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# Migration Communication Campaigns: The state of the practice and an open database

Authors: James Dennison, Lorenzo Piccoli, Mariana Carmo Duarte





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# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. The increasing centrality and importance of MCCs in migration policy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Understanding MCCs: the state of the science</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Understanding MCCs: the state of the practice</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 An MCC typology	11
4.2 The open-access, open-collaboration Migration Campaign Database (MCD)	12
Organisation of the data	12
Demographics: time, location, platform, subject actor (institution or person) and impact assessment	13
Objective: type, object of change, specific objective, and target audience of the campaign	14
Substantive content: topic and subjects of interest	14
Message: strategies, values, and emotions	15
<b>5. Example observations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6. Discussion and conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>7. References</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>28</b>



# Executive summary

- Every year governments, international organisations, and civil society associations produce communications campaigns designed to affect numerous facets of migration.
- Despite their increasing ubiquity, resources, and—possibly—impact, as well as their profound scientific relevance, such campaigns remain understudied, and existing practice and research is disjointed across various sectors and disciplines.
- As such, policymakers wishing to design migration communication campaigns (MCCs) have no central pool of experience or expertise to draw upon.
- This report takes three steps to overcoming this shortcoming by proposing and starting a unified, interdisciplinary practitioner and research agenda on migration communication campaigns (MCCs).
- We, first, overview the increased substantive importance and scientific interest of MCCs and outline six themes of research and a typology of MCCs.
- We then present our open-access, collaborative database of 301 migration communication campaigns conducted in Europe between 2012 and 2022.
- The Migration Campaigns Database (MCD) codes each campaign according to the following—theoretically-justified—variables:
  - I. Demographics (“when, where, by and for whom?”): time, location, platform, subject actor (institution or person) and impact assessment
  - II. Objective (“why?”): type, object of change, specific objective, and target audience of the campaign
  - III. Substantive content (“what?”): topic and subject of interest
  - IV. Message (“how?”): strategies, values, and emotions
- We provide initial analyses of how the above factors vary amongst the MCCs, as well as example observations. Findings include that the values-basis of the appeals are most commonly “universalism” and then “stimulation” while the most common emotional appeal is “sadness” (in both cases, contra the recommendations of Dennison, 2020 and 2023b, respectively).
- Finally, we argue that the MCD provides practical understanding of MCCs to practitioners and an opportunity to begin more systematic research in this field.
- We invite ongoing submission of all types of MCCs globally to create a bridge between communities of academics, policymakers, and communicators by filling a dedicated form online (<https://tinyurl.com/4t78hn23>).
- The live MCD can be found at: <https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/the-migration-campaigns-dataset-4/>

# 1. Introduction

How can the increasing number of policymakers responsible for strategic communication on migration produce campaigns that most effectively achieve their objectives? Moreover, how can scholars understand the increasing number of public communication campaigns designed to affect people's migratory attitudes and behaviours? Such campaigns have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, as government agencies, international organisations, and civil society associations at local, national, and even global levels respond to increased political imperatives on the issue of migration as the salience of largescale migration in the twenty-first century has become more apparent (Dennison and Geddes, 2019). This has resulted in larger budgets and more ambitious policy objectives regarding the attitudes and behaviours of both host populations and actual and would-be migrants in origin, transit, and destination countries. In Europe, specifically, recent events like the so-called "migration crisis" in 2015-2016 and the mass displacement of individuals from Ukraine have prompted institutional actors to use public campaigns with different target audiences. These campaigns, which we label "migration communication campaigns" or MCCs, have also attracted dispersed studies from a broad range of social sciences using varied epistemological and methodological approaches.

In this report, we respond to both the increased prevalence of MCCs and their currently fragmented but progressing scholarship by proposing a unified research agenda for their study and, above all, contributing and demonstrating a new Migration Campaigns Database (MCD), which practitioners can use when designing their own campaigns. We do so in three ways. First, we argue why a specific MCC research agenda is necessary. We provide evidence of their increased real-world substantive importance, and we overview the scientific literature and findings on the subject. Second, building on the above, we ask what questions such a research agenda should seek to answer. We identify six particularly pressing areas: (i) conceptualising MCCs; (ii) describing MCCs according to how they vary; (iii) explaining variation in the use, contents, and type of MCCs across both space and time; (iv) determining the effects of MCCs, both on their stated migration objectives and otherwise; (v) identifying complementarity between the disparate academics works for which MCCs are relevant; and (vi) identifying cooperation and interaction between academia and those actors producing MCCs. Finally, we offer two initial contributions to the research agenda by conceptualising and proposing a typology of MCCs, and introducing an original, open-contribution, online database of MCCs—the aforementioned MCD. We kickstart the MCD by coding 301 campaigns from Europe between 2012 and 2022 according to 14 variables. We offer descriptive statistics of these variables as an initial analysis and provide visual examples. We invite other scholars to contribute to the expansion of this research agenda and the database, which is open access and open source.

The rest of the report proceeds according to the above three sections in turn, before discussing the broader ramifications of the agenda. We see this endeavour as likely to yield both scientific and substantive policy gains, not least by offering a path to: more robust testing of MCC determinants and effects; genuine future scholarly interdisciplinarity; and the bridging of academic, policy-maker, and communicator worlds by encouraging collaboration and easy-access to pre-existing MCCs. Each of the above are likely to offer social science insights far beyond MCCs, which we discuss. Finally, we highlight outstanding shortcomings of our approach and contributions, and we propose potential avenues for scholars to overcome them.

However, how public communications should be used and is being used regarding irregular migration remains remarkably understudied, despite its growing importance to matters of the utmost gravity. This stands in contrast to voluminous literature on describing, explaining, and testing communication interventions aimed at affecting public attitudes to immigration, in terms of preserving immigrants' rights, reducing xenophobia, prejudice, misinformation, and political polarisation, encouraging social and economic integration, and averting hate crimes. States and actors such as the EU have devoted significant resources to communication efforts to reduce *both* public hostility to immigrants and irregular migration. Aside from practical importance, scientifically testing the exact effects of a wide

variety of forms of public communication contributes to broader theoretical, scientific questions regarding why humans think and act as they do, not least given the relative lack of robust studies so far.





## 2. The increasing centrality and importance of MCCs in migration policy

In recent years, Migration Communication Campaigns (MCCs) have been repeatedly stated by policymakers and members of civil society organisations (CSOs) to be key tools in achieving migration policy objectives of the utmost real-world importance, including upholding human rights and democratic legal orders, improving quality of life via integration, reducing xenophobia and discrimination, correcting misperceptions, tackling misinformation and conspiracy theories, and reducing smuggling, human trafficking, and fatalities during irregular migration. MCCs have been increasingly turned to as the way to achieve policy goals such as those of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (UN, 2018), “de-polarised” migration debates (OSCE, 2021), or “re-balanced” narratives, the goal of the ICMPD’s 2020-23 EuroMed V programme. European Commissioner (EC) Dimitris Avramopoulos used his 2015 speech at the first European Migration Forum (EMF) to state ‘Our biggest concern is the rise of racism and xenophobia, fuelled by populist movements across Europe. To communicate the positive contribution of migration, I intend to launch an EU-wide campaign to improve the narrative about migration.’<sup>1</sup> The European Commission justify their 2021 ‘Communication of Local Authorities for Integration in European Towns’ toolkit by stating ‘As hate speech against migrants is widespread in the public sphere, it is important to provide effective tools [...] that [...] can be used by every stakeholder - public or private - who wants to communicate a positive narrative on migration.’<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the EU’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which has a seven year budget of nearly €9.9 billion<sup>3</sup> to improve migration management lists as one of its eleven action types ‘Communication actions, including campaigns, social media activities and other actions aimed at raising awareness, understanding and acceptance’ as one of its 11 types of actions.<sup>4</sup>

To name just a few, recent international MCCs include those by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) related to the safety of migrants fleeing Ukraine<sup>5</sup> and fighting human smuggling in Central America<sup>6</sup>, those by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and SEEFAR related to migrants and COVID-19<sup>7</sup>, by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Aid on reducing irregular migration<sup>8</sup>, by the Global Forum for Migration (GFM) and Development and IOM on promoting balanced narratives<sup>9</sup>, and by the OECD on tackling xenophobia.<sup>10</sup> These international MCCs are, however, far outnumbered by national and local campaigns. Dennison

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vjqxprckdri/nieuws/speech\\_of\\_commissioner\\_dimitris?ctx=vjn4cltrxekk&start\\_tabo=20](https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vjqxprckdri/nieuws/speech_of_commissioner_dimitris?ctx=vjn4cltrxekk&start_tabo=20)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/positive-storytelling-migration-toolkit-local-authorities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/positive-storytelling-migration-toolkit-local-authorities_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AMIF%20-%20Thematic%20Facility%20Work%20Programme%202021-2022\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/AMIF%20-%20Thematic%20Facility%20Work%20Programme%202021-2022_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://ukraineiom.int/news/eu-and-iom-launch-all-ukrainian-awareness-raising-campaign-prevention-human-trafficking-during-war>

<sup>6</sup> [https://programamesoamerica.iom.int/sites/default/files/communication\\_campaigns\\_on\\_migration\\_2021-2022.pdf](https://programamesoamerica.iom.int/sites/default/files/communication_campaigns_on_migration_2021-2022.pdf)


<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/how-best-to-communicate-on-migration-and-integration-in-the-context-of-covid-19-813bddfb/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://seefar.org/news/projects/emerging-needs-limitations-adapting-migration-communication-campaigns-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.comunit.com/la/content/impact-communication-campaigns-deter-irregular-migration>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/migration/netcom/campaigns-tools-platforms/it-takes-a-community.htm>; <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/practice/it-takes-community#>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/migration/netcom/campaigns-tools-platforms/>



(2020) analysed 135 MCCs aimed at changing public attitudes to immigration from Europe, West Asia, and North Africa between 2009 and 2019 that were mainly national or local in scope. These MCCs were collected into an inventory by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD); a follow up inventory developed by the same organisation in 2022 for the period 2019-2021 included a further 284 campaigns.

Many such campaigns are produced by CSOs, which are also increasingly more involved in the creation of best practice guides for MCCs. Some of these guides are authored by academics or at least draw on academic findings (Crawley, 2009; Sharif, 2019; Banulescu-Bogdan, 2018; Marthouz, 2006; Bamberg, 2019; Welcoming America, 2018; Browne, 2015; Tjaden et al, 2018; Jinkang, 2022). Tjaden et al (2018) identify 65 MCCs' *impact evaluations*, though note that only 30 were publicly available and only two published in peer reviewed journals. They (2018: 22) identify eight communication tools—internet-based, tv/video, radio, print media, workshops, alternative, hotlines and information centres, and word-of-mouth peer networks—using six message types—policy restrictions/situation at destination, irregular migration smuggling, trafficking, risks of journey, and alternatives to migration—and aimed at four objectives—changed attitudes and/or behaviours and increased knowledge and/or awareness.

Finally, academic grant awarding bodies have also devoted resources to MCCs: the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme included a specific call on migration narratives with the aim to change the debate on migration in Europe<sup>12</sup> of €3 million, while the Swedish Research Council (SRC) had a 2022 call for academics to collaborate with civil society organisations as part of a 'Grant for research communication in migration and integration'.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the stated importance of MCCs by political actors, their important possible effects, their (seeming) increased prevalence also among CSOs, and the large resources devoted to them all afford them clear substantial importance.

## Scientific interest

Understanding the nature, contents, determinants, and effects of MCCs—and how and why these are changing over time—provides evidence to support broader and more profound theories of the causes of human attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours—both in terms of migration but also well beyond. On the one hand, under what conditions do such campaigns meet their varied attitudinal and behavioural objectives, if at all, and why? On the other, what does the changing production, prevalence, and composition of such campaigns tell us about motivations and assumptions of those producing them? Such questions draw on and are relevant to existing work across social scientific disciplines including political science, psychology, sociology, communication studies, demography, history, and potentially beyond. Such scientific studies broadly fit into three categories.

First, recent experimental studies of real-world campaigns typically seek to explain the effects of campaigns on their objectives in quantitative terms. Such MCCs include film screenings, awareness raising events, peer-to-peer communication, and various forms of counselling for would-be migrants (Tjaden and Dunsch, 2021; Tjaden and Gninafon, 2022; Bah and Batista, 2018; Bia-Zafinikamia et al, 2020; Shrestha, 2019, 2020; Dennison, 2022b; for review see, Pagogna & Sakdapolrak, 2021; Molenaar and Lucker, 2021) with impact typically measured in change in self-reported propensities, perceptions, and knowledge. These recent studies typically frame themselves as a response to the lack of robust impact evaluation amongst policy practitioners—as bemoaned by the policy reports listed above—and sometimes argue that their tests provide evidence of one or more theoretical approaches. However, more often the generalisability of their findings are questionable, not least because the contents of such MCCs are left relatively un-analysed in these studies.

Second, experiments that randomly allocate treatment of hypothetical MCC examples to survey participants are by now common in studies of attitudes to immigration. Dennison (2022a) overviews 68 such experimental studies, as well

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<sup>12</sup> [https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020\\_MIGRATION-09-2020](https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020_MIGRATION-09-2020)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.vr.se/english/applying-for-funding/calls/2022-06-10-grant-for-research-communication-in-migration-and-integration.html>



as other relevant studies, categorising their findings into nine common strategies: Providing information, correcting misperceptions and “myth-busting”; appeals to emotion; emphasising self-interest and common interest; emphasising conformity or diversity; migrant descriptions; emphasising common ground; appeals to empathy; messenger effects; and appeals to identity. These studies share theoretical sophistication and strong internal validity, though often lack external validity (though see Kalla and Broockman, 2021) and remain more focused on attitudes to immigration amongst host populations than other facets of migration (though see Hager, 2021).

Third, at the same time as the above two categories of studies have increased, there has also been a blossoming of critical and media studies of MCCs that tend to focus more on the motivations and aesthetic contents of the campaigns themselves. Oeppen (2016) argues that information campaigns aimed at would-be migrants are, rather than genuine attempts at their stated aims, instead nefarious means of control, a political act aimed at domestic audiences, and a way of shifting responsibility onto would-be migrants. Musarò (2019: 629; see also Cappi and Musarò, 2022) analyses the imagery of an Italian campaign to argue that such campaigns ‘contribute to nurturing a ‘compassionate repression’ that increasingly and silently legitimizes the difference between the ‘us’ (the figure of the citizen) and the ‘them’ (the figure of the foreigner)’. This approach is expanded by (van Dessel, 2021) and similar to the discourse analysis of Williams (2020; see also Williams and Coddington, 2022; Watkins, 2020; Heller, 2014), ethnography of Vammen (2021). More positivist approaches including qualitative studies by Brändle (2022) and Brekke and Thorbjørnsrud (2020). Notably, scholars utilising these approaches have largely overlooked the MCCs that focus on reducing xenophobia, negative attitudes, and misperceptions amongst host populations, despite such campaigns often being produced by the same international and national organisations, often as part of the same programmes, and possibly being more numerous. Furthermore, although these studies analyse the contents of MCCs in great depth, with great potential theoretical utility, the explanatory elements—in terms of the determinants and effects of MCCs—are rarely tested and often simply taken as read.



### 3. Understanding MCCs: the state of the science

Overall, we identify several trends in the contemporary academic literature on MCCs. Most studies, including reviews, consider *either* MCCs focused on influencing emigration or immigration, leading to almost entirely separate literatures on the two types with vastly different normative assumptions and empirical approaches. This is even though MCCs are typically produced by the same actors and often as part of the same public policy programmes meaning that many trends in their motivations, production, and effects are likely to have commonalities. The distinction between those focussed on emigration and immigration arguably makes the mistake of not envisaging migration as a single phenomenon, albeit viewed from multiple perspectives (Leloup, 1996; Sjaastad, 1962). This is not to say that all MCCs are conceptually the same—quite the opposite. Instead, they have a common root in managing and affecting migration throughout the cycle of human migration and beyond that fall into numerous sub-types (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010; Geddes et al, 2020). Moreover, many claims regarding the descriptive trends of MCCs have a weak evidence base from which important normative and empirical claims are regularly made. We know relatively little about how MCCs vary over space and time in either qualitative or quantitative terms, including their: objectives, origins, budgets, strategies, contents, media, actors, and placement within broader policy programmes.

In terms of explanation, claims regarding the causes of MCCs come overwhelmingly from academic studies using critical and media studies approaches, with the attendant strengths and weaknesses of a focus almost entirely on MCCs directed at influencing emigration behaviour and extensive analysis of the contents of the MCCs but relatively naïve methodological approaches leading to questionable claims. Conversely, claims regarding the effects of MCCs come overwhelmingly from experimental studies, either based on impact evaluations of real-world campaigns in the case of those affecting emigration behaviours or *ad hoc* survey experiment treatments aimed at affecting attitudes to immigration; both of which typically emphasise internal over external validity, in part owing to the lack of analysis of the contents of the MCCs themselves.

Related, as the three strands of the literature have rarely spoken to each other, they have become increasingly distinct, despite being relatively nascent. As such, there is very little interdisciplinarity, despite large potential gains given each strand's relative shortcomings. Similarly, whereas those experimental studies of real-world emigration-focussed MCCs evaluate the impact of campaigns organised by international organisations, experimental studies on attitudes to immigration do not feed into broader academic-policy maker cooperation.

Building on the above, we identify six particularly pressing areas for an MCC research agenda to address:

1. Describing and conceptualising MCCs in the abstract, including an effective typology of how they vary.
2. Describing MCCs empirically based on how they vary according to the above typology and variables theoretically significant to their determinants and effects.
3. Explaining variation in the use, contents, and type of MCCs both across space and time utilising theories based on institutions, ideas, interests, and individuals (Shearer, 2016).
4. Determining the effects of MCCs, both on their stated migration objectives and otherwise.
5. Identifying complementarity between the disparate academic works for which MCCs are relevant, not only in terms of inter-disciplinarity but also in terms of methodological (quantitative, qualitative, etc.) and theoretical (positivist, interpretative, etc.) approaches, not least given the social dimension of the objectives and audience coupled with the aesthetic dimension of the campaigns themselves.
6. Identifying cooperation and interaction between academia and scientific findings and the design, implementation, and assessment of these campaigns by those who produce them.

# 4. Understanding MCCs: the state of the practice

We now turn to offering two initial contributions to the first two of the above identified six research areas.

## 4.1 An MCC typology

First, we conceptualise and propose a typology of MCCs. Our starting point is Rice and Atkin’s (2009, also Rogers and Storey, 1987) definition of public communication campaigns more broadly as ‘(1) purposive attempts (2) to inform, persuade, or motivate behavior changes (3) in a relatively well-defined and large audience, (4) generally for noncommercial benefits to the individuals and/or society at large, (5) typically within a given time period, (6) by means of organized communication activities involving mass media, and (7) often complemented by interpersonal support’. Of note are the three Aristotelian rhetorical objective types—to inform (i.e., simply provide factual information); to persuade (to change an individual’s beliefs and preferences); and to motivate (to affect behaviour)—which together we take as our typological starting point. From these, as outlined in Table 1, five objects of change are suggested: awareness and misinformation for “inform”; beliefs/perceptions, and preferences for “persuade”; and behaviour for “motivate”. In addition, we propose three typical target audiences. From these several typical specific MCC objectives are suggested that are observed repeatedly. Finally, we offer example MCCs for each of the objects of change.

**Table 1: Migration Communication Campaign typology**

Objective	Object of change	Typical specific MCC objectives
Inform	Awareness	Awareness raising of risks of irregular emigration and/or promotion of safe options for migrants and prospective migrants
	Misinformation	Fact-checking; “myth-busting”; correct information on emigration/immigration
Persuade	Individual beliefs	Decrease prejudice; change perceived effects of immigration/emigration; narrative change
	Public preferences	Affect support for migration policies
Motivate	Behaviours	Affect propensity to migrate; promote integration initiatives; act for/against migrants

As such, we build on Crawley’s (2009: 4) distinction between two types of public communication campaigns in the field of migration: those with the goal of informing and shaping the propensity to migrate of would-be-migrants in countries of origin and those with the goal of changing the attitudes of the population in countries of destination. Drawing upon this initial distinction, we propose a more nuanced typology of organised strategic communication in the field of migration based on the first principles of their stated goal<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> See previous section for a discussion on how the stated goal of a campaign may not necessarily correspond to the actual goal(s) of those launching the campaign.

## 4.2 The open-access, open-collaboration Migration Campaign Database (MCD)

We now introduce an original database of 301 campaigns to kick-start more systematic research in this field, the 'Migration Communication Campaigns Dataset' (Dennison, Piccoli, and Duarte, 2023a). The database includes a diverse set of variables that can be used to compare and contrast different types of MCCs, as we discuss below. For the first release of the database, we limit the temporal, geographical, and issue-focus of the included observations for reasons of feasibility. We currently include information on campaigns conducted in countries of the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the United Kingdom (UK) between 2012 and 2022. We restrict ourselves to this frame because we could rely on previous projects providing data on migration communication campaigns (see below), although these projects did not—and indeed no project feasibly could alone—provide a systematic coding or overview of existing campaigns. Additional information on the definitions used are available in the codebook of the database (Dennison, Piccoli and Duarte, 2023b).

We built the dataset in three steps. First, we collected existing sources and systematically coded the migration communication campaigns that had already been identified. We used three sources: (1) a repository of migration communication campaigns created by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (Dennison 2020), 105 campaigns between 2015 and 2019 in Europe and North Africa of which we retained 78 items), and then a second updated repository of 310 campaigns in Europe and North Africa between 2019 and 2022 of which we retained 132; (2) the repository of migration communication campaigns created by the OECD (2022, 46 campaigns between 2013 and 2022 of which we retained 38 items); and (3) the list of migration communication campaigns by the Clarinet project (2021, 53 campaigns between 2013 and 2020 of which we retained 32 items). Second, we conducted a search on Web of Science of all the academic articles published between 2012 and 2022 on migration communication campaigns. We used the following keywords: "migration campaign" OR "information campaign" OR "narratives" AND "migration" OR "immigration" OR "emigration". We found 161 articles and we selected eight of them, which in turn helped us identifying campaigns held in Denmark, Hungary, Spain, and the UK (Caviedes 2015; Blay-Arráez et al. 2019; Fehsenfeld and Levinson 2019; Bajomi-Lázár 2019; Cattaneo and Grieco 2020; Merkovity and Stumpf 2021; Shah and Ogden 2021; Terrón-Caro et al. 2022). Finally, in December 2022 we circulated a survey among prominent institutions involved in advocacy, regulation, and research of migration. We selected these institutions to reflect a diversity of scale, mandate, geography, and other characteristics. A full list of the institutions with whom we shared the survey is available in the Appendices (Table A1). We also published the survey on our social media channels inviting everyone to contribute. In March 2023 we had received 17 additional campaigns through the survey.

We make the database open source because we plan to extend the database over time, space, and issue area. We will include additional data, both internally (i.e., Adding more campaigns in our countries of observation during our period of observation), externally (i.e., Expanding the geographical coverage to other countries), and longitudinally (i.e., Expanding the period of coverage). For this, we invite other scholars to contribute to the expansion of the dataset by filling a dedicated form online (link: <https://tinyurl.com/4t78hn23>). We will periodically code new proposals that fit our selection criteria and publish annual updates of the Dataset and its Codebook. We welcome suggestions on all regions and emigrant or host population target audiences.

### Organisation of the data

The Dataset is organised around a typology of four key overarching themes, which draw on previous research on migration-information campaigns (Pagogna and Sakdapolrak 2021): demographics ("when, where, by and for whom?"), objectives ("why?"), substantive content ("what?"), and message ("how?"). For each theme we include a set of binary variables (rather than categorical, since most variables have the potential for multiple responses, such as the MCC's country). Overall, the Dataset comprises a total of 13 variables: while the full list and description can be found in the codebook (Dennison, Piccoli and Duarte, 2023b), here we discuss ten variables that can inform the research agenda

we lay out in this article. The broad geographical and longitudinal coverage makes it possible to compare across countries, identify recurring themes, and explain patterns of change and continuity.

### **Demographics: time, location, platform, subject actor (institution or person) and impact assessment**

We include a set of standard variables to capture the MCC's demographics of when, where, and by whom. "When" is measured in terms of year(s), allowing us to track and explain MCC trends over time. "Where" is measured, first, geographically in terms of number of countries and which countries and, second, in terms of platform (dedicated website, social media, billboards, leaflets, advertisements on newspapers, radio, and television, and community-level programmes such as exhibitions, workshops, cultural and social events). "Who" or, more accurately "by whom", considers who created the MCC. MCCs be initiated by a broad range of actors, including international organisations, non-governmental organisations, political parties, governments (national, regional, and local), religious organisations, private companies, educational institutions such as libraries and museums, sport clubs, think tanks, public hospitals, and semi-organised groups of friends and artists. Finally, these variables include whether the MCC publicly disclaims the existence of an impact assessment, defined as "an evaluation that makes a causal link between a program or intervention and a set of outcomes" (Bia-Zafinikamia et al. 2018; Tjaden et al. 2018). These assessments can take many forms, but in the database we simply record whether the campaign publicly acknowledges the existence of such assessment or whether it does not. Descriptive statistics from these variables are shown in Table A4, in the appendices due to its length.

Overall, we see:

- Broad geographic and, albeit to a lesser extent, linguistic distribution of MCCs across Europe
- A marked increase in the number of campaigns during the decade 2012-2022
- We find that NGOs are by some distance the most common producer of MCCS— among 18 categories— followed by international organisations and then national governments.
- Only 23 per cent of MCCs are migrant-led, while only 66 percent have any sort of impact assessment.



## Objective: type, object of change, specific objective, and target audience of the campaign

Our “objective” set of variables consider the motivation for the MCC, i.e. why it has been produced. Four variables are drawn from our MCC typology in Table 1 that incrementally narrow down the exact focus(es) of the campaign. In each case, multiple responses are possible. First, “objective type” responses are “inform”; “persuade”, and “motivate”. Given their fundamental nature, they are unlikely to change in future. Similarly, “object of change” has five responses: “awareness”, “misinformation”, “beliefs/perceptions”, “preferences”, and “behaviours”. More open to expansion are our other two variables in this group. “Specific objective” for which we start by including those typical specific MCC objectives are shown in Table 1, notably “awareness raising of migration opportunities/risks”, “fact checking on migration statistics”, “change perceived effects of immigration”, “affect support for migration policies”, “lower propensity to migrate irregularly”. “Target audience” is typically one of “migrants”, “potential migrants”, and “host populations”, though this may also be “experts” or “journalists”. Descriptive statistics from these variables are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of objective variables from the MCD**

	%	No.
<b>Type of objective</b>		
Inform	66.11	199
Persuade	25.58	77
Motivate	23.60	71
<b>Object of change</b>		
Awareness	64.78	195
Behaviour	25.25	76
Beliefs/perceptions	17.28	52
Misinformation	8.64	26
Behaviour	11.30	34
<b>Target audience</b>		
Would be-migrants in the country of origin	3.20	10
Migrants in the country of destination	16.60	50
Population in the country of destination	82.72	249
Expert audience in the country of destination	10.30	31

## Substantive content: topic and subjects of interest

The “what” set of variables includes information on the contents and subjects of interest of the campaign. On the contents of campaigns, we use as a reference the selection of topic clusters identified by Pisarevskaya et al. 2019 and Levy et al. 2020 that point to the most prominent migration-related contents as observed in academic research over the last few decades: “Gender and family” (eg. MCCs about child; family; parent; school; youth), “Governance and politics” (eg. MCCs about human rights, citizenship, political participation), “health” (eg. MCCs about health risks),



“immigrant incorporation” (eg. MCCs about migration economics and businesses, integration), “migration processes” (eg. MCCs about mobilities, displacement), and “Migration-related diversity” (eg., MCCs about racism and social contact). These variables are not mutually exclusive as one MCC can be about more than one of these topics at the same time. On the subjects of interest of the campaign, we build on the scholarship on migration and refugee labels (Zetter 1991, 2007; Crawley and Skleparis 2018) to identify what group of migrants are the subject of the MCC. We consider the following variables that, again, are not mutually exclusive: “Refugees and asylum seekers”, “International migrants”, “Irregular migrants”, “Children” (eg. Unaccompanied minors), and “Other” (eg. Women, individuals with disabilities). This set of variables allows to measure the relative frequency of topics and categories that are prominent in migration studies. Descriptive statistics from these variables are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of content variables from the MCD**

	%	No.
<b>Content</b>		
Gender, family, etc.	1661	50
Governance	1894	57
Health	532	16
Integration	3289	99
Process (eg. mobility)	3256	98
Diversity	2625	79
<b>Subject of Interest</b>		
Refugees and Asylum seekers	3821	115
International Immigrants	5083	153
Irregular migrants	864	26
Children	1262	38
Other	598	18

### **Message: strategies, values, and emotions**

This group of variables describes how the MCC sought to achieve its objective. It contains variables on the strategies, values, and emotions prompted by MCCs.

First, following Dennison’s typology of the different strategies used in MCCs (2022), the database includes nine variables regarding the strategies used by campaigns: correcting information on stocks/flows/fact checking on effects of migration, appeal to emotion, appeal to self-interest/common interest, emphasising conformity or diversity, migrant description, emphasizing common ground, appeal to empathy, messenger effects, and appeal to identity. These variables are not mutually exclusive, as each campaign can combine different strategies at the same time.

Second, the variables capture the values a campaign appeals to. Appealing to one’s audience’s “personal values” is regularly cited by migration advocacy and policy communication as key to persuasion and motivation. Such values—defined as one’s broad motivational goals in life—have indeed been shown to strongly affect a broad range of their

political and non-political attitudes and behaviours, not least regarding immigration (eg. Davidov and Meuleman, 2012). Moreover, recent meta-analyses of the effects of communication that appeals to values is highly supportive of the notion of their effectiveness (Joyal-Desmarais, et al., 2022). One of the more commonly used values schema is that of Schwartz’s Basic Human Values (1992, see Table A1 for explanation of each the ten). These have been repeatedly applied to attitudes to migration, with Dennison (2020) arguing that persuasive communication should appeal to the values of moderates or those with whom one disagrees on the issue—in the case of attitudes to immigration, security, conformity, and tradition to persuade opponents (eg. immigration as building/protecting the nation) and universalism to persuade supporters (eg. immigration as a threat to minorities). Dennison (2023a) argues that border management communication is likely to be more effective if it can identify and appeal to the values of irregular migrants and other target groups. As such we include one variables measuring whether and which one of the values listed above the campaign appeals to.

Similarly to values, migration advocacy and policy communicators insist that elicit emotions rather than using facts makes for more effective communication. Although this dichotomy is dubious, eliciting emotions has indeed been shown to make a message more resonant and act alongside cognitive processes of persuasion and motivating. Dennison (2023b) suggests that very little practical guidance on how to communicate using emotions exists, however. As such, he utilises Plutchik’s (1980) Basic Emotions to argue, amongst other things, that migration communication campaigns should select the emotion that they attempt to elicit according to its physiological reaction. Plutchik’s eight Basic Emotions each have a corresponding physiological reaction (see Table A2) and, we can infer, that his 24 additional “dyad” emotions (those that result from combinations of the basic ones) are likely to result in combinations of those physiological reactions. As such, again, we include questions on whether which emotions the campaign sought to elicit. Descriptive statistics from these variables are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics of content variables from the MCD**

	%	No.
<b>Strategies</b>		
Correct information on stocks/flows/fact checking on effects of migration	45.51	137
Appeal to emotion	53.16	160
Appeal to self-interest/common interest	16.28	49
Emphasise conformity or diversity	18.27	55
Migrant Description	32.89	99
Emphasise a Common Ground	11.33	34
Appeal to empathy	56.80	171
Messenger Effects	28.24	85
Appeal to identity	2.33	7
<b>Values</b>		
Universalism	41.53	125
Benevolence	17.94	54



Tradition	10,96	33
Conformity	4,98	15
Security	24,92	75
Power	8,31	25
Achievement	14,62	44
Hedonism	1,99	6
Stimulation	3754	113
Self-Direction	8,31	25
<b>Emotions</b>		
Joy	19,33	58
Sadness	19,60	59
Fear	13,62	41
Anger	12,96	39
Anticipation	11,96	36
Surprise	8,64	26
Disgust	11,96	36
Trust	19,27	58

Notably, we show that majorities of the campaigns use strategies of appealing to empathy and appealing to emotion. The third most used strategy is correcting information. By contrast, emphasising common ground, common interest or conformity are relatively less common. Similarly, the values-basis of the appeals are most commonly “universalism” and then “stimulation” while the most common emotional appeal is “sadness” (in both cases, contra the recommendations of Dennison, 2020 and 2023b, respectively).

# 5. Example observations

We now offer two example observations of MCCs taken from the MCD. We choose two that used a billboard in its campaign to facilitate presentation in this report.

Example one:

*Figure 1. No Walls But Bridges*



- Name: No Walls But Bridges
- Description: An international grassroots campaign and an open dialogue on social media on sustainable solutions for the integration of migrants, developed in the Migrant Integration Lab Device, a global mechanism for sustainable integration
- Long description: ---
- Website: <http://s230464179.onlinehome.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-05-23-Final-Report-Campaign-No-Walls-but-bridges-Migrant-Sustainable-Integration-Le-Guern-Petrache.pdf>
- Email: [contact@b1-akt.com](mailto:contact@b1-akt.com)
- Language: English
- Number of years: 1
- Year: 2019
- Number of countries: 1
- Country: France
- Geographical coverage: National
- Media: billboard; social network
- Subject actor type: Academic institution; private company;
- Subject actor name: B1-Akt; Ecole des Ponts Business School
- Objective type: inform; persuade
- Object of change: awareness; beliefs and perceptions
- Target audience: population of destination country
- Content: incorporation; diversity
- Subject of interest: immigration
- Strategy: inform

#### Example two

- Name: Together Human
- Description: From 26 November to 7 December 2019, the Young Muslim Activists Association (JUMA) ran a public media campaign under the slogan 'Gemeinsam menschlich' (Together Human) to show that Muslims and non-Muslims in Germany have much in common. Through a series of portraits, Muslims and non-Muslims are seen working together, interacting, and taking part in shared activities.
- Long description: This case study tells the story of a public campaign 'Gemeinsam menschlich' to change the perception of Muslims in Germany. A particular feature of the work is that it was initiated to appeal specifically to a segment of the population identified and defined by segmentation research. The campaign was developed and tested in the Narrative Lab at the International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA) by JUMA, an NGO that gives young Muslims a voice and makes their social commitment visible. SCI thanks the teams at JUMA and ICPA for sharing their journey.
- Website: <https://www.socialchangeinitiative.com/gemeinsam-menschlich-together-human-a-public-campaign-to-move-the-middle-a-case-study-b4obddd6-8165-454d-9f64-c9397b21ba73>
- Email: n/a
- Language: German
- Number of years: 1
- Year: 2019
- Number of countries: 1
- Country: France
- Geographical coverage: Local
- Media: billboard; social network; video
- Subject actor type: Non-Government Organisation
- Subject actor name: The Young Muslim Activists Association; Narrative Change Lab of the International Centre
- Impact Assessment: Yes
- Objective type: persuade

- Object of change: beliefs and perceptions
- Target audience: population of destination country
- Content: incorporation; diversity
- Subject of interest: immigration
- Strategy: appeal to emotion; migrant description; common ground; appeal to empathy; messenger effects
- Values: tradition; conformity; stimulation
- Emotion: trust

Figure 2. *Gemeinsam menschlich* (“Together human”)

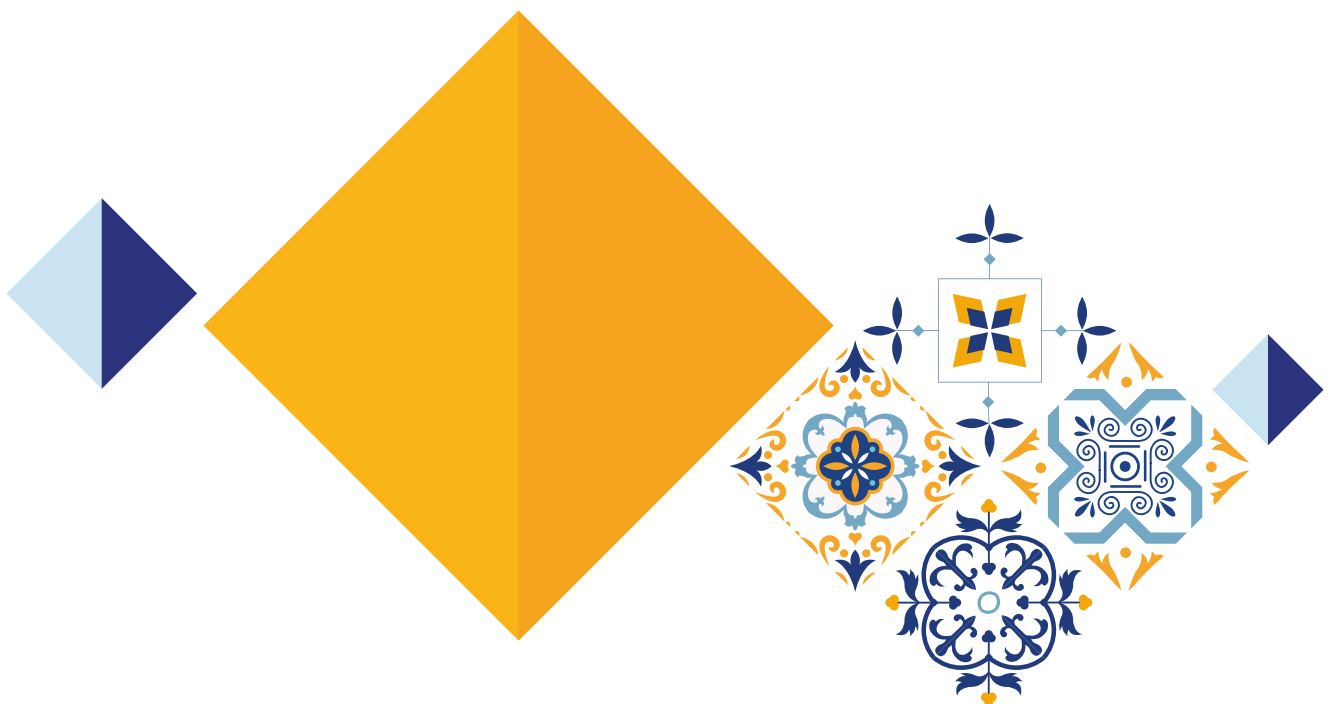


Notes: clockwise from top left “being there together when it really matters”; “Together, excited to learn”; “Together, carrying responsibility”; “Together, team spirited”

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

Briefly we discuss two main limitations of this dataset. The first limitation concerns the coverage of campaigns included. We do not claim that our Database is comprehensive: inevitably, there will be campaigns that we have not come across during our data collection. We aim at expanding the database over time, both internally (i.e., Including more campaigns in our countries of observation during our period of observation), externally (i.e., Expanding the geographical coverage to other countries), and longitudinally (i.e., Expanding the period of coverage). For this, we invite other scholars to contribute to the expansion of the dataset by filling a dedicated form online (<https://tinyurl.com/4t78hn23>).

The second limitation concerns the range of variables included. While the Database includes a large and diverse set of variables, it currently does not cover some important aspects of MCCs. For example, due to the difficulty in gathering transparent and precise data on the topic, the database does not contain information on the funding structure of migration communication campaigns. This is a key information, which would provide greater clarity on the existing funding channels, the organisation and items included in the budgets (salaries, consultancy, production materials, rental of equipment, paid advertisements..), and the scale of different campaigns. As we consolidate the Dataset, we may also be able to expand the range of substantive information that is provided with each campaign.



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# Appendices

## List of Acronyms

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EMF	European Migration Forum
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GFMD	Global Forum for Migration and Development
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICPA	International Centre for Policy Advocacy
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCC	Migration Communication Campaign
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PICUM	Platform for Undocumented Migrants
SRC	Swedish Research Council
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom

**Table A1: List of institutions with whom we shared the survey to collect MCC**

Name of the organization	Organisation type
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)	Civil society organisation
European Commission's department in charge of migration and home affairs (DG HOME)	EU institution
European Migration Network (EMN)	EU funded network
International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA)	Civil society organisation
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	International organisation
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	International organisation
Migration Policy Institute (MPI)	Think tank
Platform for Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)	Civil society organisation
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	International organisation

**Table A2: Schwartz's 10 basic personal values (1992: 6-12, 24)**

Value	Basic motivational goal	Specific goal examples
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature	Social justice, inner harmony, equality, broadminded, unity with nature, protecting environment, a world at peace, world of beauty, wisdom
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact	True friendship, mature love, meaning in life, responsible, loyal, helpful, honest, forgiving, spiritual life
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion impose on the individual	Humble, respect for tradition, moderate, devout, detachment, accepting portion in life
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations and norms	Obedient, honour parents, self-discipline, politeness
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationship and of self	National security, social order, family security, cleanliness, reciprocation of favours, sense of belonging, healthy
Power	Attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system	Authority, wealth, social power, social recognition, preserving public image
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	Successful, ambitious, influential, capable, intelligent
Hedonism	Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself	Pleasure, enjoying life
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (a varied life, an exciting life, daring)	Exciting life, varied life, daring
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring	Independent, freedom, curious, creativity, choosing own goals, self-respect

**Table A3. Eight opposing primary emotions and their respective physiological reactions (from Dennison, 2023b)**

Plutchik's opposing primary emotions	Opposing physiological reactions
Joy versus sadness	Connect versus withdraw
Fear versus anger	Feel small versus feel big
Anticipation versus surprise	Examine versus jump back
Disgust versus trust	Reject versus embrace

**Table A4. Descriptive statistics of demographic variables from the MCD**

	%	No.
<b>Language</b>		
English	0.32	95
Italian	0.11	33
Multiple	0.09	26
French	7.97	24
Other	0.08	24
German	7.64	23
Spanish	7.64	23
Greek	6.64	20
Dutch	1.99	6
Portuguese	1.99	6
Romanian	1.99	6
Hungarian	1.66	5
Polish	1.66	5
Bulgarian	1.33	4
NA	0.33	1
<b>Year</b>		
2012	1.33	4
2013	3.99	12
2014	5.65	17
2015	7.97	24
2016	14.29	43
2017	16.28	49
2018	21.93	66

2019	3256	98
2020	3056	92
2021	3621	109
2022	2292	69
<b>Country</b>		
AT	2360	71
BE	2330	70
BG	1890	57
CH	1430	43
CY	1930	58
CZ	1990	60
DE	2430	73
DK	1790	54
EE	1790	54
EL	2560	77
ES	2760	83
FI	1860	56
FR	2130	64
HR	1860	56
HU	1960	59
IE	2090	63
IS	1860	56
IT	3120	94
LI	1830	55
LT	1790	54
LU	1860	56
LV	1730	52
MT	1830	55
NL	2130	64
NO	1530	46
PL	2000	60
PT	1030	31
RO	1990	60

SE	1960	59
SI	1930	58
SK	1790	54
UK	1990	60
<b>Number of countries</b>		
0	100	3
1	7575	228
2	166	5
3	066	2
4	133	4
6	033	1
7	033	1
8	033	1
9	066	2
10	033	1
11	066	2
24	033	1
27	066	2
28	166	5
32	14.29	43
<b>Level</b>		
Local	25.91	78
National	55.15	166
European	8.97	27
Global	9.30	28
<b>Media</b>		
Billboard	10.3	31
Exhibition	11.6	35
Leaflet	11.3	34
Newspaper	4.7	14
Petition	10	30
Podcast	20	60



Radio	6	18
Social Network	388	117
Television	5	15
Video	535	161
Website	44	132
Workshop	169	51
Other	253	76
<b>Subject actor</b>		
Academic Institution	332	9
Educational Organisation	299	15
Informal Group	498	70
International Organisation	2326	8
Media	266	35
Local Authority	1163	5
Museum	166	52
National Government	1728	128
Non-governmental Organisation	4252	17
Private Company	565	2
Public Hospital	066	1
Public Library	033	9
Regional Government	299	17
Religious Organisation	565	18
European Institution	598	3
Think Thank	100	1
Trade Union	033	1
Sports Organisation	033	43
<b>Migrant led</b>		
Yes	233	7
No	9767	294
<b>Impact assessment</b>		
Yes	9336	281
No	664	20

## ICMPD Regional Office for the Mediterranean

Europa Centre, 2nd floor  
John Lopez Street  
Floriana, FRN 1400  
Malta  
Tel: +356 277 92 610



Euromed Migration



@EUROMEDMigr



emm5team@icmpd.org



[www.icmpd.org/emm5](http://www.icmpd.org/emm5)

