CoMiDE Manifesto on Migration and Development in Europe

The interest on the nexus between migration and development has become one of the key subjects of discussion spanning across diverse entities, institutions and agencies working on human development at national and regional levels. These various complementary processes have led to the effect that deliberations on international development are only credible if substantive considerations and references are made on the role of migrants and diasporas. It is indeed the case that institutions and organisations have much to learn about effective policies and practices. The conclusions from the 2013 High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Migration and International Development are a testimonial to the fact that no country, development agency or international NGO can remain ignorant towards the interlinkages between migration, diasporas and development any longer. Migrants and diasporas have an important role to play when it comes to achieving inclusive sustainable development and socio-economic transformation.

The CoMiDe Manifesto on Migration and Development in Europe calls upon EU member states – especially the four CoMiDE partner countries Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Slowakia – to recognise migrants and diasporas as key development actors and to integrate them across institutional frameworks and policies. The idea for developing the CoMiDe manifesto stemmed from the realisation that fundamental structural and behavioural changes are needed in the domain of migration and development. This includes the adoption of a human rights-based approach and the promotion of gender equality as well as Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). When referring to the migration-development nexus, then policy coherence needs to be seen with respect to the harmonisation of migration, development and other sectoral policies. Especially in times of recession, PCD has a countercyclical effect as it allows to maximise outcomes, build synergies, arbitrate conflicts of interest, and contribute to political credibility as well as to aid and cost effectiveness.

The manifesto summarises the core principles and action points to harvest the full development potential of diasporas and to foster more policy and institutional coherence in the field of migration and development. It serves as a public declaration of commitment for all active supporters. This declaration is the result of a three-year, EU-funded project CoMiDe (Initiative for Migration and Development). Migrant organisations such as the AVP, the Austrian umbrella organisation of African migrant organisations and AFFORD, the London-based African Foundation for Development have been valuable partners throughout the development of the manifesto. In addition, the recently founded Africa-Europe Platform was also consulted. We would like to express our gratitude to Gibril Faal (AFFORD), Alexis Nshimiyimana Neuberg (AVP) and Arthur Yenga (Africa-Europa Platform) for their valuable comments.

The manifesto was adopted by all participants and involved stakeholders at the CoMiDe Conference “Developing developers: Migrants as development actors – A new way forward” in Ljubljana on the 6th of December 2013. It provides actions points on two priority themes: 1) Diaspora Engagement and 2) Diaspora Entrepreneurship. These have been chosen as priority themes for specific reasons. Firstly, no serious policy or action can be undertaken on migration and development without substantive engagement with migrants and diaspora organisations. The first priority emphasises the unique transnational role of migrants and diasporas as catalysts and intermediaries between countries of origin and destination. Secondly, diaspora entrepreneurship was one of the pivotal topics for migrant and diaspora organisations. This is related to the fact that the private sector and the economic activities of diasporas are often overlooked in the development discourse. Diaspora entrepreneurship provides the opportunity for new types of partnerships, innovations, and socio-economic development (i.e. local job creation, tax revenues and social security services).
The core principles of the CoMiDe Manifesto on Migration and Development in Europe are as follows: i) the recognition of migrants and diaspora organisations as key development actors, ii) a declared commitment to work with them on an equal basis at all levels of development cooperation and international development, iii) the empowerment of diaspora organisations by providing tailor-made capacity building taking gender- and age-specific needs into account, and iv) the institutionalisation of a diaspora engagement structure and the provision of appropriate (co-)funding schemes.

In order to fully exploit the development potential of diasporas, a human rights-based approach and freedom of movement (dual citizenship, flexible visa and residence requirements, portability of social security rights etc.) are fundamental.

**Priority 1: Diaspora Engagement**

I. Readily acknowledge migrants and diaspora organizations as development actors since they have experiential knowledge and possess intellectual capital, by applying a bottom-up and participatory approach and thereby enabling equal participation in development cooperation and international development;

II. Diligently raise knowledge and awareness about migrants as development actors among key stakeholders and in public, inter alia, through the promotion of diversity, inclusiveness, and interculturalism in mainstream media. Engage journalists with migrant background in media and support diaspora media;

III. Formally declare commitment to work with migrant and diaspora organisations at all levels of development cooperation and international development, including the conceptualisation, formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies, projects and programmes. Establish consultative mechanisms with them and hold decision makers accountable by monitoring their commitments;

IV. Formally declare commitment to work with migrant and diaspora individuals by adapting non-discriminatory recruitment policies to ensure equal access to employment, consultancy and other contractual positions and assignments. Increase migrants and diasporas’ chances on the job market by improving their qualifications through training courses/internships and through peer-to-peer learning;

V. Formally declare commitment to enable and empower migrant and diaspora organisations through cooperation, and the provision of support and tailor-made capacity-building programmes on migration and development taking age- and gender-sensitive needs and those of vulnerable groups into account;

VI. Support diaspora engagement through specific mechanisms in development cooperation in the short- and the mid-term and create appropriate (co-)funding options and schemes for diaspora and migrant organisations that supplement their existing voluntary contributions to development activities on the long-term;

VII. Formally establish an enabling environment for socio-economic, cultural and civic engagement and integration of migrants by allowing for dual and multiple citizenship, flexible visa and residence requirements, portability of social security rights, enhancing language competencies and working permits. By this it is acknowledged that migrants who are integrated and productive within the socio-economic fabric of their countries of residence have better chances and greater ability to contribute to the development of their countries of origin;
VIII. Deliberately strengthen the migration-development nexus through improved coherence of policies and institutions at international, European and national levels by advancing cooperation between donor and aid-recipient countries which focus on the transfer of skills and financial resources (without linking to return programs) and at the European and national levels through a whole-of-government approach that is equity-focused, age- and gender-sensitive, and promotes diversity and women’s empowerment at all levels.

Priority 2: Diaspora Entrepreneurship

I. Duly acknowledge migrants as entrepreneurs, equal partners and change agents in both, their countries of residence and origin and invite them to networking activities, business forums, communication with chambers of commerce and business associations. Recognise the potentials of diasporas and migrants as competent mediators for businesses who can open the markets in their countries of origin by capitalizing on their local knowledge as well as on their cultural and social skills;

II. Readily acknowledge migrants as economic multipliers for the growth of trade and cultural services, the enlargement of local and international supply chains, facilitation of business partnerships and the professionalisation of management systems in the countries of residence and origin. Acknowledge migrants as multipliers for the transfer of technologies and know-how that would render their products and services competitive on the local, regional and global markets;

III. Diligently seek knowledge and undertake appropriate analyses in order to better understand the types of enterprises that migrants and diasporas manage as well as to better incorporate them in the economic system. Investigate how socially and environmentally responsive diaspora-led (tourism) enterprises can be promoted;

IV. Systematically offer support and capacity building to diasporas and their members to initiate start-ups, social business enterprises, socially and ecologically responsible firms, income generating activities following an approach that is poverty-, age- and gender-sensitive, and promotes diversity and women’s empowerment. Regularly provide information on good practices, databases of migrants’ business ideas and financing possibilities for diaspora entrepreneurship activities through donor programmes, credit lines/microcredits, bank instruments and migrant saving funds;

V. Purposefully institutionalise diaspora entrepreneurship in development cooperation and international development, and build strong and united umbrella associations that can advocate for restructuring financial support mechanisms in front of the policy- and decision makers. Firmly acknowledge their valuable contribution to the conceptualisation, formulation, implementation and review of policies, strategies, programmes and projects and introduce adequate (co-) financing schemes. Properly channel remittances of migrants in order to avoid private savings work for acts against humanity and reduce remittance transfer costs.

VI. Deliberately strengthen cooperation with already existing businesses in countries of origin and communication with decision- and policy-makers as well as the partnerships between donor and aid-recipient countries for improving diaspora entrepreneurship through co-development policies, tax exemptions and deductions on diaspora/development cooperation-related investments, improved access to credits, loans, financial products, internet and mobile banking facilities.