



CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop

Free University of Bolzano-Bozen

29 September 2023

Mapping and debating migration and the Covid-19 pandemic in the MENA region

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences for the populations as well as for the world economies have been evident since the first moments, when countries, like China in East Asia and Italy first in Europe, decided to adopt restrictive measures to prevent its spread. The pandemic has affected many countries all around the world, each of them with a specific social, political and economic system and they have adopted strategies, implemented procedures and mechanisms to cope with its growing and damaging effects.

The pandemic has demonstrated the vulnerabilities of the healthcare systems as well as stressed how international cooperation is necessary in times of crisis. The MENA region is no exception. The consequences for countries, however, vary according to local circumstances, the measures implemented, the possibilities of economic recovery and the availability of funds to face the post-pandemic. Not only has the Covid-19 pandemic emphasised the vulnerabilities of national socioeconomic, political and healthcare systems, but it has also reinforced inequalities for the poorest and marginalised groups (women, youth, refugees and migrants) and has increased the divide between the Global North and Global South. This is also evident in the education sector, where marginalised and poor pupils and students found themselves in a tremendous difficult situation where the disruption produced by the digital learning caused stress to teachers as well as to students.

As suggested by Hanieh and Ziadah (2022), in order to better understand and assess the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is necessary to move beyond an analysis and discussion of the pandemic as a public health emergency, but it is, instead, relevant to map and conceive of the pandemic as a catalyst for wider transformation which has necessarily occurred in many countries. This is evident in the academic as well as in the common language where we now tend to discuss and present an event by locating it in a temporal sequence of pre-pandemic and/or post-pandemic.

This workshop aims at debating, in a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the MENA region, and in particular on the healthcare and education systems. In some of these countries, and most notably in the GCC countries, these systems have historically and recently functioned because of the presence of foreigners too. We want to map and debate the role of migrants in the

healthcare as well as in the education sectors, which have seen the presence of migrants and NGOs operating in these countries. The workshop intends to propose a discussion and debate around the role of migrants in providing healthcare services and education in light of the imposed restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. By adopting an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, the workshop intends to focus on the historical, socioeconomic, political and cultural dynamics in order to better understand the role of migrants in healthcare and education sectors, and their interaction with the nationals. It also intends to understand how migrants' everyday life, in some cases, has been affected by the pandemic and how they have renegotiated their role and expertise in light of the restrictions. Both within the groups of the migrants and the refugees, on the one hand, and within the group of the nationals, on the other, there were gender differences in healthcare and education, which seemed to have increased in the region, and the restrictions and lockdown have affected women and men differently.

The workshop revolves around three major themes:

- **The impact of Covid-19 on the migration dynamics within the MENA region;**
- **International cooperation initiatives aimed at supporting migrants and refugees in the MENA region;**
- **The initiatives organised by the migrant communities in MENA region to face the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences.**

The analysis of the pandemic and its consequences represents an opportunity to widen the discussion to some sectors of the MENA region where the contribution of migrants is historically, socially and culturally relevant. The workshop accepts papers covering a variety of topics including:

- Migration dynamics within the MENA
- Healthcare systems and migration
- Education and migration
- Impact of measures implemented on migrant communities
- Civil society' activities to support migrant communities
- Migrants' private initiatives
- Women, migration and Covid-19
- Men, migration and Covid-19
- Children, migration and Covid-19
- Representation of migrants and Covid-19 in the media
- Relations between nationals and migrants in light of Covid-19
- Remittances and Covid-19.

The selected authors will be invited to present and discuss their ideas in a workshop to be held at the **Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy) on September 29, 2023, under the patronage of the SISL. Partial refund covering travel and accommodation costs will be provided for selected papers.** On this occasion, all authors will be able to share their thoughts and ideas regarding their contribution. All presenting authors will have the opportunity to publish an article on an edited volume with an international famous publishing house.

- Abstracts and papers are accepted in English.
- Deadline for sending abstracts: 20 June 2023.
- Length of abstracts: approx. 500 words.
- **Abstract and short CV should be sent to Gennaro Errichiello: ge6@soas.ac.uk**

International scientific committee

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