



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

Health of older refugees and migrants: policy brief

Policy issue and context

Both ageing and migration are in themselves complex multidimensional processes shaped by a range of factors at the micro, meso and macro levels over the life-course of the individual, yet they also have intertwined trajectories. Migration adds an additional layer of complexity to the already great diversity in health and well-being in older populations in general. Consequently, diversity-sensitive health care policies and practices must seek to address the health and social needs of both older refugees and migrants who are newly arrived and those who have been settled in Europe for some time and are, therefore, “ageing in place”.

Policy considerations

Healthy ageing policies that attend to diversity can contribute to closing gaps in health inequalities particularly for older refugees and migrants. Responding to their needs must be integrated into all dimensions of ageing policies and practices across the WHO European Region. Furthermore, such policies and practices should endorse life-course approaches that recognize older refugees and migrants to be socially active, economically productive and rich resources of knowledge in their communities.

Healthy ageing over the life-course

- Target risk factors as they unfold over the life-course using a comprehensive longitudinal approach that also considers the migration trajectory and the country of origin.
- Focus on diseases of higher prevalence in older refugee and migrant groups, with particular attention to poor mental health and long-term effects of trauma.
- Ensure that health care is both gender sensitive and age relevant and considers social isolation in refugees and migrants living alone and/or with frailty.



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**Knowledge Hub
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Supportive environments

- Utilize voluntary and community organizations, particularly social enterprises run by refugees and migrants, as resource of engagement and social participation for older groups.
- Collaborate with nongovernmental organizations to enhance access to support needed in old age, particularly for single or isolated refugees and migrants.
- Support informal caregivers to avoid them becoming overburdened and ensure access to formal care when needed.
- Estimate care demands and preferences among older refugees and migrants to support strategic programming.
- Ensure that communities are age friendly, with adequate housing, outdoor areas and community services.

People-centred health and long-term care services

- Ensure that health and long-term care facilities have diversity-sensitive policies and practices, are of sufficient quality and their use does not expose refugees and migrants to financial hardship.
- Ensure provision of skilled interpreters for recent refugees and migrants in both health and long-term care facilities as an integral part of universal health coverage.
- Utilize a variety of engagement tools to ensure that older refugees and migrants are involved in the formulation and shaping of their care and that this care is based on inclusive and person-centred principles.
- Implement diversity training across professions in health and long-term care sectors to ensure provision of culturally appropriate and inclusive care for all older adults.

Evidence base and research for elderly care

- Collect disaggregated data and monitor health status and service utilization to identify at-risk and/or underserved groups and to facilitate accountability.
- Analyse in detail the individual, social and structural factors shaping health among older people in general, and in refugee and migrant groups in particular.
- Strengthen the evidence base through more systematic evaluations of policy and practice initiatives for, or inclusive of, older refugees and migrants, using applied participatory research to ensure diversity sensitivity in emerging practices.
- Identify informal and structural barriers for access to and quality of health and long-term care for older refugees and migrants.
- Evaluate the roles of different formal and informal community organizations, settings and resource personnel in supporting elderly refugees and migrants.
- Share knowledge in service development, implementation and advocacy for older refugees and migrants across countries to support the development of best practices and leverage capabilities.