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# Action plan for refugee and migrant health in the WHO European Region 2023–2030

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**Health for all, no matter where you come from**

## Summary

“Good health should not be determined by where someone comes from, or what passport they hold. This action plan lays out how to make our health systems inclusive and ensure everyone benefits from universal health coverage, including refugees and migrants.”

**Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe**

## Regional context

One in eight people in the WHO European Region is a refugee or migrant. An estimated 101 million migrants, including 12.5 million refugees, live in the Region.

### Health needs of refugees and migrants

Refugees and migrants are likely to be healthy in general. However, they can be at risk of ill health in transit or in destination countries due to, for example, poor living conditions, changes in lifestyle, disruption or a lack of access to health and other essential services.

Refugees and migrants often experience conditions that contribute to poor health, including

- restrictive migration policies
- economic hardship
- discrimination.

### Progress under the first Strategy and Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Health in the WHO European Region 2016–2022

Since 2016 countries have made enormous strides to make health systems more accessible and inclusive for refugees and migrants across the WHO European Region.

- Member States show an increased awareness of refugee and migrant health in general.
- Many Member States have taken great efforts to include refugees and migrants in responses to COVID-19.
- Most Member States developed contingency plans for large arrivals of refugees and migrants.

### Barriers to access

Still, refugees and migrants often face barriers when accessing health-care services, including:

- limited access due to legal status;
- a shortage of interpreters and cultural mediators;
- uncertainties about how to register in health and other enabling systems;
- a lack of resources; and
- a lack of legal support services.



**World Health  
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European Region

# FIVE action pillars to improve refugee and migrant health until 2030



1.

## Ensure refugees and migrants benefit from universal health coverage

Refugees and migrants benefit from universal health coverage, grounded in the right of every individual to the highest attainable standard of health. Public health systems are strengthened to respond to the immediate and longer-term health needs of refugees and migrants.



2.

## Implement inclusive emergency and disaster risk reduction policies and actions

The health of refugees and migrants is fully accounted for in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery processes, including in protracted situations, as many are denied access to the resources and services needed to safeguard their health and well-being.



3.

## Develop inclusive environments that promote public health, social inclusion and well-being

Integration and social cohesion are facilitated to create inclusive and healthy environments that enable refugee, migrant and host populations to thrive. Promoting health requires not only providing formal access to health services but also addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health risks and outcomes.



4.

## Strengthen migration health governance and evidence- and data-driven policy-making

Humane and evidence-informed policies and processes are promoted to meet the opportunities and challenges presented by displacement and migration. Facilitating safe, responsible and dignified migration requires strong commitment to good migration governance and data.



5.

## Explore innovative ways of working and develop enabling partnerships

The collaboration between actors with roles and mandates for health and migration is strengthened to ensure responses are underpinned by mutual solidarity, responsibility and partnership, using a whole-of-society and whole-of-government perspective across migration routes.

“Migration can offer significant social, economic and cultural benefits for our societies. To realize its potential for thriving, healthy populations, we must include refugees and migrants in universal health coverage throughout the migration route. Health coverage cannot be described as universal if it excludes refugees and migrants.”

**Gundo Weiler, Director of Country Support and Partnerships, WHO Regional Office for Europe**