



SAÚDE E MIGRAÇÕES NA UE
HEALTH AND MIGRATION IN THE EU
Better health for all in an inclusive society
Lisbona, 27-28 settembre 2007

Conference Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

After these two days of intense and very productive work culminating more than one year of preparations, the Portuguese Presidency wishes to sum up what has been learned and what was proposed in order to achieve better health for all in the EU.

The Conference “**Health and Migration in the EU: better health for all in an inclusive society**” set out to provide the scientific basis and political reflexions needed to introduce this important and long-overdue theme into the EU health agenda. This was felt by the Portuguese Presidency to be an urgent need.

The Conference was organized with the support of the European Commission, the collaboration of all Member States and the special contribution of WHO, the Council of Europe and other relevant stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations. The involvement of many illustrious scientists, experts and politicians was essential for the success of this meeting. We thank all of them for the many important contributions.

The rationale for this high level Conference may be summarised as follows:

- The recognition that the EU needs and will continue to need migrants, for demographic and economical reasons, to fully achieve the goals of the Lisbon Agenda.
- The EU migration policies must be refined: brought in line with the scientific evidence that is being accrued, and, set out to address the need for inclusion of newcomers while at the same time providing development assistance to sending countries, in order to diminish the need for out-migration.
- That access to healthcare by everyone must be seen as a prerequisite for the public health of the EU and an essential element of its social, economic and political development, as well as promotion of human rights.
- Addressing the health of migrants was also seen from the very beginning not only as a humanitarian cause, but moreover as a need for attainment of the best level of health and well-being for everybody living in the EU.

The goals of the Conference were thus two-folded: (a) to identify the main health problems affecting migrants in the EU, together with the determinants of their health status and ways to respond to their health needs, to improve knowledge and information on these of the type issues; (b) to concentrate on migration into the EU, the focus of the analyses and the identification of the initiatives, no matter the kind of migrants. From a public health perspective the target population comprises all of them.

From a practical perspective, the organisation of this Conference and the preparatory works fostered the formation of a European network with focal points. This network will hopefully continue, and, in the near future, be the engine to carry out and implement changes in migrant health.

Health promotion, disease prevention, and equitable access to health services were considered the main broad strands on which to structure the discussions. But some specific areas of major concern such as mental health, occupational health, woman and child health

(including sexual and reproductive health), access and quality of care were also subject to in-depth analysis.

The following conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the Conference constitute a challenge for all those concerned with health issues in the EU. They concern to people working at the Community, national, regional, local and global levels. It is now the politicians' task to decide on how to address them and this should be done innovatively and rapidly. There are a number of EU instruments already available that could provide the basis for an immediate take-up of these recommendations.

General conclusions

- Migrants are an important resource for Europe and the EU needs them. They contribute to demographic and economic growth. The healthier they are the easier the intercultural dialogue, more feasible the integration and also the larger their contribution to economic growth.
- Migrants experience increased health risks, frequently similar to those of the disadvantaged groups. Both national and EU policies need to take that into consideration. This requires actions and practices that promote and protect health. Health services are in this respect a unique resource to attain those goals.
- Many of the health problems faced by migrants are the product of social and environmental factors including housing and working conditions, personal security, family situation, poor integration, cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination and stigmatisation. Similar diversity characterizes migrant populations among the 27 EU countries.
- Migrants do not constitute a uniform group of people; on the contrary, they are very diverse in terms of level of education, income, social status, access to public services, cultural practices and beliefs, languages, etc. This implies that this diversity should be considered and taken into account when designing policies.

- There is a clear need for more data and knowledge on migrant health in the EU. Evidence gathered so far also suggests that there is a need for better practical interventions in areas such as health promotion, disease prevention and control, and better access to health services. Some feasible interventions have been identified and were presented in the Conference as Good Practices; however more structural changes are needed.
- Coherent immigration policies which incorporate a proper consideration of the health dimension are essential at both EU and Member State level. Health should also be considered a key component of integration and cooperation for development with the countries of origin. Moreover, health should be included in the EU Charter of Migrant's Rights.
- Special consideration needs to be given to migrant health across all relevant policy processes - "health in all policies", with special emphasis on cooperation and development policy. This should provide the basis to implement some of the recommendations of this Conference in the short run.
- The forthcoming European Health Strategy and the Health Services Framework should address migrant health issues. Ongoing work on communicable diseases, health determinants and chronic diseases, child and adolescent health, and mental health is worth continuing.
- Partnerships developed under the auspices of EUROMED, EU-Africa cooperation and EU neighbouring policy should be thoroughly explored. The potential of these instruments is to be taken advantage of in the forthcoming EUROMED and EU-Africa Summit.
- Employment and social policies should consider health needs of migrant workers as well as the gender aspects of migration and health. In this sense it is important to ratify and implement the UN and ILO conventions on migrant workers.
- The WHO agenda and the forthcoming Conference of the Council of Europe in Bratislava illustrate the relevance of the theme. Thus, we are posing a global call for action, for additional efforts to improve the health of the migrants.

Specific conclusions

Along with the general conclusions and recommendations presented above the Presidency also extracted the following ones from the more focused discussions on some themes of special concern.

These are just a few ones drawn from a much more complete set covering the sections of information and research, health promotion, disease prevention, access and quality of healthcare, mental health, occupational health, woman and child health (including sexual and reproductive health) and international cooperation.

- There are shortfalls on available information and gaps in knowledge. Thus, surveillance and research on health issues, focusing on specific mobile populations, should be conducted. The EU research agenda and information systems should reinforce migrant health related topics and indicators.
- “Health in all policies” approach has been identified as a philosophy to guide intervention and action in migrant health. There is a need to incorporate migrant health and equitable access to care into mainstream health policies, accounting for different barriers: geographical, social and cultural.
- New tools as health impact assessment should be used to anticipate and adjust for potential negative effects of other sectors policies on migrant health.
- Migrants are particularly vulnerable to some infectious diseases such as TB, HIV/Aids and STI. In view of the global nature of such conditions, the EU countries should look for consensus and convergence in their approaches to policies and strategies for prevention, control, and treatment.
- Noncommunicable diseases, as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, also largely affect migrants. They require specific approaches, as those aiming at the whole populations, but also at the high risk individuals.

- Health is a main element of human rights. Migrants and their descents should have access to health care as a way to promote the integration and the well-being of the whole population, if necessary adopting positive discrimination practices.
- Due to the particular circumstances of migration and settlement, migrants may be particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. Special emphasis should be set on entitlement and accessibility to mental health services, on the promotion of high-quality and culturally-sensitive mental health care and on encouraging migrants to actively participate to the provision of services and the definition of their own needs.
- The workplace and the residence can be used as entry points for delivery of health services and health information to migrant workers and their families and to promote health and combat major health threats. Intersectoral collaboration and coherence between health, employment and migration strategies need to be further enhanced.
- Migrant women and children, which are among the most vulnerable of the migrant populations, should be considered a priority and targeted if necessary through outreach programmes. Specific actions should include access to family planning services and education, sexual and reproductive health, guarantee vaccination and immunisation programs, and prevention of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- In order to help prevent disease and ill health among migrant population strengthening health systems in the countries of origin is a must. So there is a need for a growing dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination for a better articulation of their efforts.
- Although the Conference did not focus specifically on the migration of health professionals, we fully endorse ethical responsible recruitment, to avoid the brain drain. Circular migration can contribute to strengthen the health systems in the countries of origin.

Final messages

- Global problems call for global answers; health and migration are two global phenomena that call for urgent global responses. As migration surpasses national borders and is a global issue, the EU should assume a leading role in this global challenge.
- One of the main keys of the development is the investment in migrant health to reduce poverty and promote migrant integration in the host societies.
- Another central and crosscutting issue for all migrants is the lack of access to quality care. Privileging equitable, culture-sensitive access to health care to all migrants is one of the main recommendations of the Conference.
- Strengthening development cooperation targeted at essential health needs is critical to prevent disease at the source and ensure overall better health of all in today's globalised world.
- Urgent political decisions should open the way to practical solutions. The Portuguese Presidency considers the results of the Conference as a sound basis to encourage the Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament to improve migration policies in such a way that migrant health is one of the core elements.
- Thus, the Presidency is encouraged to use this set of conclusions and recommendations on migrant health to form the basis of a proposal for the next Council conclusions.