

GCM Regional Review Submission - UN MGCY

Review Outline

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For any questions, please contact migrationgfp@unmgcy.org

Introduction

Reducing and addressing people's vulnerabilities on the move is a key commitment contained in the GCM, with 1 in 3 migrants worldwide being under the age of 30¹. Young migrants are often described as "the most vulnerable among vulnerable people," and recent statistics show how non-EU-born youth still have the EU's highest unemployment rate².

Building on the youth priorities on migration in Europe that gathered through previous consultations of 16 youth-focused or youth-led organizations in 23 European countries, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) has conducted additional consultations with 5 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with a national or international focus and representing 2,300 youth in Germany, UK, and Portugal. The consultations focused on youth perspectives and asks for the implementation of three specific objectives of the GCM:

- Objective 7: 'Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration'
- Objective 15: 'Provide access to basic services for migrants'
- Objective 18: 'Invest in Skills Development and Facilitate Mutual Recognition of Skills, Qualifications and Competences'

The results of the consultations are summarized in the policy briefs contained in this document. Overall, youth are alarmed by the lack of action on the GCM at the national level. We reiterate that ensuring young people on the move are socially and economically integrated and that their human rights are respected is a prerequisite for young people on the move to - first - not be left behind in the gains towards the 2030 Agenda, and - second - to significantly contribute themselves to the achievement of the SDGs through their own skills and work. **Without integration, we are missing out on the potential of migrants' contributions to their host communities and countries.** We urgently call on governments to take greater action to implement a global compact that is beneficial for all.

Objective 7: Address and Reduce Vulnerabilities in Migration

With high numbers of young migrants in Europe, it is more important than ever to ensure that their vulnerabilities are addressed and reduced, including to violence, trafficking

Key Youth-Led and Youth-Focused Projects

Youth have been at the forefront of addressing gaps in migrant protection, including through:

- Offering migrants free or affordable support through the migration processes and once in arrival communities, including by providing access to psychosocial support, employability, psychological and medical care, housing, mediation, translation, and judicial support;
- Offering support services targeted to disadvantaged young people, including LGBTQI+ or younger adolescents;

¹ UN DESA, 2017

²https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Youth_unemployment

- Fighting discrimination and xenophobia by building relationships between migrants and local community leaders to create the right policy instruments, by creating areas of discussion and integration such as workshops in schools, or sport activities.

Key Recommendations

Youth and civil society organizations facilitate social cohesion by creating programmes that facilitate inclusion of migrants into local communities, such as linking children and youth to local peers to facilitate integration and improve public narratives on migration. **We need government and relevant stakeholders' support to increase funding for these programmes and support nationwide integration efforts.**

Youth call on governments and other relevant stakeholders to pay specific attention to vulnerable communities within migrant youth such as unaccompanied children, disabled, LGBTQI+, women and girls. As such, policies and programmes that account for their unique vulnerability is necessary for protection. Specific vulnerabilities must be taken into account when drafting policies or providing services.

International cooperation and mobilization of resources are needed to ensure young and children - and all migrants - are protected throughout their migration journey. **Youth call for an end to migrant detention, especially children, and for coordinated efforts to prevent human trafficking and protect its victims.**

Objective 15: Provide Access to Basic Services for Migrants

When migrants or any portion of the population cannot access basic services, their wellbeing is heavily impacted, this exacerbating already existing inequalities. An interruption in a child's education affects their ability to fulfill his or her potential, makes them more likely to fall into poverty, and diminishes the contribution that they will be able to make to their host communities as well. The COVID crisis has made this even more apparent.

Key Youth-Led and Youth-Focused Projects

Youth have been at the forefront of helping migrants access basic services, including through:

- Providing support of social workers to help migrants gain knowledge and access to institutions and services that can help them;
- Provide or facilitate migrants' access to essential services such as education, health, social support, housing, and legal advice;
- Providing mentoring and support through the implementation of a 'buddy system', linking with other migrants or host communities members.

Key Recommendations

Youth call on governments to increase funding for support organizations. Greater availability and scope of support services and offices would allow migrants to more readily access those services that

will enable them to participate in the formal economy and other formal institutions. It can also tackle a more significant mandate such as reducing vulnerabilities in human trafficking and exploitative migrant work – as such services provided close by can provide an offer to information regarding migrants' rights and avenues of remedy. In the same perspective, the **number of social workers** who support migrants by providing clear information on how to access essential services should also be increased. Currently, existing partners are often volunteers who lack the availability, breadth of knowledge, and experience to tackle the more complex individual access issues migrants face.

Youth call on governments and relevant stakeholders to simplify language on relevant documents for migrants to increase accessibility to already existing services. Websites, forms, and other portals for accessing formal institutions are often written in difficult to decipher jargon, which presents an additional barrier for migrant access. Consequently, flyers, websites, and informative booklets should be available in simplified local languages and commonly spoken languages among migrants, such as English, French and Arabic. Where possible, basic services should also be provided in a second language and translation services, and cultural mediators should be provided with public funding prioritized for relevant NGOs and community partners.

Youth call on national, regional, and local governments, as well as educational institutions, to ensure no child, regardless of migratory status, is missing out on their education. This requires guaranteeing flexibility during the enrollment process (for instance, relaxing the bureaucratic requirements) and providing targeted support through scholarships and language classes. In the current crisis, ensure access to the internet and appropriate devices to attend online classes subsidies if needed.

Objective 18: Invest in Skills Development and Facilitate Mutual Recognition of Skills, Qualifications and Competences

Pathways and regulations that facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications are fundamental to allow migrants to effectively contribute to their host communities. Skill development is also crucial to ensure that their current skills can be adapted to the specific needs of the local market.

Key Youth-led and Youth Focused Projects

Youth have been working to increase skills development and recognition, including through:

- Offering aid and guidance through skill-building programs;
- Tailoring apprenticeships or channelling migrants into apprenticeships which make use of existing skills and developing complementary skill sets that the beneficiary considers relevant to its carriers;
- Building a professional economic integration plan for migrants, including helping them create a CV, find volunteering options which suit their interests and long term goals, workshops, providing internships, formal and informal training/workshops;
- Offering classes of intensive language training which match their chosen areas of work/study;
- Running homework clubs for ethnic minority children whose parents do not understand the local education system/expectations or who do not have the language ability to support them;
- Holding 'Family Learning' sessions for families with primary school-aged children;
- Accompanying families to facilitate the recognition of previous studies/qualifications;

- Running programs that assist children with their school work, providing integration support in schools and organizing various activities that aim to teach skills in arts, music, sports, language.

Key Recommendations

Youth call on governments and relevant stakeholders to streamline recognition of foreign qualifications and certifications. Migrants face significant challenges in access to documentation, which hampers access to common social mobility routes. Commonly, this materializes in an inability to present official certificates due to a lack of access to them. Consequently, qualification recognition ought to be better facilitated and alternate qualification routes introduced. A failure to provide adequate employment and training opportunities forces migrants to repeat schooling and training and to take positions for which they are overqualified, amounting to a failure to utilize latent human capital to its full potential. Increasing employer awareness and building connections with local employers is essential to facilitate and make the most skilled migrant workers.

Youth call on governments to ensure access to language classes. This is essential to facilitate the integration of migrants. Language classes should be advertised at all entry points and grant access to students without overcrowding issues. They need to answer different educational needs such as age, proficiency, and language (e.g. business, school, and daily life). Most importantly, adequate funding has to be provided to public and civil society actors that already offer these services to make them affordable and facilitate access to young migrants who lack financial resources.

Youth call on governments to facilitate administrative procedures regarding apprenticeships. Migrants must be able to apply for and begin apprenticeships despite a lack of official residency. Doing so ensures migrants achieve faster access to the formal job market, avoiding pitfalls associated with prolonged unemployment prospects and fostering social mobility.

Conclusion

After consulting with thousands of youth in Europe, we have reconfirmed that migration is a critical topic in Europe and is likely to grow more urgent in the near future. Young migrants, lacking the skills and connections to navigate often confusing and inadequate support systems in host nations, are especially at risk. This review identifies critical areas where relatively modest reforms would have significant positive impacts on young migrant outcomes. It also highlights the vital role of youth organizations in enabling migrants to survive and thrive in Europe and calls for more substantive and financial support to increase their impact.

Europe will face long-term economic and political challenges if no progress is made on these issues. By taking action, countries will benefit from increased social cohesion and more prosperous societies thanks to migrants' contribution and collaboration with host communities.

Youth are already taking action. We call on governments and all relevant stakeholders to prioritize increasing their efforts in implementing the GCM with youth priorities in mind.