



Climate Change, Migration, and Health Research in the European Region

Policy Brief

Lancet Migration European Regional Hub

November 2021

Background


Lancet Migration is a global collaboration between The Lancet and researchers, implementers, and others in the field of migration and health that aims to address evidence gaps and drive policy change, building on the recommendations of the UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health published in December 2018 (www.thelancet.com/commissions/migration-health). Launched in 2021, the Lancet Migration European Regional Hub, co-hosted by the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, aims to bring together researchers, civil society, non-governmental bodies, multilateral organizations, policymakers, and migrants across the region to encourage the development of regional research projects and link academia with policy and practice to translate evidence into action. One of the core research priorities for Lancet Migration is the climate change, migration, and health nexus.

In 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defined the term “climate migration” as “the movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border.” On September 28th, 2021, a session was held at the 12th European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health (ECTMIH) conference, ‘Lancet Migration European Regional Hub: accelerating research for climate change-influenced migration health.’ Furthering this, during the COP26 in Glasgow, Lancet Migration co-hosted two high-level panel discussions. Building on lessons learned from these dialogues, we call on researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to join us in advocating for improved synergies across the migration, climate change and health nexus.

Evidence to date

It is well recognized that climate change and its consequences are detrimental to planetary health and disproportionately affects those most vulnerable. Faced with the consequences of disasters, conflict, resource and power inequities, and limited livelihood and service opportunities, large numbers of people are being displaced from their homes. Infectious diseases, access to food and water, sanitation and hygiene, safe housing and communities, injuries, and mental health are some of the many health issues encountered as a result of forced migration. Since 2013, the European Union has identified climate change-influenced migration as a health policy issue. However, few focused research initiatives have evolved to feed into existing and emerging health policy challenges. It is not well understood to what extent health is impacted and how access to health services can be improved in the European Region in response to climate change-influenced migration. More understanding is needed on specific types of migration, how these are set to change in the European context, and their health implications. Most data currently rely heavily on quantitative research methods, highlighting the need for contextual field research to understand individual experiences and needs as well as population-level impacts.

The European Region should act as global leader on advancing evidence, policy and practice for this pressing challenge. We call for immediate action for mitigation, coupled with sustainable, long-term



solutions and forward planning that will address climate change, migration, and health through evidence-based policy and action.

Call to Action

We call on researchers, research institutions and research fund to:

- increase collaborations in agenda setting and implementation of research between and within countries, and with migrants
- increase funding for research centres outside EU in countries disproportionately impacted by climate and planetary health emergencies
- diversify research methods, to include participatory and qualitative research better representing migrants on individual and collective levels
- broaden the scope of health topics studied, to fill existing research gaps, especially regarding the impact on mental health, spread of infectious diseases, food insecurity, health protection, and other attributes of migration drivers, risks, and vulnerabilities
- increase research efforts on anticipation of climate-driven migration specifically in areas with vulnerable populations such as through using modelling and forecasting
- adapt the research agenda to the local risks and vulnerabilities, including those created by the policies in place
- disseminate findings and transform them into policy briefs for policy & decision makers
- develop accessible opensource databases on migration, climate change and health
- include the voice of impacted communities, and share evidence-base and research results with them

We call on governments and multilateral organizations to:

- increase funding for research on the intersection between climate change, migration and health
- prepare, adapt and mitigate health crises by better preventing, preparing and responding to disasters taking migration-related vulnerabilities and opportunities into consideration
- adapt to health challenges posed by climate change, using evidence-based practices
- ensure effective access to quality preventative and curative care for all populations, including migrants/displaced/refugees as beneficiaries and target populations into the countries' UHC plans.
- design clear action plans in prevention, preparedness and response to climate-related migration and health that foster participatory governance inclusive of migrants, researchers, and other diverse community-based stakeholders
- push the research and action agenda for climate change, migration, and health at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences
- advocate for recognition of and commitment to the health rights and inclusion of health needs of people on the move in all EU countries' universal health coverage strategies
- include indicators on inclusion of people on the move in health policies and services and ensure independent monitoring and reporting of these indicators
- support researchers and migrants in translating their findings and experience into health policy and practice, to promote evidence-based action
- include multi-stakeholders and champions in climate change-influenced migration and health research, policy and practice, while ensuring participation of impacted communities

We call on the media to:

- highlight prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response strategies to climate change-related migration
- publicise evidence-based actions that can be taken by everyone to address the health impacts of climate change on everyone
- communicate the health impacts of climate change and the mutual benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation for health
- report on climate change related drivers of migration
- portray people on the move with dignity and compassion, without ulterior political

Signatories



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Read more about climate change-influenced migration and health within the European Region here:

- [IOM Environmental Migration Portal](#)
- [The health impacts of climate-related migration](#) *Schwerdtle et al. 2018*
- [Climate migration requires a global response](#) *The Lancet, 2020*
- [Climate Change, Human Migration and Health: Bridging from dialogue to action](#) *Centre Virchow-Villermé for Public Health Paris – Berlin, 2016*
- [MSF Speaks out about the health and humanitarian impacts of climate change](#) *Médecins Sans Frontières, 2021*

The **Lancet Migration European Regional Hub**, established in 2021 in Geneva, aims to bring together local and regional researchers, civil society, non-governmental bodies, multilateral organisations, policymakers, and migrants across the region with the goal of engaging at multiple levels to a) Encourage the development of regional research projects, b) Link academia with policy and practice via the Lancet Migration network to translate evidence into action via policy and public engagement, c) Disseminate information and activities among stakeholders. The European Regional Hub is working to build a sustainable hub for research and policy action which links with the Lancet Migration global initiative learning from past or existing initiatives.

Read more about the European Regional Hub:

<https://migrationhealth.org/regional-hubs/europe/>

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Inquiries can be directed to: humanitarianstudies-communications@unige.ch