D7.1
REPORT ON USERS BOARD
PARTICIPATORY FEEDBACK

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Red Cross Italy

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Executive Summary

The EUMigraTool (EMT) is an innovative predictive instrument for stakeholders involved in responding to migration flows arriving in the EU response. The EMT’s aim is twofold:

- Predicting migration flows;
- Detecting risks and tensions in the EU related to migration.

The EMT is based on reliable models with ample evidence on migration flows, using data on drivers in countries of origin and transit and socio-economic factors in host EU member states. The tool is to be validated in, at least, three specific EU Member States: Italy, Spain and Greece. In order to gather first insight for the practitioners in the field of migration representing the above-mentioned Member States, a workshop was organised for end-users of the EMT (NGOs and municipalities) and their feedback is contained in this report.
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## Abbreviations

**ACLED**: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project  
**AIDA**: Asylum Information Database  
**BUL**: Brunel University London  
**CEPS**: Centre for European Policy Studies  
**CERTH**: Ethniko Kentro Erevnas Kai Technologikis Anaptyxis  
**CIT**: Cork Institute of Technology  
**CRI**: Associazione della Croce Rossa Italiana  
**CSD**: Center for the Study of Democracy  
**EC**: European Commission  
**EMT**: EUMigraTool  
**EUI**: European University Institute  
**FIZ**: Karlsruhe – Leibniz-Institut für Informationsinfrastruktur  
**IAI**: Istituto Affari Internazionali  
**IEB**: Independent Ethics Board  
**IfW**: Institut für Weltwirtschaft  
**IGC**: Independent Gender Committee  
**IOM**: International Organization for Migration  
**MTU**: Munster Technological University  
**NGO**: Non-governmental Organisation  
**OCC**: Open Cultural Center  
**OIT**: Oxfam Italia Onlus  
**ToR**: Terms of Reference  
**TRC**: Terracom AE  
**UAB**: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
**UB**: Users Board  
**UNHCR**: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
**WP**: Work Package
1 Introduction

The Users Board of ITFLOWS is constituted by a core group (Lead Users) of NGOs that are part of the ITFLOWS Consortium and 12 external members. Particularly, Lead Users are Oxfam Italia (OIT), Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) in Bulgaria, and Open Cultural Center (OCC) in Spain and Greece. They are supervised by Munster Technological University (MTU, former CIT) as leader of WP7, and they are also led by Red Cross Italy (CRI). These partners together with the ITFLOWS project coordinator – Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB) – have met several times to draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) of potential external candidates to be inserted in the Users Board (UB) and their roles.

As a result, the Users Board Participatory Feedback has been achieved. This deliverable is linked to a preparatory phase of the EUMigraTool (EMT), where a first screening of potential NGOs/municipalities was done, in order to select the most suitable and committed organisations to be part of the board for the entire duration of the project.
2 Selection of the Members of the Users Board

The selection of the Users Board was done in consultation with the UAB and MTU Partners, as well as with the Lead Users of the Users Board, who listed before the start of the project some potential stakeholders from their civil society network who could be eligible for the board. This task actually started in the Proposal stage (2019) and the list concluded by the end of November 2020.

Some challenges were encountered when reaching out to potential end-users, as the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing restrictions made it difficult to connect and engage with the potential candidates. Another obstacle met, especially considering the Italian context, was to find specialists in NGOs and municipalities who could properly communicate in English, which was a necessary condition to participate in the UB’s meetings.

All UB members are practitioners in the field of migration, with a specific role that falls into one or more of the following groups: 1) first responders at the borders, 2) second-level organisations engaged in registering and managing asylum seekers in transit, or/and 3) entities engaged in social inclusion and integration of migrants.

More than 15 potential end-users were contacted and screened during the selection process. In order to shortlist the candidates, their expertise, level of engagement, area of responsibility, location and fair representation among EU Member States was considered. As part of this selection task, candidates had to fill out a questionnaire with five questions. The submitted questions were the following:

1. How relevant is it for your organisation the accurate prediction of migration flows for the purposes of managing and allocating resources at specific entry points?
2. How relevant is it for your organisation to identify sentiment towards migration in specific locations for optimising the integration of migrants?
3. How relevant is it for your organisation to participate in an international forum and debate on EU migration flows?
4. How relevant is it for your organisation the use of a technological tool (EMT) to
help predict and manage migration flows in the EU?

5. How interested is your organisation in being trained and being able to test and master the EMT tool?

From the results of this survey, it was made clear which organisations would fit better to the requirements of the project. The final selection of external members of the Users Board took into account their level of interest in actively participating in the Users Board, too.

3 Users Board composition and their expertise

By early December 2020, the Users Board was officially established with 12 external members and 4 members from the core group (Lead members). Members of the UB represent the main Members States that are going to be studied in ITFLOWS: Italy (7 members), Spain (3 members), Greece (3 members), Bulgaria (2 members) and Denmark (1 member). While UB consists mostly of organisations where the EMT will be validated, three additional members – from Bulgaria (2) and Denmark (1) – have been added for potential enhancement of the validation countries, as well as for gathering greater insights and additional feedback about the EMT.

Thus, selected organisations and institutions fully align with the territorial scope of the project, as their locations are linked to Work Package 3 tasks, which include interviews to migrants that will take place in 2021.

Particularly, the following locations are represented in the Users Board for the validation of the EMT:

- In Italy, the Board is represented by (1) the municipality of Settimo Torinese, highly involved in migrants’ social inclusion; (2) the NGO Oxfam Italy, which works in tasks related to the reception of migrants; (3) the NGO Red Cross Italy, which has great expertise in first response; (4) the NGO Evangelical Churches Federation, also highly specialised in first response; and (5) AMMI,

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1 See full list of NGOs in Annex 1
(6) Penelope and (7) Iroko, which were chosen for being NGOs specialised in trafficking in human beings and mediation;
- In Spain, (1) Open Cultural Center (OCC) is a very active NGO in the reception and social inclusion of migrant population in Barcelona. It is joined by (2) Red Solidaria de Acogida in Madrid and (3) a local branch of Spanish Red Cross in Málaga, also dealing with first assistance and integration of migrants in Spain;
- Greece is represented by (1) OCC, based in Northern Greece; (2) the Hellenic Red Cross, located in Athens and engaged as first responder, (3) the Network of Children’s Rights, which works with minor migrants in Greece, and (4) the municipality of Katerini.

The UB’s inputs are essential for creating the user’s interface of the EMT. Moreover, these institutions are going to be the first users to test the EMT, and thus assess its efficiency and degree of accuracy in its predictions.

4 Users Board first Workshop

The first Users Board Workshop took place virtually on ZOOM platform on 20 January 2021 from 15:00 till 19:00 CET. It benefited from the participation of 21 key stakeholders, including ITFLOWS Coordinator, ITFLOWS Partners’ representatives, and the Project’s Data Protection Advisor. Only one member of the UB, AMMI organisation (based in Italy), was absent.

The agenda of the Workshop was as follows:
The challenge of conducting the workshop online was overcome by using different online interactive applications, with the aim at boosting participation and discussion among the UB members. The use of a questionnaire via Padlet and simultaneously reading the written answers was an extremely useful exercise to collect feedback and getting a first reaction from the end-users of the EMT (see Annex II).
5 The EMT prototype

A preliminary layout of the tool's functionalities and models, as well as the future outcome of the tool, was presented by the two technical partners, CERTH and BUL.

The prediction models will be based on different data sources including, but not limited to, data from ACLED, UNHCR, OpenStreetMap, Frontex, Eurostat, IOM, etc. Similarly, the tensions’ feature will consider variables like socioeconomic conditions and public attitude towards migrants or social media in Members States. By using several factors, the EMT will create a map of risks of tensions towards migration in the European Union (EU), in which are different degrees of tensions at national and regional level will be indicated.

The EMT will be a web-based application with a friendly and intuitive interface for all types of users, fully customisable for everyone to adapt it to their specific conditions and needs. Simulations will be conducted with a view of:

- Checking the implications of certain phenomena in countries of origin and transit;
- Better understanding the implications of certain observations and measurements in countries of origin and transit;
- Providing estimations in areas where data is not always available;
- Forecasting future displacements towards the EU;
- Examining behaviour of migrants in specific situations and environments.
6 Discussion of the Survey and Users Board Functional Requirements

The ITFLOWS Consortium prepared a survey via Padlet, which the UB members were asked to answer during the workshop. Instructions on how to use Padlet were circulated prior the workshop, so that all participants would have time to become familiar with the particular application. The activity was divided into three groups of questions, gathered according to the topics. After each group of questions was answered, a brief discussion and debate was followed.

6.1 Summary of Survey

The main feedback received from the UB was the following:

Regarding a question on how the European Union response to the previous migration crisis – such as 2015-2016 crisis – affected their activities and operations, they answered that migrants live in precarious conditions especially from the perspective of Greece-based NGOs in refugee camps in Moria, as well as at the border with Spain. According to the UB, EU’s priority on ensuring security and surveillance is delaying the full enjoyment of migrants’ rights.

As for a question on what was their opinion on the regular entry channels in Europe, and what methods and principles should a new regulation of such measures be based on, they responded that the establishment of new safe and regular migration routes to Europe are paramount to discouraging dangerous journeys from Sub Saharan Africa or Central Asia and Middle East to Europe. This can be achieved through:

- Arranging entry quota for specialised labour force;
- Providing humanitarian corridors, for example for those trapped in Libya;
- Sharing of migration flows among EU member states (relocation).

In lieu of following regular routes impossible for many, migrants are crossing various countries in extremely dangerous conditions with the aim to obtain asylum status. A recommendation to the EU is to find long-term solutions in relation to
stabilisation of the political situation in countries of origin. This could be achieved by addressing root causes of displacement such as violation of human rights and laws, sharing efforts among countries in hosting displaced people, effective sharing of information and standardisation of a European data system to regulate flux. Other UB members representing local institutions suggested that there are existing information channels adequate to monitor unmet needs but (as municipalities) they are not sufficiently supported in allocating funding for those purposes.

Concerning a question on what their current sources of information in terms of migration flows prediction were, the majority of the Users Board members referred to statistical data received in their daily activities with migrant population by principal international organisations dealing with displaced people and refugees such as IOM and UNHCR. Others rely on their local network of NGOs; or receive regular updates from the Ministries of Migration and Asylum and of Interior. Red Cross national offices benefit from a global Red-Cross/Crescent Movement data, but coordination among other branches is not always at its maximum potential, and no common database exists. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the Danish Refugee Council has developed its own prediction tool for forced migration forecasts at the scope of developing strategic planning within its institution.

Regarding the question on how they think that EMT could help effectively reduce to a minimum the existing tensions between migrants and locals, all members of the UB were convinced that predictions of displacement that specify where people are coming from and how many are arriving could alert specialised entities to promptly intervene and respond to the emerging needs. In addition, all participants agreed that a reliable data source could improve (a) allocation of necessary resources; (b) up to date information sharing; (c) raising awareness and transparency over the arrival of migrants, changing of the narrative about migrant communities; (d) reducing potential tensions between migrants and host countries communities; (e) avoiding excessive burden for Member States at the frontline; (f) improving relocation and fair distribution at national and European levels; and (g) boosting social integration of refugees.
On the question of **what they thought about the current design of the EMT and how soon would they like to see it operational**, the majority of the participants found the tool flexible and user-friendly but they pointed out that it should contain more disaggregated data, such as child forecasting arrivals and other criteria such as age, profession, education, and language, among others. The Board agreed that the tool should be tested before summer seasons, as it is when the need may be increasing in the countries of validation.

The UB was also asked whether there were **any specific features (additional requirements) they would like to see in the EMT**. They answered that not only demographic components such as age, gender and profession are useful, but the tool could also map variables such as vulnerability, nationality, gender and human rights violations. The EMT could also play a role in indicating risk and barriers along the route for the migrants, whilst giving useful information on past, present and future migration flows.

On the question of how **their institution would use the EMT in practice and how do they think it would change their work**, they answered that it would help allocate necessary resources and prepare long-term strategies. A higher emergency preparedness could be achieved in advance, by knowing migrant’s nationality, needs and vulnerabilities, even before they had arrived. It could also serve as a tool for advocacy, thanks to the scientific data it provides. The EMT could help develop adequate communication strategies that could lead to best practices of integration and defuse potential conflicts. In sum, the UB agreed that information provided by the tool could be used to develop a tailor response among end-users, as well as raise awareness about migration.

The UB was also asked whether in their opinion **there were ways in which the EMT could be misused**, and they all assented. The misuse could entail closing of borders, instigating violence, and misuse for political purposes to gain support and consensus for an *anti-migration* policy. The main recommendation was to ensure that the tool was shared only with relevant stakeholders.
Finally, regarding the **data protection, ethical and societal risks in using EMT**, the ITFLOWS Consortium is fully aware about the high risk that the EMT entails in terms of the potential misuse of the research. In this sense, the Project is fully committed to ethical standards embedded in Work Package 2. In fact, when conducting interviews to migrants, it is fundamental to review existing documentation about ethical questions and issues that usually arise. It is also critical to make sure that the process of conducting interviews is fluid, despite potential last-minute changes may occur. A solution to that is to closely monitor the progress of events and anticipate to potential changes and connected future challenges. It is also worth adding that the project is following a strict gender and human rights approach in all phases of its implementation. This will ensure that, besides conducting data analysis and research, it enforces protection of individual data and confidentiality measures too. ITFLOWS also intends to maintain a healthy working environment, where people feel comfortable, accommodating everyone equally, always considering and being sensitive to the individual contextual characteristics. The paramount principle **remains to protect the rights and privacy** of the migrants involved in the study. As mentioned above, the risk of negative impact is that the tool could be misused for stigmatising, discriminating, harassing, or intimidating individuals, especially for those who are in vulnerable situations such migrants or asylum seekers. Important measures are foreseen to minimise these risks related to the misuse of the research. For instance, strong monitoring structures and procedures have been designed for the project from an internal and external perspective with the aim to ensure that the research activities will be conducted in strict compliance with the EU and international human rights legal and ethical framework. In particular, an Independent Gender Committee (IGC) is working within ITFLOWS to ensure compliance with the consortium's strategy of considering gender-specific disadvantages or risk of other forms of discrimination on grounds of sexuality, race, religion, disability, age and etc. In the framework of the ITFLOWS project, there is also an Independent Ethics Board (IEB) which will provide independent advice and guidance to the project.

### 6.2 Functional requirements derived from the survey

The workshop was particularly relevant to gather NGOs’ and Municipalities’
feedback at the earliest stage in determining the EMT functions according to end-users’ needs, challenges and priorities. The discussion triggered by the survey serves as input in establishing the core functionalities of the tool.

The following functional requirements were identified:

**Collect, curate, integrate, and visualise historic and predictive data on migration:** the EMT shall display future (prediction) and historic data. It must gather both raw data and analysed / processed data from various data sources regarding migration patterns, economic and social assessments, and policies. Since migration is a rapidly changing phenomenon there is an emerging need to have a common evidence-based information base that could be easily shared among relevant stakeholders responding to migration flows. This will be a beneficial function as NGOs collect information from scattered data sources.

**Pre-assess migrants’ condition:** the EMT should offer insight into the migrant vulnerability as they arrive to Europe from their country of origin, in order to strengthen access to services. Data revealing the level of vulnerability is crucial for the services providers at the borders. Knowing which transit countries migrants have passed through enables providers to prepare tailored support to migrants, both in terms of humanitarian as well as legal support. In the worst case scenario, it also allows stakeholders to immediately activate referral systems to specialised services, in the case of minors and presumed trafficked persons. Knowing migrants’ nationality, characteristics and vulnerability can help users in drafting a preparedness plan;

**Collect disaggregated data:** demographic information such as age, gender, family composition and country of origin can offer users a better understanding of the profile of forecasted arrivals, and this can be shared with various stakeholders. As a result of the information collected, NGOs and local authorities are better equipped to provide humanitarian aid and services and allocate necessary resources to meet the needs of migrants as they arrive;

**Enhance advocacy and transparency in the field of migration:** the EMT
represents a valid tool to strengthen advocacy, particularly as relates to the consequences of forced migration. Thanks to the scientific data it provides, the EMT could help to develop adequate communication strategies that could lead to disseminate best practices and provide added value of refugee integration, with a view to change the narratives surrounding migration and to defuse potential conflicts;

**Detect possible tensions between host communities and migrants:** this function offered by the EMT will also display public sentiment in European Union (at least 3 MS) towards migrants through a Big Data analysis using keywords. As a result, this information will be then embedded in the tool’s functionality and will serve to monitor possible tension, discontent and negative sentiment;

**Identify location for sustainable integration:** the function of perceived tensions prediction will monitor host community sentiment and propose locations for optimising the integration of migrants in municipalities and regions (mainly in Spain, Italy and Greece), where sentiments towards migrants are identified as positive (thus promoting two-way integration processes). Overall, this function will facilitate relocation and fair distribution at the national and European level.
7 Conclusions

As a general observation, the first Users Board Workshop produced valuable and substantial findings for collecting first impressions of the EMT from the Users Board. Overall, the workshop stimulated a lively discussion, not only between participants and organisers, but also among UB members themselves, as they could exchange views and opinions concerning their specific challenges.

The dynamics of the workshop were effective, mixing verbal discussion with written answers included in Padlet. This variety of interactive resources kept participants’ attention along the session and showed engagement and concentration from them during the discussions thus providing very successful outcomes for the creation of the EMT.

According to the feedback gathered during the workshop, the UB observed that, at this stage, the first model is sufficiently comprehensive and attractive. However, they claimed there is a need to further develop its characteristics to better fit the purpose of providing more information about the level of vulnerability of the migrants and other relevant information.

One last concern raised by NGOs and local entities representatives is that they are currently not properly equipped to cover individual needs of the most vulnerable migrants, (e.g., survivors of abuse and violence, who constitute the majority of people crossing Libya to Europe). They stressed the need to have better knowledge on the characteristics and needs of the arriving migrants when preparing a response at their arrival point, such as information on individual traumas, medical needs, physical disabilities, etc. The gender dimension of migration in Europe also needs to be better addressed, especially considering that trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation has drastically increased in countries like Italy or Spain, and 40% of the victims are women and girls. The current poor reception facilities and limited services adapted to gender and age specific needs in the countries of destination could be thus improved by predicting the gender and age of migrants via the EMT.
Annex I
Members of the Users Board

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<td>Associazione Multitietnica del Mediatori Interculturali (AMMI)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Associazione Penelope Coordinamento solidarietà sociale onlus</td>
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<td>Hellenic Red Cross</td>
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Padlet survey
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**Deliverable 7.1**

1. **How the European Union responded to the previous migration crisis (such as 2015-16 crisis) - affected your activities and operations?**

2. **What are the main weaknesses you find in your country’s reception system? What kinds of measures would it take to overcome them?**

3. **What is your opinion on the regular entry channels in Europe? What methods and principles should a new regulation of such measures use?**

4. **How the European Union responded to the previous migration crisis (such as 2015-16 crisis) - affected your activities and operations?**

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12. **What is your opinion on the regular entry channels in Europe? What methods and principles should a new regulation of such measures use?**