

TIME TO ACT

HOW THE EU CAN LEAD ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG

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Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Commissioned and published by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, European Union

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Coordination and final editing: Silvia Brugger

Printed in Belgium, June 2014

English proofreading: Stephen Glennon

Production: Micheline Gutman

Cover Picture: © Pablo Tosco/Oxfam International

D/2012/11850/3

This publication can be ordered at:

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, European Union, Brussels – 15 Rue d’Arlon – B-1050 Brussels – Belgium

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change will increase migration flows, in particular from the world's poorest and most crisis-prone countries. The links between climate change and migration are complex and difficult to identify. In spite of disagreement about how to identify climate as a causal factor in migration, the policy challenges posed by the movement are real.

Even though climate change and environmental degradation have a significant impact on population movements worldwide, at present, there is no coherent policy approach from the European Union (EU) on how to respond to the phenomenon of environmentally-induced migration/displacement. People who move because of some long-term environmental change are seen as voluntary or economic migrants with no entitlement to protection, while those moving after sudden environmental disasters often qualify for short-term humanitarian aid, but no longer-term support. The result is that people who move in the context of climate change go unregarded within the international humanitarian and refugee law and EU migration policy. Different policies and responses are needed at each stage of environment-related migration, ranging from actions to mitigate climate change, the offer of protection during the phase of displacement and (re-) integration or resettlement measures in the final stage. Environmentally induced migration intersects development, adaptation, humanitarian and migration policies, which leads to difficulties in responding adequately to the phenomenon.

Several European policy documents, including the European Commission's Staff Working Document '*Climate change, environmental degradation, and migration*' from April 2013, have highlighted the need for further analysis. The issue has received increasing attention in recent years: research projects have provided a better understanding of the phenomenon and of corresponding legal and policy gaps. Discussing climate change and migration also implies a considerable debate

about the terminology. Terms like environmental or climate 'refugee' have been questioned, both in the academic and political sphere. It is necessary to keep in mind that the choice of words also has important legal and policy implications. 'People who move in the context of environmental change' and related notions are considered to be adequate to describe the phenomenon and therefore used in this report. Even though a categorisation of 'movements in the context of environmental change' is extremely difficult, this report will distinguish between 'displacement', 'migration as an adaptation measure' and 'planned relocation' for the purposes of this analysis.

With this report, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union wants to raise awareness that there is already a great deal that we know about climate change and migration. The time has come to translate research evidence and recommendations into policy practice: **what role can and should the EU play to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change and migration?**

The **first part** of the publication '*Defining the challenge - Myths and facts about climate change and migration*' provides an understanding of key characteristics of movement in the context of climate change on the basis of a wide range of case studies and research results. The experts from the Climate Outreach Information Network and the UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition also provide an adequate way of communicating the phenomenon, which is critical to debunking some common myths about climate change and migration.

The **second part** '*Tackling the challenge - Policy recommendations to the EU*' focuses on EU policies and legal frameworks in the area of migration and asylum and builds upon the results of the research project ClimMig (May 2011-June 2013), which was led by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, together with the

Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI). The researchers identify gaps in legal, normative and institutional frameworks of relevance to climate-related migration and displacement and establish recommendations addressed to European policy makers on how to overcome these gaps.

Several EU policies, including e.g. development cooperation, humanitarian aid, climate change, foreign policy, migration, disaster risk reduction, conflict prevention and peace-building, are addressing environmentally-induced migration/displacement in some way. On the whole, there are shortcomings when it comes to the actual protection of environmentally displaced persons as well as to the promotion of migration as adaptation. A further problematic point is the framing of the issue as being solely

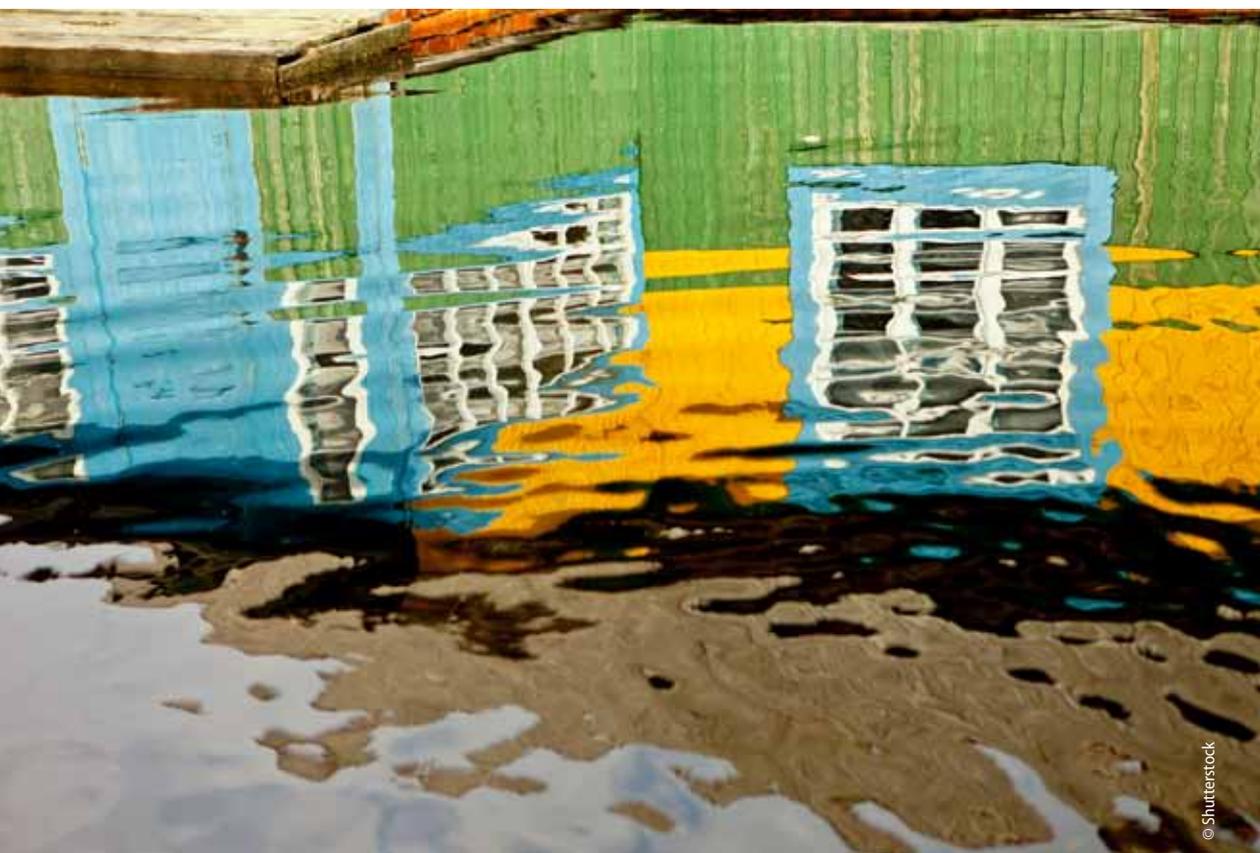
a matter of development cooperation or humanitarian assistance. This report therefore mainly focuses on how to adapt the legal framework to address the challenge of climate change and migration. However, this should not disregard the importance of other EU policy areas such as development cooperation, which should take climate-linked migration much more into account.

We hope that this publication can raise awareness, stimulate debates and provide policy makers with a sound basis for further decision-making – and thus enable the EU to lead on climate change and migration.

Silvia Brugger
Director Climate and Energy Programme,
Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, European Union

PART I: Defining the challenge – Myths and facts about climate change and migration

By Jo Salisbury & Alex Randall



1. The relationship between climate change and migration

The relationship between climate change and migration is far from simple. To understand this multi-dimensional phenomenon, it is necessary to explore the causal links between climate change, disasters, socio-economic factors and general drivers of migration. Across the globe, countries and regions face varying degrees of **vulnerability** to climate change. Climate-linked disasters may unfold instantly or over a number of years and as such these differing events will lead to varying migratory responses. People may be forced to move to ensure their immediate survival, or they may have some choice about when and where they move to. Exploring various scenarios assists in understanding the complex relationship between climate change and migration, and highlights that climate change may be one of a number of reasons for migration.

1.1 Vulnerability to climate change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines vulnerability as the extent to which a system will be disrupted by the impacts of climate change.¹ Vulnerability to climate change is made up of three key elements:

- **exposure**, the climate-linked hazards that an area might face;
- **sensitivity**, how sensitive a system is to any of the hazards it is exposed to;
- **adaptive capacity**, the ability of the system to adjust in order to accommodate the impacts.

For example, two cities could be exposed to very similar hazards, but one city could be more sensitive as, for example, its physical sea defences might be weaker. Whether a particular disaster causes people to move will also depend on a number of other important factors including levels of economic development and preparedness. Further, two countries could be exposed to similar risks and have comparable vulnerabilities but one country might be better able to adapt to the impacts.² Thus, the way in which a country adapts or does not adapt to climate change will also have important implications for the movement of people. Vulnerability to the impact of climate change is further differentiated between people *in the same location*. Men and women may be affected differently, with women commonly the more vulnerable. Other members of the population may also be especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change by virtue of their age, disability or by reasons of discrimination. These differences in vulnerability have an impact on whether and how people move in the context of climate change.

1.2 Slow and rapid onset events, forced and voluntary migration

The effects of climate change are not predicted to happen at the same pace, and a useful distinction can be made between slow onset and rapid onset events. Slow onset events unfold gradually, perhaps over a number of months or years. Examples include drought, desertification and sea level rise. Rapid onset events unfold almost immediately, or over a number of days. Examples include hurricanes and typhoons, flash flooding and land slides. Slow and rapid onset events lead to different patterns of movement,³ ranging from cyclical migration to permanent movement that can occur both internally and internationally.

1 Parry, M. L.; Canziani, O. F.; Palutikof, J. P.; Van der Linden, P. J.; Hanson, C. E. (eds) (2007): Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York: Cambridge University Press.

2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (1998): The regional impacts of climate change. An assessment of vulnerability, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2012): FAO's Emergency Activities: Technical Handbook Series: The Emergency Sequence: What FAO Does – How FAO Does It. Overview of the Handbooks.

People who move in the context of climate change will have differing responses, choices or limitations when determining their movement. It is important to acknowledge the difference between slow and rapid onset events to understand and develop the various policy responses and gaps in legal protection that arise in regard to human movements.

Faced with sudden onset disasters, people are more likely to be forced to flee for survival. In contrast when faced with slow onset disasters, which unfold over a number of months or years, people may still be forced or obliged to move, but may have more opportunity to decide how and when. Further, some people may be fortunate enough to have the resources and opportunity to plan their migration. With such wide variations in determining the timing and destination of movement it is helpful to consider movement on a spectrum, with forced movement at one end and voluntary movement at the other.

1.3 The significance of climate change and migration for Europe

It is unlikely that large numbers of people will move *en masse* into Europe solely because of climate change. But this does not mean that there will be no inward movement to European countries at all and that there are no implications for the European Union (EU).⁴ European decision-makers should consider migration linked to climate change for a number of reasons.

By taking into account the phenomenon of climate change and migration, and specifically the legal status of people who move for reasons related to climate change, the EU can create a humane and functioning immigration and asylum system that is fit for purpose.

Creating opportunities for migration into Europe could provide some people with a way of avoiding extreme climate change impacts as European countries are generally less exposed to the risks of climate change or are more able to adapt to the risks. While people usually migrate within their own country, some people might have the means to move and seek work in the EU as a way of protecting themselves and their families against worsening environmental conditions. By creating new, legal and safe migration options the EU can assist people in protecting themselves from certain climate change impacts.

When people move due to sudden disasters like floods and hurricanes, they tend to move short distances. However, such disasters sometimes lead to protracted displacement situations where people remain in temporary shelters for months or even years. In spite of the best efforts of governments and international agencies, such situations are often hugely detrimental to the welfare of the displaced population, especially of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, women, children, people with disabilities and people with severe health problems. In some instances, European countries that are mostly geographically distant from the site of disaster provide temporary protection. In the face of increasingly severe climate-linked disasters, European decision-makers must set up rules of how and when they agree to provide refuge and protection during such disasters.

The European Union has the power to shape global adaptation and development policy, and should do so in a way that sees some forms of migration as a way of reducing vulnerability to climate change. The EU and its Member States should consider funding development and adaptation projects that create opportunities for people to move. By focusing these projects on areas that are especially vulnerable to climate impacts, people could begin to reduce their vulnerability by choosing to migrate. At the moment,

4 Geddes, A.; Sommerville, W. (2013): Migration and environmental change: assessing the developing European approach, Migration Policy Institute, Policy Brief Series, Issue No. 2.

few development or adaptation programmes consider migration as a key to reducing vulnerability, however through their funding of such projects, the EU decision-makers have the opportunity to put this on the agenda.

2. How the interplay between other factors and climate change shapes patterns of movement

When asked, people rarely state that the sole cause of their movement is climate change. Evidence indicates that, in most cases, other important forces shape patterns of movement. This even holds true for movement in the context of sudden climate-linked disasters.⁵ So while there are important connections between climate change and migration, the impacts of climate change often combine with several other factors to cause the movement of people. Clearly, however, climate change may negatively affect other drivers of migration such as economic conditions, which is understood to strongly influence decisions to migrate.⁶

By examining a series of examples and case studies, this report builds up a picture of how climate change influences the movement of people, and looks at how climate change interacts with a number of other forces to shape patterns of movement.

2.1 The Horn of Africa

'Because of severe drought, my family and I moved permanently to the river some distance away. But this was difficult because of fighting going on in that area, and eventually we moved because of it.'

*Lau woman from Sudan,
Fugnido Camp, Ethiopia⁷*



In the Horn of Africa, people interviewed in refugee camps frequently stated various environmental changes among a number of causes of their displacement. Other factors included political instability, conflict and degraded livelihoods. The impacts of climate change were very rarely identified as the sole cause of displacement. Rather, the interviewees tended to see environmental change, especially changes in rainfall, as one factor that weakened their ability to cope with other forces causing their displacement.⁸

5 Randall, A; Salsbury, J; White, Z. (2014): Moving Stories. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

6 Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011): Final Project Report: Executive Summary, London: The Government Office for Science, 11-14.

7 Randall A.; Salsbury, J; White, Z. (2014): Moving Stories. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

8 Tamer, A.; Radha G.; Sakdapolrak, P.; Warner, K. (2012): Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: Perspectives of refugees from the East and Horn of Africa, Bonn: University of the United Nations Institute for Environment and Human Security.

The multi-causal nature of the displacement described by the interviewees is confirmed through a brief examination of the forces creating the ongoing displacement crisis in the region. For example, in Djibouti and Somalia, high international food prices have severely affected both countries because they are highly import dependent.⁹ The region has also experienced two decades of political violence including interstate wars, civil conflicts and violence involving the massacre of civilians.¹⁰ Climatic factors are clearly important: in 2010 the region experienced its worst drought in 60 years. There is strong evidence that the drought was a consequence of climate change.¹¹ Testimony by refugees and other kinds of evidence suggest a complex interaction between environmental, political and economic forces. The tragic result of this interaction has been a refugee crisis of unprecedented scale. During the peak of the crisis, 1,400 people a day were arriving at the Dadaab complex of refugee camps. The camp complex is now the biggest in the world.¹²

2.2 The Sahel

'I crossed the border with my animals, my donkeys, my children and my wife. I travelled to Timbuktu, crossed the river and came down to Burkina. I walked every day until sunset and after I would go to bed. The journey took three months.'

*Malian man, in Burkina Faso*¹³



© World Bank Photo Collection

9 World Food Programme (2013): Horn of Africa Crisis.

10 University of Upsala (2012): Conflict Encyclopedia, North Africa.

11 Lott, F. C.; Christidis, N.; Stott, P. A. (2013): Can the 2011 East African drought be attributed to human-induced climate change?, *Geophysical Research Letters*, 40 (6), 1177-1181.

12 Care International (2012): Dadaab Refugee Camps update on the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

13 Randall, A.; Salisbury, J.; White, Z. (2014): *Moving Stories. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change*, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

The picture of migration and displacement in the Sahel region shows similar interwoven forces that make up the drivers of movement. It should be noted that, in this region, migration has been a traditional way of life for many years, for example to tend livestock. As in the Horn of Africa, much of the population of the Sahel is highly dependent on agriculture as the primary livelihood.¹⁴ Agriculture is predominantly rain fed, which falls almost entirely during a three- to four-month season. Therefore, changes to rainfall patterns can have a deleterious effect on agricultural production and livelihoods, which has contributed to widespread displacement. More recently, this finding has been confirmed by a United Nations University study, which found that changes in rainfall had an impact on migratory decisions.¹⁵ Between the 1960s and 1980s, drought caused large-scale displacement in the region. The movement was primarily internal and involved people moving from north to south. Where migration took place across international borders, people tended to move from the land-locked countries of the Sahel to the coast.¹⁶ However, although loss of livelihoods and drought may cause movement, it is also important to note that moving requires resources. As people's livelihoods are degraded they can find it more difficult to move. This can mean that people find themselves trapped in areas that can no longer provide them with a livelihood, and yet are unable to leave. This is precisely what happened during the 1983-85 drought in the Sahel. Across the region, levels of mobility increased, however in Mali, levels of mobility decreased as people simply didn't have the resources to move.¹⁷

2.3 Pakistan

'The water came at night and we didn't have time to save our belongings; we had to choose whether to save our children and ourselves or our property and assets, so we chose to save our kids. We left everything and ran to save our lives.'

*Unnamed survivor of 2010 floods.*¹⁸



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Pakistan has experienced widespread displacement due to disasters.¹⁹ In recent years, flooding has caused large-scale damage, loss of life and internal displacement of communities, which have then been supported with humanitarian aid in camps and temporary settlements.²⁰ In spite of these disasters, Pakistan has also been a major destination for people seeking protection and is currently the most common destination country for refugees from Somalia. Pakistan also

14 Kandji, S. T.; Verchot, L.; Mackensen, J. (2006): *Climate Change and Variability in the Sahel Region: Impacts and Adaptation Strategies in the Agricultural Sector*, Nairobi, Kenya: Word Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

15 Warner, K.; Afifi, T. (2014): *Where the rain falls: Evidence from 8 countries on how vulnerable households use migration to manage the risk of rainfall variability and food insecurity*, in: *Climate and Development*, 6 (1).

16 Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) (2011): *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel*, Geneva: UNEP, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN University.

17 Foresight: *Migration and Global Environmental Change* (2011): *Final Project Report: Executive Summary*, London: The Government Office for Science, 13.

18 Randall, A; Salsbury, J; White, Z. (2014): *Moving Stories. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change*, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

19 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2011): *Pakistan Media Factsheet*.

20 International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2012): *IOM Pakistan response – six months on*, Islamabad.

hosts 1.6 million refugees from Afghanistan.²¹ Clearly, environmental factors have created widespread internal displacement, but other forces such as conflict and political instability are also driving people *into* Pakistan.

2.4 The Arctic

'About five years ago the sea ice used to take longer to melt. It lasted about 10 months but now it's only 8 months. This harms our way of life, our way of hunting, our way of fishing, and our way of travelling from one place to another.'

*Charlie Nakqashuk, Pangnirtung, Nunavut*²²



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In the Arctic regions of Alaska and Canada, environmental change has interacted with a variety of economic and political factors to shape patterns of movement. Interviews conducted with indigenous people living in the Arctic

regions of Alaska and Canada show a similar mixture of reasons for moving or staying as in other parts of the world. People interviewed in the *Many Strong Voices* project spoke about the impacts of environmental change on their living conditions, citing new hazards such as erosion and difficulty moving along traditional hunting routes due to thinner ice.²³ However, it is also clear that mobility patterns in the Arctic are changing for a number of reasons. For the last half-century, governments have tried to settle the nomadic Arctic peoples, often forcibly.²⁴ At the same time there has also been significant out-migration by young people in search of education and work opportunities.

2.5 Bangladesh

'Climate change has wrecked everything; our people are living in other towns and cities, like refugees. All I wanted was to grow old with my children and their children. But now they are gone and I don't think they will ever return.'

*Shamisur Gazi, 83, Chakbara, Bangladesh*²⁵



© Moneer ul Islam/Oxfam International

21 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2013): UNHCR country operations profile – Pakistan.

22 Randall, A; Salsbury, J; White, Z. (2014): *Moving Stories*. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

23 GRID-Arendal: *Many Strong Voices*. The Many Strong Voices. Portraits of Resilience.

24 Government of Canada (2010): *Backgrounder - Apology for Inuit High Arctic Relocation*. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

25 Randall, A; Salsbury, J; White, Z. (2014): *Moving Stories*. The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change, Oxford: Climate Outreach and Information Network.

Bangladesh is vulnerable to a number of climate-related hazards and has severely limited capacities to respond to these climate risks due to a series of factors. There are currently 50 million Bangladeshis living in areas prone to flooding. These people are vulnerable to a number of slow and rapid onset disasters. Flash floods and cyclones have created sudden displacements. Erosion and water stress have degraded livelihoods slowly, and limited people's ability to cope with disasters.²⁶ Other factors such as extreme poverty also magnify vulnerability and limit the ability to adapt to climate change. While climate-linked disasters are a key driver of internal displacement, and are likely to become more so, poverty makes the country less able to respond to these disasters. Bangladesh also experiences widespread out-migration. The flow of remittances created by millions of Bangladeshis working abroad has become a major part of the country's economy.²⁷ The force driving this cross-border migration is primarily the search for employment in rapidly-growing economies to support their families back home. The extent to which climate change will increase or limit remittance income is clearly an important issue to consider in Bangladesh and other countries that rely heavily on this form of income.

2.6 Pacific Island States

'Carterets' people are facing, and will continue to face, many challenges as we relocate from our ancestral grounds. However, our plan is one in which we remain as independent and self-sufficient as possible. We wish to maintain our cultural identity and live sustainably wherever we are.'

Ursula Rakova, Carteret Islands



Like Bangladesh, many of the low-lying island states in the Pacific are vulnerable to the impacts of slow and rapid onset events. Cyclones and storm surges create sudden displacements while droughts, salination of soils, erosion and sea level rise also create more slowly unfolding problems. Sea level rise obviously represents one of the biggest problems to these low lying islands. With the majority of the population living near the coast and much of the infrastructure at, or just above sea level, this clearly presents a huge challenge. The vulnerability of the Pacific Island States to climate change is exacerbated by high levels of poverty together with small populations and geographical remoteness.²⁸ This vulnerability, along with a series of other important forces, creates the patterns of mobility that can be observed in and around the Pacific Island States.

26 Asian Development Bank (2012): Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific, Manila: ADB.

27 World Bank (2013): Press release. Developing countries to receive over \$410 billion in remittances in 2013, says World Bank.

28 Ferris, E.; Cernea, M.; Petz, D. (2011): On the front line of climate change: Learning from and with Pacific Island Countries, New York: The Brookings Institution – London School of Economics, Project on Internal Displacement.

Many of the Island States experience different kinds of mobility linked to climate change:

- **displacement** due to sudden onset disasters, where people move temporarily and return after the disaster;

- **internal and international migration** as people seek work elsewhere, partly in response to livelihood degradation linked to climate change impacts;

- many communities are considering **planned relocation** as a way of moving while also maintaining social connections and cultural heritage;

- finally some people are also experiencing **immobility**, a desire to move but a lack of legal or safe migratory opportunities – as demonstrated by this testimony:

'The majority of I-Kiribati have no wish to live in another country, but mounting evidence suggests that we may soon have little choice. Therefore migration may become the key part of the way we are forced to 'adapt' ... But, there's a problem. Unlike our neighbours in Tuvalu (with a population of about 10,000) we have no significant or sympathetic migration relationship or policy with any country.'

*Linda Uan, Kiribati*²⁹

Several countries have visa arrangements with Australia and New Zealand and this has created the opportunity for people to move if they wish.³⁰ It is likely that climate change impacts will magnify these existing migratory trends, rather than create entirely new ones.

3. Some facts about movement with a climate change dimension

From the case studies here and from the research undertaken by experts and academics, the consensus is that most movement with a climate change dimension is likely to be internal rather than cross-border.³¹ When people move due to sudden onset disasters,³² they are more likely to remain in-country, often close to the scene of the disaster. Sometime the displacement is temporary, however disasters often create protracted displacement, where people end up in camps for months or even years. Sudden disasters such as flash floods and typhoons usually mean people move rapidly to ensure their survival. They may be carrying their possessions or helping children and other vulnerable community members, hence they are more likely to remain within their own country.³³ Further, that displacement is more likely to be short in distance to enable people to return home as soon as possible. In cases where people *are* crossing borders, such as in the Horn of Africa, it seems that people are experiencing 'progressive displacement', where a chain of factors creates their cross-border movement. So although their initial displacement may be the result of drought, they may then be displaced again several times before crossing a border to escape conflict or political violence.³⁴

29 Government of Kiribati (2013): I-Kiribati want to migrate with dignity.

30 Immigration New Zealand (2014): Pacific Access Category.

31 Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011): Final Project Report, London: The Government Office for Science.

32 Ferris, E.: (2011): Climate Change and Internal Displacement: A Contribution to the Discussion Prepared for UNHCR Bellagio Roundtable, 22-26 February 2011, 9.

33 Warner, K. (2010): Global environmental change and migration: Governance challenges, in: Global Environmental Change, 20(3).

34 Afifi, T.; Govil, R.; Sakdapolark, P.; Warner, K. (2012): Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: Perspectives of refugees from the East and Horn of Africa, UNHCR/UNU.

It is highly unlikely that entire communities will move *en masse* permanently.³⁵ Little evidence points to patterns of movement in which one community – or even an entire village, town or region – decide to move at the same time, to the same location. Slow onset events such as droughts are more likely to create longer distance movements, although these are still mainly internal. Rather than crossing international borders, people *are* seeking non-farm work in cities, reinforcing the existing powerful trend of rural to urban movement. Even in these cases, people are generally moving to cities within their own country, and often to the nearest big city.

Climate change may also lead to less movement, trapping the most vulnerable people in some of the most dangerous locations. This is due to the fact that moving requires resources and as climate change adversely affects vulnerable livelihoods, people may find themselves without the resources to move.³⁶ As noted earlier, this was clearly the case in Mali during the drought of 1983 and it seems likely that this may also be the case elsewhere.

Another issue that affects the movement of people is the limitation on international immigration. Many states severely restrict the numbers and type of immigrants allowed to cross their borders and implement a strict immigration entry regime. Those displaced by climate change do not have any specific international legal protection available to them and do not have any right to enter the territory of another country. This backdrop also has an impact on migratory decisions and the choices, or lack of choices, available to people who have to move for reasons of climate change.

Clearly millions of people are migrating and crossing borders every year; however, the available evidence indicates that currently climate change is not the only factor driving long distance, cross border movement.³⁷

In the case of both slow and rapid onset events, people are unlikely to cross *continents*. If people *do* cross borders in response to climate change, they tend to move to neighbouring countries. When people move, they are not necessarily moving permanently. In the case of displacement linked to sudden onset events, people tend to move immediately in response to the disaster and then return home as soon as possible. In cases of migration in response to slow onset events, climate change is likely to increase seasonal migration, where people move temporarily to find other work as farming becomes harder.³⁸ For example, rather than moving permanently away from rural areas, many people move temporarily from rural to urban areas during times of acute environmental stress and then return.

It is also clear that migration linked to climate change does not affect everyone in the same way, even within the same community or family. There are important variations in the way that some people are able to respond to climate change and the extent to which they are able to move. Vulnerability to climate change is affected by gender, age, disability and membership of an ethnic group or minority.

35 Haas, H. (2013): Oxford Martin School Webcast, International Migration Institute, Will climate change cause mass migration?

36 Black, R. (2013): Migration, immobility and displacement outcomes following extreme events, in: Environmental Science & Policy, 27 (1), 32-43.

37 Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011): Final Project Report, London: The Government Office for Science.

38 Kniveton, D.; Smith, C. D.; Black, R. (2012): Emerging migration flows in a changing climate, in: Dryland Africa, Nature Climate Change 2, 444-447.



Migration, climate change and gender

Populations that are poor, discriminated against and otherwise marginalised are often more exposed to the negative effects of climate change. Commonly, such populations will inhabit areas more prone to disasters such as coastal zones, flood plains and arid regions. They are more reliant on natural resources and, by virtue of poverty, have limited adaptive capacity. The ability to adapt to climate change also varies within populations and it is understood that climate change magnifies existing inequalities. Men and women have socially conditioned vulnerabilities and capacities that must be considered when developing responses to climate change so that specific needs and priorities are adequately addressed.³⁹

Due to the division of labour, unequal access to resources and decision-making processes, women are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁴⁰ There are many reasons why women are particularly vulnerable: they form a disproportionately greater share of those in poverty; women in rural areas in developing countries are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihood due to their responsibility to secure water, food and energy for cooking and heating; they are more likely to be excluded from decision-making processes; they have been denied educational opportunities that are open to men; they are less likely to have access to early warning systems and their role as carers means they may respond less quickly to disasters due to restricted mobility.⁴¹

39 Jones, L. (2010): Overcoming social barriers to adaptation, Overseas Development Institute.

40 Jungehülsing, J. (2010): Women who go, women who stay: reactions to climate change, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung México, Centroamérica y el Caribe.

41 European Parliament, (2012): Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Report on women and climate change, A7-0049/2012, 13.

The differentiated impact of climate change between men and women has not been sufficiently understood in relation to strategies of migration as an adaptation to climate change.⁴² Women have different capacities and capabilities for adaptation than men due to their socio-economic status. Knowledge, care responsibilities and resources are factors that are likely to vary between men and women and which will lead to differing opportunities to adapt. Further, women are often poorer

and thus less able to adapt to the effects of climate change. It is also clear that women are more vulnerable when migrating and are more likely to experience violence, verbal abuse or to be trafficked.⁴³ However, a true picture of the difference in gender in terms of priorities and possibilities of migration as an adaptation strategy is not known. These gaps in research and understanding must be plugged in order to develop adaptation strategies with a greater understanding of the role of gender.

4. Framing and communicating climate change and migration

4.1 Problems with terminology

There is an ongoing debate about what to call people who move in the context of environmental change. Various organisations and reports have suggested different terms, ranging from ‘climate refugee’,⁴⁴ ‘climate migrant’,⁴⁵ ‘environmentally displaced person’⁴⁶ and even describing people at risk of displacement as ‘climate change refugees to-be’.

There are several difficulties with these terms. They suggest that it is possible to pick out who is and who is not an ‘environmental migrant’ or ‘climate refugee’. In reality, people who have an environmental or climate change *dimension* to their movement will also have several other forces influencing their movement. Research shows that people tend not to see environmental change as

the sole reason for their movement, but see it as one among many factors.⁴⁷ The evidence from a number of regions across the world also indicates that environmental factors usually interact with other forces to create human movement, rather than being the sole cause of movement. Therefore, labelling someone an ‘environmental displacee’ (for example) suggests that environmental factors are the sole cause of their movement. To this extent, these labels are not a useful aid to understanding the complexity of climate-linked movement.

Similarly, some terms also suggest something about the experience of the person who has moved. For example ‘environmentally displaced person’ suggests that someone has been displaced, or forced to move; whereas in many cases when people move in the context of slow onset events, they may have some choice in how, when and where they move to. The term ‘climate migrant’ implies a significant amount of choice about moving, when, in fact, if someone is displaced in the context of a sudden onset disaster, it is very likely they will have had no choice about moving. Some of the labels also imply information about where someone has moved to. For example ‘climate refugee’ suggests

42 European Parliament, (2012): Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, Report on women and climate change, A7-0049/2012, 7.

43 International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2013): IOM’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment activities.

44 ‘Climate Refugees’ Documentary film production (2012): Climate Refugees.

45 United Nations University (2013): Climate migration ‘a complex problem’.

46 Boano, C.; Zetter, R.; Morris, T. (2008): Environmentally displaced people: Understanding linkages between environmental change, livelihoods and forced migration, Forced Migration Policy Brief No.1, Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre.

47 Afifi, T.; Govil, R.; Sakdapolrak, P.; Warner, K. (2012): Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: Perspectives of refugees from the East and Horn of Africa. Bonn: United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security.

a cross-border movement, as to fall within the legal definition of a ‘refugee’ someone must be outside their country of origin. However, as we have seen, most climate-linked movement will be internal rather than cross-border.

The choice of words also has important legal and policy implications. The term ‘climate refugee’ suggests that people might be entitled to some kind of legal protection, for example under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The term also implies that such people *must* be protected under existing refugee law. However, people whose migration is linked to climate change are very unlikely to qualify for refugee status as defined by the Convention.⁴⁸ There are some suggestions that the Refugee Convention should be amended to incorporate people whose migration is linked to climate change. There is wide consensus, however, that any attempt to renegotiate the terms of the Refugee Convention would not produce the desired legal protection, and might in fact risk weakening the protection currently provided for other people displaced across borders.⁴⁹

Finally, many of the existing terms referred to above are not how people with an environmental dimension to their movement refer to themselves. For example, the President of the island state Kiribati, Anote Tong, has been critical of the phrase ‘climate refugees’. He argued that when the people of Kiribati do have to leave, they want to do so with dignity, as skilled migrants and welcome,

productive members of their new communities, rather than as ‘refugees’.⁵⁰ Similarly, Ursula Rakova, a campaigner from the Carteret Islands, has been very critical of the way in which Carteret people have been termed ‘climate refugees’ by the media. She argues that while their movement might be inevitable, their hope is that it will be very different from the kind of forced movement experienced by most people who are described as refugees. She stated: ‘Our plan is one in which we remain as independent and self-sufficient as possible. We wish to maintain our cultural identity and live sustainably wherever we are.’⁵¹ Clearly, her desired situation is far from the circumstances in which most refugees find themselves. It is vital to consider the wishes of affected people in how they want to be described. At the moment the voices of affected communities are largely absent from the debate about how climate-linked migration should be addressed. Unless people are happy with the phrases being used to describe their communities they will continue to feel alienated from the debate.

For these reasons, a number of other terms have been adopted. ‘People who move in the context of environmental change’⁵² is perhaps cumbersome, but is at least accurate. ‘People who have an environmental dimension to their movement’ is similarly descriptively useful. The Nansen Initiative⁵³ has settled on the phrase ‘people displaced across borders due to natural disasters and the adverse effects of climate change’.⁵⁴

48 The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee is someone who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.’

49 International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) (2011): ‘Climate Refugees’: legal and policy responses to environmentally induced migration, Study requested by the European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels: European Parliament.

50 Farbotko, C.; Lazrus, H. (2012): The first climate refugees? Contesting global narratives of climate change in Tuvalu. in: *Global Environmental Change*, 22 (2), 382-390.

51 United Nations University (2009): *How-to Guide for Environmental Refugees*.

52 Kälén, W.; Schrepfer, N. (2012): *Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change Normative. Gaps and Possible Approaches*, UNHCR.

53 In 2011 the Norwegian Government held a conference on climate change and displacement. The outcome of this conference was a set of broad recommendations known as the Nansen Principles. In 2012 the governments of Norway and Switzerland launched the Nansen Initiative, a state-owned consultation process that sought to build consensus on how best to address cross-border displacement in the context of sudden and slow onset climate change and geophysical disasters.

54 The Nansen Initiative (2013): *Objectives*.

4.2 Climate-linked migration as a new security threat?

Migration linked to climate change is often presented as a new security problem that must be addressed. It is true that there are a number of regions where disaster displacement could interact with existing conflicts to worsen the situation.⁵⁵ However, news stories declaring that migrants might arrive in ‘waves’ or ‘floods’ and are a security threat to their destination country are clearly inaccurate.⁵⁶ Apart from being an inaccurate representation of how migration linked to climate change might happen, it is also an extremely unhelpful way of framing the issue. There is strong psychological evidence that presenting issues in terms of security encourages a strongly self-enhancing and inward-looking perspective, which is quite at odds with building a society that is open and tolerant of migrants.⁵⁷ There is also evidence that arguments framed in terms of security can make people more prejudiced and more likely to favour military intervention.⁵⁸ Communicators need to be extremely careful when discussing migration alongside negative climate impacts such as rising sea levels or extreme weather events, as it is all too easy to create the impression that migration is a threat and should be feared.

It is also frequently suggested that climate change will cause people to move into already densely populated areas and that this increased population density will cause violent conflict over scarce resources, new civil conflict, or even interstate warfare.⁵⁹ However, there is currently only very mixed and inconclusive evidence for a direct causal relationship between climate-linked movement of people and violent conflict.⁶⁰

Framing climate-linked migration as a security threat is clearly not supported by evidence and could be very unhelpful in building tolerant societies.

4.3 Migration as an adaptive response to climate change

There are more positive ways of framing migration linked to climate change that can both accurately characterise the phenomenon and view migrants as active agents in making decisions. Migration may be one of the most powerful ways of managing the impacts of climate change. There may be circumstances in which moving is the most effective way for a community to adapt to the worst effects of climate change.⁶¹

Climate adaptation is a contested term, so while migration may fall outside some traditional definitions of adaptation, it clearly can fall within some more nuanced ways of thinking about adaptation. For example, the World Resources Institute has produced a framework for climate change adaptation that defines a ‘spectrum’ of climate change adaptation projects.⁶² This spectrum ranges from infrastructure adaptation projects, such as sea and flood defences to development and livelihoods projects that help build resilience to climate change impacts, such as working with pastoralists on rangeland management to make the land more resilient to drought.

There are clearly cases in which communities use migration as a way of increasing their resilience to climate change that would fall within this definition of adaptation.

55 Werz, M.; Conley, L. (2012): *Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict Addressing complex crisis scenarios in the 21st Century*, Washington: Center for American Progress, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington DC.

56 Mitchel, L. (2013): *Climate change, not jobs, will force migrants to Britain, warns MP*, in: Daily Express, 12 August.

57 Crompton, T. (2011): *Common Cause: the case for working with cultural values*, London: WWF.

58 Cohrs, J.C.; Moschner, B.; Maes, J.; Kielmann, S. (2005): *Personal values and attitudes toward war*, in: *Journal of Peace Psychology* 11 (3).

59 Hartmann, B. (2010): *Rethinking climate refugees and climate conflict. Rhetoric reality and politics of policy discourse*, in: *Journal of International Development* 22 (2).

60 Gleditsch, N. (2012): *Special issue on climate change and conflict*, *Journal of Peace Research* 49 (1).

61 Black, R. (2011): *Climate Change: Migration as adaptation*, in: *Nature* 478, 447-449.

62 World Resources Institute (2012): *Ready or Not? Assessing National Institutional Capacity for Climate Change Adaption*.

An increasing number of people migrate temporarily and seasonally. In rural agricultural areas, people often remain at home during the busy periods of the agricultural calendar and move to find work elsewhere during the quieter times. This seems to be a trend that is increasing regardless of climate change impacts. However, it is likely that as climate change impacts make farming in some places harder, people will increasingly use this pattern of migration as a way of adapting. For example, if changes in weather patterns shorten the growing season in some regions, seasonal migration could increasingly become a way to help communities respond.

There is also evidence that people use migration as a way of adapting to water stress, particularly in agricultural areas.⁶³ During periods of temporary water stress, some household members will move to nearby cities and attempt to find temporary work. If and when the period of water stress ends and farming becomes more productive, they will then return and resume farm-based work.

These strategies are increasing resilience in several ways. As income from farming falls (for example due to water stress) some household members move to find work elsewhere. This helps maintain continuity in the household's income. At the same time, the size of the household decreases, which reduces expenditure, and there is likely to be an inflow of remittances from the household members who are working elsewhere.

The idea of migration as a form of climate adaptation is not universally accepted and raises important ethical and legal questions. Recognising migration as a positive response to climate change

could require developed countries to reconsider their policies on immigration, which are usually restrictive. It would also mean reconsidering international development and funding priorities which tend to assist recipients to *in situ* rather than assisting them to move. There are policies and projects that *could* facilitate migration as a way of adapting to climate change. For example, it is well-documented that training people in non-farm skills often results in out-migration from rural areas.⁶⁴ This raises the possibility that offering educational opportunities and retraining in areas highly exposed to natural hazards could enable people to seek work in areas of lower risk if they choose.

Migration may also be helping to build some communities' resilience to sudden onset disasters. This happens in two ways. If some people have migrated away from an area that is highly exposed to some kinds of natural hazards, then there are simply fewer people in the areas, and therefore fewer people at risk of injury, death or displacement in the event of a disaster. Further, the role of remittances is also important here. In areas prone to disasters, remittances can be extremely helpful during or after a disaster. In the event of a disaster, livelihoods and businesses providing income are usually severely disrupted and it can take a long time before normal income-generating activities can be resumed. In such cases, remittances from a different area, or even a different country, can provide a vital stopgap. For example, in 2009 nearly 10% of the Philippines' citizens lived outside the country. This overseas workforce has created a powerful flow of remittances into the Philippines, which now accounts for over 11% of GDP. With increasing exposure to disasters at home, this flow of remittances from abroad has provided some financial stability for families affected by disasters.

63 Warner, K.; Afifi, T. (2014): Where the rain falls: Evidence from 8 countries on how vulnerable households use migration to manage the risk of rainfall variability and food insecurity, in: *Climate and Development*, 6 (1).

64 Mahajan, V.; Kumar Gupta, R. (2011): Non Farm Opportunities for Smallholder Agriculture, Paper presented at the IFAD Conference on New Directions for Smallholder Agriculture, 24-25 January 2011, 5.

5. Summary of key characteristics of climate-linked migration



The available evidence creates a complex picture from which making predictions about the future is challenging. Notwithstanding, it is clear that there is enough available information

to begin making policy decisions that will help and protect people who move in the context of climate change. Certain key characteristics of climate-related migration can be identified.

- Movement is more likely to be internal than across international borders.

- Where people cross international borders, they are more likely to move to neighbouring countries rather than crossing continents.

- In sudden onset climate disasters, people tend to move a short distance and for a temporary period.

- Climate change is likely to increase seasonal migration as well as rural to urban migration.

- Individual characteristics such as gender or age may impact on movement and choices.

- Climate change may deplete the livelihood of communities to the extent they are trapped and unable to move.

PART 2: Tackling the challenge – Policy recommendations to the EU

By Margit Ammer & Monika Mayrhofer



At present, there is no coherent EU policy on environment-related forms of migration and displacement, which means there is no well-structured normative framework that addresses different forms of climate- and environment-related migration. However, environment-related forms of migration have been a topic of discussion at EU level for a while and a multitude of institutions and actors are involved in shaping the process. So far, EU deliberations have focussed on the subsequent questions:

- How and to what extent will environment-related migration and displacement affect European countries and the EU?

- Should the EU respond to this issue and if yes, in what way?

- To what extent are existing legal and policy frameworks adequate to effectively accommodate and cover different forms of environment-related migration?

- Does the EU need new instruments and policies to deal with the phenomenon of climate change and migration?

The initial findings of this on-going discussion and reflection process on this topic have been summarised in the European Commission's Staff Working Document (CSWD) on 'Climate change, environmental degradation, and migration' (accompanying the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change), published in April 2013. This document should serve as a starting point for a discussion on the topic of environment-related migration/displacement with Member States, which may eventually lead to the development of a policy in this field.

1. Policy responses by the EU so far

1.1 Initiatives by the European Parliament

EU institutions started to engage with environment-related migration and displacement in the late 1990s by gathering information, commissioning research projects and organising events in order to discuss the topic with different stakeholders. The European Parliament was the first EU institution to do some groundwork in this regard. It included the issue of 'climate refugees' in its 1999 resolution on *The Environment, Security and Foreign Policy*, which stressed the extent of the challenge and warned against the direct and indirect pressures on EU immigration and justice policies, development assistance and spending on humanitarian aid as well as 'increased security problems for the EU in the form of regional instability in other parts of the world.'⁶⁵ In addition, the Parliament organised seminars, workshops, hearings and other discussion events.⁶⁶ A study on 'Climate Refugees' (2011), commissioned by the European Parliament (*Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs*), both explored protection gaps and possible policy responses at an international level and also analysed the current EU legal and policy framework.⁶⁷

The most recent initiative was launched by the Greens/European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament. The group adopted the position paper 'Climate Change, Refugees and Migration'.⁶⁸ The paper discusses crucial issues

65 European Parliament (1999): Resolution on the environment, security and foreign policy. 28.1.1999, A4-0005/99, Art. I.

66 For a list of such events see European Commission (2013): Staff Working Document 'Climate change, environmental degradation, and migration', Accompanying the document 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, SWD(2013)138 final, 16.4.2013, in the following: CSWD, 6.

67 WICMPD (2011): 'Climate Refugees': legal and policy responses to environmentally induced migration, Study requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels: European Parliament.

68 The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament (2013): Position paper climate change, refugees and migration, adopted in May 2013, drafted by Hélène Flautre, Jean Lambert, Ska Keller and Barbara Lochbihler.

concerning terminology, adaptation and development, legal options and EU options with regard to climate change and migration and makes recommendations for further policy developments in this field.

1.2 First steps undertaken by the EU High Representative and the European Commission

In 2008, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Commission published a document on *Climate change and international security*. The paper describes environmentally-induced migration as a ‘threat’ that might enhance the potential for conflict in transit and destination countries. The document points out that Europe ‘must expect substantially increased migratory pressure’ and recommended an enhancement of EU capacities by building up knowledge and systems of monitoring and early warning. It further emphasised the role of the multilateral leadership of the EU to promote global climate security by considering ‘environmentally-triggered additional migratory stress in the further development of a comprehensive European migration policy, in liaison with all relevant international bodies.’⁶⁹

1.3 Stockholm Programme and Commission Staff Working Document

In 2009, the European Council included a paragraph on climate change and migration in the Stockholm Programme.⁷⁰ This was an important step on the way towards an EU approach on climate change and migration. The paragraph highlights the need to explore the connection between climate change, migration and development and asks the European Commission to carry out ‘an analysis of the effects of climate change on international migration, including its potential effects on immigration to the Union.’⁷¹ This served as a starting point to develop the Commission Staff Working Document (CSWD), published in April 2013. During the preparation of the CSWD, the European Commission organised expert consultations and roundtables such as the consultation of experts on ‘Climate Change and Migration’ in May 2011. The CSWD represents the culmination of the efforts of the Commission to launch a discussion on the inter-linkages between migration, environmental degradation and climate change, and to provide an overview of the research and data currently available in this area. The CSWD aims to present a compilation ‘of the many initiatives of relevance for the topic which are already being taken by the EU in various policy fields, and analyses on-going debates on policy responses at EU and international level.’⁷²

69 High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (2008): *Climate change and international security*, S113/08, 5-7. It was argued that Europe would bear the consequences of global warming *inter alia* in the form of mass migration since some parts of the population of some EU-neighbouring regions (e.g. northern Africa, Middle East), which are already affected by difficult health conditions, unemployment, social exclusion, would become more prone to the impacts of climate change. In that way, internal and international migration could be triggered.

70 ‘The Stockholm Programme – An Open and Secure Europe Serving and Protecting Citizens’ defines the EU policy priorities in the area of justice and home affairs for 2010-2014.

71 European Council (2009): *The Stockholm Programme – An open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens*. 14449/09, JAI 679, Brussels, 16.10.2009, 42.

72 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 3.

On 19 July 2013, the Council of the European Union released the *Conclusions on the 2013 UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and on broadening the development-migration nexus* stating that ‘climate and environmental degradation are already exerting an increasing influence on migration and mobility and therefore considers that the linkages between climate change, environmental degradation and migration should be further explored and addressed as appropriate, in particular in the context of development cooperation, foreign policy and humanitarian assistance.’⁷³ The document calls on the EU and its Member States ‘to urgently take steps to deepen knowledge and further develop policy’ in this field.

2. Shortcomings of current policy responses

The approach of the European Commission to environment-related migration can be characterised as being cautious and reserved, especially when it comes to migration and asylum policies and frameworks. The following chapter will briefly summarise the most important general insights drawn from the policies suggested so far at EU level, focussing mainly on the CSWD. Thus, the following arguments will focus primarily on the work of the Commission.

2.1 Keeping a low profile or taking a leadership role?

As mentioned above, the general ‘policy style’ with regard to environment-related migration is cautious. So far, the European Commission has been quite reluctant to take a leadership role at international level and towards EU Member States. The policies suggested or adopted so far rather aim at promoting existing initiatives or re-framing existing measures (e.g. development policies) as also being relevant for addressing environment-related migration. Compared to other issues, climate change and migration is a rather low-priority item on the EU policy agenda. This is not only true for the European Commission, where several Directorate-Generals were involved in the drafting process of the CSWD – however, with changing responsibilities. Environment-related migration also ranks low on the agenda of the European Parliament. Although the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs commissioned the above-mentioned study on ‘Climate Refugees’, and the Greens in particular were repeatedly trying to promote the topic, initiatives to put the topic on the agenda of other European Parliament Committees and to include it in Committee reports or to discuss it in Committee hearings have failed so far.

The initiatives – especially those by the European Commission – and the process so far suggest that only incremental and less controversial policy changes, such as in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, will emerge rather than developing new policies or revising or opening up legal instruments in the field of migration and asylum policy.

⁷³ Council of the European Union (2013): Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the 2013 UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and on broadening the development-migration nexus. 12415/13, Brussels, 19 July 2013, 6.



2.2 Adopting a comprehensive approach and re-framing the issue of environment-related migration

EU policy on environment-related migration and displacement has an internal and an external dimension. Both dimensions are heavily influenced by the objective to limit or manage immigration and refugee flows into EU territory.⁷⁴ The internal dimension relates to migration into the EU. The external dimension refers to the inclusion of migration and asylum policies into external relations with third countries. The latter aims at preventing immigration by addressing the root causes of migration in third countries and by transferring migration control instruments – such as border control or measures to combat illegal

migration, smuggling and trafficking – outside of the EU.⁷⁵ Both dimensions are mentioned in the CSWD. However, the policy focus is on the external dimension. This is justified by the reference that environment-related migration will primarily occur ‘in the developing world, with migrants moving either internally or to countries in the same region.’⁷⁶ However, the Commission fails to acknowledge in the CSWD, on the one hand, that there is no data available on whether and how many people are moving towards Europe for inter alia environmental reasons. On the other hand, it ignores that people who would like to move to the EU in this context would in most cases not be able to do so legally – especially with regard to unskilled and poor persons. Instead, the Commission assumes in the CSWD that no one

74 Boswell, C. (2003): The ‘external dimension’ of EU immigration and asylum policy. *International Affairs*, 79 (3), 619.

75 *Ibid.*, see also Castles, S. (2004): Why migration policies fail, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27 (2), 218.

76 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 34.

will migrate to Europe in this context. Given that four fifths of the worldwide refugee population stay within their regions of origin, the combination of population growth, the increase in the quantity and intensity of environmental hazards and insufficient adaptive capacity will put more and more pressure on the regions of origin. Current policy responses therefore clearly lack a comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of climate change and migration.

The EU's approach to environment-related migration was initially driven to a large extent by security considerations; however, lately it has been complemented by a development approach. The former refers to the perception of immigration primarily as a threat to national security. The latter rather highlights migration as a positive contribution to the development of a region. Although the development approach emphasises the positive aspects of migration, it is criticised for seeking to pursue the same objectives as the security approach, i.e. to strengthen immigration control and to decrease migration towards European countries.⁷⁷ Both dimensions are problematic by either producing stereotypes of a mass-influx of – mostly unskilled and poor – migrants or, paradoxically, by denying responsibility for any activity in the field of EU immigration and asylum policy because it is regarded primarily as a 'development' problem and most migration is said to occur within the Global South.

2.3 Adopting a human rights approach and taking vulnerable groups into account

The European Union is legally obliged to respect human rights in all its policies. Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union states that the 'Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.' According to Article 6(1), the EU recognises the rights, freedoms and principles in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Thus, the rights listed in the Charter are to be applied by EU institutions and Member States when implementing EU law. In addition, the EU's external relations should be guided by principles such as 'democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law' (Article 21, Treaty on the European Union). Although the CSWD contains a short reference to international human rights law, stating that '[h]uman rights law applies to environmentally induced migrations, as to all other persons',⁷⁸ the consistent implementation in regard to all policies and measures that concerns environment-related migration and displacement is flawed. For example, the CSWD proposes that 'the EU funded *Temporary and Circular Labour Migration (TCLM)* agreement between Spain and Colombia can serve as a model'⁷⁹ when it comes to promoting and facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy. Some recent research has shown that TCLMs have serious shortcomings when it comes to the protection of rights of persons migrating and working

77 Vlassopoulos, C. (2012): Climate change and migration: towards a new nexus for policy making in the European Union?, in Human Rights and Climate Change. EU Policy Options, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, Brussels, 61; and Lavenex, S. and Kunz R. (2012): The Migration-Development Nexus in EU External Relations, in: Journal of European Integration, 30 (3), 452-453.

78 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 16.

79 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 28.



under these schemes. There is often a ‘trade-off’ between the rights of circular migrants and economic gains of these programmes. In destination countries, ‘temporary migrant workers remain outside ordinary legal parameters, as they are only afforded selected and partial rights, in contrast to native and permanent immigrants.’⁸⁰ This does not only apply to those programmes carried out in so-called ‘underdeveloped’ and/or nondemocratic countries but also to the alleged ‘successful and well-managed programmes’ such as the TCLM agreement between Spain and Colombia.⁸¹

As pointed out in the first section of this paper, specific groups such as women, minorities, the poor or children are specifically affected by negative consequences of climate change and are particularly vulnerable as migrant groups. Vulnerable groups so far only play a marginal role within EU considerations on environment-related migration and displacement.

80 Zapata-Barrero, R.; Faúndez García, R.; Sánchez-Montijano, E. (2012): Circular temporary labour migration: reassessing established public policies, in: *International Journal of Population Research* Volume 2012, 6-7.

81 *Ibid.*, 6.

3. Looking more closely at EU asylum and migration policy

3.1 The internal dimension: asylum policy

The EU **Qualification Directive**⁸² regulates who qualifies for ‘international protection’, i.e. as a refugee according to the Geneva Refugee Convention – the primary refugee protection instrument at global level – or as a person benefitting from subsidiary protection status. Subsidiary protection is an EU version of the so-called ‘complementary protection’ based on general human rights obligations, in particular on the principle of non-refoulement⁸³ (specifically Art. 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Environmentally displaced persons could only under exceptional circumstances qualify as refugees under the Geneva Convention⁸⁴, which is also the position taken in the Commission’s Staff Working Document (CSWD).⁸⁵ However, this is **less clear-cut with regard to subsidiary protection**.

Movements in the context of environmental-related impacts have the ‘potential [...] to be covered under ‘inhuman or degrading treatment’ (based on Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights).’⁸⁶ Even though Member States did not want to cover this form of movement in the Qualification Directive, this ‘does not foreclose the possibility that treatment resulting from such

situation could amount to inhuman or degrading treatment.’⁸⁷ Despite that, the CSWD mentions only that the Qualification Directive would ‘not include environmental degradation nor climate change amongst the types of serious harm which can lead to granting such protection.’⁸⁸ However, the relevant question to be asked is **whether the return of a person to his or her country of origin, which is affected by environmental degradation or environmental disasters, poses the risk of ‘inhuman or degrading treatment’**.⁸⁹ Neither the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg nor the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg has explicitly taken position on this question yet.

It is not only that the CSWD oversimplifies the interpretation of ‘serious harm’ – the reasoning in the CSWD regarding the appropriateness of subsidiary protection must also be brought into question: the CSWD argues that subsidiary protection would be inappropriate in cases of slow-onset environmental degradation since people would ‘tend to seek support for finding an alternative livelihood and earning a living rather than seeking refugee-type protection’ so that ‘[n]either the aim nor the content of refugee-type protection would appear to be “appropriate” [...]’: With regard to this aspect, the CSWD does not acknowledge that slow-onset environmental degradation may, after some time, lead to forced forms of migration. Moreover, the CSWD argues that because of its long-term character, subsidiary protection would also not be ‘appropriate’ in the case of rapid-onset events leading to

82 European Parliament & Council of the European Union (2011): Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast), Official Journal of the European Union, L 337/9.

83 The principle of non-refoulement is defined as the prohibition to expel a person to a country where she/he would face a real risk of a threat to her/his right to life or a real risk of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; it includes the prohibition to refuse entry if the person would otherwise face one of the risks mentioned.

84 McAdam, J. (2012): *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, Oxford: University Press, 47; and UNHCR (2009): *Climate change, natural disasters and human displacement: a UNHCR perspective*, Geneva.

85 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 17.

86 McAdam, J. (2012): *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, 103.

87 McAdam, J. (2012): *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, 104.

88 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 18.

89 Art. 15 lit b Qualification Directive (see 82).

temporary displacement. However, subsidiary protection does not necessarily have to be regarded as a long-term protection since cessation is envisaged if the conditions for granting it no longer exist.

To conclude, subsidiary protection might be a form of protection accessible for some persons affected if the Qualification Directive was interpreted in a certain way. However, the following obstacles still exist:

— Firstly, regarding the question whether a person qualifies for subsidiary protection, a **future-oriented risk forecast** must be undertaken. Therefore, persons who left their country of origin after an environmental event or process cannot claim subsidiary protection if the situation in the country of origin has eased in the meantime.⁹⁰ This means that it is primarily the hypothetical situation upon the return of a person that is relevant when assessing whether somebody is eligible for subsidiary protection – and the existence of a difficult situation in the past is not as important.

— Secondly, Art. 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights does **‘not allow for pre-emptive movement** where conditions are anticipated to become dire, and thus would not assist people trying to move before the situation became intolerable.⁹¹

— Thirdly, the situation leading to ‘inhuman or degrading treatment’ must **cover the whole country** of origin or it has to be unreasonable for the person concerned to move to a safe area and settle down there.⁹²

Finally, another important point must be raised: many displaced persons (would) most likely face the same challenges as refugees in **accessing EU territories** (e.g. the need for a visa, the existence of carrier sanctions or strengthened border control). This means that they would in many cases need to use irregular means to enter or stay on the territory of the Member States since EU asylum law is linked to EU visa policy, EU rules on external border controls, EU law on irregular migration, EU external relations policy and development policy.⁹³

Temporary protection according to the **Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC)** should serve to tackle urgent protection needs in the case of a ‘mass influx of displaced persons’ or when a mass influx is ‘imminent’ until individual asylum applications can be handled; it is defined as ‘a procedure of exceptional character’.⁹⁴ The personal scope of application of the Temporary Protection Directive seems to be broader than the one with regard to subsidiary protection⁹⁵ and could be of relevance for environmentally displaced persons – if a larger group was affected.

So far, however, the Temporary Protection Directive has **never been applied**: in order to trigger the application of the Directive, a decision by the Council (qualified majority), upon proposal by the Commission on the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons, must exist. This has so far not been the case, not even in the context of the ‘Arab spring’ or the Syrian civil war.

90 Wouters, K. (2009): *International Legal Standards for the protection from refoulement*. Antwerp: Intersentia, 25.

91 McAdam, J. (2012): *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, 76.

92 Art. 8 Qualification Directive (see ⁸²).

93 Peers, S. (2011): *EU Justice and Home Affairs Law*, Oxford: University Press, 295-297.

94 Council of the European Union (2001): *Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof (Temporary Protection Directive)*, Official Journal of the European Union, L 212/12, Art.2 lit a.

95 Displaced persons are defined as third country nationals or stateless persons who had to leave their country or region of origin (or were evacuated after a call of international organisations) and cannot return safely and permanently. This applies in particular to persons who have fled from areas that were seriously threatened by systematic or widespread human rights violations or who are victims of human rights violations (Art.2 lit c Temporary Protection Directive).

The CSWD regards temporary protection as ‘appropriate after severe rapid-onset disasters (such as floods), when masses flee from the area affected but when the possibility of them returning in the short or medium term remains open.’⁹⁶ However, the document does not contain further information regarding which circumstances it would deem the Directive applicable for environmentally displaced persons.

3.2 The internal dimension: migration as adaptation through EU labour migration policies?

The European Commission clearly acknowledges migration as an adaptation strategy in its Staff Working Document. It states that the facilitation of well-managed mobility and labour migration from environmentally degraded areas could represent an effective strategy to reduce environment-related displacement.⁹⁷ It seems, however, that the Commission rather has mobility and labour migration within the ‘developing world’ in mind, i.e. migration within countries and regions of origin, rather than migration towards the EU. The document refers explicitly to the promotion of ‘mobility within states (e.g. rural-urban migration); and to ‘international migration, in particular between developing countries in the same region.’⁹⁸ Moreover, in the conclusion of the CSWD, the Commission stresses that ‘addressing environmentally induced migration is principally a matter for the EU development and humanitarian aid policies.’ Thus, it is not regarded as a pressing issue for EU immigration policy. The prediction that most people moving in the context of environment-related impacts will stay within their region does not mean that *nobody* will ever or has ever come to Europe. Similarly, the fact that four fifths of the worldwide refugee population stay in their regions of origin does not release EU Member

States from providing protection to those who actually manage to arrive on EU territories.

While not entirely excluding the possibility of labour migration towards the EU, the CSWD does not specifically refer to it. In this vein, the Commission mentions in the Staff Working Document that future initiatives on labour migration and mobility would be better aimed at regions at risk of environmental degradation and should build on experience gained with labour migration schemes implemented by the EU and its Member States as well as non-EU countries. An example mentioned by the CSWD is the *Temporary and Circular Labour Migration* agreement between Spain and Colombia and the New Zealand labour migration policy for Pacific islands. With regard to the promotion of well-managed international mobility and better organisation of legal migration, the CSWD also refers to the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM),⁹⁹ e.g. promoting circular migration schemes.

Immigration to the EU (as adaptation) is not explicitly discussed, which certainly has to do with the difficult process of harmonising rules on labour migration and the fact that Member States have – according to the primary law bases in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – the right to control the number of workers to be admitted to their labour markets. Consequently, it would be up to national governments to determine how many third country nationals are allowed to enter in order to seek work and, hence, whether persons affected by environmental degradation can make use of migration as an adaptation mechanism by immigrating to EU Member States in search for work. Despite that, the TFEU clearly speaks of a ‘common immigration policy’ – and in this context the Commission would have been in the position to put this issue forward.

96 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 19.

97 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 26, with reference to Foresight (2011).

98 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 28. It mentions that a 26 million EUR initiative to promote implementation of the ECOWAS 1980 Free Movement Protocol was recently launched.

99 European Commission (2011): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, COM(2011) 743 final, Brussels, 18.11.2011.

At EU level, so far only modest steps have been taken to harmonise the entry and residence of certain categories of workers: The so-called ‘Blue Card Directive’, adopted in 2009, regulates entry, residence and a common special procedure with regard to highly qualified employment,¹⁰⁰ which might be of relevance only to a small fraction of persons affected by degraded environment. The Council and the European Parliament approved the ‘Seasonal Migrant Workers Directive’¹⁰¹ in February 2014, which regulates the conditions for entry and residence of seasonal workers including a joint permit. This could be relevant to persons who wish to make use of labour migration as an adaptation strategy – taking into account that seasonal migration might become even more

important due to climate change impacts (see part I of this report). However, there are shortcomings when it comes to the question of human rights for migrants.¹⁰² In this context, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants critically stated that ‘the number of visas issued under this programme will remain at the discretion of Member States’ and ‘that it does not provide any long-term solutions and may in fact lead to migrants ending up with irregular status if they overstay their visas.’¹⁰³ The Rapporteur recommended the opening up of legal entry channels to the EU which ‘may prove to be more efficient and less costly than punitive measures, and may also contribute to a reduction in irregular migration.’¹⁰⁴



100 Council of the European Union (2009): Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment, Official Journal of the European Union, L 155/17.

101 Directive not yet published in the Official Journal of the European Union. European Commission (2010): Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment, COM(2010) 379 final, 2010/0210 (COD), Brussels, 13.7.2010.

102 The permit would allow the holder to reside for five to nine months within a 12-months-period, after which return is obligatory; re-entry is to be facilitated by Member States in a subsequent season. There exists no possibility of status change. The Directive does – in contrast to the ‘Blue Card Directive’ – not provide for the entry of family members.

103 Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants (2013): Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants; Regional study: management of the external borders of the European Union and its impact on the human rights of migrants, A/HRC/23/46, 24.4.2013.

104 Ibid.

In sum, the EU's action with regard to migration policy has been described as 'imbalanced' since the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty (1999). EU legislation on border management, visa and irregular migration is regarded as 'substantial' and EU action relating to the operational level would be 'quite integrated' whereas 'legal migration issues, in particular admission for work purposes, are not addressed in a detailed and coherent manner'.¹⁰⁵

Other suggestions made in the CSWD as to the potential role of the EU with regard to migration as adaptation include, amongst others:

- supporting partners in introducing a migration dimension to their national adaptation planning;
- highlighting the potential of migration as a coping strategy in political dialogues with 'developing countries';
- playing a role in global migration and development fora.

3.3 The external dimension

As acknowledged by the CSWD, many, if not most, persons affected are likely to stay in their countries or regions of origin. Thus, they will add to the large number of refugees and internally displaced persons living in the 'developing world'.¹⁰⁶ Already today, the EU supports – in the context of the external dimension of asylum policy – regions and countries of origin and transit in their efforts to assist and protect displaced persons, in particular refugees. The CSWD mentions that apart from providing humanitarian assistance, the EU could support the provision of durable solutions for persons who are displaced permanently or for a longer term.

According to the CSWD, some of the EU initiatives in supporting sustainable solutions for displaced people could 'if adequately adapted [...] serve as a useful model to apply to environmentally induced displacement'.¹⁰⁷ Some initiatives mentioned in this context are the Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs).

Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs)

RPPs are a rather new concept introduced by a Communication in 2005 and subsequently integrated into the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility. They aim at strengthening the protection capacity of third countries and at supporting the provision of durable solutions for refugees. RPPs comprise particular projects for the improvement of the general protection situation, of asylum procedures and of reception conditions. They also include projects for the hosting community and a (voluntary) resettlement component.¹⁰⁸

It seems sensible to enhance the protection capacity of host countries of environmentally-displaced persons. However, the following challenges must be borne in mind when applying RPPs to environment-related displacement:

- Firstly, RPPs do not provide for a normative framework upon which protection is granted. Since existing asylum frameworks do not cover all environmentally-displaced persons, it is questionable whether currently this group would benefit from RPPs without amending those frameworks.
- Secondly, RPPs have had only a very limited impact so far due to restricted flexibility, lack of funding, insufficient coordination with

105 Pascouau, Y. (2013): EU immigration policy: act now before it is too late, Commentary European Policy Centre (EPC) 20.6.2013.

106 UNHCR (2013): Global Trends 2012, Geneva: By the end of 2012 there were approx. 45.2 million persons forcibly displaced persons including 28.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Four fifths of the worldwide refugee population are hosted by 'developing countries'.

107 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 30.

108 European Commission (2005): Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Regional Protection Programmes, COM(2005) 388, Brussels, 1.9.2005.

other areas, such as humanitarian assistance and development.¹⁰⁹ RPPs are criticised for constituting only a list of projects with very limited funding (from the development budget) available, in particular when compared to funds provided in the context of EU humanitarian assistance. It was also described as a ‘repackaging’ of already existing projects. It is therefore doubtful whether such a concept should be expanded to other types of needs, given that there is already ‘very little money for very large needs.’

Thirdly, relying too heavily on the external dimension can be risky: it has been argued in the context of refugee protection – which might be to a certain extent also true for environment-related displacement – that refugees should not be confined to areas where effective protection cannot be guaranteed. Durable solutions will not always be available in regions of origin or transit for all individuals in need of protection. However, working with countries of origin would be also based on ‘a desire to control refugee flows.’

Thus, it must be questioned whether RPPs – given their shortcomings – lead to a transformation of the hosting areas into ‘safe havens.’¹¹⁰ In this context another component of RPPs, resettlement, becomes particularly important. So far, resettlement hardly played a role given the absent or low commitments of EU Member States.

Relocation

The CSWD mentions that the EU could play a role with regard to supporting ‘planned relocations’ (as a last resort). It argues that the facilitation of relocation could be important in preventing ‘potential unorganised displacement,’ in particular for so-called ‘trapped populations’ or ‘persons in communities severely affected by environmental



degradation but lacking the resources to either adapt or migrate,’ e.g. for countries at risk of being ‘inundated by sea water or becoming environmentally unsustainable due to desertification.’ Finally, relocation is seen as an option after displacement to host communities lacking the capacity to provide a durable solution to ‘lighten the burden on host communities.’¹¹¹

In this context, the European Commission suggests that the ‘EU should [...] consider supporting countries severely exposed to environmental stressors to assess the path of degradation and design specific preventive internal, or where necessary, international relocation measures when adaptation strategies can no longer be implemented.’ The CSWD refers to the experience of the EU and its Member States with regard to their own resettlement programmes, which could be useful ‘in supporting non-EU countries’ efforts to use relocation in managing environmentally induced migration.’ Thus, a potential role of the EU is seen in developing preventive internal, or if necessary, international relocation measures. However, the specific wording (‘non-EU countries’ efforts to use relocation’) suggests that the CSWD is rather referring to **relocation undertaken by non-EU Member States.**

109 European Commission (2010): Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, First Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum (2009) COM (2010) 214, Brussels, 6.5.2010, 8.

110 Crisp, J. (2003): Refugee protection in regions of origin: Potential and challenges, Migration Policy Institute.

111 European Commission (2013): CSWD, 31.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

From the analysis of key characteristics of movement in the context of climate change (*Part I*) and of legal and policy gaps of current EU initiatives

- The European Commission should assume an active leadership role with regard to environment-related migration, not only by supporting or contributing to debates on a global level, but also by seeking and advocating solutions towards other EU institutions and towards EU Member States.

- All EU policies on environment-related migration and displacement must respect and protect the rights of individuals concerned and comply with human rights obligations. Vulnerable groups such as women, the poor, minorities or children have to be taken into consideration when developing measures and policies with regard to environment-related migration and displacement.

- European decision-makers should reconsider the frames that are currently shaping EU discussions on environment-related migration and displacement. It is important that the EU – as one of the major contributors to the production of greenhouse gases – is aware of its responsibilities not only by taking appropriate action in terms of legal and policy frameworks in the field of migration and asylum policy but also by being aware of its responsibility on how to influence the discourse and dismantle negative stereotypes about migrants that generally accompany security debates.

- The European Union should shape global adaptation and development policy in a way that sees some forms of migration as a way of reducing vulnerability to climate change.

- The EU and its Member States should consider funding development and adaptation projects that create opportunities for people to move. By focusing these projects on areas that are especially vulnerable to climate impacts,

and frameworks, and in particular the European Commission Staff Working Document, (*Part II*) policy makers should take into account the subsequent recommendations in order to proceed towards a coherent EU approach with regard to migration in the context of climate change:

people could begin to reduce their vulnerability by choosing to migrate.

- By taking into account the phenomenon of climate change and migration, and specifically the legal status of people who move for reasons related to climate change, the EU can create a humane and functioning immigration and asylum system that is fit for purpose.

- While movements in the context of environmental change are more likely to be internal than across international borders, some people might have the means to move and seek work in the EU as a way of protecting themselves and their families against worsening environmental conditions. Although the external dimension of migration is important, the EU must therefore also give due weight to the internal dimension of migration and provide legal means for labour immigration to the EU for migrants in the context of climate change or providing protection for displaced people.

- The EU should make use of the potential of the Qualification Directive (subsidiary protection) in the context of environment-related forms of migration and displacement. However, since there are disadvantages with regard to this form of protection, the EU should consider using its competence to adopt new legal instruments under Art. 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

- In the face of increasingly severe climate-linked disasters, the EU should set up rules of how and when to provide refuge and protection during such disasters. The EU should make use of the Temporary Protection Directive in the case of a mass influx of persons displaced by inter alia environment-related events.

— The EU should create legal channels to EU territory in order to avoid the distress and deaths of persons en route to Europe. In particular, legal channels for labour migration should be opened in order to enable persons and communities to reduce their vulnerabilities. As also stressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, ‘the opening of legal entry channels to the EU may prove to be more efficient and less costly than punitive measures.’

— While Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs) could be relevant in particular for environmentally-displaced persons who are ‘trapped’ in their regions of origin, the current practice suggests that they would not bring an added value when applied to climate-related displacement. The concept should be reflected and adequate resources would be needed to make RPPs workable for environmentally-displaced persons. Apart from that, RPPs should not be used as an excuse for barring access to Europe.

— The idea of preventing displacement by preventive planned relocation is sensible. However, the EU should not focus solely on this aspect and also consider options that aim at the reduction of the ‘burden’ of regions of origin, e.g. modification of the concept of resettlement as a means for ensuring safe access to Europe and taking the responsibility/‘burden’ from regions of origin.

— The southern Mediterranean region may specifically be affected by the impacts of environmental degradation. The EU is therefore well advised to prepare a meaningful contribution towards sharing the ‘burden’ of regions of origin.

CONCLUSIONS

The inter-linkages between climate change and migration are complex and at times hard to grasp. This is reflected not only in the conceptual discussions on definitions most suitable for actually describing and capturing this multifaceted phenomenon, but also in the consequences for policy-making. Addressing migration in the context of climate change presents new challenges for policy makers at both international and national levels as it is difficult to translate the complexity of the issue into a coherent and well-designed policy and legal framework. To date, there is no legally binding definition of ‘environment-related migration and displacement’.

The topic is further complicated by the fact that industrialised countries and regions, such as the EU, produce per capita the largest share of human-made greenhouse emissions, which are mainly responsible for global warming. Yet, the adverse effects of climate change are mainly felt by ‘developing’ or least developed countries: their vulnerability is comparatively high whereas their adaptive capacity is quite low. Thus, the impact of human-induced climate change on population mobility raises important political and legal questions such as accountability, financial responsibility, global effort sharing and not least the necessity of political and legal frameworks responding to this multi-dimensional phenomenon.

However, **the complexity of the challenge should not be used as an excuse for not addressing this issue.** In particular, there is already ample evidence that environment-related migration and displacement is occurring and that it will increase in the future.

The European Union is in a position where it must begin to develop a holistic policy approach that addresses migration in the context of climate change. On the one hand, EU development and adaptation policies should adequately address the challenge of climate-linked migration. On the other hand, understanding the gaps in legal protection, identifying particularly vulnerable populations and supporting the practice of migration as an adaptive response are just some of the actions possible by the European Union. If not closed, these legal and policy gaps will cause major difficulties and wide-ranging humanitarian crises. The EU should act as a leading political force to address the phenomenon of climate change and migration.

List of abbreviations

Art.	Article
COIN	Climate and Outreach Information Network
CSWD	European Commission's Staff Working Document on 'Climate change, environmental degradation, and migration' (accompanying the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change)
EU	European Union
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
RPP	Regional Protection Programme
TCLM	Temporary and Circular Labour Migration
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations

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<http://www.climate.gov.ki/2013/02/12/i-kiribati-want-to-migrate-with-dignity/>
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<http://www.manystrongvoices.org/portraits/>
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Short biographies

Margit Ammer is a researcher at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights. She has a legal background and her research at the institute focuses on asylum and migration issues as well as on their inter-linkages with the environment. For the past six years, she has been (inter alia) conducting research projects on the legal and normative frameworks that apply to different forms of migration and displacement associated with the environment. Margit is a member of the Management Committee and the core group of COST Action IS1101 'Climate Change and Migration: Knowledge, Law and Policy, and Theory'.

Monika Mayrhofer is a researcher in the team working on anti-discrimination, asylum and diversity issues at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights. She graduated from the University of Vienna with a Master's degree and a PhD in political science and is specialised in the fields of anti-discrimination and diversity, gender, migration and European integration. She has been involved in a range of international research projects, including studies on environment-related migration, the European human rights system and the evaluation of the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the Austrian educational system.

Alex Randall works as Project Manager on the Defending Rights Programme of the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN). He is mainly focused on communications work for the UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition – an alliance that exists to challenge the lack of long-term strategies to support and protect people at risk of displacement linked to environmental change. Before joining COIN he worked at the Centre for Alternative Technology. He has also worked for the Public Interest Research Centre on their Values and Frames project. He co-founded Cheat Neutral, a spoof offsetting company, and UN Fair Play, an organisation that works with small island states at international climate change negotiations.

Jo Salisbury works on the Defending Rights Programme of the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN). She has a Masters in International Human Rights Law from Essex University and spent a number of years representing asylum seekers and refugees. She has also worked for the Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association where she focused on rule of law and fair trial issues. Prior to starting with COIN she worked for Oxfam focusing on partnership development.



The inter-linkages between climate change and migration are complex and at times hard to grasp. Addressing migration in the context of climate change presents new challenges for policy makers at both international and national levels.

However, the complexity of the challenge should not be used as an excuse for not addressing the issue. There is already ample evidence that environment-related migration and displacement is occurring and that it will increase in the future. Research projects have provided a better understanding of the phenomenon and of corresponding legal and policy gaps.

The time has come to translate research evidence and recommendations into policy practice. The European Union (EU) could act as a leading political force and should begin to develop a holistic policy approach that addresses climate change and migration.

This report debunks some common myths and provides an understanding of key characteristics of migration in the context of climate change. With a focus on EU policies and legal frameworks in the area of migration and asylum, the report presents a series of recommendations in order to proceed towards a coherent EU approach on climate change and migration.

