

Access to Health Care for Undocumented Migrants

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PICUM's project "Access to Health Care for Undocumented Migrants" is co-funded by the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) within the framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion.

The overall aim of this project is to improve access to health care for undocumented migrants, a specific group of socially excluded migrants. This goal will be reached by developing and promoting a system of reporting on the situation regarding access to health care for undocumented migrants in eleven EU member states within the framework of the Social Inclusion and Social Protection Process. The system will be used by NGOs, local authorities and health care specialists to communicate relevant information to their governments, to be included in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and in the National Strategies on Health and Long-Term Care.

The project gathers nineteen partners from eleven EU member states (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom), representing various interests: local authorities, responsible for public health and for implementing health care legislation at the local level; NGOs, representing the demand of undocumented migrants for health care and giving input on specific barriers; and health care professionals, having the obligation to provide care to people requesting medical services.

This project will be carried out in two phases:

Phase 1 (09/2005 – 09/2006): will be devoted to the identification of problems faced when undocumented migrants try to access health care services and to the drafting of a common reporting template. Several working meetings with experts and partners are foreseen, as well as a research on access to health care for undocumented migrants in the countries in which the partners are located.

Phase 2 (09/2006 – 09/2007): will result in a project publication including policy recommendations for improving access to health care for undocumented migrants, general findings from the research

as well as the report on the conference "Access to health care for undocumented migrants through local cooperation among all actors involved".

The EU Framework

Among the areas of particular interest mentioned by the European Commission in the call for proposals of the Second Transnational Exchange Programme of the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006, it was included "the promotion of the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities as well as other groups experiencing extreme poverty and exclusion".

Notwithstanding this concern as well as the support that the Commission has granted to PICUM's project's purposes, it should be born in mind that there still exists today the necessity that the Social Inclusion Strategy encompasses undocumented migrants as one of its target groups. Undocumented migrants are not yet formally considered as being one of the most marginalized and socially excluded groups in Europe. Very few documents of the European Institutions acknowledge this fact and there is almost a total invisibility of this problem in the different action plans to combat social exclusion presented by the member states up to date.

This explains why this project seeks to give more visibility to the problems of marginalization of undocumented migrants arising from their inadequate access to health, to mainstream the involvement of local and regional actors in the whole anti-poverty process and to bring the attention of policy-makers on the necessity of designing a Social Inclusion Strategy that encompasses one of the most socially excluded groups in Europe nowadays: undocumented migrants.

Project Aim

The overall aim of this project is to improve access to health care for undocumented migrants in the EU. This goal will be primarily reached by:

- conducting a research that helps to identify the legal and practical barriers encountered by undocumented migrants when trying to access health care in the different partner countries;
- developing and promoting a methodology for data collection and a system of reporting on the situation in the EU member states regarding access to health care for this specific group of socially excluded migrants within the framework of the Social Inclusion – Social Protection Process. These tools will be promoted to be used by local actors to communicate relevant information to be included in the National Action Plans by the governments;

- increasing the knowledge of local actors about the European process to combat poverty and social exclusion at European and national level and raising awareness about the importance of using this policy channel to combat the exclusion of undocumented migrants from health services;
- building networks and promoting local partnerships to address the problems;
- making recommendations that help national and European policy-makers to better address the problems arising from a lack of or an insufficient access to health care for undocumented migrants in the EU.

Methodology

The project is based on a transnational-bottom-up approach. The project primarily seeks to support local efforts and bring local expertise to the national and European level. One of the reasons behind this choice is explained by the fact that it is precisely at local level where the consequences of an insufficient access to health care are felt directly and, moreover, where national and European policies are executed. In addition, experience shows that the problem related to the access to health care for undocumented migrants requires a global response. The European dimension of the project has proved to help actors to exchange experience and find support and inspiration for further action towards social inclusion of undocumented migrants.

Partners and other actors involved

This project gathers nineteen partners from eleven member states (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). There is a good representation of interests in the partnership given the involvement of a diverse range of actors.

- Public authorities: responsible for implementing laws regarding health care at local level and responsible for public health;
- Local and European NGOs: representing the side of undocumented migrants; and
- Health care providers: having the responsibility of giving medical assistance to people in need.

Project's partners are listed per category below:

Public Authorities:

- CPAS (Centre Public d'Aide Sociale de Bruxelles (Belgium))
- Primary Care Trust Newham (United Kingdom)

- Stelle für interkulturelle Arbeit der Landeshauptstadt München (Germany)
- Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst Rotterdam (Netherlands)
- Fundación Progreso y Salud (Spain)
- EUROCITIES (International)

NGOs:

- Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants (Hungary)
- Jesuit Refugee Service (Portugal)
- Comede (France)
- Medinetz (Germany)
- NAGA (Italy)
- Rosengrenska (Sweden)
- Evangelisches Hilfswerk in Österreich (Austria)
- Medimmigrant (Belgium)
- Caritas Europa (International)
- Médecins du Monde (France)

Health Care Providers:

- Hospital Punta de Europa (Spain)
- Lampion (Netherlands)
- European Public Health Association (EUPHA) (International)

A high number of other experts in the field of migration, health and the European Social Inclusion Strategy are also actively involved in the project through participation in the meetings and workshops that have been organized by PICUM in Brussels as well as in all project countries.

Main Activities

Research

In addition to a literature review, the research is based on the project partners' input from their relevant field of action and on the expertise of external experts gathered through working meetings. Furthermore, field trips to the partner countries will be carried out in order to complete the information gathered. The development of a research tool, including questionnaires and a reporting template, will also serve as a framework for information management and facilitate further research or reporting activities. The final project publication and this website will

disseminate the research results. The results will also be presented by PICUM in the final conference that will be held in Brussels in June 2007.

The contents of the research are the following:

- data and profile of undocumented migrants in the country concerned;
- identification of vulnerable and most-excluded groups and communities;
- main health needs;
- estimation of undocumented migrants lacking access to health care;
- health systems of the countries represented in the partnership;
- legal provisions on access to health care for undocumented migrants in the different partner countries;
- implementation and interpretation of relevant legislation at regional and local level;
- practical barriers encountered by undocumented migrants when trying to access health care;
- good practices existing in the country;
- relevant projects carried out in the past in the field of "migrants and health".

Development of a reporting template

One of the major actions of the project is the development of a reporting template conceived as:

- a framework for data collection on access to health care for undocumented migrants in terms of law and practice in all relevant fields of health care;
- a tool for updating and reporting competent authorities urging them to include information and strategies to combat undocumented migrants' social exclusion in the NAPs on Social Inclusion and the National Strategies on Health and Long-Term Care, respectively.

Several partners' working sessions have been devoted to the design and amendment of the draft template. The development of this instrument counts also with the input of some experts on data collection about undocumented migrants' related issues and of a medical sociology consultant.

Partners and experts' meetings and workshops

The project draws in the full range of agencies which work at the frontline of dealing with the health care issues of undocumented migrants. Moreover, in order to gain a picture as comprehensive and complete as possible during the different working sessions, the group of partners has been supplemented by a number of additional key experts in the field of immigration, health and the social inclusion policies.

A thematic overview of the meetings is provided below:

1) Inaugural meetings - (I Partner meeting)

§ NGO's meeting

- Date: 21 November 2005
- Place: Brussels
- Number of Participants: 19

§ Health care providers' meeting

- Date: 5 December 2005
- Place: Brussels
- Number of Participants: 14

§ Local authorities' meeting

- Date: 12 December 2005
- Place: Brussels
- Number of Participants: 12

The following objectives, as expressed in the meetings agendas, were common to all three meetings:

- to introduce and develop the objectives and methodology of the project; to build an active network of relevant field actors and to increase their capacity to understand and participate actively in the Social Inclusion Strategy;
- to gather information on access to health care for undocumented migrants in the targeted eleven EU member states;
- to discuss main features of the reporting template.

2) Working session with partners and advisors - (II Partner meeting)

- Date: 22-23 May 2006
- Place: Brussels
- Number of Participants: 46

As described below, this two-day meeting was divided in 5 sessions:

- Round-table with keynote speakers: "The European Social Inclusion Strategy and its contribution to the fight against social exclusion of undocumented migrants".
- Round-table with keynote speakers: "Health needs and barriers to access health care for a specific target group: undocumented women".
- Presentations of project partners' activities.
- Round-table with keynote speakers: "Data collection as a way to influencing policy".

- Partners' working session on the reporting template and presentation of future project's developments.

3) Academic advisors meeting

- Date: October 2006
- Place: Brussels
- Participants:
- Focus: Policy recommendations on access to health care for undocumented migrants

4) III Partner meeting

- Date: 4 December 2006
- Place: Brussels
- Focus:
 - Presentation of research results
 - Agreement on final version of the reporting template
 - Thematic study: health needs of undocumented children

5) IV Partner meeting

- Date: March 2007
- Place: Brussels
- Focus:
 - Policy recommendations
 - Final conference

6) V Partner meeting

- Date: June 2007
- Place: Brussels
- Focus:
 - Feedback and evaluation of the project
 - Dissemination strategies for project's results and publication
 - Future cooperation

Field visits to partner countries

During the first phase, the project's personnel have visited all partner countries with the following purposes:

- to disseminate the project's objectives and activities;
- to get an in-depth knowledge and gather information about the situation regarding access to health care for undocumented migrants in the different states, in terms of law and practice;
- to collect examples of good-practice at both, local and national level;
- to improve methodology for data collection and test the project questionnaire and reporting template;
- to identify and broaden the network of relevant actors within each of the countries (NGOs, hospitals, local and regional administrations and legal experts);
- to identify the national structures and channels to access the NAPs on Social Inclusion and contacting the competent authorities and the independent social inclusion experts; and
- to organize training sessions on the Social Inclusion process for the different stakeholders.

Two-Year Work-Programme

The project runs from 1 September 2005 to 1 September 2007. It is carried out along two different phases.

Phase 1 - (09/2005 – 09/2006):

- § Research;
- § Five partners and experts' meetings
- § Field visits to partner countries
- § Drafting of the reporting tools

Phase 2 - (09/2006 – 09/2007):

- § Press release: "The invisibility of undocumented migrants in the European Social Inclusion Process"
- § Four partners and experts' meetings
- § Brochure with policy recommendations
- § Final publication with research results and the reporting template
- § Final conference "Access to health care for undocumented migrants through local cooperation amongst all actors involved"

Table with the overview of main activities per calendar month.

Main Outcomes

Project website:

It will contain a description of the project's aims, contents and results, the partners and the project's financing institutions.

Reporting template:

It will help local actors to communicate relevant information regarding access to health care for undocumented migrants to be included in the NAPs for Social Inclusion and for Health and Long-Term Care by the competent national authorities.

Press release:

It will bring the attention to the fact that the European Social Inclusion Strategy is being developed with no consideration at all about the marginalization of undocumented migrants and the barriers they encounter to access basic social services in the EU.

Final publication:

It will contain the research results, examples of good practice in partner countries, the reporting template and policy recommendations.

Policy recommendations on how to improve access to health care for undocumented migrants in the EU:

They will suggest solutions for reoccurring problems, inspire all actors involved, particularly policy-makers, and raise awareness with a broader public. These policy guidelines will be disseminated in the project publication as well as in a separate brochure.

Final Conference:

The conference "Access to health care for undocumented migrants by local cooperation among all actors involved" will be organized together with EURO CITIES' Social Affairs Forum and will take place in Brussels in June 2007. Experts from all over Europe in the field of health, immigration and the social inclusion strategy will be invited to this two-day conference. The main goals will be:

- to provide a dissemination platform for the project results;
- to open a wide discussion about all problems associated to the insufficient access to health care for undocumented migrants in the EU;
- to promote the use of the information tool for regular reporting;
- to raise broader awareness on the link between undocumented migrants and Social Inclusion.