork, services, rights that we expect for ourselves.

It is the job of every government to listen to people. We need to listen to each other. Hear each other’s stories.

It is important we remember that every one of those people we are talking about are human beings. They all have their story. Leaders should try to hear those stories before they make their decisions.

After all, we are all united by our desire to live in dignity, in freedom, to take care of our families and our communities.

We should actively welcome people who want to share their lives with us in our societies. Show them compassion and treat them as equals.”

Welcome

“This is about building open, inclusive societies that are better for all of us to live in.

Throughout history, moving from one place to another has always been part of the human experience. In this era of greater openness and connectedness, people are becoming open to the world and more open to each other.

When people move, it brings benefits for the community. It is up to the community as a whole and to the government to find a way to value those benefits.

Sometimes we see a fearful response to that progress but it is important that we retain the tolerance and togetherness that have always ensured that societies thrive in the past when new groups of people arrived.

The natural thing to do is welcome people – it is fear that makes people hesitate to follow our natural instinct to help others.

We can all make our world more open if we open our hearts to those already here contributing to our societies.”

4. From threat to opportunity

Audience principles

Emotion

Our audiences need to feel empowered, not overwhelmed by the scale of the situation.

To create the optimism and belonging that cultivate openness to others we need people to feel part of a community.

Our base (people who feel a strong desire to help people who move) needs to feel encouraged to express our shared values, and reach persuadable audiences (who might feel a combination of support for and fear of newcomers).

Underlying negative migration narratives is a fear of the other, if not downright racism. Our messages need to cultivate tolerance and togetherness to counter this.

Emphasizing mobility and dynamism may be a more effective terrain for this debate.

Action

Many audiences feel a mix of both solidarity with people who move and suspicion of their motives. We should concentrate on activating the solidarity by giving them a chance to act on it and elevating their voice when they do.

We want people to act on ideas of themselves as tolerant and open. Make helping a human, rather than a political act. Something that is done locally, in the community. People can support welcoming without being politically involved – people can feel useful, while still acting locally.

We want to cultivate empathy through both stories but also by providing simple actions that allow audiences to exercise and expand their empathy. We want them to relate to the challenges people on the move face.

Show the dignity not just in people who move but in people who welcome – how lives are enriched by meeting new people and encountering new experiences.

5. From victim to hero Stories

We want to elevate the stories that illustrate our worldview not just to prove that there is support for more humane policies but to encourage others to follow suit.

We want to celebrate the dignity and humanity in people who move, and make a positive example of the humanity shown by people who welcome them.

People who move

Tell stories about people who move that show:

Resilience – People making the best of bad situations, showing how they are motivated by hopes and aspirations that anyone can share.

Dignity – People showing dignity, courage and perseverance in adapting to a new life – including relatable small pleasures like spending free time with their family, taking holidays, improving working conditions in the office

Transformation – People exploring and embracing new cultures, and new friends – languages, sports, food etc.

Joy – moments of arrival, of receiving papers, of new friends and other moments of success like graduation, succeeding at work etc.

Aspiration – Young or dynamic migrant voices speaking on behalf of their community.

People who welcome

Tell stories about people who welcome people who move that show:

Compassion – People who care for and welcome others, motivated by humanity and altruism. Talk about why they do it and how it makes them feel.

Inclusion – Services being provided to diverse groups of people: Children being educated, people training and working together, etc.

Transformation – Show what change looks like – both hosts and newcomers change. These are stories of Communities reinvigorated – New encounters, unlikely coming together.

Joy – Simple moments of community life enriched by diversity, tolerance and inclusion. Show people with a migration background as a natural part of the community.

Trust – Celebrate politicians and other leaders who meet with and listen to them.

Communications principles

Proactive

How to create moments that reinforce our messages and narratives.

Capture attention with short, surprising moments of compassion and care.

Create relatable content that shows audiences people like them showing compassion and empathy – connecting loyalty and welcoming.

Create positive and poignant moments: Regularisation ceremonies; Papers' parties etc.

Tell authentic stories of care and inclusion from daily life and common spaces where communities come together.

Repeatedly celebrate the benefits of more mobility, of a world where people are able to travel back and forth.

Reactive

How to inject our messaging into on-going stories and breaking news

Every story on migration is a chance to repeat our core message: we live in an inter-connected world and need a smarter, more sensible response built on trust, care and humanity.

Try to place migration stories in the context of wider, everyday politics, removing it from a context of security and crisis and place it in a context of responsibility to care and shared humanity.

Insist on the need for common sense solutions, government's duty to care and earn trust.

Always remind people of the humanity of those involved and the need for empathy and compassion.

Try to reference the fact of interdependence, that we need to work together in today's world.

Visuals



Earth – we need to experiment with maps (which may trigger old migration as problem frames but could also represent mobility) and images of earth (which can trigger sense of shared humanity).

Community - Families being together - seeing one's grandparents

Culture – show how society's traditions are enriched and enhanced when embraced by newcomers.



Mobility - More mobility, people are able to travel back and forth – daily travel, bicycles, trains, planes.

Trust – People in authority sitting opposite, and equal to, representatives of communities.

Messaging Principles

Do

How to articulate our narratives in communications.

- Try to refer to people and humans, not refugees and migrants.
- After years of crisis narrative, people need to be reassured that there is a process or system that can fix things.
- Put the things we want in a wider context, not migration policy but a way of running society and looking after this world. It is about taking care of people who are here. It is about working together with people wherever they are.

Don't

How to avoid triggering people's fears.

- Avoid talking about migration like a "crisis" or a problem to be managed.
- Be careful talking about law and rights in order not to trigger sense of people being "illegal".
- Limit use of national frames and talk of borders that remind people of otherness.
- Be conscious of calling people "migrants", as it risks defining them by that category alone. The issue is not migration, but whether our societies are welcoming and caring.

Words / quotes

Common sense

Human

Aspiration

Kindness

Together

Opportunity

Welcoming

Dynamic

Community

“What is in your heart is more important than what is written on your identity papers.”

“Communities that open, flower. Communities that grow, thrive.”

“The movement of people is wind in the sails of our societies. We can keep our sails up and allow it to move us forward, or take them down and our societies will come to a standstill.”

“Everyone should be able to follow their dreams, whoever they are and wherever those dreams lead.”

“Every wall needs a door.”

Challenging concepts

The current tropes associated with migration tend to elicit defensive and fearful responses. They need to be evoked with care, as they always risk triggering negative frames. However, we may experiment with ways of neutralising the terms.

Borders Calling to mind borders (e.g. ‘people before borders’) suggests migration as threat or problem that needs to be limited. It calls to mind countries as containers with limited room, and also violation of personal integrity. Ideas to test with care : compassionate border guards, welcome at borders, borders as meeting points not barriers.	Walls Calling to mind safety walls (e.g. build bridges not walls) calls to mind the threat from which we want to be kept secure. To test: do we actively name alternatives or avoid calling them out altogether? “Every wall needs a door”
Freedom and fairness Do we want governments to leave people to choose freely (laissez-faire) or actively care for people who move? Fairness can trigger desire to care but also need to be strict with rules. To test: whether it is more effective to talk about laws and rules or about a system. What does a fairer system look like?	Rights Talking about migration as a human rights issue has had limited effect. It has an othering effect, talking about “their” rights (or entitlements). Talking about rights as national or European values can also trigger an “us vs them” frame. Rights also connect to crime/law. Instead, focus on shared humanity.

Bridging

How to use this messaging to handle negative or challenging questions about migration

Question	Message
We cannot help everyone. We can't welcome all the misery of the world. We should focus on helping people already here, the homeless and the unemployed.	We should think of it less as helping and more as solidarity. Let's start by recognising that we are all connected as humans on this planet. Most people do not want help, they want solidarity, support and dignity. Society is all about how we live together. The instinct to care is human. So let's focus on building a more caring society.
Undocumented people shouldn't be here in the first place. We want to help but should not reward people who break the law.	This is about whether we can trust the system to treat everyone fairly. When people don't trust the authorities, they take risks out of desperation. It is misguided for leaders to punish people for seeking a better life, what we need is to open doors to new opportunities, and open our hearts to new people. We should have a system focused on humanity, not on fear.
If we help some we will be overwhelmed by others who follow them.	The way the media reports on this story can make us feel powerless. But actually we have the power to make the world better by our actions. Time and again throughout history, we have seen that humanity has an amazing capacity for openness and welcoming. Humanity has come so far on its journey because it embraced opportunities to grow and evolve. That is the spirit we can embrace today.
How much migration is the right amount? Is it ok to selectively let in the best migrants?	It is important that we recognise the humanity of people who are here and those who come here and we can do that by respecting their humanity in simple ways by ensuring government does its job, issuing paperwork and treating people fairly. Our societies are not built on money alone. There are so many things that give us value in our lives. This area of life is no different!

Further reading

Our basic message should be “People Move”, according to Anat Shenker-Orsorio in Center for Community Change, [Messaging this Moment: A Handbook for Progressive Communicator](#). Anat carried out ground-breaking research on migration messaging in the USA and Australia, advising us to [lead with values](#) like family, freedom, fairness and treating others as you’d want to be treated and “Seize the moral high ground by talking about what’s right, not about pragmatics or cost savings.” ([ASO, Words that work](#)) She also successfully tested a [unity/citizens of the world message](#) – “we all have a stake in making the world a safer place.”

Research from [More in Common shows that most Italians](#) feel solidarity with outsiders and overwhelmingly reject rising racism and discrimination, even while also believing that immigration has had negative effects on Italy. In other words, people can have empathy for individuals while still being suspicious of an issue/trend. The report proposes a constructive message: “Let’s get organized, let’s manage this and take advantage of it. [ICPA](#) also recommends a more comfortable space in value appeals to community solidarity, local pride, the family, religious tolerance, and an inclusive idea of home or homeland.

Framing expert George Lakoff recommends a worldview built on “empathy, responsibility [to care] and empathy” in his book *The Political Mind*. His colleague [Elizabeth Wehling](#) says that in Europe we need to move from talking about how many people can we afford to take in to how little welcome can we afford to show.

[In Fear, Hope and Loss: Understanding the Drivers of Hope and Hate](#), researchers found that people who are more optimistic about their own lives tend to hold more liberal views than those who feel pessimistic.

Hope-based campaigns that changed the narrative

In Canada, [Refugee613](#) tells the stories of people who resettled refugees, and how the experience changed them.

Welcoming America helps local towns and cities become “[welcoming cities](#)” making it easy to take positive action on migration.

Refugees talk (Switzerland) bought [YouTube ads](#) that would run over far-right videos, forcing people to watch a refugee introduce themselves.

Look beyond borders – a [viral video](#) showed newcomers having an emotional moment of social contact with Europeans

Refugees Welcome Index – a [survey](#) that ranked countries according to how welcoming they are, asking respondents if they would let refugees live in their country, their community, and their home.

Amnesty International USA – [local supporter groups](#) held dinners with locals and newcomers across the country.

Give a home – [concerts](#) held simultaneously around the world in people’s living rooms – a comforting setting conducive to empathy.



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON
UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

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Co-funded by the
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for Integration
and Migration

This report has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020)

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