

Future Research on Migration, Human Mobility and Integration

Opportunities and Needs



Future Research on Migration, Human Mobility and Integration - Opportunities and Needs

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Foreword

Migration is a strategic issue for Europe's future. Europe's citizens expect a migration and asylum policy that is fair and firm, one that effectively manages migration and remains true to European values. European research on migration informs asylum and migration policy, delivering feedback to policy and best practice solutions for migrants' integration (e.g. in education, health, labour markets) and migration mobility.

As Directors-General for Research and Innovation and for Migration and Home Affairs, and as Europeans, we see migration not as an abstract policy field but as part of Europe's history and identity, as well as a defining topic for the future.

It is no coincidence that one of Europe's most successful programmes bears the name of Marie Skłodowska-Curie, a scientist who crossed borders in pursuit of knowledge and transformed science forever. Her journey reminds us that the movement of people has always meant the movement of ideas. From Erasmus to Horizon Europe, mobility has powered European integration, strengthened our universities and connected our societies.

Over the past decade, the European Union has built the largest publicly funded migration research community in the world. Since 2015, more than 55 collaborative projects and around 130 European Research Council grants have deepened our understanding of migration governance, labour mobility, integration and asylum systems. This growing body of evidence has helped shift the debate beyond short-term crisis responses towards more informed, evidence-based and forward-looking policies.

At the same time, the context in which migration unfolds is evolving rapidly. Geopolitical instability and technological transformations, including artificial intelligence, are reshaping mobility patterns, labour markets and global competition for talent. Europe is also facing a profound demographic transition, with a shrinking working-age population and persistent labour shortages. This is reflected in the recent European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy, which defines our objectives for addressing irregular migration, ensuring our asylum system protects those in need, and providing legal pathways for international talent. Attracting and retaining such talent – researchers, students, highly qualified workers and startup founders and innovative entrepreneurs – is essential to boosting Europe's research and innovation capacity, as well as economic competitiveness. These interconnected shifts require research that is systemic, forward-looking and capable of linking human mobility to the major transitions shaping Europe's future.

At a moment when academic freedom and independent research are under pressure in parts of the world, the European Union remains a place where talent can thrive and innovate. Through Horizon Europe and initiatives such as Choose Europe for Science, we are strengthening Europe's position as a global magnet for talent, research and innovation. Migration research is therefore not only about understanding mobility. It is about strengthening Europe's capacity to anticipate change, remain competitive and uphold the democratic values on which our Union is built.

Over the past two years, the European Commission's services have engaged extensively with researchers, policymakers, civil society organisations and stakeholders to reflect on two key questions: where should Europe strengthen research and innovation on migration, integration and mobility; and how could research more effectively translate into policy and practice? This document brings together the outcome of all these exchanges. Structured around 8 key orientation areas for research, it promotes an integrated approach in which collaboration, data continuity, policy engagement and implementation pathways are built into the research ecosystem from the outset. In doing so, it aims not only to guide future European actions, but also to support national, regional and local policymakers and funding organisations in shaping their own priorities.

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Introduction

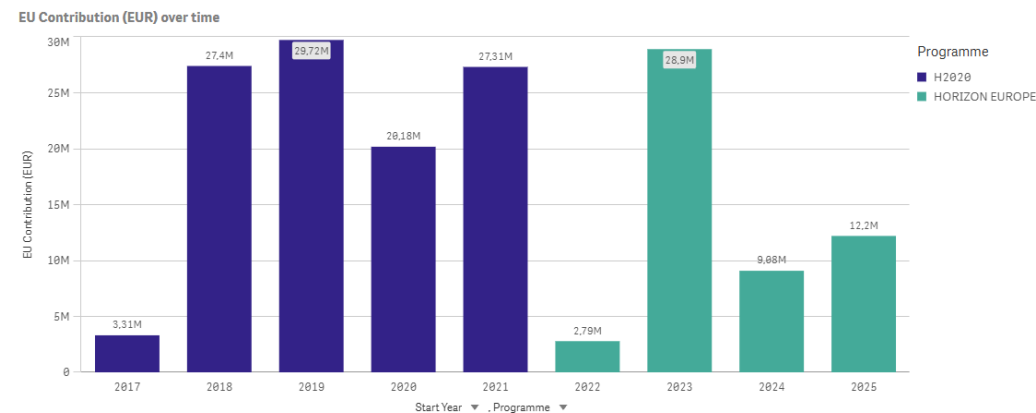
State of play: migration research in the European Union

Over the past decade, migration has been a recurrent priority for the European Union, reflecting its growing relevance as both a societal reality and a policy domain.

While EU-funded research on migration¹ dates back to earlier Framework Programmes, it expanded significantly under Horizon 2020, particularly from 2015 onwards, when Member States experienced a marked increase in asylum applications and broader migratory movements. This period exposed complex links between migration, labour markets, integration systems, demographic change and global instability, highlighting the need for stronger evidence to support policymaking.

In response, the EU substantially increased investment in migration-related research across Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, by supporting 52 collaborative projects addressing topics such as integration, migration governance, asylum and forced displacement, migration narratives, forecasting and modelling, and the migration-development nexus. These projects have generated a significant body of knowledge and practical tools and complemented in-house research by the Joint Research Centre (JRC). Together, they contributed to more evidence-based approaches to migration management, including support for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum and to a better understanding of migrants' experiences and societal impacts. Additionally, the European Commission also established the [Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography](#) (KCMD), an interactive platform providing data and evidence to support EU policymaking regarding migration, mobility and demographic changes.

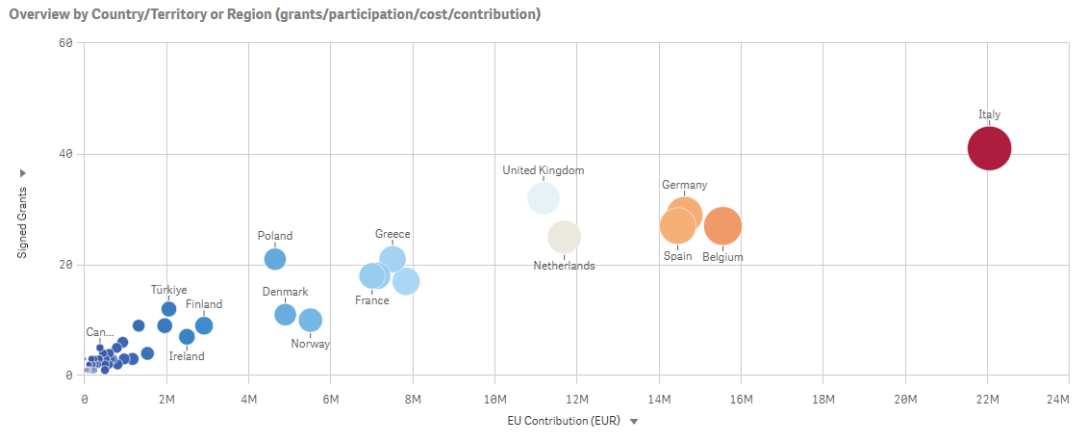
Between 2016 and 2025, EU funding for migration-related research under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe remained relatively modest, but structurally significant in terms of participation and collaboration. A total of 17 calls funded 52 projects, with an EU contribution of approximately EUR 160.9 million. This represents 0.15% of total programme funding and 0.09% of signed grants, yet the share of unique participants reached 0.81%, indicating that migration calls attracted a comparatively broad and diverse set of actors across the research landscape².



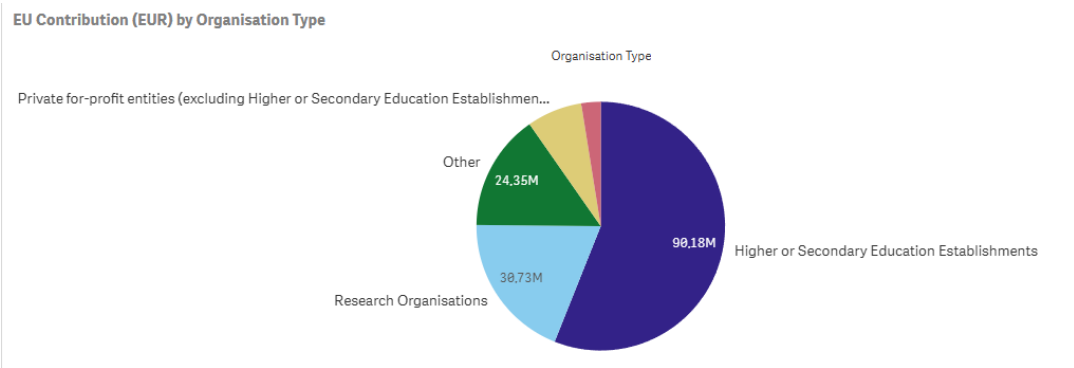
¹ For the purposes of this report, the term "migration" refers to the movement of third-country nationals across the external borders of the European Union, reflecting the scope of the EU research and policy initiatives discussed. Intra-EU mobility of EU citizens is not covered.

² The charts and portfolio analysis presented in this report are based on a study conducted by the European Commission's European Research Executive Agency.

Participation is geographically concentrated but still widely distributed across Member States. Italy emerges as the leading country, participating in 40 of the projects and receiving around EUR 22 million. It is followed by the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, each with substantial involvement and funding levels ranging roughly between EUR 10- 16 million. A second tier of countries, including Greece, France, Sweden, Austria, and Poland, also demonstrate consistent engagement, albeit at lower funding levels. Beyond Europe, collaboration extends internationally to partners in Canada, the United States, India, and Africa, highlighting the global dimension of EU-funded migration research.



In terms of the composition of beneficiaries, higher education institutions dominate, receiving over 56% of total funding (EUR 90.18 million), followed by research organisations with 19.1% (EUR 30.73 million). Together, these two categories account for roughly three quarters of all EU contributions, underlining the central role of academia and research centres in shaping the knowledge base on migration. Other actors, including private companies, public bodies, and SMEs, play a complementary but important role, particularly in implementation and dissemination. Notably, SMEs account for nearly 60% of participations, though with a smaller financial share (EUR 13 million), reflecting their operational role within projects rather than leadership in research design.



Stakeholders' consultations: from evidence to strategic orientation

To identify gaps in EU migration research, and to shape future priorities, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation launched a series of stakeholder consultations carried out between 2023 and 2025. These included a policy roundtable, workshops, webinars and the [Ten years of EU Migration Research and Innovation: Impacting Lives - Shaping the Future](#) conference in November 2025.

In total, more than a hundred stakeholders have been consulted, including the 52 Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe funded projects, NGOs, international organisations, policy makers, academia, universities.

On 18 November 2025, the final conference brought together several leading experts in migration research to reflect on a decade of significant progress and chart a course for the future, with a mix of insightful panel discussions and interactive sessions.



Orientations for Research: 8 key areas

This chapter outlines the priority research areas identified to inspire national, regional and local policy makers and potential funding organisations in setting their own research priorities. The selection is grounded in the structured consultation process carried out between 2023 and 2025, which brought together Horizon-funded projects, researchers, policymakers, Member States, international organisations and civil society. Their input was assessed alongside the European Commission's policy orientations and available R&I evidence on long-term transformations affecting Europe. The aim was not to reproduce the full breadth of migration-related research, but to identify those areas where EU-level investment can generate the greatest strategic value and address the most pressing knowledge gaps.

The prioritisation followed a qualitative synthesis of stakeholder contributions, existing project results and forward-looking analysis. Priority areas were selected based on three criteria: relevance to major societal transitions, potential to inform policymaking across Member States, and the added value of coordinated EU research action. While many additional areas were raised during consultations, only those demonstrating strong convergence and clear strategic importance were retained as core priorities. A key consideration for the next phase of EU migration research is predictability. Identifying clearly defined thematic priorities allows research funding to anticipate emerging challenges rather than respond reactively to crises.

These priorities must also be understood in the context of several structural transformations and an evolving EU policy framework, notably the Pact on Migration and Asylum, shaping migration dynamics in Europe and globally. Demographic change, technological disruption, geopolitical changes, climate pressures and evolving labour market needs are increasingly interconnected

drivers influencing patterns of mobility, integration outcomes and migration governance. Understanding how these long-term trends interact is essential for ensuring that European research and innovation investments generate actionable knowledge capable of supporting effective, forward-looking migration policies.

Integration: local, regional, national and EU

Integration has emerged as a structural condition for the effectiveness and sustainability of migration policies in the European Union. Over the past decade, evidence generated through EU-funded research consistently shows that integration outcomes depend not only on admission rules or labour market access, but on the ability of newcomers and host societies to build inclusive, functioning environments over time³. Labour market participation is central, but integration is equally shaped by access to education and training, adequate housing, skills recognition, local governance capacity and shared adherence to European values.

From a macroeconomic and demographic perspective, integration is not a secondary social objective. It determines whether migration translates into fiscal and economic impacts, political acceptance, labour market resilience and innovation capacity, or instead generates marginalisation and social tension. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasised that integration is a two-way process: it requires opportunities and support for newcomers, as well as institutional readiness and societal engagement within receiving communities.

Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe have already created a critical mass in this field, with more than twenty projects addressing labour integration, skills recognition, education systems, youth inclusion, local service provision and governance frameworks. This accumulated knowledge clearly points to integration as a determinant of long-term social cohesion, economic contribution and public trust in migration governance. Consolidating and scaling this evidence base therefore represents a high-value area for continued EU research investment.

Integration outcomes are largely shaped at local and regional level. Stakeholders highlighted housing shortages, spatial segregation and weak coordination between employment services and local authorities as key bottlenecks.

Further research could examine integrated local governance models linking housing, labour market access, education and social services. Other research and innovation activities could pilot scalable solutions in partnership with municipalities and regions, including digital tools for service coordination or housing allocation mechanisms aligned with labour market demand.

³ See the European Commission's [Migration and Mobility research webpage](#) for an overview of the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects on integration and inclusion that inform the findings presented in this section.

KIDS4ALL: Innovative learning methods for integrating migrant children



KIDS4ALL (Key Inclusive Development Strategies for Lifelong Learning) developed and tested new educational approaches to support the integration of migrant children in schools and communities. The project piloted a collaborative learning model across several European countries, combining peer-to-peer learning (“buddy pairs”), digital learning tools and educator training. The initiative focused on helping both migrant and non-migrant students build key competences for lifelong

learning, including language skills, digital literacy and intercultural understanding.

One of the project’s most striking findings is that peer-learning approaches can significantly improve integration outcomes. By pairing migrant students with local peers in structured learning partnerships, the project strengthened students’ confidence, motivation and sense of belonging while improving social interaction in schools. The experience showed that integration is not only a question of language acquisition or academic performance, but also of building relationships and participation within school communities. These insights offer practical guidance for education systems seeking to support the integration of migrant children and promote social cohesion from an early age.

Labour market sustainability and socio-economic resilience

Demographic change is intensifying labour shortages across sectors in the European Union. Addressing these structural challenges requires a better understanding of how migration can support EU labour market sustainability while fostering economic resilience and social cohesion across diverse regional contexts. While migration alone cannot fully offset the EU’s demographic decline, it is increasingly recognised⁴ as a key factor in maintaining economic dynamism and contributing to innovation particularly when combined with effective integration policies.

Research should explore, through foresight scenarios and demographic projections, how migration can contribute to addressing labour shortages in both high- and low-skilled sectors. A forward-looking approach is needed to assess how different migration policy frameworks may influence labour market sustainability, innovation capacity and long-term economic resilience across European regions.

Further research should also examine structural barriers to labour market integration. Fragmentation in qualification recognition systems across Member States limits labour mobility and the effective use of migrant skills. At the same time, digital tools are increasingly used to match migrant skills with labour market needs, yet interoperability between systems remains limited. The forthcoming EU Talent Pool⁵ represents an important step in this direction, providing an EU-level platform for matching non-EU jobseekers with employers in shortage occupations across Member States. Research could analyse and test digital platforms that support skills

⁴ See JRC, [Fertility and migration, and population decline: The EU at a demographic crossroads \(2025\)](#).

⁵ See HOME, [EU Talent Pool](#) (2026).

matching, micro-credential recognition and cross-border data sharing, while other research and innovation activities could pilot scalable solutions, such as adapting and deploying existing EU-funded digital tools for cross-border skills matching, testing automated micro-credential recognition systems, or establishing interoperable data-sharing frameworks between public employment services, training providers and employers through policy labs and regional pilots.

MERGING: Housing as a driver of migrant integration



The Horizon 2020 project MERGING (Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond) explored how housing policies and participatory initiatives influence migrant integration across Europe. The project analysed integration practices at European, regional and local levels and tested participatory housing pilots in Lyon, Valencia and Gothenburg, involving migrants, local authorities, NGOs and citizens in housing renovation and community initiatives. By combining policy analysis, interviews,

quantitative research and participatory action research, MERGING examined how housing conditions shape migrants' access to employment, social networks and civic participation.

One of the project's key insights is that housing is not only a social policy issue but a central gateway to integration. Stable housing strongly influences migrants' ability to access labour markets, education, local services and civic rights. The research also showed that participatory housing initiatives – where migrants, local residents and organisations collaborate in housing projects – can significantly strengthen social cohesion and local acceptance. MERGING demonstrates that integration outcomes depend heavily on local governance capacity and coordinated housing policies, offering practical lessons for cities and regions managing migrant integration.

Legal Pathways

The European Union is seeking to expand legal migration pathways to address demographic decline and labour market shortages.⁶ Despite a substantial EU legal migration acquis, uneven national implementation, alongside co-existing national pathways differing in visa conditions, recognition of qualifications, labour rights and long-term residence prospects, creates a fragmented landscape for potential migrants.

Recent EU initiatives, including the EU Visa Strategy and Recommendation on Attracting Talent for Innovation (January 2026)⁷, reflect a broader policy push to address these gaps, with particular attention to profiles that are central to Europe's research and innovation capacity such as STEM⁸ workers, researchers, students, start-up founders and innovative entrepreneurs.

⁶ European Commission, [Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action \(2023\)](#).

⁷ See HOME, [Commission adopts a first-ever EU Visa Strategy](#).

⁸ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

At the same time, migrants evaluate multiple factors when choosing their destination, including economic opportunities, regulatory frameworks and long-term integration prospects⁹. In an increasingly competitive global environment for talent and skills, these dynamics influence whether the EU can effectively attract workers through legal pathways. Without addressing these factors, even well-designed migration policies may struggle to meet labour market needs or reduce incentives for irregular migration.

Research is therefore needed to better understand how legal migration pathways can be designed to enhance the EU's attractiveness as a destination while responding to labour market demand. This includes analysing how different admission systems, regulatory frameworks and labour market conditions influence migration decisions and integration outcomes in origin, transit and destination countries.

Future research could also explore alternative and innovative approaches to migration management, including scenario-based analysis, foresight and experimental policy design. Comparative studies could identify best practices from both EU and non-EU countries and assess how these approaches might be adapted and scaled at the EU level. In addition, research should build on existing evidence on migrants' destination choices and decision-making processes to identify the policy features that make legal pathways more accessible, effective and sustainable.

Technological change and AI

Technological transformation, including the rapid deployment of artificial intelligence (AI), digital identity systems, algorithmic decision-making and data-driven governance, is reshaping migration management across the European Union. From asylum processing, the management of return, readmission and reintegration processes, border management to labour market matching and skills recognition, digital tools increasingly influence how migration policies are designed and implemented. While digital innovation can improve efficiency, transparency and service delivery, it may also raise important concerns regarding bias, including the risk of perpetuating or amplifying discrimination against migrants and minorities, as well as issues of accountability, fundamental rights, data protection and unequal access.¹⁰

As digital technologies become embedded in migration governance, policymakers require a stronger evidence base to understand both their operational performance and their broader societal impact. Stakeholders from the research community, public administrations and civil society have emphasised that the rapid expansion of algorithmic tools in public decision-making requires careful monitoring to ensure trustworthiness, legal certainty and compliance with European values and legal frameworks.

In this context, the EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence (AI Act¹¹) provides an important framework to support the development and deployment of trustworthy AI systems, while also enabling innovation and the responsible uptake of new technologies across the Union. The Regulation establishes a risk-based approach, setting proportionate safeguards and obligations for AI systems that may impact safety or fundamental rights, whilst seeking to create the legal certainty necessary to foster research, innovation and investment in AI solutions. The

⁹ [Horizon 2020 HumMingBird project](#), *Do Migration Policies Work?* Policy Brief (2022); see also *Anticipating and Managing Migration Flows towards the EU* (Final Report, 2024), which highlights that destination choices emerge from the interaction of economic opportunities, migration policies, social networks and migrants' evolving decision-making, including through "migration hubs".

¹⁰ [AI Act Service Desk – Migration, asylum and border control management](#).

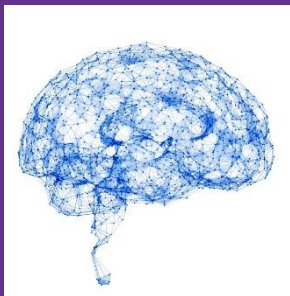
¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1689>.

Commission is also supporting implementation efforts through the preparation of guidance and practical tools, including ongoing work on guidelines concerning the classification of high-risk AI systems under Article 6 of the AI Act. These guidelines aim to support a harmonised and practical understanding of the rules across sectors and use cases, including in sensitive areas such as migration, border management and law enforcement.

This responds directly to needs highlighted by stakeholders for independent and multidisciplinary evaluation of AI systems used in areas such as asylum procedures, visa processing, risk profiling and case management. Currently, there is limited systematic evidence on how algorithmic tools affect decision quality, procedural safeguards, fairness and fundamental rights, including whether they reproduce or exacerbate discriminatory patterns in areas such as asylum decisions, risk profiling or visa allocation across different administrative contexts.

Future research should therefore examine the design, deployment and impact of AI-driven systems in migration governance across Member States. Projects could assess issues such as bias and discrimination (including indirect and systemic forms), explainability, accountability mechanisms and compliance with EU frameworks, including the AI Act and the GDPR. Comparative analysis and the development of robust evaluation methodologies will be essential to ensure that technological innovation in migration management remains effective, accountable and human-centred.

LINK4SKILLS – Using artificial intelligence to anticipate skill shortages and guide talent mobility



A key innovation of LINK4SKILLS is that the AI system allows policymakers to simulate the impact of different policy choices. For example, users can test how measures such as training programmes, increased labour participation or targeted migration pathways might affect future labour shortages and wage dynamics. By connecting employers, education providers and governments, the platform helps align skills development with labour market needs and supports fair and efficient global skill flows.

For policymakers, this approach demonstrates how AI-driven labour market intelligence can improve migration governance and talent strategies. By anticipating skill shortages in key sectors such as health, construction and STEM, tools like the Link4Skills Navigator can help governments design evidence-based migration policies, attract the right skills and support economic growth while improving opportunities for workers and migrants alike.

Climate change

Climate change is an important driver shaping patterns of human mobility. Yet the relationship between climate change and migration remains complex and insufficiently understood. Climate-related pressures such as droughts, floods and resource scarcity interact with pre-existing vulnerabilities, including economic precarity, governance challenges and social inequalities. These dynamics can influence decisions to migrate, reshape migration routes and affect the living conditions of people in both origin, transit and destination areas.

Stakeholders consulted during the 2023–2025 engagement process emphasised that climate change should be understood as part of a broader continuum of socio-economic and environmental stressors that reshape mobility patterns. These processes often intensify existing inequalities and can generate differentiated impacts across regions, gender and social groups. At the same time, the policy landscape addressing the climate–migration nexus remains fragmented, and while a growing body of research exists, evidence is often dispersed, context-specific and not sufficiently integrated to support coherent and operational policy responses.

Further research is therefore needed to consolidate and operationalise existing knowledge, and to deepen understanding of how climate change interacts with economic, political and social factors to influence mobility decisions. This includes analysing how climate pressures affect internal displacement, regional migration dynamics, the economic and social repercussion of migration flows linked to climate change on origin and destination areas, longer-term mobility patterns or immobility.

Further research should also explore how migration itself can function as an adaptation strategy and assess whether it effectively enhances migrants' well-being and climate resilience. It should also analyse the interaction between in situ adaptation measures (i.e. locally implemented actions such as green roofs, drought-resilience crops, etc, to enhance resilience to climate change without requiring relocation) and migration as a form of adaptation, assessing whether these approaches complement or substitute each other.¹²

In response to these needs, the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025 supports the CAMINO project, a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), which will map existing research and policy initiatives while preparing future strategies to address the climate–migration nexus. It will thereby act as a central knowledge hub on mobility in the context of climate change.

¹² Cattaneo, C., Shayegh, S., Albert, C. *et al.* Broadening climate migration research across impacts, adaptation and mitigation. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 16, 255–260 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-025-02545-1>.

HABITABLE – Understanding how climate change reshapes migration



HABITABLE project was dedicated to understanding how climate change affects migration and displacement patterns. Bringing together more than 20 research partners across Europe, Africa and Asia, the project analysed how environmental pressures interact with economic, social and political factors to shape mobility decisions. A central innovation of the project was the concept of “social tipping points”, which helps explain how gradual environmental changes can trigger sudden shifts in migration patterns when

communities reach critical thresholds of vulnerability.

Climate change does not automatically lead to migration. Instead, migration decisions emerge from a complex interaction between environmental stress, economic opportunities, governance capacity and social networks. In many contexts, migration can also function as an adaptation strategy, allowing households to diversify livelihoods and reduce pressure on fragile ecosystems. The project highlights the importance of integrated policy responses that combine climate adaptation, development and migration governance, helping policymakers anticipate potential displacement risks and design more resilient responses. The project also produced operational insights for policymakers, including tools to anticipate climate-induced mobility through social tipping points analysis and guidance on integrating migration into climate adaptation and development planning.

Strengthening science-for-policy processes in migration research

Research and policy communities frequently operate in parallel rather than in concert, resulting in a persistent gap between knowledge production and uptake. This gap reflects differences in incentives, time horizons, communication formats and accountability frameworks between academia and decision-making environments. Migration research therefore often appears retrospective to policymakers, as project timelines and reporting cycles rarely align with legislative and operational rhythms. Addressing this disconnect requires moving beyond isolated project outputs towards cumulative knowledge-building and more structured engagement between research and policy communities.

Reducing the research–policy gap requires concrete adjustments in the way research projects are designed and implemented, including stronger involvement of policy and operational stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle and clearer pathways for the uptake of research results. This may include more flexible project durations, mid-term policy interaction milestones, and mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer continues beyond the formal end of projects. Such approaches would help ensure that research outputs remain relevant for policy development and operational decision-making.

Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of embedding science-for-policy mechanisms directly within project design. Structured interfaces, knowledge brokerage functions and formalised feedback loops should be integrated from the outset rather than added as dissemination components at the end. In addition, co-creation should become a standard design principle, involving policymakers, practitioners and local authorities in defining research

questions and methodologies. Early engagement can increase operational relevance and reduce the risk of persistent research–policy disconnect. JRC could play an important role here which should be further explored.

Finally, stronger cooperation is needed between research institutions, EU institutions, national administrations, international organisations and operational actors involved in migration management. Developing clearer “pipelines” from research to implementation would allow successful methodologies, tools and tested practices to move beyond project completion and transition into operational funding instruments where appropriate. Such an approach would enhance the return on investment of EU research and support the effective deployment and uptake of research results in policy implementation.

BRIDGES: Understanding how migration narratives shape decisions



The Horizon 2020 project BRIDGES examined how migration narratives are produced in public debate and how they influence individual attitudes, policymaking and migration decisions. The project analysed media and political narratives across six European countries and studied how they shape public perceptions and policy responses to migration. By combining social science research, media analysis and engagement with civil society actors, the project provided new insights

into how narratives influence migration governance and political debate.

One striking finding emerged from research on potential migrants in The Gambia and Afghan migrants in Turkey. Fieldwork showed that EU information campaigns aimed at discouraging irregular migration often struggle to influence decisions because they compete with strong locally rooted narratives about Europe as a place of opportunity. When official messages contradict migrants’ lived realities or local perceptions, they tend to be disregarded. The research highlights that effective migration policies must consider how information travels through social networks and narratives, rather than relying solely on awareness campaigns. This suggests that migration policies and communication strategies should move beyond one-way information campaigns and instead engage with trusted local actors, diaspora networks and context-specific narratives to be effective.

Investment in shared and interoperable datasets and infrastructures

Comparable datasets and longitudinal data across Member States are essential for cumulative learning, forecasting capacity and evidence-based benchmarking. While relevant data often exist, access to administrative and operational datasets for research purposes remains uneven, limiting their reuse and integration across projects. Without data continuity and comparability, research remains fragmented, and policy insights remain difficult to generalise across national contexts.

Current data sources often capture short-term indicators but rarely allow for long-term tracking of labour market participation, educational attainment, intergenerational mobility or civic engagement. As a result, there is limited longitudinal evidence on integration outcomes across generations and on the long-term socioeconomic trajectories of migrants across the European Union. These limitations are further compounded by legal, ethical and technical constraints on the sharing and reuse of personal data across jurisdictions, underscoring the need for secure, interoperable research infrastructures that fully respect EU data protection and fundamental rights requirements.

Research could therefore focus on analysing long-term integration trajectories across Member States, identifying the determinants of upward mobility and assessing the effectiveness of different policy approaches over time. Comparative methodologies and harmonised indicators would be particularly valuable, allowing projects to develop policy-relevant tools for evaluating integration outcomes beyond employment rates alone.

Future initiatives could also explore linking existing European datasets such as the EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), the EU-LFS (EU Labour Force Survey) and administrative migration statistics within interoperable research infrastructures. Such efforts could build on emerging European initiatives, including the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), the Atlas of Migration and other KCMD infrastructure to facilitate secure data access, cross-country comparability and cumulative knowledge-building.

From research to implementation

Numerous Horizon projects have developed methodologies, tools and tested practices addressing migrant integration. However, many of these results risk remaining underutilised after project completion, as mechanisms to transfer research outputs into operational policies and programmes remain limited.

Bridging the gap between research and implementation is therefore essential to maximise the impact of EU investments in research and innovation, building on coordination efforts such as the Horizon-funded INNOVATE and CAMINO projects. These projects aim to consolidate knowledge, reconcile research with policymaking, identify gaps and help shape future research and innovation priorities. A clearer “pipeline” approach could ensure that successful research outputs are systematically identified, consolidated and translated into practical solutions that can support policymakers and practitioners working on integration.

A dedicated action could map mature research results from Horizon-funded projects, develop mechanisms for transferring promising solutions into implementation instruments such as AMIF and other relevant EU, national or regional funding programmes, and support cross-border replication of successful practices. This would strengthen continuity between research and operational deployment and increase the return on EU, national, regional and local investments.

Better alignment of European and national policy needs with research priorities could also be supported through practical mechanisms such as a European community of practice and a dedicated knowledge platform for regional and local authorities, which play a decisive role in integration outcomes. Such initiatives would help scale tested approaches, facilitate peer learning and ensure that research-based innovations reach the actors responsible for implementation.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, EU-funded migration research has moved from a reactive response to crisis towards a mature and strategic policy field. A substantial evidence base now exists across integration, demographic change, technological transformation and climate-related mobility. The consultation process carried out between 2023 and 2025 confirms both the relevance of this work and the need to consolidate, structure and scale it in view of Europe's long-term challenges.

Looking ahead to the next decade, migration research should not be treated as a thematic niche but as an enabling instrument for European competitiveness demographic resilience, labour market sustainability, innovation capacity and social cohesion. The 8 priorities identified in this agenda reflect a broad convergence among stakeholders and align with the Union's wider political priorities. At the same time, improving research methods, data continuity and research–policy interfaces will be essential to maximise impact.

Properly positioned and designed, EU migration research can continue to provide the analytical foundation needed for anticipatory, evidence-based and coherent policymaking in a rapidly changing global context.

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Over the past decade, EU-funded migration research has evolved into a strategic policy field, generating strong evidence on integration, demographics, technology and climate mobility. The consultation process conducted between 2023 and 2025 confirms both the continued relevance of this research and the need to better consolidate, organise and scale existing knowledge in order to address Europe's long-term challenges more effectively. This report builds on these findings by identifying key priorities for the next decade, positioning migration research as a cross-cutting enabler of European competitiveness, demographic resilience, labour market sustainability, innovation and social cohesion.

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