



Knowledge Sheet

Providing comprehensive protection and assistance to migrant persons during emergency situations

Managing migratory crises

The cases of Mexico, Peru, Greece, and Italy



Background

Between June and October 2021, a series of three workshops took place in the framework of the Costa Rica IV Action (2020-14), implemented by MIEUX+ in collaboration with the Directorate General for Migration and Foreigners (DGME). The events aimed at facilitating the exchange between Costa Rican public officials and officials from administrations of the region and the European Union (EU) and focused on the issue of providing comprehensive protection and assistance to migrant persons during emergency situations. This Knowledge Sheet focuses on governmental responses to migration crises, lessons learned, good practices and challenges.

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Lessons Learnt

Creating learning spaces for public administration peers

Lean and flexible administrations are necessary to manage sudden and massive migration flows as humanitarian emergencies. By sharing their experiences among peers, MIEUX+ contributes to creating an environment where the knowledge and praxis of public administrations can be replicated, adapted and contextualised to face the multidimensional nature of mixed migration flows.

Multi-level and multi-stakeholder coordination

Multi-level and multi-stakeholder coordination as crucial elements to overcome structural problems migrants face, such as lack of overall information, limited knowledge of the national health system, and understanding of the local language. This is in line with one of the main working methodologies in MIEUX+ Actions.



Actors

Mexico

The Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees (COMAR) and the National Coordination of Civil Protection (CNPC) of Mexico

Peru

The National Superintendency of Migration of Peru

Greece

The Greek Ombudsman's Office

Lampedusa & Linosa, Italy

The Municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa, Italy



Further Reading

- [Snapshots from the borders](#)
- [Lampedusa Charter](#)
- [EU Consular protection mechanisms](#)
- [Operação Acolhida](#)



Mexico

Government responses to migration crises: lessons learned, good practices and challenges



Identified Challenges

Costa Rica and Mexico share similar experiences of being transit countries for migrant persons travelling to the United States. Costa Rica has experienced in the last decade the arrival of large flows of migrant persons originating from regional countries, like the Cuban migrants in 2015, but also increasingly persons originating from outside the Americas. Similarly, Mexico has experienced since 2018, nine waves of so-called 'migrant caravans' originating from the Northern Triangle of Central America with the purpose of transiting to the United States. Both phenomena have created very complex situations for the Mexican and Costa Rican Governments, both in terms of attention to migrants and people with special vulnerabilities such as unaccompanied children and in terms of institutional resources. To face these issues, Mexico has increasingly adopted a whole-of-government approach, involving not only traditional actors such as the Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid but also its National Civil Protection System, in finding innovative solutions for the management of migratory crises in the country.



Good Practices

1. Coordination with new actors

Although actors such as Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid, the National Migration Institute or other agencies are the lead institutions for migration management in Mexico, the support of the National Coordination of Civil Protection of Mexico proved instrumental for the assistance to migrant populations. Civil Protection not only provided care to the displaced migrant population during emergencies, but also conceptualised mass arrivals as a type of emergency, which enabled the Mexican institution to activate certain protocols.

2. Ad-hoc crisis management plan

Under the direction of the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection and the Ministry of the Interior, especially the National Migration Institute and under the coordination of the National Civil Protection Coordination, the Migrant Caravan Assistance Plan was launched, in which all federal agencies as well as UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR participated. According to the Assistance Plan, reception of migrants consisted of immediate medical attention, food, hydration and information at the entry point; registration and distribution of identification bracelets that allowed the migrant access the services offered as well as initiate and conclude the management of his/her migratory procedure.

3. Vertical cooperation

Mexico's federal political and administrative system ensures autonomy for many of the institutions responsible for assistance and protection of vulnerable groups, including migrants in transit. Hence, when faced with crisis management, all institutions at federal, state, and municipal level had to come together, align their procedures, and cooperate in an efficient manner in order to provide assistance and protection to migrants.



Government responses to migration crises: lessons learned, good practices and challenges



Identified Challenges

Although usually thought of as transit country, an estimated 10% of the population in Costa Rica is foreign-born. Likewise, Peru has become over the years a destination country, especially for Venezuelans wishing to migrate or seeking asylum, while continuing to experience several smaller flows, especially from Haiti, *en route* to North America. As a consequence, there has been an exponential growth in the number of foreign-born population: from 80,000 registered migrants in Peru in 2017, the current figures estimate the number at 1.2 million. This sudden influx has created a new reality that the Peruvian Government and public administration have responded to with a series of practices.



Good Practices

1. Legislative changes

In 2017, there was a revision to the National Migration Policy, including the creation of the Intersectoral Roundtable for Migration to reinforce plans for integration and regularisation of migrants.

2. Extraordinary measures to ensure inclusion

The Peruvian Government extended new work permissions and a virtual ID card in order to circumvent the restrictions on face-to-face assistance caused by the pandemic. Government services were extended to cover twenty-four hour shifts for registration and case procedure.

3. Data-driven government policies

Sociodemographic data is collected through online forms and a survey asks migrants in Peru about their needs. The results from this survey will feed policy-making in the area of migration in the years to come.

4. Border management

Reinforced border procedures enabled the registration and collection of biometric data at border check points, which enabled the public administration to register newcomers and for all government services to access this information swiftly.

5. Digital Agency for Migration

Ninety-nine percent of migration procedures can be done online, which has enabled government departments and agencies to provide services for migrant populations all over the territory.



Government responses to migration crises: lessons learned, good practices and challenges



Identified Challenges

While Costa Rica is largely considered a stable country in economic and social terms, the mounting internal debt and overall world crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact of the resources dedicated to manage migratory crises. Likewise, a fragile economic situation was the less-than-favourable backdrop to massive flows of migration that began in 2015 in Greece. Severe challenges related to the coordination of assistance, the identification of vulnerable groups and registration procedures ensued, which have been compounded by the onset of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, both countries have put efforts to adopt strategies that centre of human rights and social protections. To face these challenges and provide adequate levels of protection for migrants, the Government of Greece and its public administration, which includes the Human Rights Office of the Greek Ombudsman, adopted a series of practices, as well as changes in legislation and in operative protocols.



Good Practices

1. Institutional framework

Under the overall authority of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the new posts of Deputy Minister for Refugee Integration and a Special Secretary for the Coordination of Key Actors as well as a Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied minors were created. These changes were introduced to strengthen coordination among all parties.

2. Multi-stakeholder cooperation

Aside from improving the institutional framework to create an enabling environment, the emphasis was on streamlining registration procedures for asylum seekers through cooperation with international actors such as UNHCR or EU agencies FRONTEX and the European Asylum Support Office, but also cooperation with civil society actors.

3. Digitalisation

Enabled faster processing times of many asylum case procedures, including self-registration. This included sending asylum applications by email, auto-completion of online forms, as well as other migration procedures for obtaining and renewing documents.

4. Independent accommodation

A system for independent rental units in various cities is managed by UNHCR. The aim is to provide good living conditions and integration at local level.

5. Prevention of discrimination

Migrant children were enrolled in school, information campaigns were created to address the foreign and local population, and channels for the participation of migrants in local activities were opened with the overall aim to promote social inclusion.



Lampedusa & Linosa, Italy

Government responses to migration crises: lessons learned, good practices and challenges



Identified Challenges

In many parts of the world migratory crisis have gone from occasional and punctual events to a constant issue fully embedded in local realities. Therefore, the framing of these phenomena as “crises” does not provide a suitable backdrop to coordinate first-line responses and provide durable solutions for migrants, especially at the local level. In its own migratory context, the Costa Rican government has had to seek solutions to not only attend migrants, foster inclusion but also to prevent and combat xenophobia in host communities. Comparably, the small islands of Lampedusa and Linosa (Italy) in the Central Mediterranean Sea have witnessed dramatic arrivals by boats over the last thirty years. This has put an enormous strain on the small municipality that nevertheless has built a reputation of inclusion due the practices tested and established.



Good Practices

1. EU-wide cooperation

The islands have sought cooperation with 19 border municipalities all over Europe to recognise their special role in providing assistance and reception to migrants arriving on their territories through an EU-funded programme called Snapshots from the borders. The project intends to strengthen a new horizontal, active network among cities directly facing migration flows at EU borders, as a way to promote more effective policy coherence at all levels (European, national, local).

2. Countering misinformation

The Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa publicly declared against some of myths that started circulating about migration and the pandemic during the early months of 2020. The Mayor is also promoting a new European Remembrance Day to honour the 350+ victims of a shipwreck trying to reach Lampedusa shores on 03 October 2013.

3. The Lampedusa Charter

Under the coordination of the Executive Bureau of United Cities and Local Government, Lampedusa and Linosa are advocating for the Lampedusa Charter, which aims to re-write the narrative on European migration and is inspired by the principles enshrined in the Global Compact for Migration.

