

# The COVINFORM project

Migrants as a 'vulnerable group' in the COVID-19 pandemic:  
A European perspective

Migration & Health seminar

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# Overview

- Project mission and objectives
- Consortium
- The research topic
- Conceptualizing vulnerability
- Different types of vulnerability
- Vulnerability: use with caution?

# COVINFORM mission & objectives

- EU Horizon 2020 project (36 months)
- Examine how vulnerability is defined and addressed in COVID-19 responses from government, public health and communication perspectives
- Examine the impact of responses on vulnerable and marginalised groups
- Identify and analyse strategies for inclusive and effective COVID-19 communication
- Develop solutions, guidelines and recommendations

# Consortium

- SYNNO GmbH, Austria
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Magen David Adom in Israel
- SAMUR Proteccion Civil, Spain
- Universita Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore (UCSC), Italy
- SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung, Germany
- Trilateral Research, UK
- Kentro Meleton Asfaleias (KEMEA), Greece
- Factor Social (FS), Portugal
- Austrian Red Cross
- Media Diversity Institute (MDI), UK
- Societatea Națională de Cruce Roșie din România – Romanian Red Cross
- University of Antwerp, Belgium
- Sapienza University Of Rome, Italy
- Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain
- Swansea University, UK
- Gotenborg University, Sweden

# The research topic

- COVID-19: a pandemic with consequences far beyond physical health
- Vulnerable and marginalized groups disproportionately affected
- A ‘socially patterned’ pandemic
- Vulnerable groups include:
  - Refugees and migrants
  - Elderly
  - Frontline healthcare workers and emergency responders
  - Homeless people
  - People of lower socioeconomic status

# Conceptualising vulnerability

- How is vulnerability defined in policy and practice?
- Range of underlying drivers of vulnerability
- Three main types of vulnerability:
  - Vulnerability relating to health status
  - Vulnerability relating to socioeconomic position
  - Vulnerability relating to communication

# Vulnerability relating to health status

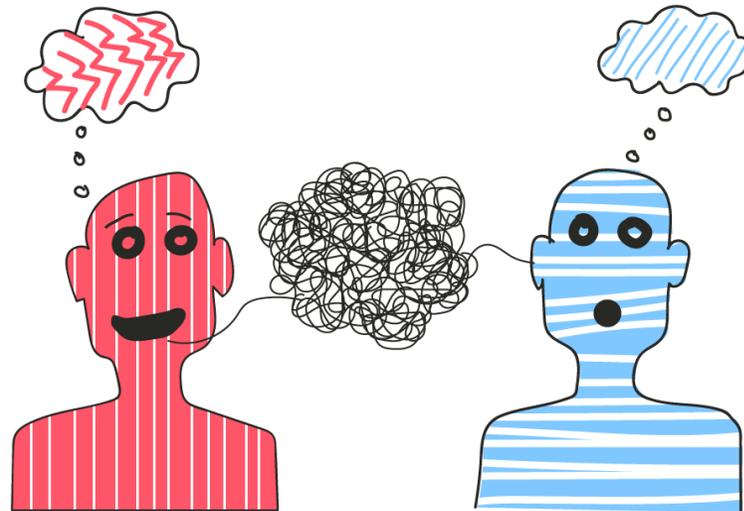
- Clinically vulnerable people: the elderly, adults with chronic disease or decreased immunity
- Delays and disruptions in routine care
- Link with structural health inequalities
- Distribution of chronic diseases

# Vulnerability relating to socioeconomic position

- Ability to respond to pandemic in ways that limits impact
- Occupation and working conditions
- Poverty and social exclusion
- Vulnerable families with children
- Legal status

# Vulnerability relating to communication

- Inability to access or understand communication
- Language barriers, illiteracy, digital gap
- Media habits



# Vulnerability: use with caution?

- Inconsistency and ambiguity
- Criticism:
  - Paternalistic and oppressive idea
  - Mechanism of widening social control
  - Risk of exclusion and stigmatization
- Avoid implying 'inherent' vulnerability
- Leave space for heterogeneity and agency

