Doroftei, aged 10, has not been vaccinated: “I still cannot go to school”
Saint-Denis - France

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE FACING MULTIPLE HEALTH VULNERABILITIES

OBSTACLES IN ACCESS TO CARE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN IN EUROPE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Europe is the cradle of human rights. Indeed, the range of international texts and State commitments that ensure people’s basic and universal rights is impressive. With regard to healthcare, European Union institutions recently reaffirmed their adherence to the values of universality, access to good quality care, equity and solidarity. Yet, this report shows how, in practice, these promises too often remain just words rather than effective progress.

Doctors of the World – Médecins du monde (MdM) teams are distinctive because they work both on international programmes and at home. Abroad, MdM is active in many of the places in the world from which people try and escape to survive. At home, we provide freely accessible frontline medical and social services to anyone who faces barriers to the mainstream healthcare system. This report is based on data collected in 2014 in face-to-face medical and social consultations with 23,040 people in 25 programmes/cities in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Turkey. It paints a bleak picture of the ‘cradle of human rights’.

Increasingly dangerous migration routes due to tightening border controls, sub-standard detention conditions and a life in fear of being expelled await most of the migrants who decide to seek safety and refuge in Europe. They have in common to destitute EU citizens the risk of becoming victims of exploitation, but they also face xenophobia. While the economic crisis and austerity measures have resulted in an overall increase in unmet health needs in most countries, the most destitute – including an increasing number of nationals – have been hit the hardest. In total, 6.4% of the patients seen in Europe were nationals (up to 30.7% in Greece and 16.5% in Germany), 15.6% were migrant EU citizens (up to 53.3% in Germany) and 78% of all patients seen were from outside the EU/3rd-country nationals.

Altogether, 62.9% of the people seen by MdM in Europe had no healthcare coverage. Children’s right to healthcare is one of the most basic, universal and essential human rights. And yet less than half of the children seen in MdM consultations were properly immunised against tetanus (42.5%) or measles, mumps and rubella (34.5%) – although these vaccinations are known to be essential throughout the world and the vaccination coverage for measles at the age of two years is around 90% in the general population in Europe. More than half of the pregnant women had not had access to antenatal care before they came to MdM (54.2%).

The reported barriers to healthcare, as well as the analysis of the legal frameworks in the countries surveyed, confirm that restrictive laws and complex administrative processes to obtain access to care actually contribute to making people sicker. As in previous surveys, the barriers to accessing healthcare most often cited were financial inability to pay, administrative problems, lack of knowledge or understanding of the healthcare system and rights to care, and language barriers. It is thus hardly surprising that one patient in five said s/he had given up trying to access care or treatment in the last 12 months.

The data collected clearly deconstruct the myth of migration for health reasons, so often used by governments to restrict access to care. The migrants encountered in 2014 had been living in the ‘host country’ for 6.5 years on average before consulting MdM. Only 3% quoted health as one of the reasons for migration. Among the migrants who suffered from chronic diseases, only 9.5% knew they were ill before arriving in Europe.

European and national migration policies focus heavily on migration as a ‘security issue’, thereby forgetting their duty to protect. An overwhelming majority of patients (84.4%) questioned on their experience of violence reported that they had suffered at least one violent experience, whether in their country of origin, during the journey or in the host country. They need extra care and safe surroundings to rebuild their lives, instead of too often living in ditches and slums in fear of expulsion.

EU Member States and institutions must offer universal public health systems built on solidarity, equality and equity (and not on profit rationale), open to everyone living in the EU. MdM urges Member States and EU institutions to ensure immediately that all children residing in the EU have full access to national immunisation programmes and to paediatric care. Similarly, all pregnant women must have access to termination of pregnancy, antenatal and postnatal care and safe delivery. In order to respect the ban on the death penalty, seriously ill migrants should never be expelled to a country where effective access to adequate healthcare cannot be guaranteed. They must be protected in Europe and have access to the care they need.

As health professionals, we will continue to give appropriate medical care to all people regardless of their administrative or social status and the existing legal barriers. MdM refuses all restrictive legal measures to alter medical ethics and exhorts all health professionals to provide care to all patients.

The median age was 35.8 of the people seen in the nine European countries. Of those, the majority came to receive care too late - that is after the 12th week of pregnancy (58.2%). A large majority of pregnant women had no healthcare coverage (81.1%), were living below the poverty line and 30.3% reported poor levels of moral support.

23,040 patients seen in face-to-face medical and social consultations in 25 cities in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Turkey. Of whom 22,171 patients were seen in the nine European countries.

29.5% declared their accommodation to be harmful to their health or that of their children.
18.4% never had someone they could rely on and were thus completely isolated.
50.2% had migrated for economic reasons, 28.2% for political reasons and 22.4% for family reasons: only 3% had migrated for health reasons.
34% had the right to reside in Europe.
63.4% were or had been involved in an asylum application.

84.4% of the patients who were questioned on the issue reported that they had suffered at least one violent experience.
52.1% had lived in a country at war.
39.7% reported violence by the police or armed forces.
37.6% of women reported sexual assault and 24.1% had been raped.
10% reported violence in the host country.

22.9% of patients perceived their physical health as bad or very bad. When it comes to mental health, this goes up to 27.1%.
70.2% hadn’t received medical attention before going to MdM among patients who suffered from one or more chronic condition(s).
Only 9.5% of migrants who suffered from chronic diseases knew about them before coming to Europe.
57.9% had at least one health problem needing treatment that had never been treated before their consultation at MdM.

2014 IN FIGURES

23,040 patients seen in face-to-face medical and social consultations in 25 cities in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Turkey. Of whom 22,171 patients were seen in the nine European countries.

8,656 were women.
42,534 social and medical consultations, of which 41,238 in the nine European countries.
23,240 diagnoses in the nine European countries.

OF THE 310 PREGNANT WOMEN SEEN IN EUROPE:
54.2% had no access to antenatal care.
58.2% came to receive care too late – after the 12th week of pregnancy (among those who had not accessed antenatal care prior to consulting MdM).
87.1% had no health coverage.
89.2% lived below the poverty line.
52.4% did not have the right to reside.
55.3% were living in temporary accommodation and 8.1% were homeless.
30.3% reported poor levels of moral support.
47.5% were living apart from one or more of their minor children.
98% of the pregnant women seen had no healthcare coverage.

OF THE 623 CHILDREN SEEN IN EUROPE:
Only 42.5% had been vaccinated against tetanus (69.7% in Greece).
Only 34.5% had been vaccinated against mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) (57.6% in Greece).
38.8% of patients did not know where to go to get their children vaccinated.

OF ALL THE PEOPLE SEEN IN THE NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES:
43% were women.
The median age was 35.8.
93.6% were foreign citizens:
15.6% were migrant EU citizens and 78% citizens of non-EU countries.
6.4% of the patients seen were nationals (up to 30.7% in Greece and 16.5% in Germany).
Foreign citizens had been living in the surveyed country for 6.5 years on average before consulting MdM.
91.3% were living below the poverty line.
64.7% of patients were living in unstable or temporary accommodation and 9.7% were homeless.

OF THE 2304 PATIENTS WHO WERE QUESTIONED ON THE ISSUE REPORTED THAT THEY HAD SUFFERED AT LEAST ONE VIOLENT EXPERIENCE:
52.1% had lived in a country at war.
39.7% reported violence by the police or armed forces.
37.6% of women reported sexual assault and 24.1% had been raped.
10% reported violence in the host country.

HEALTH STATUS:
22.9% of patients perceived their physical health as bad or very bad. When it comes to mental health, this goes up to 27.1%.
70.2% hadn’t received medical attention before going to MdM among patients who suffered from one or more chronic condition(s).
Only 9.5% of migrants who suffered from chronic diseases knew about them before coming to Europe.
57.9% had at least one health problem needing treatment that had never been treated before their consultation at MdM.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTHCARE:
62.9% of the people seen in Europe had no healthcare coverage.
The most often cited barriers to accessing healthcare were financial problems in paying for care (27.9%), administrative problems (21.9%) and lack of knowledge or understanding of the healthcare system and of their rights (14.1%).
Thus completely isolated.
During the previous 12 months:
20.4% had given up seeking medical care or treatment.
15.2% had been denied care on at least one occasion.
4.5% had experienced racism in a healthcare setting.
52% of patients without permission to reside said they restricted their movement or activity for fear of arrest.
IntrOductIOn t O the 2014 survey

executIve summary

focus On pregnant w Omen

methOds

focus On chIldhOOd vaccInatIOn

admInIstratIOn

natIOnalIty and geOgraphIcal OrIgIn

reasOns fOr mIgratIOn

housing cOndItIOns

In the survey cOuntry

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self-perceIved health status

BarrIers In access t O healthcare

racIsm In healthcare servIces

tal effects on vulnerable populations

user fees should be used with great caution in view of their detrimen-
tal effects on vulnerable populations

GRIECE: the sItuatIOn remaIns pArtICulArly w OrryIng

Although the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 is still being felt across healthcare systems throughout Europe, some countries have been hit more severely than others. In Greece, 2.5 million people live below the poverty line (23% of the total population). Moreover, 27.2% of the total population live in overcrowded households, 29.4% state that they are unable to keep their home adequately warm, and 57.9% of the destitute population report that they are being confronted with payment areas for electricity, water, gas, etc. Crisis and austerity policies have left almost a third of the population without healthcare coverage. Unemployment stood at 25.8% in December 201415; unemployment benefits were limited to 12 months, after which there was no minimum income guarantee. The percentage of people reporting unmet medical care needs has increased since the beginning of the crisis, rising from around 5.4% of the population in 2008 to 9% in 2013.16

The researchers at the WHO European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies noted that many of the countries at risk of inadequate levels of public funding following the crisis are actually EU countries, further adding that “the important economic and social benefits of public spending on health have not been sufficiently acknowledged in fiscal policy decisions and EU-IMF Economic Adjustment Programmes”. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently warned that the gap between rich and poor is at its highest level in most OECD countries in 30 years. “Not only cash transfers but also increasing access to public services, such as high-quality education, training and healthcare, constitute long-term social investment to create greater equality of opportunities in the long run.”

14. Health expenditure fell in half of the European Union countries between 2007 and 2012, and significantly slowed in the rest of Europe. The public share of total spending on health globally declined between 2007 and 2012. At the same time, the overall population’s unmet needs for medical examination are on the rise in most European countries and have nearly doubled since the beginning of the crisis in Greece and Spain. The crisis has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to (re)confirm that “health systems generally need more, not fewer resources in an economic crisis”. In the same document, WHO notes that measuring the impact that the economic crisis has had on healthcare systems remains difficult, because of time lags in the availability of international data and in the effects of both the crisis and policy responses to counter these negative effects. It also continues to be difficult because the adverse effects on population groups already facing vulnerability factors can remain unseen in public health information systems or surveys. In recent decades, a number of Member States have introduced or increased out-of-pocket payments for health with the objective of making patients ‘more responsible’—thereby reducing the demand for healthcare and direct public health costs. Yet, co-payment has been proven to be administratively complex. In addition, it does not automatically decrease the overall utilisation of healthcare services, and does not necessarily incite users to make more rational use of healthcare. Furthermore, it has been shown that destitute people or people with greater health needs (such as the chronically ill) are more affected by co-payment schemes. Consequently, WHO warns that user fees should be used with great caution in view of their detrimental effects on vulnerable populations.

Content: 520 words

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The context in 2014

The continuing effects of the economic crisis

Health expenditure fell in half of the European Union countries between 2009 and 2012, and significantly slowed in the rest of Europe. The public share of total spending on health globally declined between 2007 and 2012. At the same time, the overall population’s unmet needs for medical examination are on the rise in most European countries and have nearly doubled since the beginning of the crisis in Greece and Spain. The crisis has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to (re)confirm that “health systems generally need more, not fewer resources in an economic crisis”. In the same document, WHO notes that measuring the impact that the economic crisis has had on healthcare systems remains difficult, because of time lags in the availability of international data and in the effects of both the crisis and policy responses to counter these negative effects. It also continues to be difficult because the adverse effects on population groups already facing vulnerability factors can remain unseen in public health information systems or surveys. In recent decades, a number of Member States have introduced or increased out-of-pocket payments for health with the objective of making patients ‘more responsible’—thereby reducing the demand for healthcare and direct public health costs. Yet, co-payment has been proven to be administratively complex. In addition, it does not automatically decrease the overall utilisation of healthcare services, and does not necessarily incite users to make more rational use of healthcare. Furthermore, it has been shown that destitute people or people with greater health needs (such as the chronically ill) are more affected by co-payment schemes. Consequently, WHO warns that user fees should be used with great caution in view of their detrimental effects on vulnerable populations. The researchers at the WHO European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies noted that many of the countries at risk of inadequate levels of public funding following the crisis are actually EU countries, further adding that “the important economic and social benefits of public spending on health have not been sufficiently acknowledged in fiscal policy decisions and EU-IMF Economic Adjustment Programmes”. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently warned that the gap between rich and poor is at its highest level in most OECD countries in 30 years. “Not only cash transfers but also increasing access to public services, such as high-quality education, training and healthcare, constitute long-term social investment to create greater equality of opportunities in the long run.” Greece: the situation remains particularly worrying. Although the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 is still being felt across healthcare systems throughout Europe, some countries have been hit more severely than others. In Greece, 2.5 million people live below the poverty line (23% of the total population). Moreover, 27.2% of the total population live in overcrowded households, 29.4% state that they are unable to keep their home adequately warm, and 57.9% of the destitute population report that they are being confronted with payment areas for electricity, water, gas, etc. Crisis and austerity policies have left almost a third of the population without healthcare coverage. Unemployment stood at 25.8% in December 2014; unemployment benefits were limited to 12 months, after which there was no minimum income guarantee. The percentage of people reporting unmet medical care needs has increased since the beginning of the crisis, rising from around 5.4% of the population in 2008 to 9% in 2013.
The effects of the increase in the number of asylum seekers in Europe were directly observed by NGO teams in Switzerland, where two additional asylum seeker centres were opened in 2014 in Munich. The number of asylum seekers has almost doubled compared to 2013, temporarily leading to a situation where asylum seekers had to sleep in tents or outside, before new reception facilities were opened.

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the total estimated 11.4 million Syrians have fled their homes (over half of the total Syrian population). 3.8 million took refuge in neighbouring countries and 76 million were internally displaced. Syrians were the largest group of refugees in Europe, while Afghanistan was the largest group of asylum seekers in the EU. Nevertheless, Afghanistan and Somalia had sought asylum in the EU since the war began and, as a consequence, 8% of the conflict’s total refugee population.

Due to controls and walls on land migration routes, many migrants try to reach Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. In December 2014, the UNHCR estimated their total annual number at 200,000 (compared to 65,000 in 2013). Among those seeking a better future in Europe are large numbers of unaccompanied minors. In Italy and Malta alone, over 23,800 children had arrived by sea, including at least 12,000 unaccompanied, during the first nine months of 2014. While 150,000 migrants were rescued under the Mare Nostum operation, UNHCR estimates that around 3,400 people have died or have gone missing at sea (data as of November 2014).

Migrants in Danger at Europe’s Borders

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in the number of internal armed conflicts and other forms of violent situations leading to mass displacement within or across borders, e.g. in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, South Sudan and Syria, to name but a few. Besides the direct impact of violence, many other factors endanger the populations in these countries, such as increasing poverty, food insecurity and hunger, as well as increasing risks of public health problems.

Although countries in North Africa, the Middle East and East Africa have been hosting the majority of the millions of displaced persons, there has also been a gradual increase in the number of asylum applications in the 28 Member States of the EU to 626,830 in 2014—an increase of more than 40% compared to 2013—according to UNHCR.

The fact that asylum seekers cannot freely choose where to lodge an asylum application (because the Dublin II regulation requires to request asylum in the EU country where asylum seekers entered) has serious consequences for their well-being and mental health. It also shows the clear lack of solidarity between Member States when it comes to migration issues.

The latest available OECD data indicate a rise in the number of low-birth-weight babies by more than 16% between 2008 and 2011, which is endangering the populations in these countries, such as increasing poverty, food insecurity and hunger, as well as increasing risks of public health problems.

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RISING INTELLIGENCE

Instead of focusing on the needs of vulnerable refugees, the European Council launched a joint police and border guard operation Max Migrant that took place over two weeks in October 2014. Although this joint operation was focused on apprehending ‘irregular’ migrants and their facilitators, a quarter of the people encountered by the authorities were Syrian asylum seekers. Although migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits, and clearly make positive fiscal contributions, they are often falsely described as ‘benefit-fiend’. Furthermore, the crisis has first and foremost hit foreign-born workers: despite identical participation rates in the labour force across OECD countries, the average unemployment rate among foreign-born workers (19%) is significantly higher than that of native-born workers (9%).

These differences are most salient in Greece and Spain (respectively 26% and 24%) unemployement among native-born compared with 38% and 36% among foreign-born workers).

During last year’s European Parliamentary elections, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA Europe) registered 42 hate speech incidents against migrants, LGBTIs, Muslims and Roma—by election candidates, five of whom currently sit in the newly elected Parliament.

In February 2015, Nils Muitreks, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, denounced the fact that ‘despite advances in legislative, judicial and administrative framework and hate speech not only persist in France but are also the rise […]. In recent years, there has been a huge increase in anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and homophobic acts. In the first half of 2014 alone, the number of anti-Semitism acts virtually doubled’.

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Syrain Child in the Migrant Reception Centre After Having Just Arrived by Boat in Lesbos – Greece – 2014

29 UNHCR. So close, yet so far from safety, The Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative. 2014.
32 OECD data on migration for 2013: https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-participation-rates.htm
33 Dustmann C, Frattini T. The fiscal effects of immigration to the UK. The Economic Journal, in press.
BELGIUM: The Law of 19 January 2012 confirmed the practice of most public welfare centres (Centres Publics d’Action Socio–Troubles (CPAS)) towards newly arrived, destitute EU citizens. The CPAS is not obliged to provide social assistance to European Union Member State nationals who were destitute during the first three months of their stay. [...] Consequently, destitute EU citizens have to prove that they have been living in Belgium for longer than three months, before obtaining the same access to the healthcare scheme as for undocumented migrants. However, on 30 June 201440, the Constitutional Court of Belgium ruled that this measure created a difference of treatment that is discriminatory to citizens of the European Union, as destitute undocumented migrants from outside the EU can benefit from the complementary Universal Medical Scheme starting from the first day of their stay. Furthermore, there is a lack of legal clarity on whether destitute EU citizens who have lost the right to reside are currently able to access healthcare on the same basis as undocumented migrants from outside the EU. The law merely stipulates that this is possible “only in a few cases”, without further precision. However, in December 2014, the Sociaalgestricten publicly announced that EU citizens should be considered as undocumented and have the same access to care as asylum seekers and third-country nationals. But in practice, undocumented EU citizens still have to pay full fees for receiving healthcare in most hospitals.

FRANCE: Following the French President’s political commitments, from 1 July 2013 onwards, the thresholds for the complementary Universal Medical Scheme (Couvercle Mutuelle Universelle complémentaire, CMU) and social security coverage, for asylum seekers, have been raised by €3,397. The additional amounts are credited to the French social security system and the asylum seeker has the same access to healthcare as asylum seekers i.e. subsidised healthcare “that cannot be deferred”, including medical examination and medicine covered by the Pharmacie Commune and the National Health and Welfare (Sociétégisten) came to the conclusion that the terms “that cannot be deferred” are in line with ethical principles of the medical profession, are not medically applicable in health and medical care and risk creating potential safety issues. Indeed, it makes it very difficult for an individual to know whether they will be accepted for subsidised healthcare or not. Furthermore, there is a lack of legal clarity on whether destitute EU citizens who have lost the right to reside are currently able to access healthcare on the same basis as undocumented migrants from outside the EU. The law merely stipulates that this is possible “only in a few cases”, without further precision. However, in December 2014, the Sociaalgestricten publicly announced that EU citizens should be considered as undocumented and have the same access to care as asylum seekers and third-country nationals. But in practice, undocumented EU citizens still have to pay full fees for receiving healthcare in most hospitals.

UNITED KINGDOM: In May 2014, the government passed the new Immigration Act, setting out its intention to make it more difficult for ‘illegal’ immigrants to live in the UK. According to the government, the Act is intended to: “introduce changes to the removals and appeals system, making it easier and quicker to remove those with no right to be in the UK. This is the follow-up to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – the right to respect for family life. Prevent ‘illegal’ immigrants accessing and abusing public services or the labour market.”

SWEDEN: Since July 2013, a law has granted undocumented migrants (specifically SWEDISH migrants) and the same access to healthcare as asylum seekers i.e. subsidised healthcare “that cannot be deferred”, including medical examination and medicine covered by the Pharmacie Commune and the National Health and Welfare (Sociétégisten) came to the conclusion that the terms “that cannot be deferred” are in line with ethical principles of the medical profession, are not medically applicable in health and medical care and risk creating potential safety issues. Indeed, it makes it very difficult for an individual to know whether they will be accepted for subsidised healthcare or not. Furthermore, there is a lack of legal clarity on whether destitute EU citizens who have lost the right to reside are currently able to access healthcare on the same basis as undocumented migrants from outside the EU. The law merely stipulates that this is possible “only in a few cases”, without further precision. However, in December 2014, the Sociaalgestricten publicly announced that EU citizens should be considered as undocumented and have the same access to care as asylum seekers and third-country nationals. But in practice, undocumented EU citizens still have to pay full fees for receiving healthcare in most hospitals.

Greece: Following the Common Ministerial Decree of 5 June 2014, access to healthcare for individuals without healthcare coverage but with the legal residence status is granted under certain conditions. People entitled to free medical care in hospitals include uninsured Greek people; EU citizens or people from outside the EU who live permanently and legally in Greece, have no medical coverage through a public or private insurance scheme and do not fulfill the requirements in order to issue a health booklet; and people who previously had health insurance but lost it due to debts to their insurance funds. A three-member committee in all public hospitals is responsible for reviewing all requests, on a case-by-case basis, and granting access free to medical care. This process obviously results in long waiting times. New reforms are expected in the course of 2015.

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AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AND EU BODIES’ COMMITMENT TO HEALTH PROTECTION

There is an impressive range of international texts and commitment measures that ensure people’s basic and universal right to health. This covers the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Council of Europe (the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter) and the European Union (the Treaty on the European Union, the Treaty on the Function of the European Union and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights), as well as many resolutions, conclusions and recommendations by European institutions and agencies that are the most recent and relevant expressions of commitment to health protection since MDH’s previous European report in May 2014.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In its 2007 conclusions on Spain concerning health, social security and social protection, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECR) condemns the exclusion of undocumented migrants from healthcare in Spain. In its 2008 conclusions on Greece, the Committee questions the right whether the right to health-care for pregnant women, adolescents and the uninsured is sufficiently guaranteed. However, the European Union, the WHO, MSF, Médecins sans Frontières, reminded national governments that universal access to healthcare should not be undermined by austerity measures or the economic crisis – and following his visit to France, he denounced the serious and chronic inadequacies in the reception of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors, as well as the use of bone age tests to determine their care or classification. Consequently, the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) noted that, “there is no legal instrument, or even consensus, with regard to procedures and the classification of the ‘illegals’.” The Assembly stressed the need to apply the benefit of the doubt, bearing in mind the higher interest of the child.

EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS

The European Parliament (EP) acknowledged that, “access to the most basic healthcare services, such as emergency care, is severely limited to undocumented migrants.” The EP has also asked the Troika not to cut in fundamental areas such as healthcare as a condition for financial assistance to euro area countries. The Commission’s EULocation Plan on HIV/AIDS for 2014-2016 (March 2014) includes access to prevention, treatment and care for undocumented migrants as an indicator. Following the Granada Declaration by public health researchers and professionals, the Council of the EU acknowledged that, “universal access to healthcare is of paramount importance in addressing health inequalities.” The EU constitution for health, Vxien Andriukaitis, former Minister of Health of Lithuania, is committed to the reduction of health inequalities in Europe as a declared to a newly created Interest Group on Access to Healthcare in the European Parliament. “In many countries, voters have already sent a clear message – they would not put up with policies that not only neglect citizens’ right to access healthcare but eventually pushes them below poverty line.” The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) – issued a paper on the Criminalisation of migrants in an irregular situation and of persons engaging with them – underlining the fact that undocumented migrants ‘fear of detection deprives them of healthcare. Finally, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) published an extensive report on Access to healthcare in times of crisis95, which included a focus on the situation of specific groups in vulnerable situations, such as Roma, undocumented migrants, older people, people with chronic health conditions or disabilities and people with mental health problems.


94 FP resolution on undocumented women in migranthe EU (2013/0128(INI))
95 FP resolution on Employment and social aspects of the troika operations and the troika with regard to euro area programme countries (2014/2022(INI))
97 http://www.eurovoca.org/eurovoca/fiche_73602_2.pdf
98 This risk also published a report on fundamental rights at airports and another one on equal access to healthcare for asylum seekers and irregular migrants, completing earlier work on migrants’ rights in Europe’s southern border areas.
100 Spiritual access to healthcare in times of crisis Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg 2014).
THE MDM INTERNATIONAL NETWORK’S DOMESTIC PROGRAMMES

Since 1980, the international aid organisation Doctors of the World – Medecins du monde (MdM) has been working for a world where trai-
ners to health have been overcome and where the right to health is recog-
nised and effective – both at home and abroad. The work of MdM mainly relies upon the commitment of volunteers. Working on a daily basis with people facing numerous vulnerability factors, MdM believes in social justice as a vehicle for equal access to healthcare, respect for fundamental rights and collective solidarity.

MdM international network currently comprises 15 autonomous or-
 ganisations in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Swit-
zerland, the UK and the USA. More than half of the MdM International Network’s programmes are domestic, including 150 across the Euro-
 pean continent, 12 in the USA, Canada and Argentina and three in the
Japan. 80% of the domestic programmes are run by mobile, outreach teams.

MdM’s main mission is to provide access to healthcare through freely accessible frontline social and medical services for people who face barriers to the mainstream healthcare system. At home, MdM works mainly with people confronted with multiple vulnerabilities affecting their access to healthcare including homeless people, drug users, destitute nationals as well as European citizens, sex workers, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and Roma communities.

MdM programmes are aimed at empowerment through the active partici-
pation of user groups, as a way of identifying health-related solutions and of combating the stigmatisation and exclusion of these groups. MdM supports the creation of self-help support groups as a way of stren-
gthening civil society and recognising experience-based expertise. MdM activities can thus lead to social change: amending laws and practices as well as reinforcing equity and solidarity.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS ADAPTED TO SUIT THE POPULATIONS ENCOUNTERED BY MdM

To best meet the multiple needs of populations encounte-
dered, different types of interventions exist across the MdM in-
ternational network. These vary from mobile and outreach programmes across the European continent to fixed clinics (with annual visits ranging between 50 and 80% of the programmes) provide part of or the entire range of preventive and curative services as well as social advice.

Depending on the locations and specific characteristics of the national health systems, MdM programmes may offer pri-
mary healthcare (including sometimes including vac-
cination, care for mental health issues, chronic conditions and sexual and reproductive health), specialist consultations and referrals to other health care providers (e.g. laboratories, hospital care, obstetric and pediatric care).

Examples of interventions: free social and medical consul-
tations; harm reduction programmes with syringes, condoms and outreach medical consultations in slums, squats, on the streets etc.

THE OBSERVATORY’S OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

In spite of the growing awareness and literature on health inequalities, the populations encountered through MdM programmes (especially undocumented migrants) often fall through population-wide official surveys and are currently not captured by the official health information systems – and thus are often referred to as ‘invisible’.

In the light of this observation, in 2004 MdM International Network initiated the Observatory on access to healthcare, documenting the social determinants of health and patient health status with the fol-
lowing objectives:

- Continuously improve the quality of services provided to MdM pa-
 tients (through the use of the questionnaires to guide the social and medical consultations).
- Establish the evidence basis necessary to raise awareness among
 healthcare providers and authorities on how to effectively inte-
grate people facing vulnerabilities into the mainstream healthcare
 system.
- Support the field teams in monitoring their programmes.

The Observatory has developed a quantitative and qualitative infor-
mation system that includes systematic patient data collection and
 annual statistical analyses, narrative patient testimonies, de jure and de facto analysis of healthcare systems, as well as identification of best practices when it comes to working with people facing multiple vulnerabil-
ity factors.

This way, the Observatory develops a sound knowledge of the popu-
lations encountered in MdM’s programmes that complements popula-
tion-wide official statistics with concrete experience provided direct-
ly by people confronted with multiple vulnerability factors and by the health professionals working with them.

Rather than talking about vulnerable groups, the International Network Observatory proposes to use the concept of vulnerability in health. Defining vulnerable groups in a static manner ignores the subjective, interactive and contextual dimensions of vulnerabilities. For ex-
ample, some population groups are being made vulnerable due to res-
 trictive laws. Furthermore, everyone is likely to be vulnerable at some
time in his or her life. Vulnerability factors can be accumulated and have combined effects. On the other hand, although health is largely shaped by social determinants, many members of vulnerable groups are actually quite resilient.

Since 2006 – the five reports produced by the Observatory have seen a gradual expansion in the geographical coverage of the data col-
lection, as well as in the focus – from undocumented migrants to all patients who attended MdM health centres throughout the MdM Inter-
national Network. All the survey reports and public reports aimed at health professionals and stakeholders that have been produced by the MdM International Network Observatory on Access to Healthcare are available at: www.mdmeuroblog.wordpress.com

PROGRAMMES SURVEYED

These programmes consist of fixed clinics that offer freely accessible front-
l ine primary healthcare consultations as well as social support and informa-
tion about the healthcare system and patient rights with regard to accessing
 healthcare. Ultimately, these programmes aim to help patients reintegrate
 into the mainstream healthcare system, where it is legally possible. MdM
 programmes are run by volunteers and employees consisting of health pro-
 fessionals – nurses, medical doctors, midwives, dentists, specialists etc. – as well as social workers, support workers, psychologists and administrators etc. To meet the various needs of patients and fit the characteristics of each country’s context, different packages of services and types of inter-
ventions have been developed over the years, as summarised below:

PROGRAMMES INVOLVED IN THE SURVEY AND SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>FO</td>
<td>La Chaux de Fonds</td>
<td>MUC</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Tenerife</td>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>The Hague</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For ten months in 2014, MdM Luxembourg provided medical consultations to destitute, homeless or undocumented people in a day shelter in the city of Luxembourg. The same questionnaires as for the 25 other programmes were administered to 59 patients in order to provide a picture of the population encountered. The overall majority of patients were men. One half of the patients were Luxembourg nationals, followed by Romanian and Italian citizens. More than a quarter of patients encountered in 2014 were homeless. In Luxembourg the main barriers to social welfare in general and to healthcare in particular consist of administrative and financial difficulties. Even when encountered and permitted to pay, moderate users were required to pay.

Access to healthcare coverage depends upon having work and a residential address. Undocumented migrants have no healthcare cover-
 age and only have access to emergency services. More and more hospitals require a deposit from people who don’t present a healthcare card. For the three first months following the asylum request, a weather system covers only emergency consultations, the medication prescribed (by a doctor in Luxembourg) and emergency dental care.

OPENING OF MDM LUXEMBOURG AND FIRST INFORMATION ON BARRERS TO HEALTHCARE

15 Prior to the creation of the MdM International Network Observatory on Access to Healthcare, MdM France implemented in 2006 a common class-collection tool in order to monitor the main social determinants of health, the barriers to access healthcare and the health status of its service users and publish the results. This led to the creation in 2000 of the Observatory of Access to Healthcare in France.

60 Throughout this document, countries are cited in alphabetic order by their official international code, according to European recommendations (Interinstitutional Style Guide, EU, Rev. 14 / 1.3.2012).
METHODS

QUESTIONNAIRES AND METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION

The data analysed in this report was collected by means of questionnaires administered to patients who visited one of the 25 programmes in the 10 countries associated with the International Network Observa-
tory in 2014. Every patient who attended a consultation with a health professional and support worker was administered at least one of the three standardized, multilingual forms: social questionnaire, medical questionnaire and medical re-consultation questionnaire(s).

STASTICS

This report contains data in three different types of proportion: 1) the proportions by country are all crude proportions and include all the survey sites (irrespective of the number of cities or programmes); 2) the European total proportions were calculated for the nine Euro-
panean countries and are, for most of them and unless otherwise indi-
cated, weighted average proportions (WAP) of all the countries; this allows actual differences between countries to be corrected so they each have the same weight in the overall total; 3) crude average pro-
portions (CAPP) - where countries contribute proportionally to their num-
bers - are also given systematically in the tables and figures. When numbers of respondents were low, or when subgroups of populations were examined, CAPP was preferably provided.

Standard statistical tests were used for some comparisons: mainly the Chi-square test or Fisher's exact test when the figures were low. It should be noted that a p < 0.05 denotes a statistically significant difference.

NUMBERS SURVEYED

This report is based on the analysis of data from 23,040 individuals (15,648 with details) of whom 8,566 were women. In total, 42,534 consultations were analysed (including 29,888 for which the whole questionnaire was administered in the nine European countries and 1,296 in Turkey).

NUMBER OF PATIENTS AND CONSULTATIONS BY COUNTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>NO. OF PATIENTS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>NO. OF VISITS</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>2,365</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6,645</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>8,854 / 162</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>12,976 / 1,636</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES1</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>8,639</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>17,165</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL (25 CITIES) 23,040/15,648 100 42,534/31,194 100

A. Sampling procedures were used on 12,162 and 20 in order to select patients who were adminis-
tered with the Observatory's standard questionnaire. B. In Greece, the data analysed here was collected between 1 June and 31 December. The first figure represents the number of patients to which the whole questionnaire was administered (7,016 in Chania, Mytilini, Patras, Perama and Thessaloniki and 1,400 in Athens).

REASONS FOR CONSULTING MDM PROGRAMMES

The vast majority of patients consulted MDM programmes to obtain medical care (81.1% in Europe and 99.4% in Istanbul). In total, 37,898 consultations were analysed (including 29,898 for which the whole questionnaire was administered), of whom 8,656 were women. In total, 42,534 consultations were analysed (including 29,888 for which the whole questionnaire was administered in the nine European countries and 1,296 in Turkey).

FOCUS ON PREGNANT WOMEN

A total of 371 pregnant women were seen for consultations in 2014 (mainly in Belgium, Germany, France and Turkey) representing 2.4% of patients. The average age of the pregnant women was 27.8 in the Euro-
panean countries (29.1 in Istanbul) and the youngest was 14 years old.

Almost all the pregnant women seen (970%) were foreign nationals from sub-Saharan Africa (37.1%), the EU (20.2%), Asia (13.9%) and Eu-
ronean countries outside the EU (9.9%). In Istanbul, almost all the pre-
gnant women (96.7%) were from sub-Saharan Africa.

In Europe, 52.4% of the pregnant women seen had no right to reside: 2.4% were EU nationals and 50.0% nationals of non-EU countries.

ADMINISTRATIVE STATUS OF THE PREGNANT WOMEN INTERVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% IN</th>
<th>% IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EUROPE (n=154)</td>
<td>ISTANBUL (n=47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITIZEN OF NON-EU COUNTRY WITHOUT PERMISSION TO RESIDE</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU CITIZEN WITH NO PERMISSION TO RESIDE</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL WITHOUT PERMISSION TO RESIDE</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO RESIDENCE PERMIT REQUIREMENT (NATIONALS)</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASYLUM SEEKER (APPLICATION OR APPEAL ONGOING)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALID RESIDENCE PERMIT</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU NATIONAL STAYING FOR LESS THAN THREE MONTHS (NO RESIDENCE PERMIT REQUIRED)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISA OF ALL TYPES</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPECIFIC CONDITION CONFERRING RIGHT TO REMAIN</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL WITH PERMISSION TO RESIDE</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING DATA</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Without adequate financial resources and/or healthcare coverage
B. In equivalent situation (recent immigrants: 60 days)
C. Tenure does not exist, work
D. Including subsidiary/humanitarian protection

Of the pregnant women surveyed in Europe, 33.3% were in the process of claiming asylum (29.4% in Istanbul). 44.1% were or had at some point been involved in an asylum claim (33.3% in Istanbul) and, of these, 37.5% had been refused asylum.

As a result of being undocumented, two thirds of the pregnant women (66.7%) in the European countries restricted their move-
ments to varying degrees for fear of arrest. This creates a significant additional obstacle to accessing antenatal care. In Istanbul 79.7% were in this situation.

Of the pregnant women seen in Europe, 55.3% were living in tempo-
rary accommodation (24.6% in Istanbul). In total, 62.9% of pregnant women seen in Europe and 55.0% in Istanbul considered their ac-
commodation to be unstable. In Europe 22.9% and in Istanbul 54.2%
considered their housing conditions were harmful to their health or that of their children. The vast majority (89.2%) were living below the poverty line (71).
A total of 49.3% of the pregnant women reported having one or more minor children. Nearly half of them (45.9%) were living apart from one or more of their minor children. In Istanbul, up to 74.1% were living without any of their children. Women who are separated from their children due to migration report considerable emotional strain, including anxiety, loss and guilt, and they are at greater risk of depression.

Of those surveyed, 30.3% of pregnant women declared they never or rarely had someone they could rely on in case of need. The figure was even worse in Istanbul where 72.8% pregnant women were in this situation. These figures show how strong the social isolation was for these women, at a time when they were in great need of moral support. It constitutes one more barrier to accessing healthcare.

Regardless of their administrative status, 81.1% of pregnant women seen by MdM in Europe had no healthcare coverage: A total lack of healthcare coverage on the day of their first consultation was specifically recorded for pregnant women in Belgium (95.2%), France (100.0%), London (94.9%) and Istanbul (98.1%). In addition, in Germany 75.3% only had access to emergency care.

Among the pregnant women in the nine European countries, 54.2% had not had access to antenatal care when they came to MdM’s free health centres and, of those, 58.2% received care too late – that is after the 12th week of pregnancy.

HEALTH CARE COVERAGE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% in Europe (N=310)</th>
<th>% in Istanbul (N=61)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No coverage / all charges must be paid</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to emergency services only</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full healthcare coverage</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open nights in another European country</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to GP with fees</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial healthcare coverage</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free access to general medicine</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access on a case by case basis</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the pregnant women in the nine European countries, 54.2% had not had access to antenatal care when they came to MdM’s free health centres and, of those, 58.2% received care too late – that is after the 12th week of pregnancy.

RISKS THAT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN FACE WITHOUT ACCESS TO TIMELY ANTENATAL CARE

- Sexually transmitted infections go unnoticed, that can cause abortion, premature ruptures of membranes, pre-term delivery
- No early detection of anemia and diabetes (also leading to increased morbidity and mortality for both mother and child)
- Pre-eclampsia goes unnoticed during the second and third trimester
- No preparation before the delivery leads to increased stress and risks during birth and during first months as well as no future family planning, no explanation about breast feeding, vaccination etc.

Source: WHO Europe/MiDi. What is the efficacy/effectiveness of antenatal care and the financial and organizational implications?

-mdm-uk-london-2014

Jane is from Nigeria and came to the UK four years prior to her pregnancy. She presented to the clinic at 23 weeks gestation. She had become temporarily registered with her GP and was referred to her local hospital for antenatal care but was too scared to go, as she was worried about being found by the UKBA (Home Office).

She was referred to the Accident and Emergency services by the MdM clinician who assessed her, due to concerns about her health. She was admitted to a nearby hospital and then discharged after a few days but sadly went into premature labour and lost her baby girl in the early neonatal period. She received a bill for €3,620.

MdM UK - London - 2014

65 Women with no healthcare coverage were aggregated with those who are only entitled to use emergency services, which indicates that they do not have access to healthcare and hence no healthcare coverage.

66 The more recent the pregnancy the fewer women had access to care prior to MdM: 25.3 weeks on average in women with no access to care prior to MdM versus 20.8 weeks for those with access to care prior to MdM (p < 0.001).

67 Response rate: 76.5% and 71.4% respectively.
A LEGAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS TO CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN.

BELGIUM: Undocumented pregnant women have full, free access to antenatal and delivery care if they have obtained the AMU (which can be a long and difficult process and the AMU can also be refused based on very variable and opaque criteria, depending on where the patient lives). However, access to (preventive and psychosocial) antenatal and postnatal care consultations should be free of charge for everyone. Termination of pregnancy is covered by the AMU, but the procedure is too long to fall within the 12-week limit, in which case women must pay out-of-pocket at least €2250.

FRANCE: Undocumented pregnant women can gain access to AMU but there are many barriers to obtaining it, thus it can be difficult to gain access to antenatal and postnatal care. Nevertheless, a specific provision states that all care for pregnant women must be considered as urgent (antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care), as well as termination of pregnancy. This applies only in hospitals and is free of charge.

GERMANY: Only undocumented pregnant women with a temporary tolerance to reside (duldung) can access antenatal and postnatal care. This status is granted only for a limited time period when women are considered ‘unfit for travel’ – generally three months before and three months after delivery. Women are not covered for the first six months of the pregnancy. With regard to migrant EU citizens, an increasing number of pregnant women do not have any access to antenatal and postnatal care. Women whose income is below €1033 per month can have their termination of pregnancy reimbursed by their health insurance. Theoretically, asylum seekers and undocumented women are also entitled to reimbursement. However, access remains very difficult for undocumented women, due to the need for a health insurance voucher from the social welfare office and because of the risk of being reported when requesting it. Civil servants, such as health personnel (with the exception of medical emergency wards) have a duty to report undocumented migrants.

GREECE: The new Migration Code implemented by law in 2014 continues to prohibit Greek public services (article 26), local authorities, and organizations of social security to offer services to foreigners who are “unable to prove that they have entered and are residing in the country legally”. So undocumented pregnant women have no health coverage. However, undocumented pregnant women have now access to free delivery but not to ante- and postnatal care. New changes might occur in 2015. With regard to termination of pregnancy, they have to pay approximately €340 in public hospitals. Article 79(1) of the same law establishes that undocumented pregnant women may not be expelled from the country during their pregnancy or for six months after giving birth. Undocumented migrants who cannot be expelled for medical reasons may benefit from a temporary residence permit.

NETHERLANDS: Pregnant women who are seeking asylum have access to healthcare free at the point of delivery, under a specific scheme for asylum seekers (including antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care). Undocumented migrants cannot get healthcare coverage. Undocumented pregnant women have access to antenatal, delivery and postnatal care but they are expected to pay themselves, unless it is proven that they cannot pay in the case of pregnancy and childbirth, the authorities reimburse contracted hospitals and pharmacies 100% of the unpaid bills. However, in practice, undocumented women are often urged to pay straight away in cash or it is suggested that they sign to pay by instalments, or receive a bill and reminders at home, and are pursued by debt collectors contracted by healthcare providers. In contrast to maternity care, contraception and termination of pregnancy must be fully paid for by undocumented women.

SWITZERLAND: Undocumented pregnant women can afford the cheapest health insurance (around €300 per month) are fully covered for termination of pregnancy, antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care: no franchise and no out-of-pocket payment are required. Pregnant women without healthcare coverage have to pay themselves. In case of emergency, practitioners must provide healthcare without asking if patients have healthcare coverage, but patients will get the bill or have to leave without giving any contact address.

TURKEY: Undocumented pregnant women have to pay their health expenses for antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care. They are often reported to the police by healthcare staff, either because they are undocumented or because they cannot pay the doctor’s fees.

UK: Maternity care for undocumented pregnant women – including antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care – is not free at the point of use, but considered as secondary care. Thus, women are usually billed for the full course of care through pregnancy and childbirth for around £2000 without complications.

Regarding termination of pregnancy, while it is considered as primary care by law and thus should be free of charge, it is in practice regarded as secondary care in some parts of the country and undocumented pregnant women have to pay for this service.

MOBILISATION FOR WOMEN’S RIGHT TO DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES IF AND WHEN THEY HAVE A CHILD

At the end of 2013 the Spanish government proposed to repeal the 2001 law on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary interruption of pregnancy, thereby risking the right of girls and women to decide themselves if and when they want a child. The draft law would only allow termination of pregnancy in the case of rape or if the pregnancy posed a serious physical or mental health risk to women (to be attested by two different doctors not working at abortion facilities).

The proposal required girls and women pregnant as a result of rape to report the crime to the police before they could access a legal abortion. This would have introduced serious barriers for all women who are victims of rape, but especially for undocumented women (fear of and actual risk of being expelled if they contact the authorities).

In reaction to the draft law, women (and men) from a wide range of political parties and social backgrounds, and from all over Europe, took to the streets in great numbers in order to demonstrate against the proposal and to show international solidarity with women in Spain.

At the same time, the MdM International Network ran a campaign for the right of women to decide if and when they want to have children, for access to contraception and for access to safe and legal abortion. The campaign was called Names not Numbers® in reference to the 50,000 women who die every year as a result of unsafe abortion, i.e. without medical supervision.

Under this pressure, the Spanish draft law was eventually withdrawn.

At the UN Special Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health in September 2010, UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon emphasized in his opening speech the risks associated with illegal abortion: “We must confront the fact that some 800 women still die each day from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth. An estimated 8.7 million young women in developing countries resort to unsafe abortions every year. They urgently need our protection.”

68 www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTr9RiJ7VlI

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©MdM

69 www.mdmeuroblog.wordpress.com

©MdM
The vaccine(s) that protect against tetanus, MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), diphtheria and whooping cough are considered essential throughout the world, and most WHO Europe countries have also included the vaccine against Hepatitis B in their national immunisation schedules.

Many vaccines not only protect the individual but also the community, through the mechanism of ‘herd immunity’. Vaccinating an individual will also help keep others around them safer in order for this mechanism to work, and to achieve the eradication of these preventable diseases, a sufficiently large part of the population needs to be protected by means of vaccination. Coverage rates need to be above 95% to eradicate measles, above 85% for diphtheria and between 92% and 94% for whooping cough.

Vaccination for groups facing multiple vulnerabilities is even more important than for the general population, as they have fewer opportunities to be vaccinated because of multiple barriers to healthcare (mainly legal and financial). Furthermore, social determinants (e.g. lack of access to adequate food, housing, water and sanitation) have an impact on their likelihood of becoming ill and the risks of developing more serious diseases. Vaccination may help to reduce these risks, since it often lessens the severity or complications of a disease even in the few cases where vaccination does not succeed in preventing it.

A total of 645 minor patients were seen by MDM programmes in 2014. They represent 4.1% of the total population. No minors were seen in Sweden.

In Europe, only 42.5% of minors who responded had been vaccinated against tetanus. In France, only 29.3% of minors had definitely been vaccinated. In Istanbul, this applied to 52.4%.

The rates of vaccination against hepatitis B (HBV) were even lower: the average proportion of vaccinated minors in Europe was 38.7%. The HBV vaccination rate was very low in France (22.1%). In the European countries, following the WHO recommendation to incorporate hepatitis B vaccine as an integral part of national infant immunisation programmes, the immunisation coverage in the general population is averaging 93%.

The rates for mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) and pertussis/whooping cough vaccinations were 34.5% and 39.8% respectively. Yet, in the majority of countries participating in the survey, vaccination coverage for pertussis and measles at the age of two years has reached (and often exceeded) 95% in the general population.

These figures highlight the shocking gap between the general population and the children seen in MDM clinics in terms of access to vaccination. In fact, over half of the children (57.5%) seen by MDM teams had not been vaccinated against tetanus and about 60% to 65% were not protected from whooping cough or MMR.

In total, 38.8% of the people asked about vaccination did not know where to go to have their children vaccinated in the five European countries where the question was asked. In Istanbul, almost nobody knew where to go to have their child vaccinated.

In summary, many children in MDM clinics for whom vaccination status was not documented is much too high. All children’s vaccination status should be checked, even if they may subsequently be referred to specific vaccination centres.
As vaccination and health cards are requested for registration at state schools, not accessing healthcare can result in being excluded from school as well. Marisela, from Paraguay, has a permit to reside as well as a work permit in Spain, where she lives with her two children, aged 11 and 15. ‘I cannot send one of my children to school because I have to work,’ she says. In the public health centre, they told me that he is not allowed to get one as he is not registered with the municipality.

Indeed, the municipality has recently introduced new legislation limiting undocumented migrant registration. Although her first child was registered and Marisela had a permit to reside, the new local regulation has made the registration with the municipality of her second child more difficult. This, in turn, impedes obtaining a health card from the health centre.

A LEGAL OVERVIEW OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR CHILDREN

In Belgium, France, Greece, Spain, Sweden and UK: Children of asylum seekers and refugees have the same rights to healthcare as nationals.

BELGIUM: The children of undocumented migrants have free access to vaccinations and preventative care through the Birth and Childhood Office or Child and Family service until the age of six. For all curative care and over the age of six, they need to obtain the AME like adults.

Unaccompanied minors, if they go to school, have the same access to care as nationals and authorised residents.

FRANCE: Children in France are not considered as undocumented, they do not need a permit to reside. Children of undocumented migrants are entitled to the AME scheme upon arrival in France (without the three-month residence condition), even if their parents are not eligible. The AME is granted for one year.

In France, children can get vaccination for all principal diseases free of charge. Unaccompanied minors are supposed to have the same access to healthcare through the health system as the children of nationals or authorised residents.

GERMANY: Children of asylum seekers and refugees are subject to the same system as adults (48 months of residence in Germany before being integrated into the mainstream system). However, children can receive other care to meet their specific needs (no precision in law). They are entitled to the recommended vaccinations. Children of undocumented migrants also have the same rights as adults, i.e. they need to request a health insurance voucher, which puts them at risk of being reported to the authorities. Therefore, there is no direct access to vaccination and the only way for children of undocumented migrants to be vaccinated is by paying the costs of the medical consultation (around €45) and the costs of the vaccines (around €70 per vaccine). Unaccompanied minors under the protection of the Youth Office have access to healthcare.

GREECE: In theory, children of undocumented migrants should have access to healthcare, as they are explicitly not included in the law prohibiting access to care for undocumented adults beyond emergency care.

In practice, they often only have access to emergency care. However, they have free access to vaccination at Mother and Child Protection Centres (those that haven’t closed down due to the crisis). However, they often have to pay for vaccines and medical consultations, just like all other children without healthcare coverage.

Unaccompanied minors, regardless their status, should have access to the same healthcare as children of undocumented migrants or children of asylum seekers and refugees. However, in Greece, until recent political changes, unaccompanied minors could spend months in detention centres – often in the same cell as adults.

NETHERLANDS: All children can access free vaccination in preventative frontline infant consultations (0-4 years). Children of asylum seekers come under the same scheme for asylum seekers as their parents. For curative care, children of undocumented migrants face the same barriers as to care as their parents. There are no specific legal provisions for children of destitute EU citizens who have lost their right to reside and have no health insurance. Unaccompanied minors do not have any specific protection, their access to healthcare depends on their residence status.

SPAIN: Article 3º, of a law 16/2003 (added by Article 1 of Royal Decree-Law 16/2002) provides that ‘in any case, foreigners who are less than 18 years old, receive healthcare under the same conditions as Spanish citizens’. This provision states clearly that all minors in Spain, regardless of their administrative status, will be granted access to healthcare services, including vaccinations, under the same conditions as Spanish minors (i.e. free of charge). Nonetheless, the acquisition of an individual health card for the children of undocumented migrants is not so easy. Therefore, they are sometimes denied care and/or vaccination. It is clearly a problem of the implementation of the law; public health centres do not know how to deal with these minors and may refuse to take care of them until they have a health card.

SWEDEN: The July 2013 law grants full access to healthcare to children of undocumented migrants below the age of 18. Consequently, all children of authorised residents, asylum seekers and undocumented third-country nationals now have access to free vaccination, in accordance with the national vaccination programme. The vaccination of young children is performed by the health centre, while children at primary school are vaccinated by the school health system. There is a lack of legal clarity on whether children of undocumented EU citizens can access vaccination – in practice, they have to pay the full fees for vaccination.

SWITZERLAND: Children of asylum seekers and refugees have health insurance (if their parents do) which includes vaccinations. Children of undocumented migrants have the same access as their parents. Either their parents can afford private health insurance for them (around €30 per month), so children have access to vaccinations; or they cannot pay the contributions and they have to pay all doctor’s fees. Children’s health insurance is compulsory for school attendance.

TURKEY: Asylum seekers must submit a claim to the Social Aid and Solidarity Foundation to obtain access to subsidised healthcare for their children. To this end, they must prove their lack of financial resources and obtain a residence permit giving them a ‘citizen number’. The children of undocumented migrants have no access to prevention or care. Those born in Turkey may have access to free vaccination at a family health centre but they need to be registered in the civil registry. Otherwise, each vaccine costs around €8, added to the €43 medical consultation costs. Unaccompanied minors waiting for a decision on international protection can access healthcare, those who are rejected cannot.

UNITED KINGDOM: The children of undocumented migrants have the same entitlement to care as adults. They can register with a GP and receive free vaccinations but they will be charged for secondary healthcare. In practice, children are only accepted in GP practices if at least one of their parents is already registered. Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum or with refugee status enter local authority care, meaning that, like asylum seekers, they are exempt from all charges.
In total, 43% of the patients seen in Europe were women (34.3% in Istanbul). The average age of the patients seen by MDM in Europe was 35.8 (30.8 in Istanbul) and half of the patients were between 25 and 46 (26 and 36 in Istanbul).

Overall, 645 minors were received at MDM clinics, amounting to 4% of all patients (up to 5% in Belgium and France, 10% in Switzerland and 14% in Greece). In France, the number of unaccompanied migrant minors also increased, with the majority converging towards the Parisian area (Paris and Saint-Denis). Indeed, the number of unaccompanied minors visiting MDM in and around Paris tripled in 2014, with most children not having any healthcare coverage and half being homeless at their first encounter with MDM. Psychological issues were very common for most of these children, indicating the need for adequate psychosocial and medical support.

Although there are few comprehensive data on the total number of unaccompanied children present in Europe or arriving each year, significant numbers of unaccompanied minors have arrived in Europe since 2008 (the most reliable statistics are those provided by the MdM Delegation Ile de France.

Mr and Mrs D. are Syrian Christians. They were living in Aleppo with their children, aged two and eight, when they had to escape from war and persecution. They arrived in Paris (France) in September 2014. With the current housing shortage, they were advised to leave the region and decide to try their luck in Nice, where they requested asylum at the French Immigration and Integration Office (CADA) failed. Due to a lack of funds, the Departmental social cohesion directorate (DDCS) refused to allocate them housing. The family is homeless, sleeping in the Armenian Church every now and then.

When the two-year-old daughter became ill, they visited the MDM clinic. The family hadn’t eaten for 24 hours. MDM alerted the DDCS again and received the same answer that there was no budget. MDM then made the exceptional decision to pay for a few nights in a hotel for the family. More than a month after their arrival, the family obtained a place in a Centre for Asylum Seekers in another Department.

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Among the migrant EU citizens encountered at MDM, 62.3% were from Romania, which corresponds to the significant numbers of Roma people from Romania reached by MDM’s mobile units in the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, and referred to the clinic. People from Bulgaria form the second most significant EU nationality (14.8%), followed by EU migrants from Poland, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

The nationalities most frequently encountered varied from one location to another: including the Maghreb) remains the top continent of origin for patients seen in Belgium and France, while this is Asia for patients seen in London. In Greece, Greek citizens came first, followed by people from the Near and Middle East. In Germany, EU migrants came first, followed by German citizens.

TOP TEN MOST FREQUENTLY RECORDED NATIONALITIES, BY COUNTRY

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LENGTH OF STAY IN THE COUNTRY BY FOREIGN NATIONALS

On average, in CH, DE, ES, NL and UK, foreign citizens had been living in the country for 6.5 years; half of them had been there for between three and eight years. This illustrates once again that migration for the purposes of seeking healthcare is a myth, as the patients had already been living in Europe for long periods at their first visit to MDM clinics.

REASONS FOR MIGRATION

As in 2013, in the European countries, the reasons most often cited for migration were, overwhelmingly, economic: 50.2% (50.1%), political (19.3% in total, including 8.9% to escape from war) and family-related (whether to join or follow someone: 14.6%, or to escape from family conflict: 7.8%).

As every year, health reasons were extremely rare (3.0 % in Europe, which is a similar rate to that reported in 2008, 2012 and 2013: 0.9% in Turkey). There is no correlation between the number of people who migrate for health reasons, among others, and the level of legal restrictions and barriers to accessing healthcare in the host country. This is yet more proof to deconstruct the myth of migration for health.

A. Multiple responses were possible in France the question was not asked and in Belgium the response rate was too low.

B. Economic reasons correspond to the question: ‘Why did you leave your country? For economic reasons, to earn a living, because had no perspectives/ no way to earn a living in home country’.

C. In 2008, 2012 and 2013: 6.0%, 1.6% and 2.3% of the people cited health as one of their reasons for migration respectively.
"We had to drive far out into the countryside to a place near St Omer to visit the last, and most shocking, settlement where a group of 20 to 30 Syrians were living in a ditch. As we squelched down the remote muddy lane in the rain, it was hard to believe anyone could be living there. To our left were tilled fields, now just mud, and to our right were bushes, leading down into a long ditch. I had turned up my trousers to the knees to avoid getting muddied and I thought I looked silly. When we got closer a group of boys appeared from the bushes, with an adult. Recognising our logo (MdM) they huddled beneath our umbrella. Only the adult spoke, he was from Aleppo, as were all the boys, who stood with bare feet on the tops of their wet and mud-caked shoes. I stopped thinking about my trousers.

The boys were aged between 10 and 15 and were muddied and unwashed, all there without their families. The ten-year-old was scratching because of scabies. They took me down into the ditch beneath the tarpaulins to a small fire. They camped in this far-flung location because there was a service station nearby where they could try to board trucks.

“There is so much we don’t have here, still it is better than Aleppo. But we will not be here long,” the adult told me. My French colleague later told me this was a common delusion, perhaps a necessary one, and that it usually took many months to cross the channel. So how could children be living for long periods of time in muddy ditches in a rich, supposedly civilised country such as France?”

Testimony written by MdM UK in France – Calais – Saint Omer – November 2014

Lastly, no significant difference was observed in the frequency of health reasons for migration between EU citizens and other migrants: both being very low (2.9% and 2.5% respectively, p=0.68). Of course, the most frequent other reasons for migration were very different between the two groups: EU citizens had migrated mostly for economic (88.6%) and family reasons (to join or follow someone: 22.2%) and the others had done it for the four main reasons mentioned above.

|
| REASONS FOR MIGRATION: COMPARISON BETWEEN EU CITIZENS (EXCEPT NATIONALS) AND OTHER MIGRANTS (%) |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| EU CITIZENS (N=418) | OTHERS (N=3082) | P |
| Economic reasons, unable to earn a living in home country | 81.8 | 48.3 | <0.001 |
| Political, religious, ethnic, sexual orientation | 1.2 | 24.9 | <0.001 |
| To escape from war | 0.5 | 10.6 | <0.001 |
| To join or follow someone | 22.2 | 9.8 | <0.001 |
| Family conflicts | 3.5 | 7.0 | 0.004 |
| To ensure your children’s future | 2.9 | 2.5 | 0.68 |
| Personal health reasons | 2.9 | 3.9 | 0.14 |
| To study | 2.4 | 3.9 | 0.14 |
| Others | 5.0 | 9.5 | <0.001 |
| Total | 125.3 | 122.8 | |

John, aged 25, from Eritrea, keeps smiling as he talks. It is a grin that seems to mask the fatigue and exhaustion of a long journey and all that he does not want to say. “I was born in Eritrea. I left for Sudan and Uganda. I moved a lot. In 2008, I got a diploma in Statistics. In Uganda, I have worked and earned about $6,000 to leave. I knew that it was tough in France, but not as much as it is. In England, I would like to resume my studies and open my own survey company.”

MdM France – Calais – 2014
The majority (66.0%) of all people seen at the MGM centres in the nine European countries do not have permission to reside: 56.7% of citizens from non-EU countries and 9.3% of EU citizens (who have been in the country for over three months and do not have adequate financial resources and/or valid healthcare coverage). 63.2% of the EU citizens and 66.0% of the citizens from non-EU countries had no permission to reside in the country where they were interviewed (p<0.001).

Since the adoption of European Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the EU and their family members to move and reside freely, EU nationals who do not have adequate financial resources or healthcare insurance have lost their right to reside in an EU country other than their own. Article 7 of the Directive, states clearly: “All Union citizens shall have the right of residence on the territory of another Member State for a period of longer than three months if they [...] have sufficient resources for themselves and their family members not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during their period of residence and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in the host Member State.”

As a consequence of Directive 2004/38/EC, EU citizens staying for more than three months in a host Member State without sufficient resources or healthcare coverage find themselves in the same situation as undocumented migrants from outside the EU. Belgium and France have expanded their system of medical coverage for undocumented migrants to include EU nationals without permission to reside. As undocumented migrants, EU citizens who have lost their system of medical coverage for undo-

The average proportion of people without a residence permit covers wide disparities from one country to the other: Switzerland (16.6%), Greece (19%) and Germany (36.9%) had the lowest figures. In contrast, 94.2% of patients seen in the Netherlands; 83.9% of those seen in Belgium; 67.9% of those seen in France66 and 63.5% of those seen in Spain67 were in this situation.

In Germany, 29.1% of patients were EU nationals who had lost their permission to reside (compared with an average rate of 8% in the other countries). Additionally, 18.2% of patients were EU nationals who had arrived in the country less than three months ago (compared with fewer than 3% in the other countries except Sweden) and 5.0% were EU nationals with permission to reside. Germany was the country with the largest share of EU citizens (excluding German nationals), which may reflect its economic attractiveness in a Europe in crisis.

In Greece, the overwhelming majority of patients have the right to reside in Greece (83%). This is due to the large numbers of Greek and foreign citizens who do not need a permit (374/64), the number of foreign citizens to reside (20.9%) and asylum seekers (11%).

In Spain, 25.9% of patients were non-EU nationals with a valid residence permit (compared with fewer than 6% in most other countries). This is due to mass unemployment and economic problems in the country (which have primarily affected immigrants).

In Switzerland, a significant majority of patients were asylum seekers (71.5%). In contrast to the other countries surveyed (asylum seekers represented 15.3% of the total in London and 13.4% in France). The main programme in Switzerland is actually aimed at asylum seekers housed in three reception facilities in the canton of Neuchâtel and accounted for a majority of the patients.

In Sweden, 43.7% of patients had no permission to reside; a quarter were EU nationals staying for less than three months and 44.3% had a residence permit in another EU country.

In London, 57.5% of those coming to the centre were foreign nationals who did not have permission to reside and 15.3% were asylum seekers; 71.8% had a visa (the highest proportion observed in the European countries of the survey).

In Istanbul, 63.2% of patients had no permission to reside; 16.0% were seeking asylum and 12.4% were recent immigrants (less than 90 days).

The French Minister of Health has a so-called “French plan for the French”. This plan is specifically geared towards undocumented migrants from outside the EU. Asylum seekers; 11.8% had a visa (the highest proportion observed in the European countries of the survey). An EU citizen with no permission to reside: 1.0% (6.0% have no valid residence permit)

In Belgium, access for undocumented migrants to personal healthcare coverage if they are dentists (through MGE in France and MMR in Belgium). MME is a list of dentists. Authorized residents are referred to the mainstream system without attending a social or medical consultation in MME.

16.0% were seeking asylum and 12.4% were recent immigrants (less than 90 days).

In Germany, 29.1% of patients were EU nationals who had lost their permission to reside (compared with an average rate of 8% in the other countries). Additionally, 18.2% of patients were EU nationals who had arrived in the country less than three months ago (compared with fewer than 3% in the other countries except Sweden) and 5.0% were EU nationals with permission to reside. Germany was the country with the largest share of EU citizens (excluding German nationals), which may reflect its economic attractiveness in a Europe in crisis.

In Greece, the overwhelming majority of patients have the right to reside in Greece (83%). This is due to the large numbers of Greek and foreign citizens who do not need a permit (374/64), the number of foreign citizens to reside (20.9%) and asylum seekers (11%).

In Spain, 25.9% of patients were non-EU nationals with a valid residence permit (compared with fewer than 6% in most other countries). This is due to mass unemployment and economic problems in the country (which have primarily affected immigrants).

In Switzerland, a significant majority of patients were asylum seekers (71.5%). In contrast to the other countries surveyed (asylum seekers represented 15.3% of the total in London and 13.4% in France). The main programme in Switzerland is actually aimed at asylum seekers housed in three reception facilities in the canton of Neuchâtel and accounted for a majority of the patients.

In Sweden, 43.7% of patients had no permission to reside; a quarter were EU nationals staying for less than three months and 44.3% had a residence permit in another EU country.

In London, 57.5% of those coming to the centre were foreign nationals who did not have permission to reside and 15.3% were asylum seekers; 71.8% had a visa (the highest proportion observed in the European countries of the survey).

In Istanbul, 63.2% of patients had no permission to reside; 16.0% were seeking asylum and 12.4% were recent immigrants (less than 90 days).
LIVING CONDITIONS

It must be noted, as every year, that the vast majority of people who presented at the MdM clinics had a range of social vulnerability factors that were determinant in their poor health status.

HOUSING CONDITIONS

Overall, in the seven European countries where the question was asked, 64.7% of patients were living in unstable or temporary accommodation (this was particularly common in Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands). This proportion stood at 63.0% in Istanbul.

Of the patients seen in eight European countries (all but Greece where the question was not asked), 9.7% were homeless (up to 20.0% in Stockholm) and 16.4% had been provided with accommodation for more than 19 days by an organisation (up to 83.0% in Switzerland where most patients are met at asylum seeker centres). The most frequent housing condition was to be living with family members or friends (38.9%, up to 62.0% in France) or to have his/her own home (29.5%), which by no means always represented stable accommodation and furthermore could also be overcrowded. In Istanbul 75.2% lived in their own flat or house; as in 2013, homeless people were extremely rare.

29.5% of those questioned in Europe deemed their accommodation to be harmful to their health or that of their children. In Istanbul, this proportion reached 57.9%.

WORK AND INCOME

A slim majority of people attending MdM centres in Europe had no permission to reside and therefore did not have permission to work. It is therefore unsurprising that only 21.9% of them reported an activity to earn a living in the eight European countries (question not asked in Belgium).

Almost all the people surveyed in the eight European countries (91.3%) were living below the poverty line (on average, over the past three months, taking into account all sources of income).

SOCIAL ISOLATION

When asked about moral support, one in two people said they could rarely or never rely on such support only sometimes. In Istanbul, 86.1% of patients were isolated: 29.4% said they could never rely on anyone for moral support and 56.7% said they could do so only occasionally. Altogether men more often reported being isolated and without support than women (p=0.02).

AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED BY COUNTRY (%) 97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

90 The number of people living on the financial resources of others, which was met at asylum seeker centres.
91 The question was not asked.
92 Response rate at 96.8%.
93 Missing values: 65.1% in CH, 41.8% in DE, 20.6% in ES, 34.7% in FR, 13.0% in NL, 4.1% in SE and 8.8% in UK.
94 The number of people living on the financial resources of others.
95 Missing data: 67.3% in CH, 15.4% in DE, 20.8% in EL, 3.1% in FR, 21.8% in EL, 0.8% in ES, 5.7% in NL, 7.1% in SE, 13.2% in UK, and 8.4% in TR.
96 The number of people living on the financial resources of others.
97 Missing values: 67.3% in CH, 15.4% in DE, 20.8% in EL, 3.1% in FR, 21.8% in EL, 0.8% in ES, 5.7% in NL, 7.1% in SE, 13.2% in UK, and 8.4% in TR.
98 Unfortunately, the question was not asked in Belgium.
99 The number of people living on the financial resources of others.
100 The number of people living on the financial resources of others.
In Germany, 73.6% of patients only had access to emergency healthcare. 15.5% were entitled to healthcare coverage in another European country (which is free in line with the high number of Europeans in Germany among the patients received, as noted above). In Munich, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants are required to request a health voucher from the municipal social welfare office in order to access free healthcare. However, civil servants including health personnel have a duty to report undocumented migrants to the police, which creates a huge barrier to healthcare, as undocumented migrants fear being arrested. For emergency care, a recommendation was issued by the government stating that health personnel are not obliged to report undocumented migrants. However, this recommendation is not binding and has not been widely disseminated. As a result, the MDM team has been confronted with undocumented patient being reported to the police at an emergency unit and has had a meeting with hospital staff from the five Munich public hospitals to inform them about the option not to report undocumented migrants in the case of emergencies – which should be a duty not to report.

In Greece, 84.9% of patients had no healthcare coverage at all. Foreign nationals without permission to reside have no rights to any healthcare coverage. As the social crisis in Greece worsened, more and more Greek nationals and foreign citizens with permission to reside also lost their healthcare coverage due to the lack of contributions through their employment or their inability to pay for it.

In the Netherlands, 62.9% of patients seen in Amsterdam and The Hague could access general practitioners, albeit with a financial contribution, and 14.0% had no access at all.

In Spain, 61.6% of patients seen only had access to emergency care. While undocumented migrants are supposed to have access to free emergency care, in practice cases where they are directed for the emergency care they received were witnessed by MDM as well as being reported by the Ombudsman in Spain.

In Sweden, half of the patients (47.5%) had no access to healthcare at all, a quarter (28.7%) had access to some subsidised healthcare – i.e. by paying a reduced fee for a defined package of care – and 15.9% were EU citizens with coverage in another country.

In Switzerland, 74.9% of patients seen had full healthcare coverage. They were mainly asylum seekers, who have the right to healthcare during their application process (although the procedures involved can be complex and the context rather restrictive). The other patients seen either did not have or no longer had any (adequate or effective) form of healthcare coverage.

In Turkey, the vast majority of those consulting had no coverage at all for their health expenses (98.7%).

The absence of any coverage concerned 70.4% of migrant EU citizens in Europe. 15.1% had access to emergency services only. They were even less frequently fully covered than nationals of non-EU countries (7.3% versus 13.6%, p<0.001), although 8% of them had healthcare rights in another EU country.

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BARRIERS IN ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Only 23.0% of all patients surveyed in seven European countries (Turkey, Greece, France, Sweden, UK, Germany, and Spain) had experienced no difficulty in accessing healthcare before going to an MDM clinic.

Another third (33.9%) had not tried to access healthcare; with huge differences between France (67.2%), the UK (52.2%) and the top. While some of these people may not have needed healthcare, it is also clear that others have internalised the various barriers to accessing healthcare to such an extent that they did not even try to seek healthcare.

As in the previous surveys, the four reasons most frequently cited by patients seen in Europe were related to:

- Financial barriers (27.9%), a combination of charges for consultations and treatment, upfront payments and the prohibitive cost of healthcare coverage contributions;
- Administrative problems (21.9%), including restrictive legislation and difficulties in collecting all the documentation needed to obtain any kind of healthcare coverage, as well as administrative mal-functioning;
- A lack of knowledge or understanding of the healthcare system and of their rights (14.9%);
- Language barriers (12.7%). Yet, 54.8% (CAP) of the consultations required the assistance of an interpreter – whether this need was fulfilled (33.7% had an interpreter, in person or on the phone) or not (13.5%). This suggests that the language barrier is under-reported.

It is very different in Istanbul where four situations are reported by more than 40% of patients, i.e. by a much higher proportion of patients than in Europe: the absence of any previous recourse to healthcare (45.9%), the cost of consultations or treatment (46.6%), the language barrier (40.9%) and the fear of being reported or arrested (49.9%). The proportion of patients reporting a bad previous experience in the healthcare system is also particularly high (216% versus 2% on average in Europe; p<0.001). Only 1% of patients said they had no difficulties when seeking care (versus 23% in Europe, p<0.001). All these dramatic differences reflect the tremendously limited knowledge of healthcare for migrants (particularly those undocumented in Turkey).

The story of Saida, a 23-year-old from Turkey, demonstrates the misunderstanding by the medical staff of the new 2013 law giving access to undocumented migrants to healthcare “that cannot be deferred”: “I tried to get an appointment for a doctor’s consultation but was given the information that a social security number is needed to book an appointment and that I needed to pay €50 for the visit. Then they told me that I could only get treatment if I was an asylum seeker and referred me to a hospital instead. Instead I told them what doctors of the World Sweden had told me: that the undocumented only cost €5. Then I asked the staff if they knew about the new law and they did not.”

In Greece, thanks to the new presidential decree of 5 June 2014, anyone living legally in Greece and without healthcare coverage can receive a free examination at a hospital. Nonetheless, this decree is not well known or not applied. The difference is made by the enforcement of the MDM social workers, who provide printed guides, which explain the law and its implications to health professionals. They explain each patient’s case and then follow it up. Maria was able to have free examinations and delivery at the hospital in safe conditions. Nevertheless, as vaccines for 4-5 months are not available at the hospital, her baby is still medically monitored and vaccinated by MDM services.

Maria is a 38-year-old unemployed Greek nurse. She had healthcare coverage until 2009. Earning about €400 per month, she had an undeclared job as a care worker for an elderly woman. “My income covers accommodation and food. I was pregnant and without healthcare coverage, I could afford neither the costs of required examinations nor the medicines.”

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 Giving up seeking healthcare

One patient in five (20.4%) said that they had given up trying to access healthcare or medical treatment in the course of the previous 12 months and up to 63.2% reported the same thing in Istanbul. The frequency of people giving up seeking healthcare has significantly decreased in Spain since 2012; it was 53.0% in 2002, 22.0% in 2013 and 15.0% in 2014. The interpretation of this decrease is difficult since, unfortunately, the surveyed sites have changed over time (as well as the sample procedure from one year to another). However, it is useful to note that these figures do not represent the general situation of migrants in Spain, but should be taken as an indicator of those migrants who contact MMDM. Since the Royal Decree 16/2012, the MMDM Spain teams have explored different channels for integrating migrants into the mainstream health services103. Even though some regions are providing special programmes that enable certain rights for some undocumented migrants under certain circumstances, most health professionals and migrants coming to MMDM do not know about them, as there has been no communication about these specific measures (such as in Valencia and the Canary Islands). Some of the patients interviewed in 2014 had already been to MMDM before answering the questionnaire (and had thus already been informed about their care), which explains the decreasing number of patients giving up seeking care.

Denial of access to healthcare

Denial of access to healthcare refers to any behaviour adopted voluntarily by a health professional that results, directly or indirectly, in failure to provide healthcare or medical treatment appropriate to the patient’s situation. Denial of access to healthcare (over the previous 12 months) was reported by 15.2% of patients seen by MMDM in Europe1. In Istanbul, 37.1% of the patients experienced this situation and a quarter in Spain.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS IN SEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND IN TURKEY (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No difficulties</th>
<th>Administrative problems</th>
<th>No knowledge or understanding of the system</th>
<th>Language barrier</th>
<th>Healthcare coverage too expensive</th>
<th>No healthcare coverage obtained</th>
<th>Fear of being reported or arrested</th>
<th>Healthcare coverage in EU country</th>
<th>Previous recourse to healthcare system</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>62.0% in UK and 22.4% in TR. Missing values: 30.4% in DE, 43.3% in EL, 0.8% in ES, 58.6% in FR, 11.4% in NL, 17.3% in SE.</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MMDM Greece – Chania – September 2014

Johan, a 74-year-old German man, explains: “When my partner died, I lost the house. I do not have my own place anymore. I sleep at my daughter’s mostly. I don’t want to admit that I need a social worker. I am still trying to work. I do odd jobs, like careworker, looking after horses and working as a hairdresser. But I am old and I can’t work anymore. Even my savings stop. Sometimes, I got robbed at the pharmacy for which you don’t need a prescription. I started to have heart problems and last week I had swollen legs. I told my doctor. I have a care contract, but I don’t have health insurance. They didn’t warn me and after some examinations they told me I had to stay longer and pay. I died then. Then I died. I gave them the money I could and then left immediately, with the urological catheter still in me. I hope you can remove it. I’m not going back to that hospital!”

MMDM Germany – Munich – December

Miriam was a 35-year-old Moroccan woman. Her husband, Ahmed, had worked in Spain from 1989 to 2007, undecleared for 16 years. When he died, they did not inform the authorities. Ahmed and Miriam unsuccessfully looked for work and finally moved to Belgium, where they also got undecleared jobs. Miriam was pregnant and had no financial means. A second healthcare coverage request was rejected, as the CPAS stated that the father was financially responsible for his daughter’s operation costs. The surgery was delayed. The father worked hard but still could not cover the bill. Three requests were rejected.

In 2014, in severe pain, Miriam visited MdM Belgium, which referred her to hospital. She had had these pains for a while but did not dare to go the hospital because of the bill left from her daughter’s surgery. Miriam was operated on for an abscess in the brain, but the infection could not be controlled. In addition, the medical staff discovered that Miriam had diabetes, which she was not aware of. Miriam died in hospital a few weeks later. Her daughter was 26 months old.

After her wife’s death, Ahmed could not work and take care of his daughter on his own and Sonia was placed in an institutional setting. Their daughter needed a foster family. She had medical and educational needs and was not treated for her healthcare coverage, yet despite the medical certificate, the registration at the CPAS still has not been completed until today. The last request to the CPAS was finally accepted at the end of 2014.

MMDM Belgium - Antwerp–December 2014
RACISM IN HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Fortunately, only a few patients reported having been victims of racism in a healthcare facility. In Europe at least: approximately 4.5% of patients reported such an experience in the six countries where the question was asked. This proportion was the highest in Istanbul (38.7% with a response rate of 77.5%).

FEAR OF BEING ARRESTED

Undocumented migrants and migrants with precarious residence status were asked if they limited their movements for fear of being arrested (at the time of the survey) as this also constitutes a well-known barrier in accessing healthcare.

In Europe, half of the interviewed patients (52.0%) reported such a limitation (either sometimes, frequently or very frequently). This proportion was particularly high in London (83.9%), the Netherlands (88.4%) and Istanbul (85.0%), whereas, as mentioned before, the fear of being reported or arrested was a frequently cited barrier in Malaga. According to her and the friend who accompanied her, the doctor said that without healthcare coverage she could not be attended. After two weeks her pain increased and she went back to the health centre. She was denied care “until her administrative situation gets solved.”

She went to MdM a week later. With the intervention of MdM, the health centre “solved the case” and provided her with a health card. During the consultation, her general practitioner immediately referred her to the emergency department at the maternity hospital, which diagnosed her as having had a miscarriage that “should have been attended to a month earlier.” Sofia and her husband have filed a complaint in court. Although highly restrictive, the Royal decree provides access to care for pregnant women and children. Even this limited access is not always guaranteed.

MdM Spain – Malaga – January 2014

Sofia, a 45-year-old woman from Morocco, was pregnant. Her husband was about to obtain the Spanish nationalities, but she could not register under his husband’s healthcare coverage as they did not yet have a residence permit. Suffering from pain and bleeding, Sofia went to the emergency department of the maternity hospital in Malaga. According to her and the friend who accompanied her, the doctor said that without healthcare coverage she could not be attended. After two weeks her pain increased and she went back to the health centre. She was denied care “until her administrative situation gets solved.”

Sofia was eventually referred to the emergency department and her condition was diagnosed as a miscarriage. However, the hospital initially refused to treat her as she did not have a health card. She was later admitted to the hospital and received the necessary treatment. Sofia and her husband have filed a complaint in court against the hospital.

It is crucial to identify previous experiences of violence among migrant populations, in view of their frequency and impact on the mental and physical health of the victims even many years after the original episode—such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorders—risk factors when faced with unexplained physical disorders and the need for detection of sexually transmitted infections arising from sexual violence. This is why it is so important to listen attentively to accounts of previous experiences of violence, in the country of origin, during the migratory journey and in the host country. Unfortunately, stigmatisation of ‘foreigners’ remains one of the main obstacles to better patient care for people fleeing torture and political violence.

In 2014, 1,809 patients were interviewed about violence among women and 84.4% reported at least one violent experience in the previous year (57.6% compared with 34.4% among all patients; p<0.001).

Experiences of violence affected both sexes and all ages. Asylum seekers were disproportionately highly represented among victims of violence (57.6%) compared with 34.4% among all patients, p<0.001.

It is often the case that women and children who have been victims of violence are not aware of this or fail to being answered thus explaining the high number of people having reported such a limitation.

MdM UK – London – 2014

Fadel is a 17-year-old Cameroonian who left his country, while his sick mother, brothers and sisters stayed. He arrived in France three years after a violent migration journey. Fadel explains that he lived for over a year in the north of Morocco “hidden in the forest.” With other people seeking to make the Strait of Gibraltar crossing, he built a makeshift shelter. He was repeatedly coming back after being arrested.” One day, Fadel was arrested and badly beaten. He was sent to hospital where he was in a coma for a week. “When I woke up, I couldn’t remember anything: only the beatings by the police.” He tried again to cross the Strait and eventually managed to reach Spain, then France in June 2014.

Fabel v. Switzerland, the experience of violence is still widespread in Migrant populations, and so violence remains insufficiently screened by the MdM teams: only 3% of patients (22 women, 19.2% men and 82.4% men; 15.5%) were questioned on the issue at any time during their first consultation or follow-up.

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Experiences of violence affected both sexes and all ages. Asylum seekers were disproportionately highly represented among victims of violence (57.6%) compared with 34.4% among all patients, p<0.001.
The types of violence most frequently reported in the eight European countries were:
- Living in a country at war (52.1%), physical threats, imprisonment or torture for one’s ideas (43.3%) and violence perpetrated by the police or armed forces (39.1%);
- Beating or injury as a result of domestic or non-domestic violence (45.9%);
- Psychological violence (42.7%);
- Hunger (35.7%);
- Sexual assault (27.6%), reported by 37.6% of women (compared with 73% of men) and rape (14.9%), reported by 24.1% women and 5.4% of men. A quarter of the total numbers of sexual assaults reported were reported by male patients;
- Confiscation of money or documents (23.8%).

Among the respondents, 9.8% reported having experienced violence after having arrived in the countries surveyed. 21% of the reported rapes took place after the victim’s arrival in the host country, as did 57.3% of sexual assaults, 37% of incidents of documents or money being confiscated, 19% of psychological violence and 40.8% of experiences of hunger.

The perceived health status of patients who reported at least one experience of violence was significantly worse in terms of general, mental and physical health ($p < 0.001$) than the perceived health of patients who did not report an episode of violence. Of these, 71.4% perceived their mental health to be very good or good versus only 33.5% among the people who reported an experience of violence.

12.4% of those who had experienced violence perceived their general health to be very bad versus 1.7% of the people who did not report an episode of violence. This confirms the major impact of the experience of violence on health and the medical duty to systematically ask patients about their past history of violence, in order to detect and provide adequate care and referrals.

VIOLENCE BY GENDER (AMONG PATIENTS INTERVIEWED ON THIS SUBJECT IN EIGHT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN %)

PERCEIVED HEALTH STATUS ACCORDING TO REPORTED VIOLENCE (AMONG PATIENTS INTERVIEWED ABOUT EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE, IN %)

VIOLENCE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF MIGRATION IN THE 8 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (% OF REPORTED EPISODES)
HEALTH STATUS

SELF-PERCEIVED HEALTH STATUS

A majority (58.2%) of patients seen by MdM in Europe perceived their general health status as poor. However, 22.9% of patients perceived their physical health as bad or very bad, and this goes up to 27.9% for their mental health.

In Istanbul (and in this city alone), there was a very significant gap between physical and mental health status: physically, only 5.8% of patients felt their health was bad (and none of them very bad but 4.1% described their mental health as bad (and 2.0% very bad)).

Comparing these data with those in the general population of the host countries – obtained from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions survey in 2013 (latest year available) – MdM patients’ health status was worse than that of the general population in all countries, regardless of the age group considered, as well as in comparison with the 25–44 age group (close to the age distribution of the MdM patients). While these figures concern people going to MdM or ASEM clinics, most of whom, by definition, have a health issue, it is, however, not sufficient to explain the scale of the differences from the general population. Among MdM patients, 16.9% and 4.7% reported bad or very bad health, respectively, compared with 2.2% and 0.5% of the 25–44-year-old adults in the general populations of these seven countries (in 2013).

CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Health professionals indicated, for each health problem (at each visit), whether it was a chronic or acute health condition, whether they thought treatment (or medical care) was necessary or only precautionary, whether the problem had been treated or monitored before the patient came to MdM, and whether, in their opinion, this problem should have been treated earlier.

More than half of the patients (55.3%) who consulted a doctor in the eight European centres were diagnosed with at least one chronic health condition. In Istanbul, 36.7% of patients seen had at least one chronic health condition.

URGENT CARE AND NECESSARY TREATMENT

More than one third (36.5%) of patients needed urgent or fairly urgent care when they visited the seven European centres – and this figure was 100% for Istanbul.

In total, three out of four patients (74.5%) in the European programmes needed treatment that was deemed necessary by the doctor. This percentage was significantly higher in Switzerland (93.9% of patients needed at least one necessary treatment), Germany (84.3%), Spain (81.6%) and France (79.5%). In Istanbul, 100.0% of patients were in this situation.

PATIENTS HAD RECEIVED LITTLE HEALTHCARE BEFORE COMING TO MDM

In the nine European countries surveyed, 73.5% of patients had at least one health problem that had never been monitored or treated before coming to MDM. This percentage was significantly higher in Switzerland (79.7%), Germany (82.9%), France (76.9%), the Netherlands (65.3%) and London (63.2%). In Istanbul, almost all the patients were in this situation.

Altogether, 57.9% of the patients requiring treatment had not received care before coming to MDM. Thus, for these patients MDM represents their first point of contact with a primary healthcare provider. This figure was also particularly high in Switzerland (74.8%), Germany (72.2%) and France (69.2%) and, above all, in Istanbul (98.9%).

Nearly half of the patients seen by a doctor at MDM (46.2%) had at least one chronic condition that had never been checked or monitored by a doctor before. This concerned half of the patients seen by a doctor in France, one in five patients seen in Spain, one in three patients seen in Istanbul and less than 10% of patients seen in Greece.

In other words, among the patients who suffered from one or several chronic conditions (70.2%) hadn’t received any medical follow-up before going to MDM (for at least one of their chronic health conditions). Except in Greece, where this situation was uncommon (92.2%), it affected at least one third of patients with a chronic health condition in Spain, 60% in the Netherlands, 68% in London and around three out of four patients in the four other countries.

In Istanbul, almost all patients with a chronic condition had not received care before coming to ASEM (93.7%).

HEALTH PROBLEMS LARGELY UNKNOWN PRIOR TO ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

Only 9.5% of migrant patients had at least one chronic health problem which they had known about before they came to Europe (in CH, DE, ES, NL and UK).

Looking at the diagnoses in detail, very few of the patients may have migrated due to these chronic conditions, as the majority of the reported diagnoses are not life threatening. In Istanbul, 37.1% of the patients were in this situation. This shows again how the idea of migration for health reasons is false: in Istanbul, foreign citizens must pay 100% of health costs.

Natalia is a 54-year-old Greek woman. She has been the owner of a shoe shop for six years. For the last three years, due to the economic crisis, she has been unable to pay the cost of her healthcare coverage. Natalia was diagnosed with hypertension two years ago, which requires adherence to a specific drug treatment routine. “I was able to cover the cost of the drugs for the first six months... as I couldn’t afford it anymore. I had to stop.”

Since she could not regularly take the medication, she had an episode of high blood pressure which took her to the emergency department. From there she was directed by the social services of the local hospital to MdM’s Polyclinic in Patras. Since then, Natalia has been treated at the MdM Polyclinic which covers the cost of medical tests and medication.

MdM Greece – Patras – October 2014
HEALTH PROBLEMS BY ORGAN SYSTEM

Half of the health issues encountered correspond to four of the body’s organ systems: the digestive system accounted for 14.4% of all diagnoses, musculoskeletal 13.3%, respiratory 10.0% and cardiovascular 9.6%.

When health problems were grouped under broad disease categories, psychological problems were identified in 10.6% of medical consultations. The most frequently reported mental health problems involved anxiety, stress and psychosomatic problems (5.8% of consultations) and depressive syndromes (2.9% of consultations). Obviously psychotic disorders were much rarer (0.5%). Problems related to using psychotropic substances were almost non-existent (0.4%).

Overall, 10% of medical consultations for women patients dealt with gynaecological problems: normal pregnancy and postnatal issues (11.0% and 0.3%) were most frequent - mention problems (4.2%) and contraception (5.2%), menstrually reported, followed by other unspecified gynaecological problems (4.2%) and contraception (1.7%).

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A MORE EFFECTIVE HEPATITIS C TREATMENT. BUT UNAFFORDABLE!

It is estimated that 85 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis C, a liver infection that often causes potentially life-threatening cirrhosis and cancer. There is currently no vaccine against hepatitis C. Treatments available come with serious side effects and with low cure rates (50% to 70%).

A new generation of drugs now brings great hope: ‘direct-acting antivirals’ are better tolerated by patients and the cure rate exceeds 90%.

However the first drug of this kind, sofosbuvir, is sold at exorbitant prices (e.g. €41,000 in France for the full course of treatment).

This means that social security systems in many countries have to start to select the most seriously ill patients to be treated from the new treatments. This goes against the public health benefits of treating all patients in order to stop the spread of infection, on top of being highly unethical.

Médecins du Monde welcomes real medical innovation, but abusive prices put at risk the very existence of our public health model, which is based on solidarity and equity. This is why in February 2015, Médecins du Monde opposed the patent for sofosbuvir at the European Patent Office.

Médecins du Monde wants affordable medicines for hepatitis C for all.

119 See (in French) : https://mdmeuroblog.wordpress.com/2015/03/24/hepatitis-c-mdm-opposes-patent-for-sofosbuvir/
CONCLUSION

European stakeholders increasingly recognise the impacts that the economic crisis and austerity measures have had on the accessibility of national healthcare services. In 2014, following repeated calls by NGOs and the European Parliament, both the Commission and the Council have reaffirmed their adherence to the values of universality, access to good quality care, equity and solidarity.

- MDM urges Member States and EU institutions to ensure universal public health systems built on solidarity, equality and equity, open to everyone living in an EU Member State.

The international and European institutions that have asked national governments to ensure protection for people and groups facing multiple vulnerabilities are legion. The data collected by MDM over the past year clearly show that the crisis and austerity policies are still having negative consequences on people’s health. In addition, as the Council notes, “the scale of effects on health of the economic crisis and the reduction in public health expenditures may only become apparent in the following years”.

The data in this report also show how the declarations of intent that Member States formulated at the level of the Council of the European Union (“The Council acknowledges that universal access to healthcare is of paramount importance in addressing health inequalities”) have not been accompanied by any real improvements in access to healthcare for groups which already face multiple vulnerabilities, such as undocumented third-country nationals, destitute EU citizens and groups facing social stigma.

The right of children to health and care is one of the most basic, most universal and most essential human rights. The right of children to health and care is one of the most basic, most universal and most essential human rights. The right of children to health and care is one of the most basic, most universal and most essential human rights. The right of children to health and care is one of the most basic, most universal and most essential human rights. The right of children to health and care is one of the most basic, most universal and most essential human rights.

DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTHS...

Institutions such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) play a key role in deconstructing the myths some policy-makers may still spread against migrants or ethnic minorities as an excuse for not putting equitable public health first. In their assessment report of how infectious diseases affect migrant populations in Europe, the ECDC warns that, “poor access to healthcare is an important proximal risk factor for poorer health outcomes” and that more needs to be done to ensure equal access to healthcare for migrants, especially for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

National governments should ensure that coherent and inclusive infectious disease policies are in place that allow access to prevention, care and treatment for anyone residing in Europe.

A small number of migrants become seriously ill after arriving in Europe (e.g. living with HIV, having mental health problems or suffering from renal failure, cancer, hepatitis, etc.) and for them going back to their home country is not an option because they are not able to effectively access healthcare there. European national governments could achieve a quick win in terms of human rights by protecting this small group. The Member States who have done so have not seen any significant rise in the number of seriously ill migrants seeking protection. In doing so, these States are following the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which considered that a migrant living, for example, with HIV, “should never be expelled when it is clear that he or she will not receive adequate healthcare and assistance in the country to which he or she is being sent back”. Expulsions with no assurance of adequate healthcare may be tantamount to a death penalty, which goes against the position of the EU and all EU Member States on “strong and unequivocal opposition to the death penalty in all times and in all circumstances”.

When seriously ill migrants are expelled to a country where they will not get adequate healthcare, they face extremely serious consequences for their health, including the possibility of death. This must be avoided at all costs by protecting them in Europe and by giving them access to care.

- Seriously ill migrants must be protected from expulsion when effective access to adequate healthcare cannot be ensured in the country to which they are expelled.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 2014, the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (EBCOG) presented the Standards of Care developed by its members from 36 European countries, regarding obstetric, neonatal and gynaecology services. The Board highlights that, “there is still an evident disparity in accessibility to sexual and reproductive health services, in the quality of care and in clinical outcomes across the countries and even in regions within the same country”. The economic and societal impact of such inequitable access shows the “compelling need to improve delivery of care”. EBCOG recommends that “local protocols should be developed to support equal access to healthcare needs for all vulnerable groups including the migrant population and those who do not speak the host country’s language”.

In April 2014, the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), the Andalusian School of Public Health and the Consortium for Healthcare and Social Services of Catalonia launched the Granada Declaration. It states that, “when many European countries are implementing austerity policies, it is especially important that the public health community should speak out on behalf of the poor and marginalized. Among them are many migrants, who for various reasons are especially vulnerable at this time.” The declaration calls for better protection of migrants’ health and healthcare, specifically including that of undocumented migrants. Almost 100 European and national institutions, professional associations and civil society organisations have endorsed the document. This shows how many health professionals are demanding to be able to work according to their medical ethics.

- In accordance with the World Medical Association’s Declaration on the Rights of the Patient, MDM will continue to provide appropriate medical care to all people without discrimination. MDM refuses all restrictive legal measures to alter medical ethics and exhorts all health professionals to take care of all patients regardless of their administrative status and the existing legal barriers.
ACRONYMS

ACME  STATE MEDICAL AID (AIDE MEDICALE DE L’ETAT)
AMU  URGENT MEDICAL AID (AIDE MEDICALE URGENTE)
BE  BELGIUM
CAP  CRUDE AVERAGE PROPORTION
CAPT  CRUDE AVERAGE PROPORTION INCLUDING TURKEY
CH  SWITZERLAND
CMUC  COMPLEMENTARY UNIVERSAL MEDICAL COVERAGE (COUVERTURE MALADIE UNIVERSELLE COMPLEMENTAIRE)
CPAS  PUBLIC SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE (CENTRE PUBLIC D’ACTION SOCIALE)
DE  GERMANY
ECDC  EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL
EL  GREECE
ES  SPAIN
EU  EUROPEAN UNION
FR  FRANCE
GP  GENERAL PRACTITIONER
HBV  HEPATITIS B VIRUS
HCV  HEPATITIS C VIRUS
HIV  HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS
HOM  DOCTORS OF THE WORLD (MEDECINS DU MONDE – MDM)
NHS  NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (UK)
NL  NETHERLANDS
OECD  ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
SE  SWEDEN
TR  TURKEY
UK  UNITED KINGDOM
WAP  WEIGHTED AVERAGE PROPORTION (EACH COUNTRY ACCOUNTS FOR THE SAME WEIGHT)
WAPT  WEIGHTED AVERAGE PROPORTION INCLUDING TURKEY
WHO  WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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The content of this report represents the views of the authors only and is their sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the positions of the NEF, EPIM or partner foundations and the Health and Food Safety or the views of the European Commission and/or the Consumer, Health and Food Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

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All the reports of the Doctors of the World International Network and other documents and information about the European programme can be found at: www.mdmeuroblog.wordpress.com