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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

RECOMMENDATION 2021-2

Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics

**Adopted at the 14th Ministerial Meeting on
24 November 2021 in Matosinhos, Portugal**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

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The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

- A. Recalling its Recommendation 2016 - 1 on the Inclusion of Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in disaster preparedness and response, adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Lisbon, Portugal, 26 October 2016;
- B. Noting the Recommendations contained in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) briefs on *Covid-19 and Stranded Migrants* published on 2 June 2020, on *Countering Xenophobia and Stigma to Foster Social Cohesion in the Covid-19 Response and Recovery* published on 14 July 2020 and on *Covid-19 Emerging Immigration Consular and Visa Needs and Recommendations*, published on 15 July 2020;
- C. Noting the *Statement of interpretation on the right to protection of health in times of pandemic* adopted by the European Committee of Social Rights on 21 April 2020;
- D. Noting the opportunities offered by the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees and other measures contained in the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) in the countries that ratified it and in line with their national legislations, to include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees having necessary qualifications in the steps taken to respond to natural and technological disasters;
- E. Recalling the actions of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees, undertaken in particular in the framework of the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) and the ongoing work on the preparation of the new Action Plan in the field of migration;
- F. Recalling recommendations and guidelines contained in the publications *Migrants in Disaster Risk Reduction – Practices for Inclusion*, prepared jointly with International Organisation for Migration and Migrants in Crisis Initiative (MICIC) in 2017 and *Major Hazards, Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees – Their Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness and Management*, published in 2017;
- G. Recalling its Resolution 2020–1 recognising the inclusion of biological threats, hazards and risks causing natural and technological disasters in the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement adopted on 3 November 2020, as amended on 16 September 2021;
- H. Desirous to promote a more integrated, efficient and effective approach of public authorities and health professionals to ensure appropriate protection to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, including stranded migrants, regardless of nationality or migratory status during public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics;

- I. Noting with interest the report on "Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees in Preparedness and Response to Biological Disasters: Case Study of the COVID-19 Pandemic", prepared at the request of the Agreement.

Recommend that member States of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

1. Include all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, regardless of nationality or migratory status, in all national disaster risk reduction policies, linked to public health emergencies arising from biological hazards, planning processes, training curricula and emergency management, favouring long-term strategies that would reduce the vulnerability and exposure to disaster of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
2. Ensure that, during public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics, all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have adequate access to information, health services, shelter, food and other social support systems that is comparable with that enjoyed by the rest of the population;
3. Involve migrants, asylum seekers and refugees having necessary qualifications in emergency response to natural and technological disasters, taking advantage in particular of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees and other measures contained in particular in the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) in the countries having ratified it, and in line with their national legislations;
4. Support the initiatives of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement to promote, with respect to public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics, inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in its member States, in particular through promoting adequate regulations, sharing of expertise, awareness raising, undertaking training programmes and promoting good practice.

Invites the Secretariat to submit the Recommendation 2021-2 to the Committee of Ministers for information and possible distribution to all member States of the Council of Europe.