

Ministerial lunch on migration and health

**Monday, 17 September 2018
12:30–14:30, upstairs balcony**

Background

1. Since the start of the recent influx of migrants and refugees to Europe, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has been scaling up activities across the European Region and beyond in order to promote policy development on priority issues with regard to migration and health, despite the complexity and political sensitivity of this topic.
2. In 2011 many Member States urged the Regional Office to support efforts to improve international cooperation and coordination on health issues related to the mass migration resulting from the crisis in northern Africa. As a result, in 2011, with the support of the Italian Government, the Public Health Aspects of Migration in Europe (PHAME) project was created to help ensure that Member States' health systems are adequately prepared to respond to the public health implications of large-scale migration.
3. As both the number of migrants and refugees and the number of European countries exposed to large-scale migration have been increasing over the years, the activities of the PHAME project have rapidly expanded, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the first programme on migration and health at the Regional Office to support Member States in developing their capacity to address the health needs of refugees and migrants.
4. With the support of the Italian Ministry of Health, commitment was renewed in June 2016 with the establishment of a second three-year project, PHAME2, allowing the continuation and scale-up of the work in this area. The work conducted under the PHAME project also laid the foundation for the development of the Strategy and Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Health in the WHO European Region, which was adopted by the Regional Committee in September 2016.
5. The Knowledge Hub on Health and Migration was launched in November 2016. It is a joint effort between the Regional Office, the Ministry of Health of Italy, the Regional Health Council of Sicily and the European Commission and is committed to building expertise and competency on the public health aspects of migration, and making knowledge and information in this area widely available. The platform works across five priority areas:

webinar series, summer schools, policy dialogues, high-level summits and strengthening the evidence available on migration and health.

Evidence for policy-making on migrant health: moving forward

6. The session will provide reflections on recent developments in evidence on migrant health for policy-making in the European Region, covering the following points:

- implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Health in the WHO European Region: the Regional Office will present the main findings of its progress report on the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, which it is monitoring through a biennial questionnaire and which is proving to be a major advance in promoting actions to improve the health of refugees and migrants, not only in the European Region but also in other WHO regions;
- communication barriers to migrants' and refugees' access to, and utilization of, health care services in the European Region: a Health Evidence Network synthesis report will be launched to provide a synthesis of the available evidence and identify strategies commonly used in the Region to overcome communication barriers; and
- the Regional Office's upcoming European refugee and migrant health report: a brochure of the report will be presented to provide the main findings and a consolidated summary of the evidence on the health of refugees and migrants, as a preview of the full report.

A global phenomenon

7. The relentless efforts of Member States in advocating for the urgent need to address the public health implications of the migration crisis has caused the European Region to take the leading role in the discussions on this topic in European and global forums.

8. The Regional Office's mandate on migration-related issues has been recognized, through the Seventieth World Health Assembly's adoption in May 2017 of resolution WHA70.15 on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, in the context of resolution WHA61.17 (2008) on the health of migrants, and the health-related commitments made within the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

9. This session will inform discussions on ways forward, with particular reference to the blueprint for the upcoming global action plan on promoting the health of refugees and migrants and the WHO headquarters strategic initiative on health and migration, with Member States sharing their experiences of the global process.

Expected outcomes

10. The expected outcomes of this lunchtime session are as follows:

- It will provide an opportunity to hear from people who have first-hand experience of addressing the important public health challenges posed by migration.
- It will provide an overview of current trends and patterns in migration and displacement, their impact on the health status of refugees and migrants, and their implications for health policy-making and international collaboration in the arena of migrant health.
- It will illustrate the importance of government commitment to developing policies covering the health issues related to migration and health, through the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Health in the WHO European Region.
- It will inform future work and activities, as well as the response of the Regional Office.
- It will provide information on forward-looking perspectives and offer an opportunity for Member States to discuss how both WHO headquarters and the Regional Office can continue to provide assistance to Member States on migration and health. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of the health sector to identify and respond to public health needs, with particular reference to the recent developments in international migration governance, including the global compact on refugees and the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration.

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