



MOVING THE MIDDLE:
COMMUNICATING
WITH THE SILENT AND
AMBIVALENT MAJORITY

Knowledge Dossier II:
Turning Knowledge into Practice

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an inter-governmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Publisher International Organization for Migration
Carnegielaan 12
2517 KH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31703181500
Email: iomthehague@iom.int
Website: www.iom-nederland.nl

Text: Sandra Kluivers / IOM
Design: Studio Anvoco

This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.

This publication was issued without IOM Publications Unit (PUB) approval for adherence to IOM's brand and style standards.

This publication was issued without IOM Research Unit (RES) endorsement.

Cover photo: Unsplash

Required citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2024). Moving the Middle: Communicating with the Silent and Ambivalent Majority. Knowledge Dossier II: Turning Knowledge into Practice. IOM Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Hague.

© IOM 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 IGO License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).*

For further specifications please see the [Copyright and Terms of Use](#).

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks.

Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to publications@iom.int.

*<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>

pub2024/03po

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	04
Introduction	05
Methodology	08
National Campaign	12
Local Intercultural Events	23
Concluding Remarks	30
References	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Moving the Middle project, initiated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2022, aims to delve into the perspectives of the ‘Movable Middle’ regarding migration in the Netherlands.

The project consists of two phases, namely phase I, which identified key traits and concerns of this group, revealing a notable skepticism towards the government and worries about how migration impacts resource distribution. Consequently, phase II translated these findings into action through the ‘Migratie Kleurt Je Leven’ campaign, spotlighting personal stories from migrant chefs and debunking common myths about migration. Tailored online strategies, such as audience segmentation and personalized content, were employed to effectively engage the Movable Middle. Additionally, local inter-cultural events were organized in locations where a high concentration of the movable middle group was expected to reside, aiming to foster dialogue and bridge divides.

Findings from the national campaign highlight the importance of combining online and offline strategies to effectively target the Dutch Movable Middle. Members of the Dutch Movable Middle tend to be above 35 years old, often female, employed, and living outside the four biggest cities in the Netherlands, therefore it is important to target campaign content to such a group. Recommendations advocate for universal messaging with personal elements and the use of personal storytelling to enhance relatability and authenticity. Furthermore, thought-provoking messaging and structured

feedback channels ensure relevance and effectiveness, while monitoring online activity maintains campaign integrity.

Local intercultural events, organized from September 2023 to February 2024, aimed at fostering social cohesion and challenging biases among the Dutch Movable Middle towards migrants. Locations were strategically selected based on voting patterns, targeting areas with high support for certain political parties. Recommendations for similar events emphasize thorough research and collaboration with local stakeholders, including mapping local stakeholders and engaging in outreach efforts to ensure tailored event planning. During events, designated connectors and translation services facilitate interaction between diverse groups, promoting authentic connections and ongoing community engagement and dialogue. As the Netherlands grapples with migration challenges, initiatives like Moving the Middle hope to offer constructive pathways forward. By promoting fact-based discussions and understanding, the project aims to contribute to a society that respects the rights of all individuals involved and to further contribute to enhancing social cohesion on all societal levels. Through ongoing engagement and collaboration, IOM the Netherlands hopes that the Moving the Middle project can play a vital role in shaping a future characterized by empathy, inclusivity, and evidence-based decision-making.



Photo ©IOM 2024

INTRODUCTION

Migration brings a multitude of positive impacts to host societies, enriching them with diverse talents, skills, and perspectives. Migrants contribute significantly to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of their new communities. Their skills contribute to driving productivity and contributing to various sectors such as healthcare, technology, education, and entrepreneurship (Noja et al., 2018). Through their diverse backgrounds and experiences, migrants bring fresh ideas, innovation, and creativity, fostering a dynamic environment for growth and development. Migrating populations also play a large role in addressing and filling labor shortages in host countries, a phenomenon that multiple European countries are currently dealing with. The aging population in many European societies is actively contributing to labour shortages, reducing the continuation of efficient resource allocation in these very same societies (European Commission, 2023). A potential solution offered by the European Commission is to promote targeted labour migration from non-EU countries, signaling the important role that migration can play in addressing labour shortages (ibid.). Moreover, migrants often establish businesses, create jobs, and stimulate local economies, ultimately enhancing the overall prosperity and competitiveness of host societies (Al-Shawaf and Almsafir, 2014). Additionally, migrants contribute to the enrichment of cultural diversity, promoting understanding, tolerance, and cultural exchange within communities.

The Netherlands, like many other European nations, has been grappling with the complexities of migration, a multifaceted issue that touches upon social, economic, and political dimensions. The discourse surrounding migration often involves diverse perspectives, ranging from concerns about national security to humanitarian considerations. With the recent rise of right-wing, anti-migrant movements and political parties in the European region, the need to reintroduce nuance in the migration debate remains high and critical. There is an increasing recognition of the need for nuanced and comprehensive approaches that address the challenges while upholding human rights and inclusivity.

2023 was a turbulent year for politics in the Netherlands and brought many changes. In March 2023, provincial elections were held, which indirectly elect the Senate¹, whose results led to a significant shift in the political landscape. The Farmer-Citizen-Movement (BBB), a small, agrarian populist political party with only one seat in the Lower House became the largest party in the Senate. This was largely a direct result of protests against the agricultural policy of the government, the neglect of rural areas, and the broader discontent and distrust in the government that had built up over the last



Photo ©IOM 2024

decade (Otjes, 2023). This political shift occurred at the cost of radical-right and center-right parties and was the first sign of an incoming political shift away from the current center-right politics that the Netherlands has been following for the past decade.

Then, after the provincial elections in March, another significant political shift occurred on Friday 7 July, when the cabinet Rutte IV officially fell (NOS, 2023). The fall of the cabinet occurred amongst discussions around implementing restrictions on immigration to the Netherlands, in particular, limiting family reunification of refugees fleeing conflict. The largest party, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) was staunchly for limiting the number of family reunification cases, while the Christian Union (CU), part of the cabinet, refused to adhere to the proposed limitation. As such, the cabinet reached an impasse and was forced to announce the fall of the cabinet on the issue of migration (RTL Nieuws, 2023). As a result of the fall of the cabinet, new elections were announced for 22 November 2023. In an unforeseen move, the far-right Freedom Party (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, won the largest number of seats by all of all parties, winning 37 of the 150 seats (NOS, 2023). The left-wing green party, the GroenLinks-PvdA party, became the second largest, winning 25 of the 150 seats, with the center-right party VVD coming in a close third, with 24 seats (ibid.).

¹ The Lower House is known as the 'Tweede Kamer' in Dutch, the Senate is known as the 'Eerste Kamer'. The Senate has the job of checking and regulating the Lower House, who introduce and draft legislation.

The Netherlands is thus another European state to have swung to the right, following Italy, Sweden, and Slovakia (van Rij, 2023). The topic of migration has been cited numerous times as a core reason for the right-wing rise in the Dutch context, having had the cabinet Rutte IV fall over the inability to compromise over the issue and now the rise of the PVV, which has had consistent messaging on migration, namely repeating anti-migration, anti-Islamic, and anti-EU sentiments since its founding in 2006 (ibid.). As such, migration remains a contentious and polarizing topic in the Netherlands, which further enhances the need for nuanced and fact-based communication on this topic.

THE MOVING THE MIDDLE PROJECT: ATTEMPTING TO BRING NUANCE TO THE MIGRATION DEBATE

Amidst the ongoing migration debate, the Moving the Middle project seeks to play a pivotal role in fostering a more nuanced understanding of migration issues. Launched in 2022 in the Netherlands by the International Organization for Migration, the project focused on collecting data and new insights on the group known as the ‘Movable Middle’ in the migration debate. The Movable Middle is defined as individuals with uncertain or conflicting views on migration, often placing themselves in the middle of the migration debate (IOM, 2023). The first phase of the Moving the Middle project implemented a three-phase research plan to 1) collect

more data on who the Dutch Movable Middle is, what traits they have and what their views on migration are and 2) to test out various forms of communication to explore what works best in reaching this group and introducing them to more nuanced views on migration. During this first phase, it was discovered that the Dutch Movable Middle:

- Tends to be older (35+ years), employed, often times female, and lives outside the three biggest cities in the Netherlands (outside Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague)
- Have high levels of distrust towards the Dutch government, citing uncertainties about migration and the allocation of resources, namely housing, in the Netherlands
- Value equal treatment, security, self-direction, and benevolence

More information about the Movable Middle and tips on how best to communicate with them about migration can be found in the first Knowledge Dossier ‘Moving the Middle: Communicating with the Silent and Ambivalent Majority’ (IOM, 2023).

The essence of the project lies in its commitment to bridging gaps and facilitating dialogue among various stakeholders, including policymakers, communities, and migrants themselves. By engaging in a collaborative and inclusive process, “Moving the Middle” aims to challenge stereotypes, dispel myths, and present a more holistic perspective on migration. This holistic view is essential for developing policies that only focus on managing migration, but rather, strive to harness the potential of migration through recognizing the positive contributions of migrants.



Photo ©IOM 2024



Photo ©IOM 2024

After the first phase of research, the second phase of the Moving the Middle project, launched in February 2023, focused on implementing the knowledge gained into practice and continuing to gain more insights into how best to communicate about migration with the Dutch Movable Middle. The second phase included launching a national campaign aimed at targeting the Dutch Movable Middle with a more nuanced narrative about migration and organizing local intercultural events to bring the Dutch Movable Middle in contact with individuals with a migrant background. This two-pronged approach was implemented based on insights gained during the first phase, namely that communicating with the Dutch Movable Middle is best done in an online and offline combination, enhancing the reach of the messaging, as well as taking the time to also engage in in-person conversations and breaking down potentially harmful stereotypes the Movable Middle may have about migrants.

This Knowledge Dossier has as its goal to build further on the first Moving the Middle Knowledge Dossier and to share the best practices and insights learned during this second phase of the project; namely designing and launching a national campaign geared towards the Dutch Movable

Middle and organizing local, intercultural events to promote social cohesion on the local level in areas in the Netherlands where high levels of the Movable Middle live. This Dossier first begins with an explanation of the methodology used throughout the project and specifically during this second phase of the project, then first delves deeper into lessons learned from the national campaign, and consequently, lessons learned from organizing local, intercultural events. Both sections include lists of recommendations for anyone wishing to engage in communicating with the Dutch Movable Middle about migration, and how best to design their own campaign and intercultural events to bring different social groups together.

By promoting nuanced and fact-based discussions, and fostering understanding, the Moving the Middle project strives to contribute to building a society that acknowledges the complexities of migration respects the rights of all individuals involved and strives for comprehensive solutions. In doing so, they play a vital role in shaping a future where the migration discourse is characterized by empathy, inclusivity, and evidence-based decision-making.

METHODOLOGY



In 2022, IOM the Netherlands launched the Moving the Middle project. This project had as goal to conduct research on the group known as the Movable Middle in the Netherlands to 1) discover the characteristics of the group and their opinions on migration and 2) to test various types of communication and messaging about migration on the Movable Middle to attempt to nuance the migration debate in the Netherlands. These activities ultimately were done to contribute to social cohesion in the Netherlands and to create a more inclusive Dutch society by fostering an attitude of openness and inclusion towards migrants amongst the Dutch Movable Middle.

During phase 1 of the Moving the Middle project, which took place between January 2022 and January 2023, a three-phase research plan was conducted to develop a comprehensive methodology to collect more insights about the Dutch Movable Middle and effective communication strategies to reach and engage with them. These three phases entailed: first, surveying the Dutch population² to collect more information on the current general stance towards migrations and collect more information on the characteristics of the Dutch Movable Middle. Second, organizing focus groups with members of the Dutch Movable Middle to delve further into their views and values. Third, implementing a test campaign on social media to gather information on the kind of messaging formats about migration that appeal to the Dutch Movable Middle the most. To ensure that migrant voices remained central to the project, a Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board (MAAB) consisting of five members with migrant backgrounds and diverse professional expertise was set up to provide advice and feedback on all phases of the project (IOM, 2023). Based on this research, seven recommendations were presented at the final conference in 2023:

1. Be aware of the timing of your campaign:

Perceived financial well-being and sense of societal well-being play a role in receptiveness to new messaging around migration. Make sure to include the concerns of the Movable Middle in the message.

2. Use personal stories of real people:

Make sure to include faces and names of real stories that people can connect with while observing strict data protection principles.

3. Set up multiple feedback channels:

Facilitate co-creation processes with migrants and migrant organizations when working on messaging and create an open environment and room for multiple editing processes for the Movable Middle to provide feedback on the messaging.

4. Combine the online with the offline: Combine different means and modalities of communication, such as an online social media campaign, and in-person activities, such as cultural events, cooking events, dialogue sessions, etc.

5. Use value-based messaging: Value-based messaging has been proven to be more impactful when communicating with the Dutch Movable Middle as it touches upon concerns they hold about migration and current social affairs and reflects their values, making them feel heard and seen.

6. Facilitate in-person conversations: Other research has shown that in-person conversations reduce biases and negative feelings towards others. Creating an environment in which in-person discussions can take place in an open and informal manner is key to promoting inclusion in the migration debate.

7. Keep the communication positive but actual: The Dutch Movable Middle responds well to positive messaging, but remains very realistic in their concerns surrounding migration. Address these concerns and current events that are prominent within the migration debate.

More recommendations and in-depth analyses can be found in the 2023 Moving the Middle Knowledge Dossier 'Moving the Middle: Communicating with the Silent and Ambivalent Majority' (IOM, 2023).

² Number of survey respondents = 1045. Equal gender and age representation to provide representational sampling of Dutch society: Gender: Male = 49.4%, Female = 50.7%. Age: 18-24 = 10.7%, 25-34 = 16.0%, 35-44 = 14.7%, 45-54 = 17.1%, 55-64 = 16.9%, 65+ = 24.4%. Level of Educational attainment: Low = 27.1%, Medium = 42.3%, High = 30.6%

With a clearer picture of who the Dutch Movable Middle is and how best to communicate with them, the next step in the Moving the Middle project was to put the knowledge gathered during the first phase into practice, while also further expanding this very same knowledge set. Thus came the methodology for phase II of the project. Phase II was established in order to further test out insights gathered during phase I, with a particular focus on: facilitating in-person conversations between the Dutch Movable Middle and migrant communities and designing a campaign geared towards reaching this silent and ambivalent middle group. As such, two strands of focus were generated for the second phase, namely designing and implementing a national campaign with as goal to reach, and if possible, engage, the Dutch Movable Middle on the subject of migration and organizing local intercultural events to bring the middle in contact with individuals with a migration background.

National campaigns can be effective tools to engage with groups that normally do not actively participate in certain societal discussions and can aid in providing further nuanced messages and information in these very same discussions. During focus groups held throughout the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, numerous participants noted that they tended to avoid discussions around migration as they feared the potential escalation that could occur, but at the same time, they themselves had questions and points that they did wish to discuss or receive additional information about (IOM, 2023). As a result of not having the discussion about migration with anybody, they were left with more questions and more uncertainties about their own views, further exasperating existing insecurities and negative emotions (ibid.). Therefore, designing a national campaign to reach this middle group had multiple purposes:

- 1 Reach:** to reach this hard-to-reach group in the population on a national level.
- 2 Information-provision and awareness:** to provide a more nuanced, alternative message about migration, therefore contributing to dispelling certain myths and misinformation and helping people understand the contributions of migrants on the economic, cultural, and societal level.
- 3 Fostering social cohesion:** by highlighting the shared values and experiences of migrants and the Dutch population, a national campaign can create points of connection and recognition between the two groups that may usually not have any further contact, contributing to creating a sense of unity and common purpose and reducing divisions within society.

In December 2023, IOM the Netherlands launched the 'Migratie Kleurt Je Leven' campaign (translation: Migration spices up your life) for ten days. This campaign had as goal to showcase the culinary diversity brought to the Netherlands

by migrants and celebrate the larger contributions provided by migrant populations. The campaign ran on social media platforms, and advertisements on popular websites, and hosted a quiz that participants could take to test their knowledge on migration topics. Further insights into the results and content of the national campaign can be found in the section titled 'National campaign'.

Organizing local intercultural events and enabling meetings between the Movable Middle and migrants was the second focus of Moving the Middle phase II. In the previous phase, it was noted that members of the middle did not tend to have a lot of in-depth contact with individuals with a migrant background. This lack of personal contact can lead to maintaining social tensions and divisions, as it can contribute to further strengthening an 'us vs. them' mentality, fostering further social tension and division. This division can affect all various aspects of community life, including schools, workplaces, public spaces, and more. Additionally, a lack of social interaction between groups can further reduce empathy, as social contact remains a key driver of empathy, and upholds harmful stereotypes, pushing groups to rely on stereotypes and assumptions about each other, leading to misunderstandings and reinforcing biases that impede further social cohesion and the creation of healthy communities.

In other literature, organizing intercultural events to bring different social groups together has proven to be quite an effective tool in improving relations between them. According to the intergroup contact theory, otherwise also known as the contact hypothesis, positive effects of intergroup contact occurring in a contact situation can lead to the reduction of prejudices and the creation of new social contacts (Allport, 1954, via Everett and Onu, 2013). G.W. Allport, who pioneered this theory, emphasized that the contact situation did have to be characterized by four key conditions in order to successfully achieve positive effects; equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and supported by social and institutional authorities (ibid.).

Table 1: Intergroup Contact Theory: Four Key Conditions (Everett and Onu, 2013).

Condition	Meaning	Example	Evidence
Equal Status	Members of the contact situation should not have an unequal, hierarchical relationship.	Members should not have an employer/employee, or instructor/student relationship.	Evidence has documented that equal status is important both prior to (Brewer & Kramer 1985) and during (Cohen & Lotan 1995) the contact situation.
Cooperation	Members should work together in a non-competitive environment.	Students working together in a group project.	Aronson's jigsaw technique structures classrooms so that students strive cooperatively (Aronson & Patnoe 1967) and this technique has led to positive results in a variety of countries.
Common Goals	Members must rely on each other to achieve their shared desired goal.	Members of a sports team.	hu and Griffey (1985) have shown the importance of common goals in interracial athletic teams who need to work together to achieve their goal.
Support by Social and Institutional Authorities	There should not be social or institutional authorities that explicitly or implicitly sanction contact, and there should be authorities that support positive contact.	There should not be official laws enforcing segregation.	Landis (1984) work on the importance of institutional support in reducing prejudice in the military.

If the above four characteristics are not embedded in the contact situation, organizers run the risk that the contact would create a negative experience, which is actually assumed to have a bigger effect on intergroup relations than positive ones. However, if the experience is a positive one, previous research has also revealed that this positive impact can be picked up second-hand. Namely, that if a friend or loved one had a positive interaction with an out-group individual, that this then also can affect the attitude towards that out-group of the individual who did not experience this contact first-hand (Christ et al., 2014).

In a report written by IOM in 2021 titled 'The Power of Contact: Designing, Facilitating, and Evaluating Social Mixing Activities to Strengthen Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Between Migrants and Local Communities', eight recommendations are outlined for organizing the conditions of intercultural events to bring groups together:

- Be fun and goal-driven
- Promote equality amid diversity
- Bolster mutual appreciation of cultures
- Encourage shared ownership between participants
- Facilitate guided reflection
- Provide trusted oversight and facilitation
- Support sustained and regular intervention
- Ensure institutional support and partnership

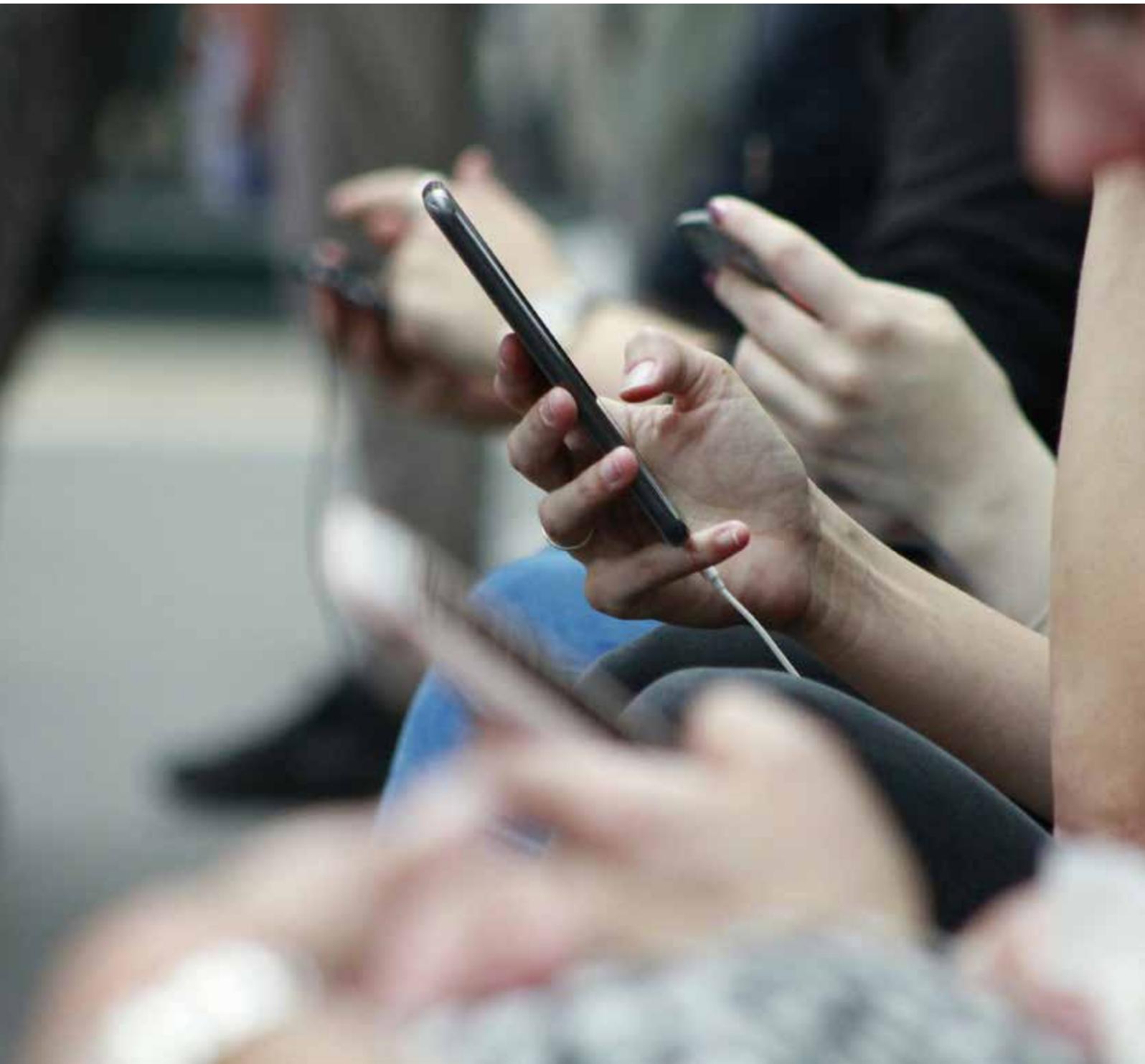
The report emphasizes the importance of targeting specific participants and groups, so that activities can be carefully tailored towards them.

Further insights on the planning methodology, the mapping, findings and recommendations collected during the intercultural events can be found in the section titled 'Local intercultural events'.



Photo ©IOM 2024

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN



Reaching and communicating with the Movable Middle on the topic of migration can be a challenge, as they can be found on all socio-economic levels in society. To ensure maximum coverage, implementing a national campaign is an effective tactic as its range ensures that the maximum reach is covered. In December 2023, IOM the Netherlands ran the ‘Migratie Kleurt Je Leven’ for ten days from 18 to 28 December.

The target group consisted of the Dutch Movable Middle who, based on previous research done by IOM the Netherlands in 2022, were defined as:

- Being above 35 years old
- Living outside the three largest cities in the Netherlands
- More likely female rather than male (though both groups were targeted during the campaign)

TARGETING THE MOVABLE MIDDLE

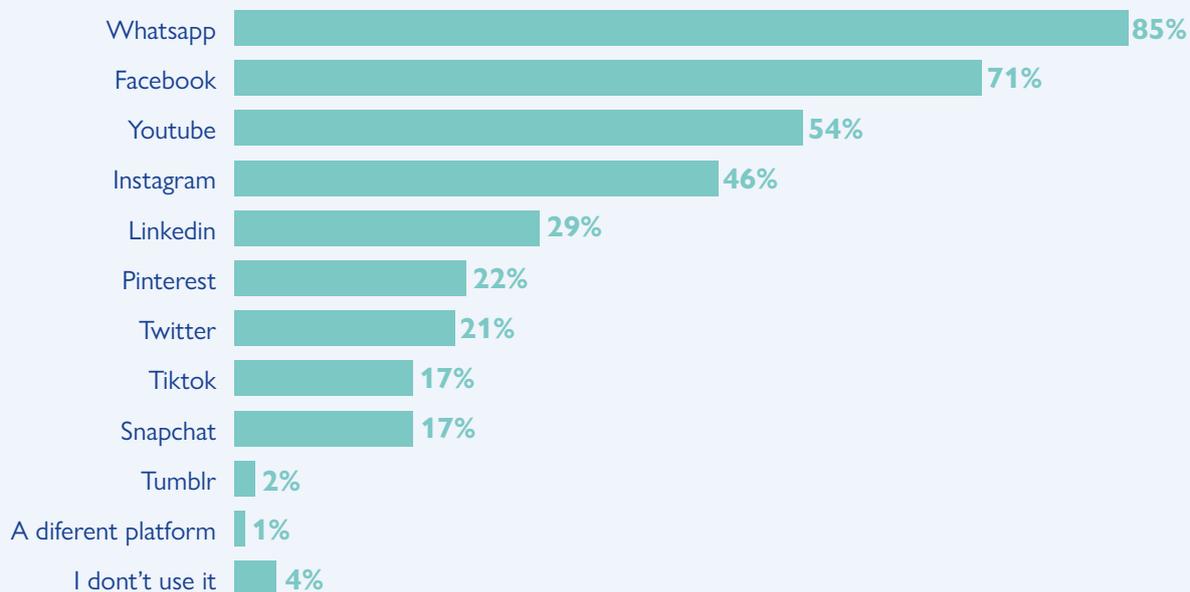
Reaching the Dutch Movable Middle through an online campaign involves several key strategies tailored to engage this specific demographic. To maximize the probability that the campaign would reach the middle group, three strategies were implemented: audience segmentation, creating personalized content, and testing materials and concepts on already-established movable middle group members.

Audience Segmentation: Based on the segmentation research completed during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project (see section above), a profile was created to use throughout the design and implementation of the

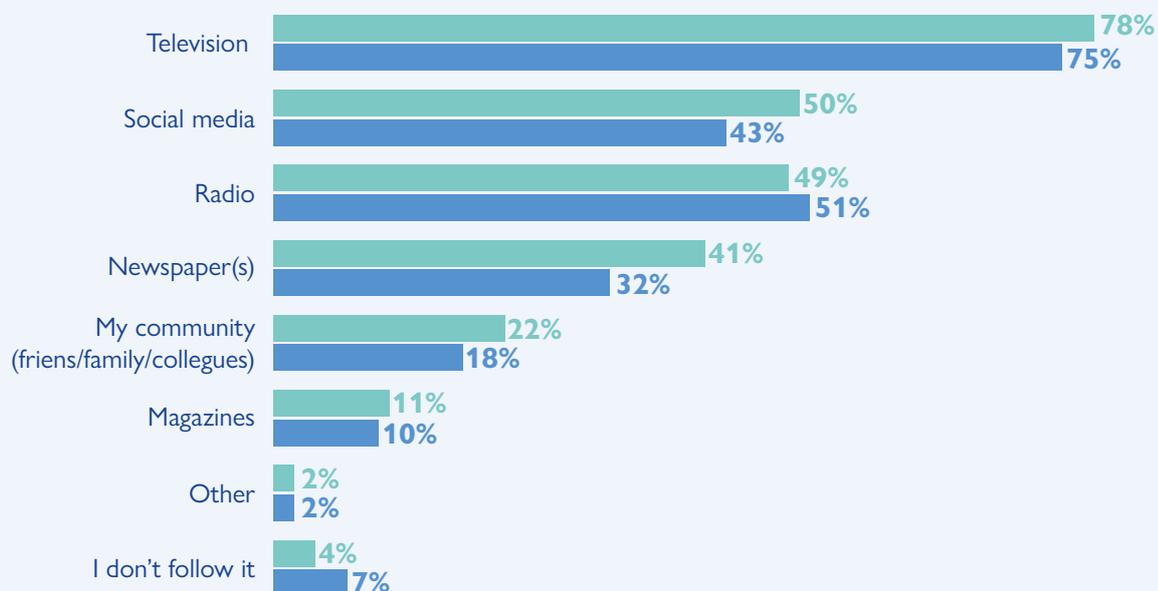
campaign. The average Movable Middle user was defined as: above 35 years old, living outside the three biggest cities, and being predominantly female. This demographic information was used to target social media profiles with these characteristics so that the probability of reaching the Movable Middle with campaign context was maximized. Additionally, their online behavior was analyzed in the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, which allowed for the creation of a comprehensive social media targeting strategy. The middle tends to use WhatsApp and Facebook the most, and while on average, they follow the news a little less via social media than the average Dutch individuals, roughly 43% of the group gets their news from social media platforms. Having analyzed their online behavior, therefore, it is pertinent to say that social media, specifically Facebook, is an important platform to utilize for an online campaign. Lastly, a range of social media platforms, as well as websites, were selected to feature the campaign advertisements and posts to maximize the reach of the campaign. Websites that are well-known to the ‘average’ Dutch public were selected as domains as diverse groups would be able to access these sites and therefore also be exposed to the campaign materials, further enhancing the probability that the Movable Middle would be reached.



Graph 1: Social media use (breakdown per platform)



Graph 2: If you follow the news regularly, what platforms do you usually use?



■ Average Dutch public ■ Movable Middle



Photo ©IOM 2024

Creating Personalized and Targeted Content:

To ensure that the Movable Middle would be triggered or intrigued enough by the campaign content that they would want to click on the post or advertisement, it was important to create content that resonates with the values, concerns, and interests of the group. Together with marketing bureau Mockus and based on the insights collected during the segmentation research and focus group session during the first phase of the project, messages were crafted that were relatable, moderate, and highlighted the humanity of migration and its impacts.

Testing Materials on the Movable Middle:

To successfully target a group through a campaign, it is very important to test the materials and the concept multiple times before further developing it. To create the campaign materials for the 'Migratie Kleurt je Leven' campaign, former focus group participants were contacted to provide two rounds of feedback; the first one to decide between two potential campaign concepts and the second round to provide feedback on the finalized messaging and imagery. These participants were recruited through a selection questionnaire, based on segmentation research done during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, therefore ensuring that they belonged to the Movable Middle group (IOM, 2023). Fostering two-way communication with the Movable Middle not only allows for direct impact on their views on migration through dialogue, but also ensures the creation of effective messaging that is then used for the campaign. The Moving the Middle project team prioritized transparency about campaign objectives, messaging, and intentions,

as authenticity and honesty are crucial for gaining the trust of the Dutch Movable Middle, who value integrity and sincerity in communication (IOM, 2023). Encouraging dialogue, feedback, and participation to build trust and rapport with this target group ensures enhanced impact and sustainable change through the project.

Lastly, in order to continue to maximize the targeted reach of the Movable Middle group, campaign performance metrics were continuously monitored and feedback was gathered to assess the effectiveness of the strategies. Adjustments were made on the basis of engagement rates, feedback, and other indicators considered.

IOM the Netherlands worked together with marketing bureau Mockus to create the 'Migratie Kleurt Je Leven' campaign, which featured five international dishes that were introduced in the Netherlands by migrants and have now become a staple in the average Dutch residents' diet. These five dishes were then reimaged to show what they would look like if migration had never occurred. The five dishes used were:

- Couscous salad
- Babi pangang (a grilled pork dish)
- Kapsalon (a combination of doner meat, fries, salad, tomatoes, and garlic sauce)
- Pasta Bolognese
- Sushi

Images 1-5: The five posters used throughout the campaign



Image 6: The chefs featured during the 'Migration spices up your life' campaign





Photo ©IOM 2024

WHY FOOD?

During focus group discussions in Moving the Middle Phase I, the topic of food as a connecting factor came to discussion. Members identified food and cooking as two concepts that could aid in bringing together the Dutch Movable Middle and migrants as food is something that is personal, has emotional value (reminds individuals of 'home', of family, of traditions and their culture) and exchanging dishes as a way to introduce each other to new cultures is a popular and effective tool for connection. Explaining diversity through food tends to be an easier, more effective, and more personal way to do so, as people have a direct connection to food from different countries and therefore tend to appreciate diversity in this context.

Additionally, after the concept had been suggested during the focus groups in phase I, the MAAB of the project also recommended using the concept of food and culture to try to craft a message about the benefits of migration, citing many of the reasons noted above, but also noting the significant presence of different cuisines in the Netherlands and how varied the choice in restaurants is.

Once the concept had been discussed with the marketing bureau, and after several rounds of revisions, the concept of '...without migration' came to be. The initial concepts were tested during another round of one-on-one conversations with previous Movable Middle focus group members, the project MAAB, and various communication experts and researchers to receive input and feedback on the initial designs and concepts.

Five chefs with a migrant background (Image 6) were contacted and asked whether they would like to be interviewed for the campaign. As such, on the migratiekleurtjeleven.nl website, visitors could read the different personal stories from the five chefs detailing their family's story and why they decided to go into the food industry. It was important to include personal stories from chefs with migrant backgrounds who lived in the Netherlands as it showed the reality of how diverse the hospitality industry is today and what an impact it has had on the food Dutch individuals eat every day.

The campaign also had a myth-busting element to it, as visitors were invited to do a short quiz containing five questions on the background of the five dishes featured in the campaign, and also five questions about popular migration myths. These questions had as goal for visitors to test their knowledge about migration in the Netherlands and to further provide visitors with more information on migration that they may not have had before. The personal element of featuring the chefs, combined with the myth-busting quiz, contributed to bringing more nuance to the migration discussion for visitors of the website, as it provided them with more information about migration, which they may not have had before, potentially correcting wrong assumptions that they held about migration, as well as shared personal migration stories, providing more insights into why people decide to migrate and how that may very well overlap with the goals and hopes that Dutch individuals have.

FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS:

THE NUMBERS

The campaign ran for ten days on social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and via advertisement placements on websites the Dutch Movable Middle was expected to visit frequently³.

Table 3: Forecasted campaign insights and results⁴

Medium	Material	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	CPC	CPM	Reach
Facebook ads	Image posts	353,669	2,299	0.65%	0.87 EUR		176,835
Programmatic Display	HTML5 Banners	857,143	1,029	0.12%		7.00 EUR	428,571
		1,210,812	3,327	0.27%			605,406

Table 4: Actual campaign insights and results

Medium	Material	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	CPC	CPM	Reach
Facebook ads	Image posts	322,791	6,604	2.05%	0.45 EUR		152,904
Programmatic Display	HTML5 Banners	745,305	658	0,09%		6.13 EUR	408,845
		1,068,096	7,262	0.68%			561,749

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

- **91%** of the total number of clicks achieved were achieved through Facebook
- A total of **359 comments** were placed under the Facebook advertisements
- **406 visitors** took and finished the quiz on the campaign website testing their knowledge on migration
- Of the **11,139** website visitors, **406** submitted their quiz responses, leading to a submission rate of **3.6%**, which is an average submission rate according to campaign experts (average rates tend to swing between 2 and 3%)

3 Websites included: mijuschka.nl, dingenvoorvrouwen.nl, Telegraaf.nl, Funda.nl, Uitpaulineskeuken.nl, allerhande.nl, linda.nl

4 Impressions: The amount times the post or advertisement was featured on social media and/or websites

Clicks: Clicks on the animation

CTR: Click Thru Rate - Numbers of users that clicked on the website link featured in the animation

CPC: Cost per Click

CPM: Cost per Mille i.e. cost per one thousand views

Reach: The number of individuals that had the posts or advertisements featured on their feeds

To summarize, the campaign generated more than double the forecasted number of clicks and Click-Through-Rate (CTR), reached 561,749 people, and the various advertisements were shown 1,068,096 times on Facebook and Display.

The two channels complimented each other well in terms of performance. Where the campaign on Facebook mainly achieved a lot of clicks, the Display campaign achieved many impressions and a large reach. On day four of the campaign, it was decided to shift the rest of the advertisement budget from Display to Facebook, as the engagement rates were measured as being much higher, and therefore to maximize reach and impact, a focus was placed on the advertisements and promoted posts on Facebook. This adjustment was rewarded and enabled an enhanced engagement of the Dutch Movable Middle, namely achieving a CTR of 2.05% on Facebook instead of the forecasted 0.65% and 7,262 clicks instead of the forecasted 3,327.

The Dutch Movable Middle is a notoriously difficult group to reach and engage in the migration debate (IOM, 2023), therefore first and foremost the goal of the campaign was to reach this group and see if the campaign material would instigate a response. Reviewing the campaign results, it would seem that the campaign concept was instigating enough to pique the interest and engagement of this group, leading them to taking action and clicking through to the website at a higher rate than expected.

COMMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT

In total, 359 comments were placed under the ten Facebook advertisement posts over the ten days of the campaign. The nature of the comments aired on the negative side, but there were a number of instances where comments led to interesting conversations about immigration and concerns the visitors may have about it, while some visitors attempted to address these concerns and nuance the discussion. Below, you can find a rough overview of the nature of the comments posted under the advertisements:

“Fun test!”

“At home, the only foreign cuisine we ate was macaroni and nasi”

“This has nothing to do with migration, but giving up the colony of Indonesia whereby many Dutch people, read Indonesians, had to flee and took their cuisine to other countries, including the Netherlands”

“We just used to eat potatoes, meat, vegetables, and a dessert”

“The kapsalon is originally from the Netherlands!”

“Babi pangang grilled on charcoal with a spicy red sauce and atjar like in the 60's, delicious”

“Sometimes I complain about that, what was wrong with boerenkool stampot (kale stew) or pancakes? Nothing wrong with babi pangang but with all the criminality and the opposition to the Dutch society”

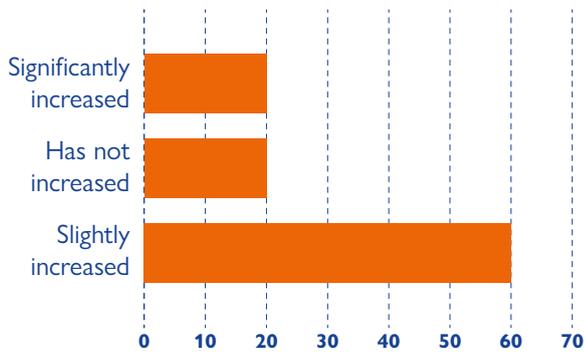
A majority of comments were negative in nature, mostly questioning ‘what was wrong with traditional Dutch cuisine’, but a surprising finding was that many times, these comments were countered by a user with more questions and this would often lead to relatively well-intentioned discussions being held. Additionally, another interesting observation was that the majority of negative comments came from men, in comparison to women, who very often would comment about the harmful effects of migration or who tended to comment about the deliciousness of the meal or their own recommendations on how best to cook it.

In other research, it has been noted that gender plays a role in social media use. For example, trolls tend to be more commonly male (Social Media Today, 2016). Research shows that men are more likely to use social media to seek information, while women tend to use social media platforms to connect with people (ibid.). Additionally, in research conducted by Facebook, it was found that female users tended to share more personal issues (e.g. relationships, family matters), while male users tended to discuss more abstract topics (e.g. politics) (Wang et al., 2013). This not only resulted in different posts being made, but also a difference in engagement. According to this same study, not only do men and women prefer certain topics, but distinct ‘female’ topics, such as birthdays, family posts, etc. tend to receive more likes from other users, while more ‘male’ topics, such as sports, current political affairs, etc. tended to elicit more comments, also from men (ibid.). This theory can be seen reflected in the campaign results, where a majority of the comments were from male users who also tended to engage in discussion with each other under the promoted posts.

FEEDBACK AND IMPACT

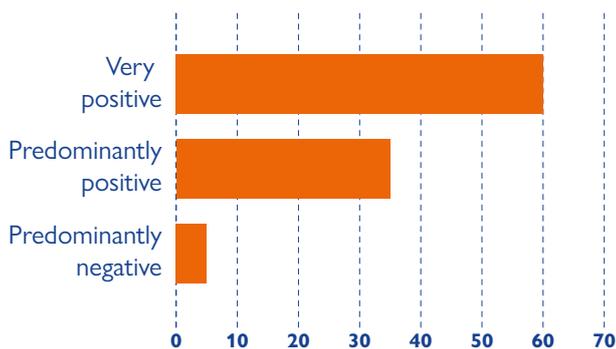
To collect feedback and further information on the potential impact of the campaign, we sent the 23 winners of the quiz a link to a feedback quiz for them to fill in. Of 23, 20 participants filled the feedback form in.

Graph 3: To what extent has your awareness of the enriching impact of migration increased? (%)



A majority of the respondents (80%) indicated that the campaign had increased their knowledge of the enriching effects of migration. This was a positive point of feedback, as one of the goals of the campaign was to introduce a more nuanced narrative about migration to the Dutch Movable Middle, in the hopes that the concept would have a thought-provoking impact on the group. With 80% of the respondents of the sample indicating that their knowledge had been increased, we can assume that the campaign might have had an impact in the respondents answers.

Graph 4: What was your overall impression of the 'Migration spices up your life' campaign? (%)



Similarly, respondents were asked what their overall impression of the campaign was, and a majority (95%) responded that their impressions was at the least predominantly positive. This was another positive finding about the impact of the campaign, as during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, it was found that the Dutch Movable Middle responds best to more positive messaging, which in turn tends to have a more positive impact on their views on migration (IOM, 2023). Noting that a majority of respondents indicated that their impression of the campaign was positive, confirms that the campaign succeeded in its enhancement of positive narratives around migration.

More points of feedback from respondents included:

- 85% of respondents reported that they thought the campaign was effective in relaying a message about the positive impacts of migration
- One respondent suggested adding an even larger myth-busting element to the quiz for a next campaign, as many myths about migration continue to exist, resulting in negative stereotypes that enhance concerns people have about migration
- Another respondent suggested enhancing the reach of the website of the campaign even further by creating a partnership with government entities and investing in being featured on other platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, etc.

To conclude, the 'Migration spices up your life' campaign surpassed expectations in engagement, indicating that the messaging did push the Movable Middle to click on the post and strive to learn more about the campaign and topic itself. Additionally, according to a sample of quiz respondents, the campaign was predominantly positively received and succeeded in enlarging their knowledge about the positive impacts of migration. For a next campaign, the reach can be further enhanced by featuring the campaign on other online platforms and additional promotional materials, and further expanding the myth-busting element of the campaign could result in further negative stereotypes and myths about migration being challenged, resulting in more nuanced messaging and viewpoints on migration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

DESIGNING A CAMPAIGN TARGETING

THE DUTCH MOVABLE MIDDLE

A national campaign can be an effective and impactful tool in combating polarization and bringing more nuance to the migration debate. After gaining more insights during the second phase of the Moving the Middle project, the Moving the Middle project team has expanded further upon the recommendations listed in the first Knowledge Dossier, to include more insights and practical tips on how to run a campaign to specifically target the Dutch Movable Middle.

As such, organizations, governmental institutions, or other stakeholders who are working on enhancing social cohesion in their own contexts may utilize campaigns to reach the Movable Middle. Interested in creating a campaign to target the Movable Middle on the topic of migration or another polarizing topic? Below are some recommendations summarized based on the findings from both phases of the Moving the Middle project:

1. COMBINE THE ONLINE WITH THE OFFLINE (I.E. CAMPAIGN WITH IN-PERSON EVENTS)

Integrating online and offline elements ensures a broader reach. The Dutch Movable Middle is diverse, and a combination of both mediums caters to different preferences. As shown in the research done during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, the Movable Middle tends to avoid the conversation about migration if they can, and combining the online and offline components can aid them in finding a safe space where they feel comfortable discussing it further. Other ways to ensure that a safe space is created during offline events can include the following: hosting the event in a 'neutral,' communal location (i.e. community centers, schools, sports halls, etc.), recruiting 'connectors' (i.e. local, well-known individuals) who can act as translator and/or have a guiding role during the event to ensure that participants are consistently checked on. Further tips on how to create a safe space during intercultural events can be found in the 'Local Intercultural Events' recommendations section.

Additionally, in-person events allow for face-to-face interactions, between local populations and migrant communities, which can lead to fostering a sense of community. This personal touch can deepen the engagement and commitment of the target audience. Organizations can launch an online campaign and



Photo ©IOM 2024

combine it with an in-person launch event, or a pop-up event/activity, or host conversation evenings, etc.

2. USE UNIVERSAL MESSAGING THAT IS RELATABLE TO INDIVIDUALS – ADD A PERSONAL/HUMAN ELEMENT

A universal message speaks to a wide audience, making it more likely to resonate with the Dutch Movable Middle. Including a personal or human element adds authenticity and relatability, which speaks to the Movable Middle's values of equal treatment and security. By touching upon those values, the messaging becomes more impactful and therefore has a higher chance of impacting the Movable Middle's view on migration. By centering people in the messaging, it also becomes more real and emotional, which can also add to the potential impact. This can be done by sharing personal stories of migrants, people who work with migrants, local communities, etc., or even by featuring 'real' people in the campaign instead of just visuals or statistics.

3. CENTER THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF THE COMMUNICATION, WHILE ALSO PROVIDING FACTS FOR 'MYTH-BUSTING'

Tapping into emotions helps the campaign connect on a deeper level. Addressing myths with facts provides a sense of trust and credibility, appealing to the rational side of the Dutch Movable Middle. In previ-

ous research done during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project, it was found that many members of the Movable Middle are unsure about how the immigration system in the Netherlands works, how many migrants come to the Netherlands, and often have many questions regarding these topics. By providing factual information, the campaign can directly tackle popular migration myths that may contribute to harmful stereotypes and further polarization. This combination could look like sharing personal stories of migrants who have come to the Netherlands, combined with information on the immigration process and information on the reason why migrants decide to come to the Netherlands.

4. INVOKE A 'THOUGHT-PROVOKING' OR POTENTIALLY 'TRIGGERING' MESSAGE TO ENGAGE THE MOVABLE MIDDLE

A thought-provoking or triggering message grabs attention, initiating conversations within the target audience. It encourages self-reflection and discussion, making the campaign memorable. Triggering messages also have the potential to stimulate behavioral change by prompting individuals to reevaluate their perspectives. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch Movable Middle tends to try to avoid the conversation about migration to and from the Netherlands. As such, crafting a campaign concept that makes viewers pause and think, increases the chance that the Dutch Movable Middle will look at the messaging and will engage with the material. This can be done, for example, by invoking items or dishes that seem 'traditionally Dutch', and tracing the roots of these, as done in the 'Migration spices up your life' campaign.

5. CREATE STRUCTURAL FEEDBACK CHANNELS WITH MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS FOR ALL MATERIALS USED FOR THE CAMPAIGN

Involving multiple stakeholders ensures diverse perspectives and insights. This helps in crafting messages that are relevant and acceptable to different segments of the Dutch Movable Middle. Additionally, adhering to the 'nothing about us, without us' motto is critical to not only creating an effective campaign and messaging, it also ensures that migrants remain active in the narrative change and creation about themselves, and the Dutch Movable Middle provided agency to have a say in the messaging that is distributed. Feedback channels create a dynamic campaign strategy. Regular input from various stakeholders allows for adjustments based on real-time responses and changing societal dynamics, ensuring the campaign remains effective. Feedback channels can be set up in a variety of manners. For the Moving the Middle project, a MAAB was created with five individuals with a migrant background and diverse professional experience so that they can provide direct input on the messaging and form of the campaign. Additionally, members from the focus groups with the Dutch Movable Middle that were hosted during the first phase of the project were contacted again to provide multiple rounds of feedback whilst creating the campaign materials. As such, build up relationships and structural communication with both groups to ensure an effective and authentic campaign.

WHAT CAN BE DONE AGAINST NEGATIVE OR HATE-FUELED COMMENTS THAT MAY ARISE DURING AN ONLINE CAMPAIGN?

During any online campaign about a polarizing topic, negative comments are to be expected and will most likely occur. To ensure that the campaign does not go viral for the wrong reasons, it is important to continuously monitor online activity and have an agreed-upon policy on how to deal with negative comments and interactions before launching the campaign. Deciding whether to ignore, respond to, or remove a negative comment is best decided upon on a case-by-case basis. In general, if the comment does not directly address anyone, and if the goal of the campaign is to engage the population and start a debate, it is recommended to just leave and ignore it. If the commenter directly addresses your organization, it is important to respond in a neutral and

fact-based manner. If the user uses inflammatory language and is insulting other users, it is strongly recommended to consider removing the comment, as leaving it could incite further extremely negative comments, which could send the campaign into a negative and escalating spiral of hate-filled language. Lastly, if users post blatantly incorrect information, it is recommended to respond in a neutral manner and provide a counterargument, linking your source and inviting the user to read the linked article and/or to continue the conversation if needed. This directly counters misinformation online, which is a significant challenge, especially in the migration debate.

LOCAL

INTERCULTURAL

EVENTS



From September 2023 to February 2024, IOM the Netherlands organized four intercultural events with a range of local partners to bring the Dutch Movable Middle in contact with migrants to engage in hands-on, fun activities.

GOAL

To directly contribute to the social cohesion in the Netherlands and to combat existing (potential) prejudices and biases the Movable Middle may hold against migrants, local intercultural events were organized in areas where high percentages of Movable Middle populations lived. This was monitored based on voting behavior in the last municipal elections, which will be detailed below.

As noted in the research done for the Moving the Middle Knowledge Dossier I, the Movable Middle tends to vote for more middle-right parties, including the VVD, and

occasionally the PVV. In order to attempt to target areas with a high concentration of individuals within the middle, the choice was made to select cities that had high levels of voting for the VVD (a central-right party) and the PVV (a right-wing party). The addition of the PVV was to attempt to target populations that tended to lean towards more negative views of migration, as the PVV is well-known for its anti-migrant views.

Below you can find the voting history of the cities selected as locations to hold intercultural events:

Table 2: Location mapping for intercultural events

Province	City	Provincial municipality elections 2023 (NOS, 2023)	National elections 2021 (NOS, 2021)	National elections 2023 (NOS, 2023)
Noord-Brabant	Eindhoven	GroenLinks (13.7%) VVD (12%) PvdA (10,9%)	VVD (19.8%) D66 (19%) PVV (9.6%)	GL-PvdA (21.1%) PVV (20.4%) VVD (14.3%)
Flevoland	Almere	BBB (13.8%) VVD (11.4%) PvdA (10.3%)	VVD (21.9%) D66 (14.4%) PVV (12%)	PVV (26.6%) VVD (15.9%) GL-PvdA (15%)
Limburg	Asenray (Roermond)	BBB (12.9%) PVV (10.9%) GroenLinks (10.8%)	VVD (21%) PVV (17%) D66 (14.3%)	PVV (31.6%) VVD (15%) GL-PvdA (13.5%)
Limburg	Venlo	PVV (14%) BBB (12.8%) VVD (11%)	VVD (21.5%) PVV (18.3%) D66 (13.1%)	PVV (36.3%) VVD (13.9%) NSC (13.1%)

Note: the left-wing green party GroenLinks and the left-wing labour party the PvdA combined candidate lists and election programs in 2022, which resulted in the combined collaboration now known as GroenLinksPvdA (GL-PvdA)

On top of scouting locations that had high levels of VVD and PVV voters, locations with high levels of polarized voting were prioritized, namely areas with high levels of votes for right-wing or left-wing parties (in the Dutch context: areas with the PVV and GLPvdA in the top three biggest parties) This was done to target areas with a high probability of low

social cohesion and high levels of segregation between social groups. As such, the four locations above were selected as they had high levels of VVD and PVV voters, but also had notable high levels of green, left-wing voters, indicating large differences between social groups.

PARTNER MAPPING

Along with analyzing voting behavior, IOM the Netherlands engaged in mapping the existing networks in selected locations to learn more about what local organizations were working on in regards to projects focused on social inclusion and cohesion. This also included doing an inventory about the current partners and contacts that IOM the Netherlands had in the area as well. Once locations were selected, local partners were contacted with the request of whether they 1) would be interested in aiding in organizing an activity and 2) whether there were other existing initiatives and

organizations that may find organizing an intercultural event interesting as well. By conducting a local mapping exercise, as well as consultation discussions, IOM the Netherlands was able to collect information on needs and on what types of activities may be most effective and where they should be held, ensuring that each activity was adapted to each location's context. Below you can find an overview of the event, the activity, and partners who IOM the Netherlands collaborated with to organize the event:

Table 3: Overview of Moving the Middle local intercultural events

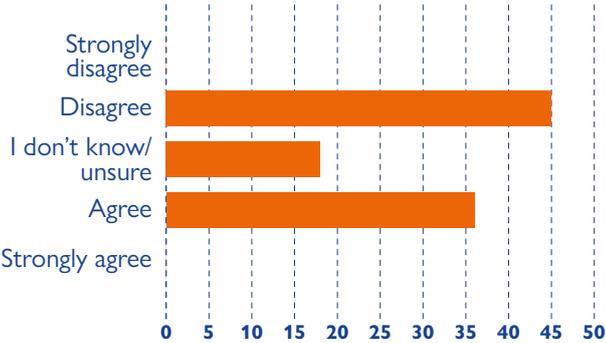
Event number	Location	Partners	Activity
1	Eindhoven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitas – Eindhoven • Nigerian Youths in the Netherlands • Pitstop Jongerencentrum 	Board games afternoon
2	Almere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitas – Almere • Community center De Schoor • Moving the Middle – Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board members 	Cooking workshop and lunch
3	Asenray (Roermond)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dutch Red Cross • Community center De Duup 	Cultural afternoon with a potluck lunch
4	Venlo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House of Confetti • Municipality of Venlo • Refugee Team Venlo 	Carnival costume sewing workshops with a communal breakfast and carnival celebration

INSIGHTS AND FEEDBACK

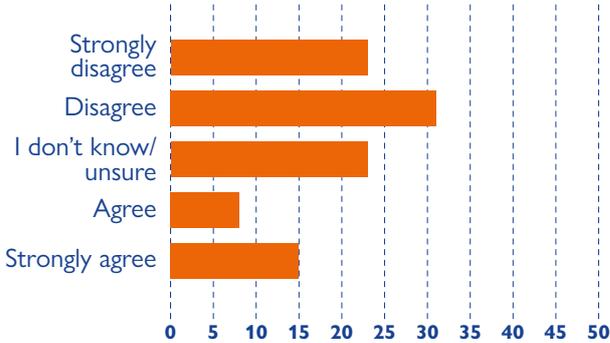
Before and after each event, participants were asked to fill in a survey to 1) measure their current opinion on migration and 2) to provide further feedback about the event.

“MIGRANTS AND DUTCH PEOPLE HAVE MORE DIFFERENCES THAN SIMILARITIES”

Before (%):



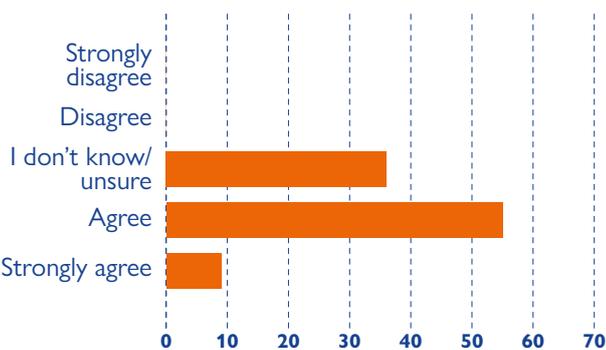
After (%):



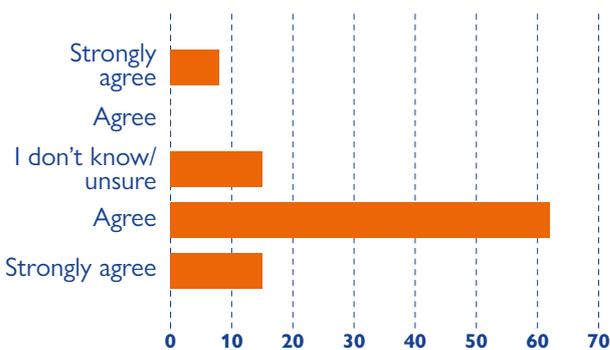
There was a slight decrease in the number of participants who stated that migrants and Dutch individuals have more differences than similarities after the local intercultural events, and a slight increase in those who responded that they were unsure. Before the events, 45% of respondents disagreed, 36% agreed, and 18% were unsure. After the event, 54% of respondents disagreed (combining 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' answers), 23% agreed (combining 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' answers), and 23% were unsure.

“MIGRATION HAS BENEFITS FOR DUTCH SOCIETY”

Before (%):



After (%):

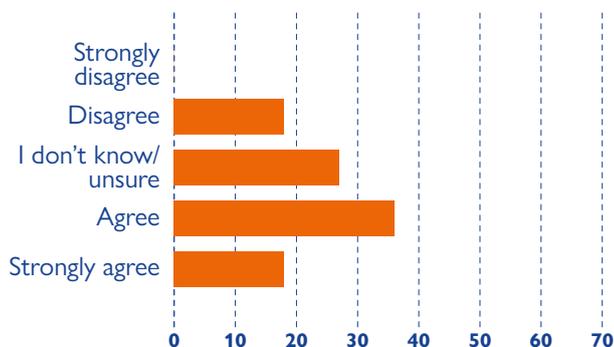


There was an increase in the number of participants who agreed that migration has benefits for Dutch society, with a decrease in participants who were uncertain about the question. Before the events, 64% of participants agreed (combining 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' answers) and 36% of respondents were unsure. After the event, on average, 77% of respondents agreed while 15% were uncertain and 8% of participants disagreed. While there was the addition of one response of disagreements, in general, there was a move towards recognition of the benefits that migration can bring to society.

Note: responses were submitted anonymously, and the first survey had 11 respondents, while the second one had 13, therefore there is a degree of uncertainty and direct causation cannot fully be determined.

“I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO MORE EVENTS TO GET TO KNOW MIGRANTS AND/OR PERMIT HOLDERS”

Before (%):



After (%):



There was also a slight increase in the amount of participants who said that they would be open to going to more events to get to know migrants and/or permit holders. Before the event, 64% agreed (combining ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ answers), 27% were unsure, and 9% disagreed. After the event, 69% of participants reported they would be open to attending similar events again (combining ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ answers), only 23% were unsure and 8% disagreed. After one event, there were already a slight shift in openness to attend similar events, and therefore can be used as an indication that participants would show up to follow-up events.’

Throughout the events, qualitative observations were collected to further inform qualitative data collection. The following observations were made:

- During almost all of the events, participants came up to the organizers and asked when the next event and activity would be organized. This indicates that the events were, in general, positively received and that there was a wish for more similar events to be organized. Therefore, it is advisable to try to organize multiple events in the same location, if possible.
- At the events that were organized without the presence of ‘connectors’ (see below section for further explanation), intergroup mixing took a lot longer and a shy atmosphere hung for longer than with ones where a ‘connector’ was present. Additionally, more local participants showed up as well. Therefore, it can be concluded that the presence of such ‘connectors’ really has a significant impact on the success of the event and should be a standard presence at future events.
- With events where cooking food was the main activity, it was noted that the activity took slightly longer than expected. Therefore, it is helpful to have snacks available or ensure that meals are eaten intermittently while the rest of the food is being prepared, to ensure that participants do not go hungry while waiting for the food.
- A few participants noted that now that the first encounter had taken place, that they would like to have more discussion focused on migration. For future follow-up events, it is recommended to have a more structured approach

to introduce the conversation about migration to allow for the topic to be openly discussed between the two groups as well, sharing personal stories about migrating and family members who have migrated, for example.

- In general, all activities were very positively received and participants enjoyed the hands-on nature of them, especially the cooking workshop and the carnival costume sewing workshops.

Based on the insights collected via the online surveys, as well as the above qualitative observations throughout the events, we can conclude that the events were successful in creating connections between the Dutch Movable Middle and migrants, therefore increasing the possibility that opinions on migration may have been positively impacted.



Photo ©IOM 2024

PHASE 1: PLANNING

Planning local intercultural events can be quite time-intensive, but it is important to take the time needed to build up a strong local network and to co-organize an event with local stakeholders and migrants themselves. Below are some best practices for planning such events:

1) Take plenty of time to organize the event and identify target-rich locations – do research before selecting the area you want to organize your event in. Check voting behaviors, local newspapers, and news bulletins as to what the latest topics of conversation are and consult residents and community centers about the current social context of the area. This will allow for a maximization of the impact of your event.

If the target group is the Dutch Movable Middle, it is advisable to adopt the following strategies:

- Target mid-sized cities and villages outside the four largest cities in the Netherlands
- Aim to reach out and partner with local municipalities and/or volunteer and sports organizations, as the Movable Middle tends to be quite involved in their own communities and this maximizes the reach of the event
- Organize events that are easily accessible and target an older audience, people over 35 years old
- Advertise in online Facebook groups, as the Movable Middle tends to be quite active in local Facebook groups

2) Mapping local stakeholders and taking the time to set up local networks – there are many exciting local initiatives taking place at the local level in municipalities that aim to enhance social connection and community-building. Take the time to explore what is already happening in the community to 1) avoid replication and 2) to build stronger connections with local stakeholders to work on the event (and potential other future initiatives) together.

3) Engage in local outreach – to ensure local participation, take the time to engage in local outreach. Hand out flyers, print and hand up flyers in community centers, contact local sports and hobby associations, etc.

4) Organize the activity on a needs-basis with input – when organizing the activity, ensure you collect input from migrants and Dutch locals themselves as to what the activity might be and what they would like to do that day. Working together with the target groups to brainstorm such an event together can enhance the sustainability of such an event (creating connections between migrants/migrant organizations

and local organizations who might want to organize future events together again) and make it so that the activity is something that participants will actually enjoy and increase the possibility of ensuring that a large number of participants show up on the day itself.

PHASE 2: HOSTING THE ACTUAL EVENT

1) Have designated ‘connectors’ – When bringing different groups together, specifically the Dutch Movable Middle and migrants, the chance is high that at the beginning of the event, the members of each group will tend to stay close to each other and will not mingle. To smooth the feelings of shyness that are felt during a first encounter, select ‘connectors’ for the event who will engage with both groups and encourage mingling. This could be one connector designated per table to help with conversation, translation, instructions for the activity, etc. Tip: Pre-mix the groups by giving participants a color when they walk in, which is associated with a specific table, where they have to sit down at. This will aid with mingling the different groups.

2) Have translation devices/translators available – As mentioned above, mingling and creating proper new social connections may be hindered by differing language capabilities. To further enable participants to communicate with each other, recommend a translation app that they can use to converse with each other or ensure that the ‘connectors’ also can take on the role of translators if needed.

3) Do hands-on, ‘fun’ activities with a shared goal – To bridge the feelings of shyness between people that may occur during a first encounter, establishing a common goal to work towards can aid in jump-starting connection. Hands-on, fun activities can bring out the joy and informality needed to establish more authentic social connections. Hands-on, fun activities can include cooking together, planting a community garden, painting, sewing costumes or an item to be used, pottery, learning new songs and dances, playing a sport (football tends to be a popular and universal option), etc.

4) Have a plan for the day but remain flexible – when bringing different social groups together, it could be that the connection between them is built up so quickly that they may divert from the original activity at hand. However, it may also be that the connection may take a little longer to build up. Therefore, establish a detailed plan for the event with a designated role for all organizers, so that moments of uncertainty or confusion can be avoided. If participants seem to

be connecting well and heading into another direction with another activity in mind, do not be afraid to let it play out. It could very well be that that feels more natural to them and thus will leave a positive impression once the event is over. Have a plan, but do not be afraid to divert from it.

5) Choose a well-known, communal location to have the activity – selecting a location that already has a connecting role in the local community not only may have a positive impact on the number of participants that show up, but also helps with the local outreach. Using a local communal location is also a trusting and familiar place to host an event that may carry a lot of uncertainty for participants and therefore can aid in creating a safe space for authentic connection to occur.

6) (If possible) Organize a follow-up event and/or ensure that there is a way for participants to follow-up with one another– One of the main questions we received when organizing the events was whether there would be a follow-up event. If possible, we encourage everyone to

host multiple events, as this will aid in further building up new connections between social groups, as participants may bring more of their friends and/or families to the events as the connections grow stronger, and they report back to their networks about the positive experience that they had during such an intercultural event. Additionally, with multiple events, trust can be built between groups which can ultimately aid in not only enhancing social cohesion but also in the ability to have discussions about more sensitive and complicated topics.

7) Ask attendees to bring a friend or family member with them to the next event – to maximize the reach of the events and the possibility that the Movable Middle is being reached, ask attendees to bring a family member or friend to the event. Bringing someone they know increases the chance that they will show up, but also that the events reach more members of the middle, who can then also build new connections with migrants and others present.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

“I think if we just start talking to each other, that will eventually lead to mutual understanding... that helps [against polarization]”

- a Moving the Middle focus group participant, 2022

The first phase of the Moving the Middle project unveiled valuable insights from a national survey, focus group sessions, and a test campaign on social media. The Dutch Movable Middle were identified as being predominantly over 35 years of age, often female, employed, and living outside the three biggest cities in the Netherlands. Additionally, regarding communication styles that are most efficient when engaging with this group, the Dutch Movable Middle responded positively to messaging framing migration as a ‘win-win’ situation, highlighting the benefits for both host countries and migrants. Additionally, the ‘Panta Rhei’ framing, portraying migration as a natural aspect of human history, proved effective. The research emphasized the need for a combined online and offline approach to communication, as the Movable Middle remained hesitant to engage in conversation and needed a ‘trigger’ as such to open up that discussion. Thus, a strategic blend of online and offline activities emerged as the most impactful method to engage with this group. When regarding the nature of the communication, employing value-based messaging and sharing personal stories of migrants and individuals involved in migration issues, alongside a balanced online and offline strategy, was recommended to achieve effective communication with the Movable Middle about migration.

In this second phase of the project, this Knowledge Dossier Part II has built further upon insights gained during the first phase of the Moving the Middle project by putting knowledge into practice when learning how best to communicate with the Movable Middle about migration in a nuanced and inclusive manner. This was done by engaging in a two-pronged approach: by launching a national campaign to share nuanced messaging about migration and by organizing local intercultural events to bring the Movable Middle in contact with individuals with a migrant background.

The findings from the Moving the Middle project underscore the significance of adopting a holistic approach that

integrates both online and offline strategies to effectively engage the Dutch Movable Middle. When designing and launching an online campaign geared towards this group, it is recommended to advocate for the incorporation of universal messaging infused with personal anecdotes to heighten relatability and authenticity. Moreover, the inclusion of thought-provoking content with a ‘trigger’ and structured feedback mechanisms ensures the resonance and efficacy of communication efforts, while vigilant monitoring of online activity safeguards campaign integrity.

In parallel, the local intercultural events conducted between September 2023 and February 2024 served as pivotal platforms for fostering social cohesion and challenging biases within the Dutch Movable Middle toward migrants. Strategic location selection based on voting patterns, with a focus on areas demonstrating strong support for specific political affiliations, enhanced the events’ impact. Key recommendations emphasize the necessity of comprehensive research and collaboration with local stakeholders to facilitate tailored event planning. During these gatherings, designated ‘connectors’ and translation services facilitated meaningful interactions among diverse attendees, fostering genuine connections and sustained community engagement. These findings underscore the importance of community-oriented initiatives in bridging societal divides and promoting inclusivity within the Dutch Movable Middle.

In an increasingly polarizing world, it is of the utmost importance that debates continue to be conducted in a fact-based and nuanced manner. Change for the better occurs when people remain in conversation with one another, with empathy and humanity at its core. With this Dossier, IOM hopes to contribute to promoting a more balanced migration narrative and to fostering attitudes of openness and inclusion towards migrants within Dutch society. It is through meeting in the middle that biases and prejudices can be addressed and resolved, and social inclusion can be enhanced.

REFERENCES

- Christ, O., Schmid, K., Lolliot, S., Swart, H., Stolle, D., Tausch, N., Al Ramiah, A., Wagner, U., Vertovec, S. and Hewstone, M., (2014).** Contextual effect of positive intergroup contact on outgroup prejudice. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(11), pp.3996-4000.
- Everett, J.A.C. and Onu, D., (2013)** 'Intergroup Contact Theory: Past, Present, and Future.' *The Inquisitive Mind*, 2/17). Available at: <https://www.in-mind.org/article/intergroup-contact-theory-past-present-and-future>. (Accessed on 05 November 2023)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2021)** 'The Power of Contact: Designing, Facilitating, and Evaluating Social Mixing Activities to Strengthen Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Between Migrants and Local Communities', IOM. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/power-contact-designing-facilitating-and-evaluating-social-mixing-activities-strengthen>. (Accessed on 12 September 2023)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2023) Moving the Middle:** Communicating with the Silent and Ambivalent Majority. IOM. Available at: https://iom-nederland.nl/images/Moving_the_middle/MtM_Knowledge_dossier_online.pdf. (Accessed on 12 January 2024)
- NOS. (2021).** De Tweede Kamer verkiezingen 2021: Bekijk hier de uitslagen van de verkiezingen. NOS nieuws. Available at: <https://nos.nl/collectie/13860/artikel/2373037-bekijk-hier-de-uitslagen-van-de-verkiezingen>. (Accessed on: 10 March 2023)
- NOS. (2023).** Uitslagen Provinciale Statenverkiezingen 2023. NOS nieuws. Available at: <https://app.nos.nl/nieuws/ps2023/>. (Accessed on 10 March 2023)
- NOS. (2023).** Dit is wat we nu weten van de val van kabinet-Rutte IV. NOS nieuws. Available at: <https://nos.nl/collectie/13942/artikel/2481977-dit-is-wat-we-nu-weten-over-de-val-van-kabinet-rutte-iv>. (Accessed: 31 January 2024)
- NOS. (2023).** Uitslagen Tweede Kamer 2023: Zetelverdeling Tweede Kamer. NOS nieuws. Available at: <https://app.nos.nl/nieuws/tk2023/>. (Accessed: 01 February 2024)
- Otjes, S. (2023).** Provincial and Senate elections in the Netherlands. *Electoral Bulletins of the European Union. Elections in Europe: 2023, Issue #4*. Available at: <https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/provincial-and-senate-elections-in-the-netherlands/>. (Accessed 31 January 2024)
- van Rij, A. (2023)** What a far-right surge in the Netherlands means for Europe, Chatham House. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/11/what-far-right-surge-netherlands-means-europe> (Accessed: 03 March 2024).
- RTL Nieuws. (2023)** Kabinet-Rutte IV is gevallen: hoe nu verder? RTL Nieuws. Available at: <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/politiek/artikel/5395045/het-kabinet-rutte-iv-gevalen-hoe-nu-verder> (Accessed 01 February 2024)
- Social Media Today. (2016).** Gender-Specific Behaviors on Social Media and What They Mean for Online Communications. *Social Media Today*. Available at: <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-networks/gender-specific-behaviors-social-media-and-what-they-mean-online-communications>. (Accessed on 28 December 2023)
- Voerman, G. & De Jonge, L. (2023).** De BoerBurgerBeweging: een agrarische belangenpartij met populistische trekjes. *De Hofvijver* 13(141)
- Wang, Y., Burke, M., Kraut, R. (2013).** Gender Topic, and Audience Response: An Analysis of User-Generated Content on Facebook. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260211100_Gender_Topic_and_Audience_Response_An_Analysis_of_User-Generated_Content_on_Facebook_-_Meta_Research. (Accessed on 28 December 2023)
- Noja, G., Cristea, S.M., Yuksel, A., Panzaru, C. and Cracea, R.M. (2018)** 'Migrants' Role in Enhancing Economic Development of Host Countries: Empirical from Europe'. *Sustainability* 2018, 10, 894. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/274438>. (Accessed on: 4 September 2023)
- European Commission (2023).** 'Employment and Social Development in Europe 2023'. Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Available online. (Accessed on: 4 September 2023)
- Al-Shawaf M.K., Almsafir M.K. (2014).** 'Globalization, a catalyst for migration: benefits for the host country and the country of origin'. *International Conference on Business and Economic Development (ICBED)* New York. Available at: <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=12140275096822405992&btnl=1&hl=en>. (Accessed on: 5 September 2023).

