



Health Care in
NOWHERELAND

*improving services for
undocumented migrants in the EU*

Press Release

Undocumented migrants (UDM) gain increasing attention in the EU as a vulnerable group exposed to high health risks with an estimated numbers 1.9 to 3.8 million people residing in the EU in 2008 (7-13 % of the foreign population). While all EU member states ratified the human right to health care, heterogeneous national public health policies open up different frameworks for health care provision which in many cases severely restrict entitlements for UDM to access health care. Accordingly, practice models how to ensure the human right to health follow different logics.

The European project “Health Care in NowHereLand” (co-funded by EU / DG Sanco) provides the first compilation of policies and regulations in EU 27 and Switzerland along with a database compiling examples for related practices, and gives insights into “life stories” of undocumented migrants in their struggle to get access to fundamental rights.

Results show that many EU countries remain in a state of “functional ignorance” ignoring the fact that UDM are denied a fundamental human right. NGOs play a significant role for service provision and supporting UDM to get access to health care, supported by the solidarity of health care professionals who mostly work as volunteers.

These findings give evidence of the urgency of making special arrangements to help UDM in Europe. Contradictions between national regulations and human rights should be considered, better information on existing rights and entitlements for both UDM and health care providers is needed as well as better support for the work of NGOs and their cooperation with main stream services. Rather than leaving the burden of provision of health care to individual professionals and NGOs, ways have to be developed to foster effective changes in the overall organisation of healthcare services.

Bullet points

- Estimated numbers of 1.9 to 3.8 million people residing in EU 27 (7-13 % of the foreign population)
- Access to health care is a fundamental human right ratified by all EU countries
- 20 of 27 EU countries allow access only for emergency care
- Civil society (NGOs and volunteer work) take over responsibilities to ensure human right to health care
- Cooperation of public health services and NGOs has to be improved

Further information: www.nowhereland.info

Project information

Healthcare in NowHereland: Improving services for undocumented migrants in the EU

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Partners:

- Centre for Health and Migration at the Danube University, Krems (AT) (main coordinator)
- Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (BE)
- Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale di Reggio Emilia (IT)
- Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (PT)
- Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (SE)
- International Health Development Research Centre at the University of Brighton (UK)

Collaborative partners:

- European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (BE)
- International Centre for Migration Policy Development (AT)
- International Organization for Migration (BE)
- UNITED for Intercultural Action (NL)
- University of Vienna, Institute for Nursing Science (AT)
- WHO European Office for Integrated Health Care Services (ES)

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