



# DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

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**Thomas Liebig**  
International Migration Division



# Introduction

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- A large part of the discussions today focused on big data and scenarios
- However, policy makers have to make decisions on migration policy with a large degree of uncertainty regarding future developments shaping the nature and scale of migration
- These developments can be classified in three categories
  - I. Megatrends
  - II. Plausible disruptions
  - III. Unforeseen major disruptions



# The three categories of uncertain developments

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## I. Megatrends

- Already clearly observable now
- Largely predictable
- Will increase in scale and scope, but the «when », «how» , and «where» will it impact migration is uncertain
- Example: environmental change; demographic imbalances

## II. Plausible disruptions

- Weak signs currently
- Largely unpredictable
- Will increase in scale and scope, could have large impact on migration, but unclear when and how this will materialise
- Example: technological change creating «digitally transparent» migrants

## III. Unforeseen major disruptions

- No or extremely weak signs currently
- Unpredictable
- Sudden and massive impact on migration
- Example: major conflict involving key origin countries; COVID-19...a year ago



# How can policy makers prepare for these developments?

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- The response will vary in part according to the type of development:
  - I. Preparing for Megatrends
    - ✓ Recognise the scale, scope and significance of these events
    - ✓ Continuously monitor the situation and adapt policies
    - ✓ Be wary of possible threshold effects and interactions
    - ✓ Survey people in potential origin countries regarding their migration intentions
  - II. Preparing for plausible disruptions
    - ✓ Seize the potential of big data but avoid being ruled by it – maintain ownership and control
    - ✓ Continuously rethink existing processes and programmes in light of new developments
    - ✓ Mainstream foresight in the administration – not only among for the leadership
  - III. Preparing for unforeseen major disruptions
    - ✓ Use intelligence and other anticipatory tools to gauge emerging signals, including early warning systems
    - ✓ Avoid basing policy choices on short-term developments to limit the risk of overreaction:
    - ✓ Example: (not) scaling down on integration in light of massive COVID-19 decline in new arrivals
    - ✓ Build contingency plans for migration management and integration capacity in case of major disruptions



## How can policy makers prepare for these developments? (cont.)

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- In addition, the overall framework conditions for reaction need to be strengthened
- Within the national government, this requires more policy co-ordination
  - Consider migration and integration as a cross-cutting issue in connection with education, employment, social protection, trade, development, and foreign policies
  - Regularly exchange relevant information among these policy areas – not only in times of crisis
- It also requires new partnerships beyond the national government
  - Include cities, social partners, civil society, tech entrepreneurs, and migrants themselves – both in the development of migration policies and in foresight
  - But ensure that these partnerships do not lead to more in-country inequalities or unfair competition
  - Develop new partnerships with countries of origin – both with the central government and with local stakeholders
  - Use periods of low migration flows to strengthen such partnerships



## Conclusion:

How to ensure that policy makers take uncertainty into account?

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- ❖ The most difficult – but also the most important – task is the link between risk analysis and policy action
- ❖ Without this link, the best instruments will be fruitless
- ❖ To obtain this link, the administration needs to
  - ✓ Mainstream foresight thinking
  - ✓ Prepare gradual policy responses – in accordance with the uncertainty
  - ✓ Maintain “a crisis room in standby”



## *Want more?*

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Have a look at our foresight publication:

<https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-strategic-foresight.pdf>

Or contact:

[Thomas.Liebig@oecd.org](mailto:Thomas.Liebig@oecd.org)