

"Migration and health- a contribution of regional experiences to international and European policies" was the theme of the information day held in Brussels on 6th April, in the headquarters of the Region of Tuscany.

The conference was organized by the Tuscany Region, in collaboration with the Joint Initiative for Migration and Development (JIMD) of the United Nations Programme for Development (UNDP), in the framework of Mattone Internazionale Project . The event was a chance to raise awareness and mutual understanding of the issue of migrant health among international institutions and regional governments in order to provide a forum for exchange of experiences and best practices aimed at ensuring the access of health care for migrants.

Migrants may be subject to multiple forms of discrimination, violence and exploitation, all of which often affect directly their physical and mental health. In addition, migrants may have health problems that are not well known or understood in their countries of destination. Legal and socioeconomic barriers impede access to health services in many cases; and services may be not migrant-sensitive or culturally and linguistically not appropriate.

Communities receiving large numbers of migrants face new challenges, such as increased diversity of the population and the consequent change in the cultural profile and health perspectives of its residents. This inevitably impacts the day-to-day work of health professionals. Current approaches to managing the health of migrants need to keep pace with the growing challenges associated with the complexity, volume, speed, diversity and disparity of modern migration flows to ensure that all migrants are able to realize their fundamental right to health.

The right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health has long been established in international human rights law. So, too, have the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It is therefore critical both for national as well as European Institutions to design health policies and programmes able to address migrants' right to health, regardless of their migratory status. Doing so requires active collaboration across the different sectors and close cooperation between governments, international organizations and the many non-state actors involved in the migration process.

Summary of Interventions written by Francesca Lilliu, intern at the [Delegation in Brussels Region of Tuscany](#).

Introductory session

The President of the Tuscany Region Enrico Rossi opened the panel by introducing the key issue: health and migration encouraging a greater forward-looking and comprehensive approach.

Health is an important factor for social inclusion, because it is interconnected to a wide range of aspects in people's lives, such as education, environment, quality and access to health care without any discrimination. At the European level, the proposal of specific action plans is crucial to reduce the causes of the crisis, adopting policies whose actions should not be confined to the own territory, as implementing an audacious investment plan in Africa.

The intervention of MEP Francesc Gambus pointed out the issue of the access barriers to health services. Further, Gambus stressed the need to give more power to the Commission, and the importance of the Regions' participation in the policy-making process, in order to achieve an equal access to health services.

The MEP Nicola Danti reported that Member States do not seem to grasp the opportunities coming from immigration, due to their focus on the negative aspects, such as the difficult management of the phenomenon, worsened by the lack of coordination with the European Union. The Schengen Treaty is therefore undermined and increasingly at risk, and its potential failure would cost to Europe € 140 million.

The director of the UN Representation Office in Brussels, Barbara Pesce Monteiro, has explained the experience of other countries where the migrants' situation is more critical compared to Europe. Pesce Monteiro highlighted the importance of a political narrative contributing to raise awareness in the population, in order to protect the values of the international community, human rights above all.

Short-term solutions are essential for the current humanitarian crisis and should not be underestimated. However, this is a long-term problem in need of a different response.

The elaboration of functional public policies is ineffective without the presence of politicians having the power for the implementation. The exchange of best practices between Regions and local authorities, along with the cooperation strengthened by the meeting in Valletta results to be fundamental to achieve our common aims.

MEP Cecile Kyenge believes that action must focus on the causes of migration, the political instability above all. Policies to be adopted in the host countries are important as well: to avoid populism/ radicalization process it is necessary to discourage the electoral logic and adopt a forward-looking vision.

The impediment of the migration flows is not the answer, which should rather be to gain skills for an effective management of this phenomenon. Italy must gear up to make the switch from being a country of emigration to one of immigration. The actual impact of the phenomenon is more serious than in other countries, and innovative expertise and professionals are increasingly necessary. In addition, local authorities should be supported in this transitional phase: the multi-level governance is essential for a successful management. In fact, many sectors are involved in the management of migration, working on each of them is important in order to obtain a satisfactory result.

- (rescue) Missions at sea
- Revision of the Dublin Regulation
- Share responsibility and centralized system (EASO)
- Humanitarian Visas
- Relocation
- Humanitarian corridors

Session 1: The health of migrants in European and international programmes

Michele Cercone (DG HOME)

He focused on the impact of the Refugee Crisis in other countries than Europe, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, mentioning the relevant data of the crisis. In Lebanon there are 1.2 million Syrian refugees, the same figure recorded in the entire European territory. As MEP Kyenge, he claims that this crisis must be

tackled from its roots, thus its management has to start outside Europe. War generates the migration crisis. The reaction to the crisis can not be within Europe.

- Numbers of migrants in 2015: 153,000 in Italy; 800,000 in Greece.
- In 2016: 150,000 individuals in Greece, and the trend is increasing, with a consequent increase of asylum requests.

Member States have responded through border controls, but this is not an efficient solution.

Possible solutions: missions at the sea, hot spots, identification through fingerprints and the importance of the European Agenda.

Josè Ortega (DG Justice and Consumers)

The central point of the presentation was the "REC Programme" (Rights, Equality and Citizenship) which aims to promote non-discrimination and fight racism, xenophobia and homophobia. The programme will mainly focus on the refugee crisis and the radicalization of intolerance.

An open call on "capacity building" about children's rights and protection of migrant children, asylum seekers, with particular attention to the protection of unaccompanied minors is shortly expected.

Giacomo Negrotto (JMDI / UNDP)

Although migration is a global phenomenon, it is important to consider the local dimension and be always present *in loco*. Local and regional authorities are at the forefront, but the involvement of the representatives of civil society and individuals is required.

David Strangis (CPMR)

The CPMR is a network that brings together 150 EU Regions, divided into six geographical commissions and 1 cross-commission. A task force (Migration Management) for migration deals with several activities, such as the collection of best practices, awareness campaigns, meetings with Commission responsables.

Session 2: Regional Experiences

In the second part of the conference, diverse representatives of European Regions had the opportunity to illustrate the experiences of their districts in migration management. The session aimed at achieving an exchange of the best practices, addressed to all participants.

Pietro Bartolo presented the migrants' situation of the Sicilian Region. He has worked for 25 years as a doctor at the public health unit in Lampedusa (Sicily). Sicily is at the forefront in the field of first asylum, and the main reference point for all the Regions or localities that begin to deal with a phenomenon becoming wider day by day. Dr. Bartolo explained the conditions of the people landed in Lampedusa over

the last years. Dr. Bartolo pointed out that these are basically healthy people. Cases of tuberculosis are rare, but their mental health is tragic, because of the violence experienced during their journey. As a result, health services should focus on their specific needs, rather than on the treatment of infectious diseases.

Jenny Malmsten (Skane, Sweden)

Sweden does not face the difficulties arising from the first asylum, as Italy or Greece, although it has traditionally been a country of immigration, with a large number of second and third generations of immigrant families. In order to reach relatives and reunite families several migrants choose Sweden as final destination. In particular, the Region of Skane has set the migration sector as a priority area, establishing the Centre of Expertise on Migration and Health, which aims to train health professionals and disseminate information on the conditions of the phenomenon in the Region, in order to increase awareness around the phenomenon.

Carmen Montaño (Andalusia, Spain)

Dr Montano described the approach of the Andalusia Region in the management of health care of migrants, particularly those without a regular permit. The Region has a full autonomy in health policy and in the organization of the priorities according to specific needs. The Region effectively manages the situation of unemployed immigrants by guaranteeing them the access to health services, as to every Andalusian citizen.

Marcel Kreykenbohm (Bremen, Germany)

Since 2005, the Region of Bremen has guaranteed the access to health services to all refugees residing in the district and holding the Health Card for refugees. In this way, the refugees without a health insurance have the same rights of citizens with insurance. Moreover, this solution has simplified the procedures and has lightened the role of public administration.

Silvana Tilocca (Sardinia, Italy)

Sardinia organized a health care assistance primarily addressed at the first asylum. The local unit provides assistance at landing and has set up clinics dedicated to migrants at public health facilities. The intensification of migratory flows has brought health professionals to learn new skills and increase the presence in spots for a better health service to the newcomers. Important is the creation of "street clinics". A particularly urgent problem is the presence of unaccompanied minors.