



# Migration, environmental degradation and climate-induced displacement

**What is the EU's approach?**

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# Outlook

- A basic definition
- Why does it matter?
- What do we know?
- What do we expect?
- What are we doing – Internationally?
- What are we doing within the EU?
- An EU approach?

# The basic definition

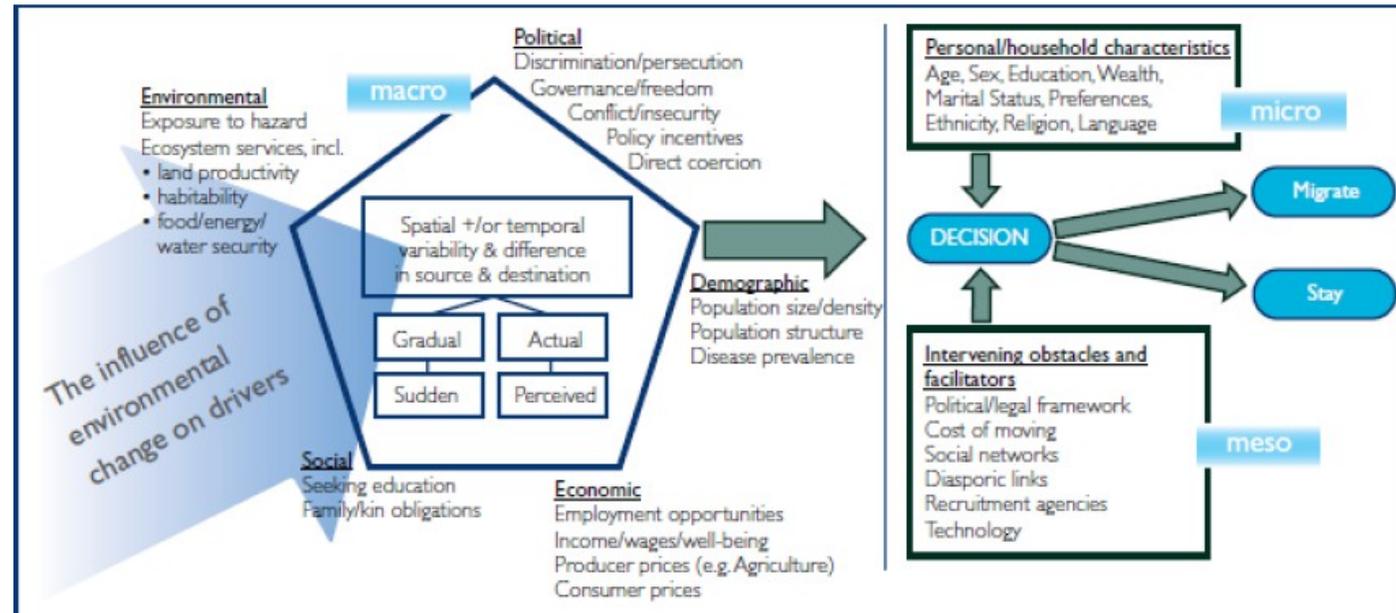
- **Environmental migrants** are
  - persons or group of persons who, (*scale of migration*)
  - predominantly for reasons of **sudden or progressive** change in the environment that adversely affects their **lives or living conditions** are (*local circumstances*)
  - **obliged** to leave their habitual homes, or **choose** to do so, (*choice*)
  - either **temporarily** or **permanently**, and (*duration of migration*)
  - who move either **within** the country or **abroad** (*destination*)

# Why does it matter?

- 17.2 million people were displaced *internally* last year as a result of disasters.
- Forecasts by IOM point at between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050 – 200 million is the most widely cited estimate
- Environmental stress may exacerbate existing insecurity and tensions between populations over already scarce natural resources, triggering conflict, displacement, and additional humanitarian and development needs.
- Migration is a more than plausible climate change adaptation strategy

# What do we know?

- Given the **complexity** of the phenomenon, there is no reliable data as yet on *cross-border* climate-related displacement.



- Even less reliable data on environmental degradation or desertification

# What do we know?

- BUT Some examples:
  - Fisheries overexploitation
  - Desertification and land degradation
  - Droughts and water stress
  - Climate change as a “threat-multiplier”

*IOM policy briefs e.g. on Ghana and Senegal*

*Research on Syria’s civil war*

*Research on Somali pirates*

# What do we expect?

- Climate change will contribute to making disasters more unpredictable, frequent and severe; and make the impact of environmental degradation even more acute
- It will lead to **increased displacement** if insufficient action is taken to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, improve resilience and adapt to climate change or to develop more sustainable practices.
- Climate-related displacement is hence likely to become more **structural/permanent** (caused by sea-level rise or desertification, with people having to relocate to survive) and **protracted** (reconstruction/rehabilitation of affected areas may take longer, especially in low-income countries)

# What are we doing – Internationally?

- **Sustainable Development Goals**
- **Sendai Framework for Risk Reduction:**
- **The Nansen Initiative** and its 2015 Agenda for the Protection of Cross-border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change.
- **The Platform on Disaster Displacement**, a state-led initiative that follows up on the work of the Nansen Initiative.
- **The Task Force on Displacement**, established at Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its 21st session in Paris, to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimise and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.

# What are we doing – Internationally?

- **The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees** also highlight the issue of people on the move due to disasters and climate change.
- The recently established **High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**, where internal displacement due to disasters and the adverse effects of climate change will also be addressed.
- Recent opinion by the **UN Human Rights Committee** on the *non-refoulement* obligations of states in relation to the effects of climate change

# What are we doing in the EU?

- **The European Parliament:** ‘The Environment, Security and Foreign Policy’ in January 1999, which led to ICMPD report on ‘Climate Refugees, legal and policy responses to environmentally-induced migration’
- **Council conclusions on climate diplomacy** in July 2011 and on January 2020: *helping the most vulnerable countries (...), as well as promoting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.*
- **A 2013 Commission Staff Working Document ‘Climate change, environmental degradation, and migration’** (SWD (2013) 138).
  - *The impact of climate change and environmental degradation on migration flows to the EU is unlikely to be substantial*

# What are we doing in the EU?

## Knowledge

- Funding Research: **MECLEP**: Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy

## Dialogue

- **Council conclusions on climate diplomacy** of January 2020.

Action internationally to fight climate change

# What are we doing in the EU?

## Cooperation:

- Operationalising the **European Green Deal** (including its external dimension)
- **Financing assistance** to cover the immediate needs of displaced persons, while also supporting efforts to boost resilience, prevention and preparedness.

# Big BUT: an EU approach?

- A coherent EU narrative on climate-related displacement, as well as priority actions, however, has not yet been developed.
- There is not sufficient awareness in DG HOME about the relations between environmental degradation, climate-change and migration
- The 2013 Commission Staff Working Document contains recommendations and points to the significant potential of ensuring a more efficient application of existing regional, national and multilateral frameworks.

# An EU approach?

- **Human Rights Law** (right to life)
- **Environmental law** (precautionary principle, common but differentiated responsibility)
- **Refugee law:**
  - The **Qualifications Directive** does not include any reference under “subsidiarity protection”; however some **MS include it under national protection figures**, e.g. Sweden, Finland, Italy, Denmark (Afghan nationals coming from drought-affected regions);
  - **Temporary Protection Directive**
- **Migration frameworks**

# An EU approach?

- **Knowledge (forecasts, Horizon Europe)**
- **Short-term emergency assistance: Prevention and preparedness for climate related displacement**
- **Medium-long term external action – and dialogue in our cooperation/ trade/ partnership policy:** leading the way, building resilience, addressing root causes, longer-term development responses, neighbourhood policy, Adaptation Strategy, Sustainable Development Strategies, our footprint in the world.
- **Migration:** Cross-border movements and potential related protection and *non-refoulement* considerations; Temporary and circular migration schemes; the upcoming Pact on Migration and Asylum?

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