



2020 OECD High-Level Policy Forum on Migration

**Opening Remarks by
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Chère conseillère fédérale Keller-Sutter, chers ministres, Mesdames et Messieurs:

Je suis ravi d'ouvrir le Forum politique à haut niveau de l'OCDE de 2020 sur les migrations et l'intégration. Le Forum d'aujourd'hui, ainsi que la toute première réunion ministérielle de l'OCDE sur les migrations et l'intégration de demain, intervient à un moment crucial. Les flux migratoires ont atteint des niveaux record, et le public se préoccupe de plus en plus – souvent en raison d'idées erronées – de la capacité des pays à bien gérer la migration.

The importance of well-managed migration and integration

Well-managed migration can be win-win-win for migrants, host countries and origin countries. Key policy priorities include ensuring that labour migration effectively meets its objectives, and fostering successful migrant integration in host countries. Indeed, the latter is a precondition for the acceptance of further migration in host countries, be it for labour, family or humanitarian reasons.

But the OECD's Indicators of Immigrant Integration suggest that migrants often lag behind the native-born in several outcomes, even though they tend, on average, to have higher levels of formal qualifications. For example, almost 20% of immigrant workers are in relative poverty – twice the figure for the native born.

In addition, only about four out of ten highly-educated immigrants with foreign qualifications are in a high-skilled job, compared with six out of ten for their native-born peers. This is not only a waste of human capital, but also a threat to social cohesion.

Let me stress that migration is not about numbers. It is about human beings; their lives, hopes and concerns. If we want to do a better job in managing migration and integrating immigrants, we need to think about the future of immigrants and the future of people in host and origin countries. Crucially, we need to bring all key stakeholders on board: policymakers, civil society, social partners, academia, and migrants themselves.

This is what today's meeting is all about: looking at the trends that are likely to shape the future of migration and integration, and how different stakeholders can respond.

Identifying the trends that will shape migration and integration

To this end, the OECD – in close co-operation with Member countries – has undertaken a foresight exercise to identify the signals that could have a large impact on migration and integration in the future. We have looked at some well-known challenges, like demographic change, but we have also reflected on challenges that are less understood.

First, the impact of digitalisation on migration management. What if, in 2035, technological developments enabled countries to select immigrants based on an assessment of their potential for successful integration and other desired characteristics? On the one hand, this could improve integration outcomes and strengthen public support for migration. On the other, as selection systems become increasingly dependent on technology and automation, there are questions about appropriate selection criteria, security, privacy and human rights concerns. Related to this, let me mention that the OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence (AI) – adopted by OECD and many other countries – set standards to promote AI that is innovative and trustworthy, which respects human rights and democratic values.

New technologies can also affect the delivery of integration services. What would happen if automatic translation tools enabled communication without the need to learn a foreign language? For the highly skilled, this could make migrating to communities with high quality of life and high digital connectivity more appealing than migrating to large metropolitan areas. But for the lower skilled, this could lead to more isolation and poorer integration.

Second, the role of regions and metropolitan areas. What if they were to become much more powerful actors in migration and integration policymaking? Equipped with smart-city technologies, municipalities – rather than national governments – may possess the best information on selection and integration. However, this may result in increased competition among cities and reinforced geographical divides.

Finally, our foresight exercise considered the implications of corporations becoming key actors in migration management in the future. Global ‘superstar’ firms could use their power to acquire global mobility rights for their employees and guarantee their successful integration. This could lead to a rise in global labour migration. However, the interests of these firms may not always align with those of local host communities.

While there are major uncertainties around these scenarios, there are also signals suggesting they are not implausible. For example, some countries are already probing the use of Artificial Intelligence, and today we will learn about some initial findings from Canada's Innovation Lab. One of the afternoon's parallel sessions will discuss how new technologies are already shaping language learning in countries like Finland, France, Germany and Israel.

Adopting a whole-of-society effort to take work forward

Looking ahead, the future is not predetermined, but we can shape it by better preparing ourselves. To do so, we first need to first take a step back and assess what has worked well in migration and integration policies and what needs to be improved or changed.

For example, the central government plays an important role in better responding to an uncertain future, but it cannot do it alone, especially in the face of large and unforeseen inflows. In this respect, we need to foster a whole-of-society effort, involving different ministries, levels of government, civil society, social partners, and migrants themselves. We also need to strengthen international co-operation, as we have learned from the refugee crisis and other large migrant inflows.

Mesdames et Messieurs:

Il est encourageant de voir autant de participants de haut niveau provenant d'un large éventail de parties prenantes et de pays se joindre aux discussions d'aujourd'hui. Je vous encourage à partager vos expériences et votre vision lors de ce rassemblement unique, qui arrive à un moment critique.

Vous pouvez compter sur le soutien total de l'OCDE pendant que nous travaillons, ensemble, pour concevoir, développer et mettre en œuvre de meilleures politiques de migration et d'intégration. Je vous remercie.