

75th WHO Regional Committee for Europe

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Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO European Region 2016–2025 (EUR/RC66/R11)

Statement by

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Honourable Chair, Director-General, Regional Director, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes the final progress report on the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) in the WHO European Region 2016–2025. We commend WHO EURO and its Member States for their commitment to this agenda, while recognizing the challenges that remain in achieving the global targets by 2030.

Migration is one of the defining features of our era. In 2024, more than 304 million people which includes approximately 72.5 million in EURO region were living outside their country of origin. Migrants and displaced populations are present in every society of the Region, and their health is inseparable from the health of host communities. Addressing their NCD and mental health needs is therefore not only a matter of equity and rights, but also of effectiveness in public health.

For migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, NCDs represent a growing but often under-recognized burden. Displacement frequently disrupts the continuity of care for conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and cancer, while precarious living and working conditions exacerbate risk factors. Stress linked to migration and exclusion further increases vulnerability to both physical and mental health conditions. When these needs are overlooked, the human cost is immense and health systems face greater emergency demands and long-term expenditures.

At the same time, progress is possible and has been demonstrated. IOM's operational footprint across Europe and Central Asia shows that inclusive approaches work:

- In Moldova, refugees with cancer have been fully integrated into the national programme, ensuring life-saving continuity of care.
- Through our Migration Health Assessment Programme (HAP), IOM identifies serious NCDs before departure and ensures treatment pathways are arranged across borders.
- In humanitarian settings, IOM supports awareness-raising and referrals for NCDs, despite challenges in resources.

These experiences underline three urgent priorities:

First, continuity of care along the mobility corridors and migration phases. Mobility-sensitive systems such as multi-country and cross-border referral mechanisms and portability of health records and entitlements—are essential to avoid treatment interruptions that worsen conditions and drive up costs.

Second, inclusion of migrants in NCD and mental health strategies. Universal Health Coverage cannot be truly universal without migrants and displaced populations. Integration into national frameworks must be explicit, with services that are accessible, affordable, and culturally and linguistically adapted.

Third, data and multisectoral action. Migrants remain largely invisible in NCD statistics. Without disaggregation by migration status, major gaps persist, undermining evidence-based policy. At the same time, migration intersects with social determinants of health such as housing, labour, education and legal status—requiring whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

This year's consultations on the global Political Declaration on NCDs and mental health recognized that people in vulnerable situations bear a disproportionate burden of disease. This momentum must now translate into inclusive health systems in Europe and Central Asia. Migrants are not only recipients of care. They are also contributors to health systems and community resilience. Recognizing their role strengthens health and migration outcomes for all.

With decades of experience, technical expertise and a strong operational presence, IOM stands ready to continue supporting Member States, WHO EURO and partners. Together, we can advance health equity, promote resilience, and ensure that refugees, migrants and displaced populations are not left behind in the fight against NCDs and in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing.

Thank you.

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