

## **Concept Note 7**

### **Territorial Public Policies and the Fight Against Irregular Emigration**

#### **GOAL**

This session will explore how territorial public policies can play a decisive role in addressing the root causes of irregular emigration, with a particular focus on the European context. Recognizing the complexity of the issue — from far-right securitarian discourses to the legitimate concerns about social cohesion and welfare sustainability — the session aims to identify pragmatic, rights-based, and territorially-grounded strategies that can reduce forced migration by making territories of origin more viable, just, and attractive for their inhabitants.

#### **CONCEPTUALISATION**

Irregular emigration is not only a border issue; it is fundamentally a territorial issue. People leave not only countries but local realities marked by inequality, insecurity, and hopelessness. According to UNHCR, over 70% of those undertaking irregular migration journeys cite lack of employment, education, or security in their home territories as primary motives. Addressing these drivers at their roots requires place-based public policies that promote territorial inclusion, economic diversification, and democratic governance.

ORU Fogar, through its consistent advocacy for rural and territorial development, has emphasized the urgent need to revitalize the very areas that are most affected by outmigration. During its IV World Summit of Regions, held in Temuco, Chile, rural and border territories were identified as “empty spaces” drained of youth and opportunity. Marie Stella Kouassi (ARDCI) and Martín Guillermo (AEBR) both pointed to the loss of young talent as a key factor fueling instability and emigration. The absence of generational renewal in these regions is not only a demographic crisis but a development failure.

Far-right political forces across Europe have leveraged fears about immigration to promote exclusionary and restrictive policies. They argue that uncontrolled immigration places unsustainable pressure on public services and erodes the foundations of the welfare state. While such narratives can be politically opportunistic, they highlight a real and growing tension: when migration is irregular, unmanaged, and



disconnected from integration policies, it can undermine local cohesion and democratic trust.

But fortifying Europe's borders cannot solve this problem alone. The fight against irregular emigration must begin where migration begins — in the territories. Europe must take a leading role in building cooperative, territorial strategies that address root causes: unemployment, insecurity, governance deficits, and lack of basic services. This means investing in regional governments abroad, especially in Africa, Latin America, and the Mediterranean, to design and implement youth employment initiatives, rural infrastructure projects, and social protection systems.

Moreover, European regional governments have a role to play through decentralized cooperation, migrant integration programs, and youth mobility partnerships. As ORU Fogar's work has shown, territorial cohesion policies are essential to prevent both emigration and political fragmentation. Rural revitalization, inclusive economies, and democratic governance can build societies where migration is a choice—not an act of desperation.

This session will showcase examples of such policies in action, interrogate the European contradictions around migration, and propose a pragmatic roadmap for territorial resilience that respects both dignity and sovereignty.

### **QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

- What are the responsibilities of European regions in supporting development and stability abroad?
- How can decentralized cooperation become tools for migration management?
- How do we balance the political tensions between humanitarian obligations and welfare sustainability?
- What territorial strategies can facilitate migrant integration without undermining local cohesion?