

## **Update from ITFLOWS coordinator, Dr Cristina Blasi Casagran, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB)**



### **MAKING PROGRESS**

#### **A Message from the Coordinator**

*ITFLOWS is an ambitious 3-year project which seeks to model and predict migration flows to EU member states and provide tools for the successful integration of migrants into our societies.*

*It has been a busy and eventful year since ITFLOWS started. Working against the challenging backdrop of COVID, we have come together and accomplished many important milestones within the project.*

*Most importantly, we have set up the ethical framework which underpins much of the data handling within the project. This is a crucial in creating a technological tool that complies with robust data protection and ethical standards.*

*Additionally, we have actively engaged end-users of the tool from multiple NGOs and municipalities to establish core requirements early, as well as actively set out a detailed Gender Action Plan describing the gender-specific policies which must be considered as part of the project.*

*Conducting the project during the pandemic has not been easy. We have had to adapt our approach to interviews with migrants and on-site meetings, utilising virtual tools where possible, but we overall managed to deliver committed results on time and to a high quality.*

*I would like to particularly thank the members of our 14 Partner Institutions for their excellent teamwork and ongoing commitment. It has been a pleasure to see them come together, many working together for the first time, to complete our 15 year one deliverables - all of them peer-reviewed by internal and external committees prior to their submission.*

*We look forward to the next year and continued success of the project.*



## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- **Data Management Plan (February 2021)** Colleen E. Boland & Santiago A. Villar Arias (UAB)
- **Report on Human Rights, Ethical, Societal and Data protection risks assessments (February 2021)** Andrea Guillén & Emma Teodoro (UAB); Thilo Gottschalk & Francesca Pichierri (FIZ); Alexandra Xanthaki & Kenneth Hansen (BUL)
- **Report on the ITFLOWS Regulatory Model (June 2021)** Emma Teodoro, Andrea Guillén & Pompeu Casanovas (UAB)
- **Meta-Analysis of micro and macro level factors affecting attitudes to immigration (August 2021)** Lenka Dražanová & Jérôme Gonnot (EUI); Tobias Heidland & Finja Krüger (IfW)
- **Report on the specifications and architecture of the EMT platform (May 2021)** Georgios Stavropoulos, Nikolaos Grevekis & Ilias Iliopoulos (CERTH)
- **Report on Users Board Participatory Feedback (February 2021)** Paola Maieli (CRI)
- **Communication and Dissemination Strategy (April 2021)** Maria Looney (MTU)
- **Stakeholders Database & Report on planned engagement activities (June 2021)** Miriam Mir (CEPS).
- Throughout this period, Andrea Guillén & Emma Teodoro (UAB), together with the Independent Ethics Board (IEB), the Independent Gender Committee (IGC), and the Data Protection Advisor (DPA) have produced various reports devoted to the ethical requirements required by the European Commission.

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In this first year, the ITFLOWS project has completed fifteen deliverables, in the form of research analysis and reports for ITFLOWS. These publications serve as a basis for further research regarding the migration in countries of origin and destination, and also as for the development of the EUMigraTool (EMT).



### ITFLOWS ANNUAL MEETING SERIES

10th Sep 2021

The ITFLOWS annual meeting is a key event within the project calendar in which our 14 consortium members assemble to discuss current research efforts, future project focuses, and broader considerations and contexts beyond the project itself. The meeting opened with ITFLOWS coordinator Dr Cristina Blasi from UAB and Dr Asli Selin Okay from IAI.

Dr Asli Selin Okay and Dr Daniela Huber Head of Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme IAI, providing an overview of WP3 efforts, discussing the conceptual and methodological frameworks developed to identify migration drivers and trajectories, while also highlighting critical bilateral engagement with the EMT development.

Prof Tobias Heidland from IFW provided an overview of WP4 efforts, presenting some of the broader and key macro considerations associated with ITFLOWS contexts such as Patterns of migration and integration, assessment of socio-economic factors, and key policy considerations.

Dr Lenka Drazanova from EUI presented WP5, focusing on the efforts associated with investigating public attitudes of EU Citizens towards migrations, considering micro and macro influences and big data analyses of public sentiments. The presentation also discussed critical inputs to EMT development, outlining how socio-demographic data will ensure that the EMT will be reflective of EU citizen demographics and attitudes.



Mr Georgios Stavropoulos from CERTH discussed the critical user-centric design aspects of WP6, and ongoing efforts to maximise end-user uptake and project impacts. The design aspects focused on illustrating current efforts associated with preliminary interface factors, incorporating additional visualisation tools, while also outlining ongoing efforts associated with migration simulation and prediction tools.

WP7 efforts were presented by Dr Haithem Afli from MTU, and follows on from WP6 in terms of maximising impacts through user-centric design methodologies. These Impacts are being achieved through the establishment of a userboard which comprises of practitioners, NGOs and municipalities.

Dr. Gergana Tzvetkova from CSD, presented the ongoing efforts to inform policy developments. WP8 which strives to maximise impacts through collaboration with policy makers, has seen the successful establishment of the ITFLOWS Policy Working Group, while also considering the initial planning considerations associated with hosting events and workshops with policy makers.

Ms Miriam Mir from CEPS provided an overview of WP9 efforts to date which focuses primarily on dissemination, communication and exploitation. Ms Mir outlined ongoing efforts to establish a prominent presence within the ITFLOWS research domains, and broader societal contexts, while also illustrating the multifaceted strategies in use to reach numerous relevant stakeholders.

The legal and ethical aspects associated with WP2 were presented by Dr Emma Teodoro and Dr Andrea Guillen from UAB. The presentation provided an overview of key research outputs to date such as the [ITFLOWS ethics handbook](#), a critical tool for ITFLOWS researchers in providing principles and guidelines to follow both when recruiting and conducting interviews throughout primary research efforts.

Finally, ITFLOWS coordinator Dr Cristina Blasi and project manager Mr Santiago Ariel Villar Arias from UAB presented project management aspects associated with WP1, outlining a number of key technical, administrative and financial reporting project milestones.

# ITFLOWS ANNUAL MEETING SERIES

## EUMIGRA TOOL VALIDATION WORKSHOP, 16th September

The purpose of the ITFLOWS Project Users Board meeting was to gain critical design and policy context feedback from ITFLOWS end-users. Participants were provided with a presentation of the EMT by Georgios Stavropoulos (CERTH), which was followed by an in-depth discussion and feedback session. The focuses centred around numerous critical areas, including the value and risks of IT predictive tools in the field of migration. Evita Armouti Migration Officer at the Red Cross Europe and Michele Levoy, Director of PICUM shared a number of invaluable insights on the subject. They cautioned on the need to always protect the rights including data privacy and human dignity of migrants and asylum seekers.

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***Userboard members  
stress the need for the  
EMT to uphold the data  
privacy migrants by  
design, and to improve  
civil society  
preparedness***

Michele Levoy also stressed the importance of keeping perspective and considering lessons learned from the CLANDESTINO Project. It was stated that the majority of undocumented migrants come into the EU regularly and later fall into irregularity, thus it is difficult to definitively determine ‘irregular flows’. She added that the issue should be put in the context of the overall travels into the EU via airports, and stressed the need to maintain hope based communication and upholding the rights of all migrants, including undocumented.

Evita Armouti seconded this, highlighting the importance for EU policy makers to understand that some people who are on the move have good reasons to do so, and are in genuine need of asylum. She stressed the need for the EU to continue to tackle these challenges as many of those seeking international protection and asylum are actually displaced in the countries of origin or in the neighbouring countries, without any prospects of reaching the EU.

Subsequently, interactive discussions ensued, with the Users Board focusing on the overall goals, design, functionalities and risks of the EUMIgra Tool. Participants highlighted the importance of upholding the data privacy of migrants by design, improving civil society preparedness, and to analyse Twitter data, particularly as this should inform how civil society could identify and communicate with their audiences on social media. Paola Maieli, Chair of the Users Board, concluded that the aim of this tool should be to advance the rights of migrants and preparation for civil society, for instance to carry out SAR operations if needed but not to let the tool to be misused to implement illegal push backs by the authorities.

### ITFLOWS Annual Meeting Series

#### ITFLOWS Closed-Door Expert Workshop, 28th September

As part of a workshop which set to explore and better understand drivers of EU-bound mixed migration, the project's Consortium partner Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) hosted a closed-door, expert workshop on the 28th of September. The event was multi purpose in nature and focused on disseminating research findings and gathering feedback in relation to ITFLOWS research innovations to date, while also fostering active engagement and knowledge exchange amongst key expert participants. The workshop also addressed conceptual and analytical questions and comparative insights related to the drivers, patterns and governance of mixed migration throughout a wide range of geographic landscapes. In addition to larger group debates, the experts divided into smaller discussions based on the various so-called routes to Europe.

### ITFLOWS Public Webinar, 29th September

On September 29, as part of ITFLOWS' annual events, project Consortium partner Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) hosted the public webinar titled *"Drivers, patterns and governance of mixed migration in the EU and its wider region: Current developments and future prospects."* The webinar presented current ITFLOWS research efforts, while also inviting external experts to address the patterns, routes and governance of mixed migration to Europe and beyond, while also taking stock of recent developments within these domains. Examples of this included the Taliban's takeover of power following the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, and the global consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which could have a bearing on migration and displacement trends, while also having potential implications for future drivers of migration.





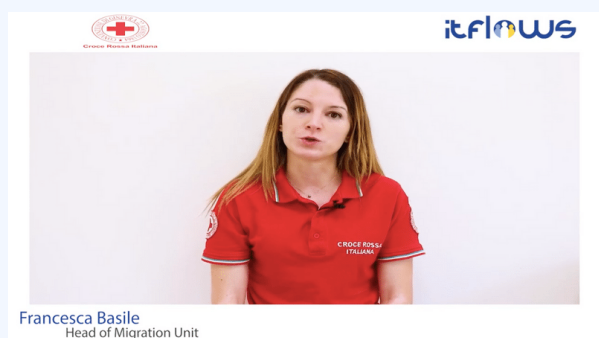
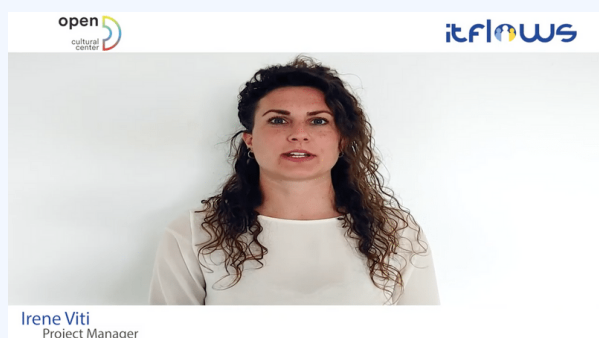


## ITFLOWS EVENTS

The ITFLOWS consortium has been extremely active throughout the first 12 months, hosting and actively engaging with over 20 events across a number of key thematic areas including policy development, end user and broader societal contexts. The following is a snapshot of some of our key events to date and for more information, please see our project website events [page](#).

- **ISWC 2020, Nov 2020** - FIZ Researchers presented a paper titled 'MigrAnalytics: Entity-based Analytics of Migration Tweets' at the 19th International Semantic Web Conference, a high profile "A" rated research event, which attracts global experts from the Semantic Web and Data Community.
- **Migration Policy Centre Webinar, "Public attitudes towards immigration and immigrants: what are the factors affecting them and what can we do about it?", May 2021** - Researchers from the European University Institute participated in this MPC webinar which examined the most influential factors affecting public attitudes to immigration and immigrants.
- **BES Cluster Meeting, May 2021** - ITFLOWS coordinator Dr Cristina Blasi attended the BES Cluster meeting, a collaboration of 6 EU H2020 funded Border Security and External Security Research projects focused on knowledge exchange and identifying synergistic partnership opportunities.
- **FRONTEX Workshop, May 2021** - ITFLOWS participated in a joint Border and External Security (BES) workshop hosted by FRONTEX in May of this year. The event which included representatives from DG Migration and Home Affairs, the Border Security Observatory, and various other government agencies, saw key representatives from eleven EU funded projects collaborating during a two day workshop focusing on numerous BES and migration contexts.
- **Border Management Community of CERIS, June 2021** - Dr Cristina Blasi, coordinator of ITFLOWS, participated in the Border Management (BM) Community of European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS) Working Groups. ITFLOWS participation within this initiative comprises of active participation within the Border Management (BM) Thematic Working Group, designed to facilitate knowledge transfer between key stakeholders, while also informing pivotal state of the art and trends reports.
- **United Nations Network for Migration Working Group on Alternatives to Detention (ATD), June 2021** - ITFLOWS coordinator Dr Cristina Blasi engaged with the UNNM Thematic Working Group, illustrating opportunities to leverage emerging technologies in effective migration governance.
- **ITFLOWS EU Migratool Symposium, Sept 2021** - A high profile public event which showcased the EUMigraTool, and hosted debates from global experts in relation to the application of predictive AI technologies to migration contexts. The event saw participation from ITFLOWS stakeholder groups including representatives from the European Commission Director General Home, and the Research Executive Agency.
- **ITFLOWS Mixed Migration Webinar, Sept 2021** - A public webinar which focused on Drivers, patterns and governance of mixed migration in the EU and its wider region, while also considering current developments and future prospects.
- **Global Borderlands Conference, Sept 2021** - Dr Cristina Blasi (cood), Dr Colleen Boland, Dr Daniel Morente (UAB), Dr Madalina Moraru and Alexandra Xanthaki (BUL) presented the ITFLOWS project in a dedicated panel on the issue of how crimmigration and bordering impact asylum seekers and refugees in the European Union.
- **EPCR General Conference, Sept 2021** - ITFLOWS researchers Dr Lenka Drazanova and Dr Jerome Gonnot, from the European University Institute, participated in the European Consortium for Political Research General Conference, while also presenting a paper titled "Drivers of attitudes to immigration: Evidence from a cross-disciplinary meta-analysis".

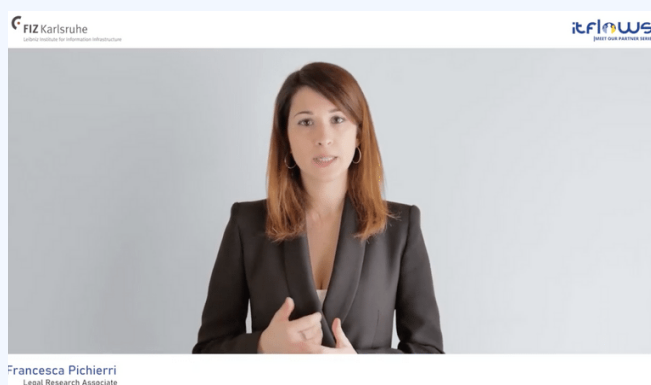
## MEET OUR PARTNERS SERIES



**WE HAVE COME TO THE END OF OUR MEET OUR PARTNERS SERIES. THIS ALLOWED US TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT EACH OF OUR 14 PARTNERS AND SHARE DETAILS ABOUT THEIR WORK ON ITFLOWS. ALL VIDEOS HAVE BEEN UPLOADED TO OUR [YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#) AND HAVE ALSO BEEN SHARED ON OUR [LINKEDIN PAGE](#)**



### MEET OUR PARTNERS SERIES





## **RESEARCHERS OF THE SEMESTER**

The ITFLOWS Newsletter aims to recognise outstanding performance among its partners, so we will be highlighting the “Top Researchers of the Semester” in every issue, as a way to recognise excellent work and effort from our researchers in contexts that require going above and beyond.

For this second semester of ITFLOWS, the AWARD goes to:  
**Emma Teodoro Martínez (UAB)** and **Andrea Guillén Gil (UAB)**.



Emma Teodoro Martínez  
Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona



Andrea Guillén Gil  
Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona

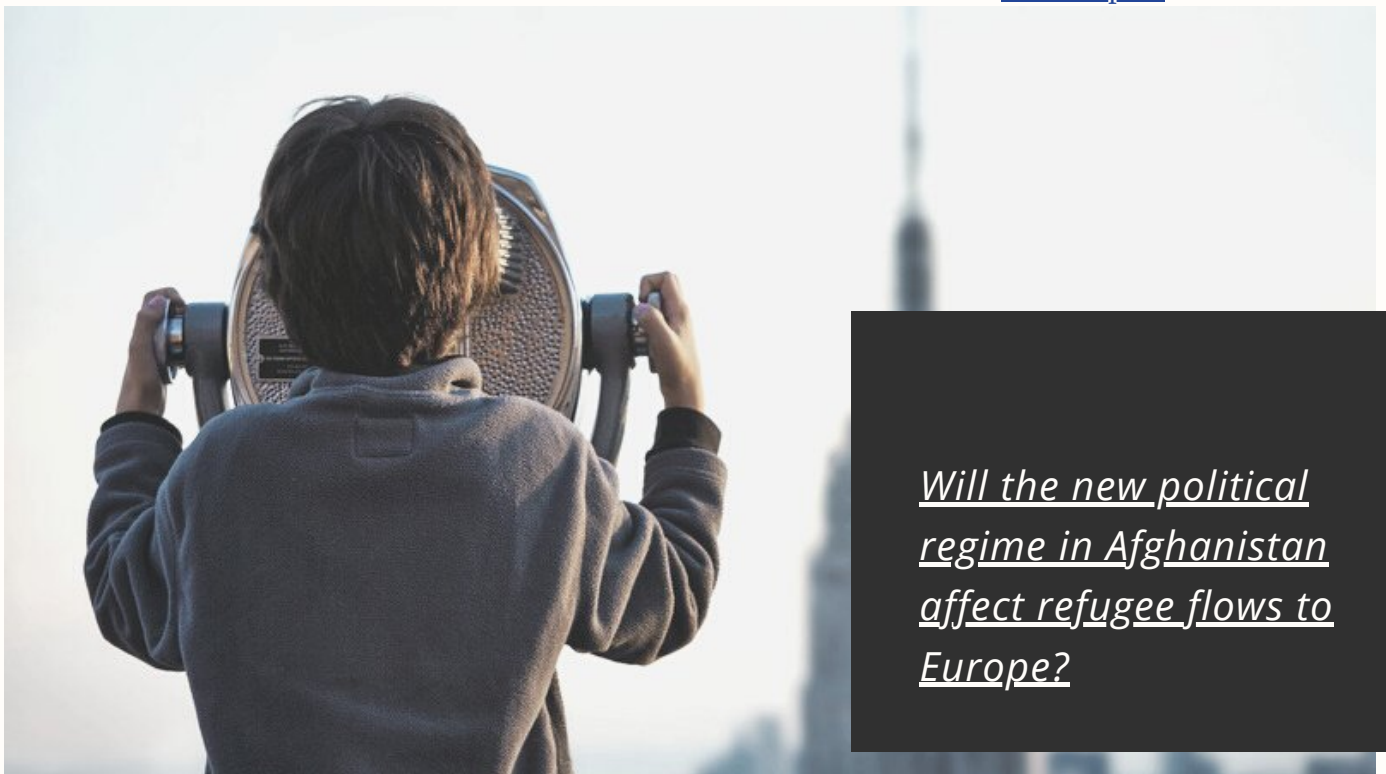
Emma and Andrea work for the Institute of Law and Technology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (IDT-UAB), which is the leader of WP2 (Societal impact, human rights, legal and ethical framework) and WP10 (Ethics requirements). In addition, the IDT-UAB is in permanent communication with and coordinating the work of ITFLOWS external boards such as the Independent Gender Committee (IGC), the Independent Ethics Board (IEB) and the Data Protection Advisor (DPA).

This second semester has been particularly intensive in terms of WP2 and WP10 deliverables, as well as with regards to ethics monitoring of and contributions to other deliverables. Most notably, Deliverable 2.4, regarding the Regulatory Model specifically designed for ITFLOWS, entailed exhaustive work, as this is a crucial model at the core of the Project.

## LATEST ON MIGRATION

In maintaining a watchful eye on the broader global migration context, our ITFLOWS researchers present a number of migration questions currently being discussed within the international community:

- [Will Tunisia's political crisis affect migration numbers to Europe? – 09 August 2021 – EuroNews.](#)
- [Europe: Lead Efforts to Protect At-Risk Afghans – 24 August 2021 – Human Rights Watch.](#)
- [Turkey will not act as EU 'warehouse' for Afghan refugees, says Erdogan – 26 August 2021 – Financial Times.](#)
- [Afghan refugees in Greece still stuck in limbo – 28 August 2021 – Deutsche Welle](#)
- [Migrant death toll increases on Atlantic route to Canary Islands – 01 September 2021 – InfoMigrants.](#)
- [Will the Taliban's takeover lead to a new refugee crisis from Afghanistan? – 02 September 2021 – Reliefweb.](#)
- [Rising migration flows and lives lost on the Atlantic Route to Europe; death toll up 500% in 2021.](#)
- [IOM provides new guidance note on Gender and Migration Data.](#)
- [COVID-19 and undocumented migrants: what is happening in Europe?](#)



*Will the new political regime in Afghanistan affect refugee flows to Europe?*