



POLICY BRIEF

Migration Health: Better Health for all in Europe

Co-funded by the European Commission, the Office of the Portuguese High Commissioner for Health and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the “Assisting Migrants and Communities (AMAC): Analysis of Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities” IOM-managed project provides a platform for dialogue on migration health priorities and fosters engagement from policy-makers at all levels to tackle health inequalities in Europe.



Further information is available at:
www.migrant-health-europe.org

This policy brief summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations of the EU-Level Consultation on Migration Health - “Better Health For All” organised within the AMAC project in September 2009
www.migrant-health-europe.org/programme.html

The *Assisting Migrants and Communities (AMAC): Analysis of Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities* has been an initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), implemented with the support of the European Commission’s Health Programme and the Office of the Portuguese High Commissioner for Health, which has contributed to recent efforts to tackle health inequalities in relation to migration in Europe.

The AMAC project has established multi-disciplinary cooperation and partnership among government representatives, the European institutions, universities and public health schools, civil society/non-governmental organisations and international agencies and has pursued the European agenda in the field of migrant health notably through the EU-Level Consultation on Migration Health - “Better Health for All”, which took place in Lisbon on 24th - 25th September 2009 under the auspices of the Portuguese Ministry of Health and the Office of the Portuguese High Commissioner for Health.

The EU-Level Consultation marked the 2nd anniversary of the European conference under the same title held under the Portuguese EU Presidency in 2007 and provided an effective link with the overarching theme of addressing health inequalities, also included within the Spanish 2010 EU Presidency’s health programme.

The Consultation brought together over 130 representatives from relevant ministries from EU and EU accession countries and neighbouring states, as well as from key European institutions, international organisations, academia and civil society organisations active on migrant health issues in Europe, with the presentation of key recent policy texts in the field by the European Commission (EC), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Council of Europe and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The Consultation provided an effective platform for discussion of five main themes: social determinants of health; the legal and policy framework; research in migration health; capacity-building for health professionals; and maternal, child and adolescent health. It also enabled the development of conclusions and recommendations directed to EU and national policy-makers and stakeholders for translation into effective migration health policy and practice at national and EU levels. A summary of these recommendations is presented in this brief.





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Matrix of EU Projects

IOM has elaborated a matrix of EU migration health projects as part of the AMAC project objective of exploring synergies with other EC projects. The matrix is a multi-variable tool gathering stated or declared information on the researched projects.

- The primary type of organisation leading projects is public (university or other academic institution) (32%), research institutes (public or private) (16%), and international bodies and organisations (21%);
- The main countries leading migrant health related projects are Austria, Germany and the Netherlands;
- The main key deliverables reported are research and data collection, databases, public websites and conferences; a few projects report to provide training courses, materials and direct support to migrant communities;
- The main objectives reported include knowledge on the political and legal framework, accessibility of care, compilation of good / best practices / recommendations, network / exchange of information and knowledge on health status and needs of the target population;
- A broad concept of “migrant” is used in most projects when describing beneficiaries, which is insufficient to define the target group.

The EU-Level Consultation on Migration Health showed consensus on the fact that effective instruments are needed to keep track, analyse and maximise results of past and current projects in the migrant health field in Europe. The ultimate goal is to avoid duplication of efforts and funding, and to enhance the coordination between actors in the field to orient planning by EU and national authorities.

Recommendations

Social Determinants of Health

- Health and related social and interior policies have to recognise and address the inequalities faced by migrants and put in place a coordinated multi-sectoral approach;
- Policy-makers of all related fields and levels throughout the EU need to foster collective will and leadership in a way that the health of all is regarded as a shared responsibility with common implications for all;

Legal and Policy Framework

- Health policies need to be revised to address present challenges affecting both health systems and individuals in the context of diversification and increase of migration flows, preserving the essential right to health;
- Access to and quality of health care, as well as health literacy, needs to be improved for all the EU population including migrants;

Research

- Further research and data are needed to drive policy changes and to better underline the health specificities of migrant populations and the social health determinants;
- Migrant and minority ethnic communities need to be included in developing and implementing research and practice solutions;
- EU leadership and structures are necessary to facilitate co-ordination within and among Member States and the development of common

terminology, standards and codes of practice for migrant health research;

Capacity Building for A Health Workforce

- Migrant-friendly health systems need to be put in place to reduce social and health care inequalities and to respect good public health practice in a diverse EU society: such systems should comprise the use of interpreting, mediation and training for all health professions;
- Cultural competency should be integral for medical school curricula and continuous professional training and should include: communication skills, capacity to manage different values and health beliefs, and awareness of legal and administrative matters around accessing services by vulnerable and diverse groups.

Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health

- Coherent and sensitive policy frameworks need to be developed in order to provide care to migrant mothers and their children and outreach interventions put in place;
- Efficient communication enhances the promotion of health and awareness of health care systems and it should be regarded as a public health investment especially vis-à-vis young migrants;
- Patterns of native children’s health vs. migrant children’s health should be monitored and compared regularly; specific attention should also be given at making sure that information on their rights is being shared properly.