



## Building Bridges for Migration in a Planetary Context

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### Co-organisers

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and EUPHA Section Infectious Diseases Control (IDC)

### Participants:

- **Sally Hargreaves** (keynote speaker), Lecturer in Global Health, St George's University of London, United Kingdom
- **Nada Ghosn**, Ministry of Public Health of Lebanon
- **Neha Pathak**, UCL Institute of Health Informatics, United Kingdom
- **Abal Moindazde**, France
- **Isabel de la Mata**, Principal Adviser for Health and Crisis Management, DG SANTE, European Commission

**Moderators:** Karl Ekdahl (ECDC) and Michael Edelstein (EUPHA IDC)

### Abstract

Europe is experiencing high volumes of migration, both within and to the region. Globally, several factors contributing to high volume migration, ranging from economic ones (migrant workers) to forced displacement caused by conflict, persecution and climate changes (draught or other extreme weather conditions) severely affecting living conditions. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has estimated that in 2017, the number of international migrants<sup>1</sup> living in Europe reached 78 million, over 10 %

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<sup>1</sup> An international migrant, as defined by the United Nations, is any individual who lives in a country temporarily or permanently apart from his or her usual place of residence for at least a year. (UN Statistics Division – Demographic and Social Statistics. 2017. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/index.cshtml>).

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of the European population, and that two thirds of international migrants live in Europe or Asia<sup>2</sup>. In EU countries, an estimated 22.3 million migrants are non-EU citizens (data as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018) and in 2017 alone, the EU has seen 2.4 million new arrivals from non-EU citizens to its Member States<sup>3</sup>. Inevitably, this trend has significant implications for public health in Europe.

Migration has significant implications for public health in Europe. Beyond potential pressures on healthcare systems, that can occur especially in instances of large scale rapid migration, some subgroups of migrants, particularly those forcibly displaced or those originating from countries with weak health systems (i.e. refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants) are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to infections. This may be due to the fact that they could come from countries with high prevalence of infectious diseases and/or low vaccine coverage. In addition, the migration journeys or substandard living conditions in overcrowded migrant centres may have increased the risk of contracting an infection<sup>4</sup>.

This plenary session will showcase several bridges contributing to strengthening public health functions and services in terms of migration, pinpointing the crucial importance of:

- **public health resources and cross-sectoral cooperation:** the case of the Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (MediPIET) building capacity in the EU enlargement and European Neighbourhood countries with particular focus on global health security; the impact of the programme on capacity building among infectious disease epidemiologists in a small country with a large influx of migrants;
- **public health guidance:** the case of guidance on screening and vaccination for infectious diseases in newly arrived migrants within the EU/EEA;
- **public health policy and advocacy:** the case of WHO Global Action Plan to promote the health of refugees and migrants;
- **involvement of the affected population in the discussion and decision making.**

The aim of this one-hour session is to stir the debate around migrant health issues and infectious diseases in the European context. The panel will start with a **keynote speaker**, followed by a lively **expert discussion** reflecting different perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup> International Organization for Migration. Global Migration Indicators 2018. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre; 2018: 21.

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat. Migration and migrant population statistics. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics#Migration\\_flows:\\_Immigration\\_to\\_the\\_EU\\_from\\_non-member\\_countries\\_was\\_2.4\\_million\\_in\\_2017](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics#Migration_flows:_Immigration_to_the_EU_from_non-member_countries_was_2.4_million_in_2017)

<sup>4</sup> European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Public health guidance on screening and vaccination for infectious diseases in newly arrived migrants within the EU/EEA. Stockholm: ECDC; 2018.

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**Key question/s addressed:** How important is cross-sectoral and cross-regional cooperation in terms of migration and public health? How can we approach migration within and to Europe as a benefit for the region?