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Health and migration: perspectives from Asia and Europe: the European perspective

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Understanding and addressing migrants’ health in Europe: current challenges and opportunities

Social determinants of migrants’ health

A new European policy for health (Health 2020) and migrants’ health
WHO European Region

53 Member States, 886 million people

160 million people are living on less than US$ 5 per day

12–15 million Roma

75 million migrants

19 million children are at risk of poverty in the European Union (EU)

Diversity of migrant/mobile populations

- International migrants
- Internal migrants
- Migrants in irregular situations
- Asylum seekers
- Tourists
- International students
- Trafficked persons
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Stateless persons

World Health Organization
Europe
What we know

- **HUMAN RIGHTS**: Migrants are usually in dirty, degrading and dangerous jobs, and migrants in irregular situations are deprived of most privileges afforded to nationals. Children of migrant parents are one of the groups most at risk of poverty in the EU (UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants).

- **HEALTH**
  In 2010, only five of 27 EU countries offered undocumented migrants access to health services beyond emergency care (Björkgren-Caudra & Cattacin, 2010).

- **ECONOMY**
  Migrants are an economic necessity that countries cannot do without. Migration accounted for an estimated 21% of the average gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the EU15 over 2000–2005. Remittances help reduce poverty in countries of origin.

- **DEMOGRAPHICS**. Counterbalancing an aging population in Europe; net migration accounted for almost 85% of the EU’s total population growth (2005).
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Social injustice is killing on a grand scale!

Three overarching recommendations

Improve daily living conditions

Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources

Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action

Commission on Social Determinants of Health: Model of Social Exclusion

Conditions surrounding the migration process that can increase vulnerability to ill health and pose barriers to access health and social services

- Poverty
- Stigma and xenophobia
- Discrimination
- Social exclusion
- Language and cultural differences
- Separation from family and socio-cultural norms
- Administrative hurdles and legal status
- Lack of social security and protection
- Exploitative working conditions including sexual abuse

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Occupational diseases and accidents
- Infectious diseases
- Unmet health needs
- Premature mortality
- Avoidable morbidity
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Unsafe abortions
Addressing the drivers of exclusionary processes, across sectors, that influence the health of migrants and ethnic minority populations

Strengthened health systems save more lives: an insight into WHO’s European health systems’ strategy

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Legitimacy of action, mandate and opportunities: WHO Constitution and World Health Assembly resolutions

WHO Constitution

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

2007: Sixtieth World Health Assembly resolution on WHO global plan of action on workers’ health

Migrant workers are identified as one of the vulnerable groups for priority action

2008: Sixty-first World Health Assembly resolution on the health of migrants

Migrant-sensitive health policies and equitable access to services; information systems to assess migrant health; best practices; capacity building of health service providers and professionals; intersectoral action
Legitimacy of action, mandate and opportunities: WHO Constitution and World Health Assembly resolutions

2009: Sixty-second World Health Assembly resolution on reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health
   Takes note of the recommendations of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health

2010: Sixty-third World Health Assembly resolution on keeping the focus on the health of the most vulnerable through constant monitoring of the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals

2010: Global Consultation on Migrant Health in Madrid, Spain
   Takes stock of actions my Member States and stakeholders; reach consensus on priority areas and strategies; initiate an operational framework
What is Health 2020?

Health 2020 is a value-based action-oriented policy framework, adaptable to different realities in the countries of the WHO European Region.

Health 2020 is addressed to ministries of health but also aims to engage ministers and policy-makers across government and stakeholders throughout society who can contribute to health and well-being.
Health 2020 vision

A WHO European Region in which all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health potential and well-being and in which countries, individually and jointly, work towards reducing inequities in health within the Region and beyond.
Health 2020: a policy informed by evidence

"Without knowledge action is useless and knowledge without action is futile."

Abu Bakr (573–634)

“Don't invest in anything that you don't understand. Do your research first.”

Paul Clitheroe (1955 – )
New WHO programme on vulnerability and health:

*Overall objective*

- To contribute to the promotion of awareness, political commitment and action relating to conditions that make people vulnerable to ill-health and in particular to address the needs and expectations of vulnerable groups, including the Roma, migrants and ethnic minorities, guided by the values and principles of Health 2020
Four key strategic directions for WHO to promote awareness, political commitment and action

**Providing support** to Member States for the implementation of policies and programmes for the health of vulnerable groups

**Providing evidence, resources** (e.g. tools, guidance, norms and standards) and intercountry activities to strengthen the capacity of Member States and other stakeholders to better meet the health needs of vulnerable groups

**Cross-programme integration** of perspectives on vulnerability and responsive actions: supporting other WHO programmes

**Building stronger partnerships** with other United Nations agencies, the European Commission and nongovernmental organizations
WHO support in emergencies related to migration

- March 2011: Joint mission of WHO/Europe and the health ministry of Italy to Greece, Italy and Malta to assess the public health situation after the influx of migrants from Northern Africa

- April 2011: WHO/Europe supports to high-level meeting in Rome to discuss health issues related to migration from North Africa

- May 2011: Agreement between Italy and WHO/Europe to conduct a three-year project on the public health aspects of migration in emergencies
WHO European Region
53 Member States, 886 Million people

Member States requesting technical assistance in the area of social determinants of health and health inequities

- 2006–2007: 6
- 2008–2009: 12
- 2010–2011: 23
- 2012–2013: 32
Summary remarks

• Migrants are important resources for Europe, contributing to economic development and counterbalancing an ageing population.

• There are substantial inequalities and barriers for migrants to access social and health services in destination countries.

• Stronger health systems and intensified focus on the social determinants of migrants’ health requires a cross-government approach.

• The urgent need to protect and promote migrant’s health as part of efforts to reduce health inequities is a key priority in the new WHO European policy for health.