

Lancet Migration European Regional Hub: a new platform for amplifying migration & health research in the WHO European Region

By the [Lancet Migration European Regional Hub](#)

Many migrants are disproportionately vulnerable to certain health risks and diseases and often face [societal and structural barriers](#) to accessing and receiving healthcare along their journeys. [When being denied health rights](#), migrants become prone to morbidity and mortality from preventable physical and mental health complications. [Recent increases in human mobility to and within Europe](#), complicated by the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), [climate changes](#), and conflict, have exposed and further exacerbated health inequalities. It is crucial now more than ever that the European Region unites to improve public health through policies that address the specific needs of and inequities faced by migrants, acknowledging the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) and the [Global Compact for Migration \(GCM\)](#).

The GCM is a monumental step in global migration policy, acknowledging contemporary drivers of displacement and advocating for the safety and wellbeing of people on the move. The objectives are rooted in creating an environment for safe and orderly migration, focusing on *the unity of purpose, shared responsibility, and common understanding*. The GCM provides a foundation for European dialogue on international cooperation on migration and a commitment to protecting migrants. It also highlights the importance of shared governance and active participation from multiple stakeholders, including people on the move themselves. However, migration health issues are often side-lined, [not only in the GCM](#) but also in the broader migration and health policy discourse at the European level.

The [Lancet Migration European Regional Hub](#), initiated in 2021, is co-hosted by the [Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies](#). Our objective is to build a sustainable and collaborative network and platform for research, policy, and practice within and between sectors, aligned with the [Lancet Migration global collaboration](#). To gain input on addressing the current gaps and pitfalls in migration health research, policy, and practice, we held an expert consultation meeting in January 2021 with a variety of academics, civil society organizations, and institutions active in the European Region. Participants discussed the many challenges they face and how a Regional Hub could be an opportunity for change. Common gaps included a lack of participatory and qualitative research, community-level approaches, needs assessments, and diversity in the type of migration sub-groups studied. Challenges such as disseminating research findings, translating research into policy and policy into practice, the diversity of languages in Europe, and collaborating with other sectors and regions were also expressed. The main identified factors for short-term, unsustainable migration health projects in Europe were their lack of sustainable funding and public, political, and technical awareness and support.

The Hub's broad scope encompasses promoting and supporting migrant health research within the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region, where [international migrants constitute approximately 10% of the total population, ranging from less than 2% up to 50% depending on the countries](#). Our Hub aims to bring together local and regional researchers, civil society, students and

young professionals, non-governmental bodies, multilateral organizations, policymakers, migrants, and host communities, across the WHO European Region to engage at multiple levels to:

1. Encourage and support the development of high-quality regional research;
2. Link academia with policy and practice via the Lancet Migration network to translate evidence into action via policy and public engagement;
3. Disseminate evidence-based information and activities among stakeholders.

Our Hub's activities align with multiple [GCM objectives](#), in particular 1: *Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies*. To ensure migration policies address health needs, and for countries to establish priority areas, it is essential that disaggregated data, at minimum, by gender and age, as well as ethnographic information on cultural resources, norms, roles, and attitudes towards health are collected to improve the quality and quantity of European data on migration and health. As migration health requires an interdisciplinary approach, we will engage with various actors across the region. We intend to prioritize collaborative approaches, including government, non-government, and community agencies while emphasizing the need for a global conversation, cross-cultural research, and a platform to exchange experiences and provide support. We also call for direct partnership and knowledge co-creation between researchers and migrants, for example, through participatory and qualitative methods, to ensure relevance and ownership while [increasing knowledge transfer and implementing research findings into policy and practice](#).

We will support researchers and create a strong network with opportunities for policy and public engagement. Best practices will be collected through country case profiles and a repository of past and existing projects, to avoid duplication and provide evidence to policymakers and practitioners. Thematic working groups relevant to the overall priorities of Lancet Migration will be formed, including universal health coverage, child and adolescent-related, and climate-related migration health, with cross-cutting themes of gender, data, and different types of migration (labour, forced, mixed).

We aim to promote diversity in gender, geography, and disciplines across the region and sectors and bridge gaps in migration health-related research. The Hub will be beneficial in sharing valuable data and project outcomes, diversifying and strengthening the research agenda, identifying evidence-based best practices, and promoting collaboration across sectors and regions.

This piece is published as part of the UN Network on Migration's Guest Blog series and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the UN Network on Migration nor its Secretariat.