



Fachkommission
Fluchtursachen

SUMMARY

Preventing Crises, Creating Prospects, Protecting People

Report by the Commission on the Root Causes
of Displacement



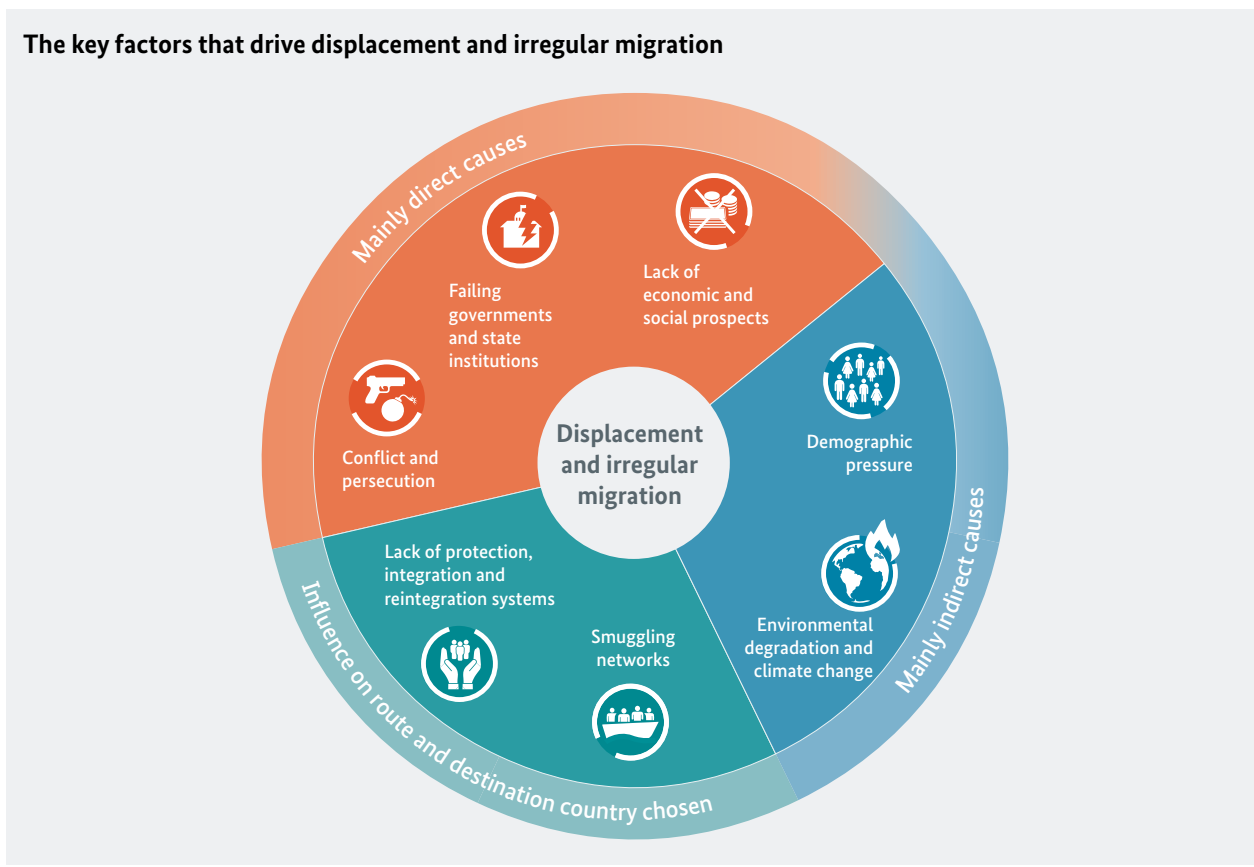
The independent Commission on the Root Causes of Displacement was mandated by the German government in July 2019 to identify the main causes of displacement and irregular migration and to develop approaches for effectively mitigating them. In its report, the Commission presents recommendations for Germany’s future activities at the national, European and international levels to the German government and the German parliament (Bundestag). This summary outlines the findings of the first chapters of the report and concludes with 15 key recommendations to be prioritised in the upcoming legislative term.

There is often more than just one reason why people leave their home regions

War, persecution, hardship or a lack of prospects are the most familiar causes of displacement, and are often cited by those seeking protection as the reason for their flight. However, there is often more than just one reason why people leave their home regions or countries.

The following figure provides an overview of the key drivers of displacement and irregular migration, which are usually linked by complex interdependencies. Conflict and persecution, failing governments and institutions, poverty and a lack of prospects are factors that are for the most part direct triggers of displacement and irregular migration. Other issues with an aggravating effect, such as the impacts of climate change or the demographic pressure in many developing countries, are triggers that are mainly indirect. In addition to these primary causes of displacement and irregular migration, there are other factors influencing the route and the destination country chosen, such as smuggling networks and a lack of protection and reintegration systems in countries of transit and origin, which may trigger further migratory movements.

There is no clear hierarchy as to the reasons why people feel forced to leave their home countries or regions. The Commission therefore rejects any approaches that focus on a single reason and instead proposes an array of measures that aim to tackle the root causes of displacement and irregular migration in a comprehensive and coherent manner.



Displacement has increased over the last decade

The number of refugees has been growing for years, showing that the international community needs to scale up efforts aimed at mitigating the root causes of displacement. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of refugees who fall under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or have been recognised by other countries as refugees almost doubled, increasing from 10.5 million to 20.4 million people. This increase is primarily due to a few crisis hotspots (Syria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Venezuela). There are also protracted conflicts causing displacement, for instance in Afghanistan. Moreover, the number of internally displaced persons trying to escape conflict and seeking refuge inside their own countries saw a considerable increase between 2010 and 2019, going from 24.9 to 45.7 million people. In addition, a number of people – quite how many exactly is hard to estimate – are forced to leave their home regions because of natural disasters.

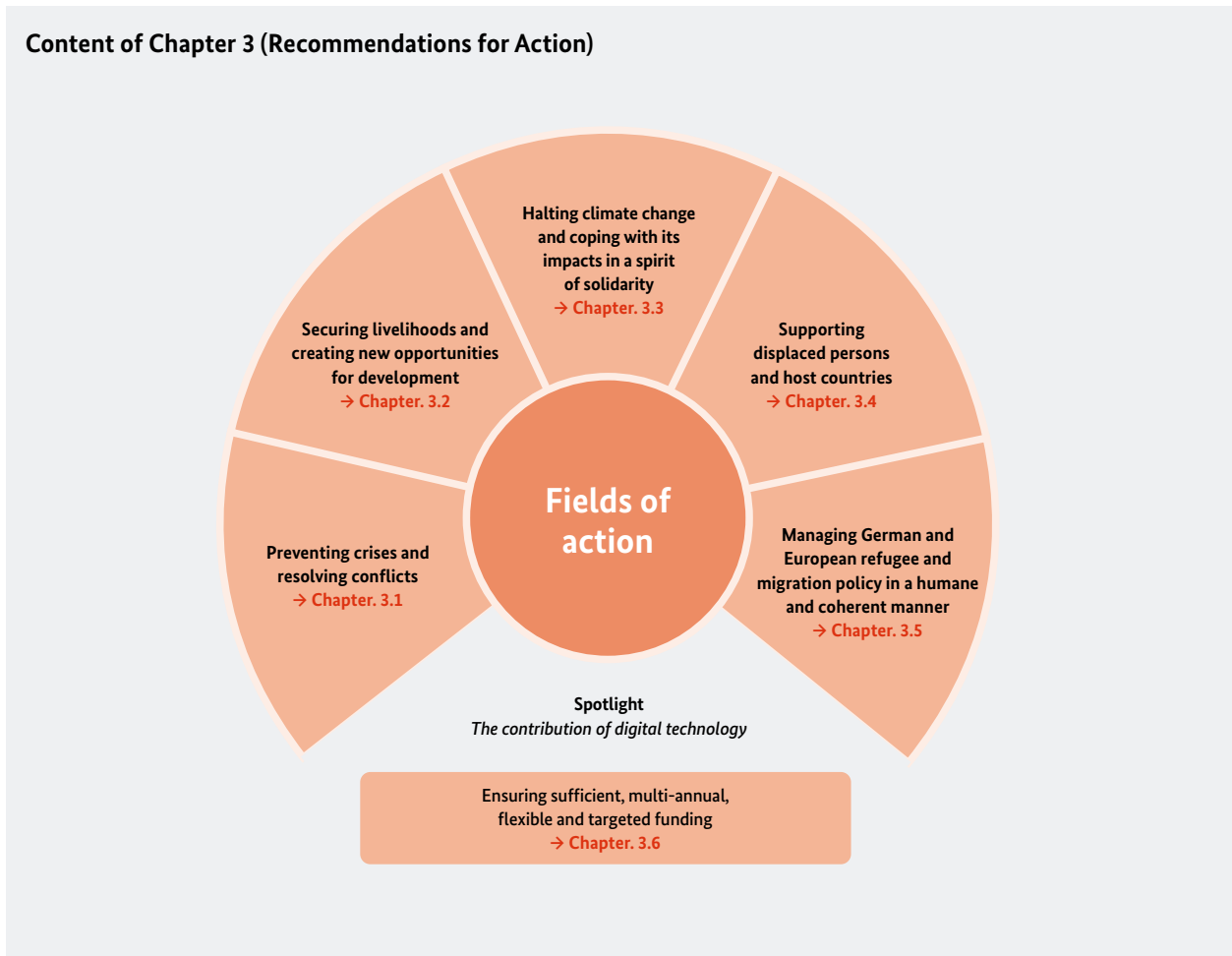
The large majority of these people do not try to reach the European Union (EU). Instead they become internally displaced persons within their own countries or seek refuge in neighbouring countries. After a sharp increase in irregular entries into the EU via the Mediterranean up until 2015, the numbers have since declined, also as a result of more restrictive border policies and mobility restrictions in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. Any projections about where, when and how many people will decide to migrate and which destinations they will choose are subject to a high level of uncertainty. It is, however, safe to assume that the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will further exacerbate the structural drivers of displacement and irregular migration.

The German government and the German Bundestag should introduce closely coordinated measures in five areas of action:

1. Preventing crises and resolving conflicts: The German government should enhance its strategic capability in order to prevent crises more effectively and to resolve existing conflicts. Violent conflicts are a central cause of displacement. However, options for intervention are usually limited as conflicts are becoming more and more complex and increasing numbers of actors are involved. Two examples illustrating this point are Syria and Afghanistan, the two countries that the most refugees in Germany come from. With its guidelines “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” adopted in 2017, the German government has established a framework for its political engagement in this field. Drafting clear and coherent strategies for individual conflicts and implementing them using a comprehensive approach remains a central task, however.

In concrete terms, this means that the German government should pool and expand existing analytical capacities. In order to enhance its strategic processes, it should set up a “Council for Peace, Security and Development” that involves independent institutions and civil society in exploring and identifying possible options for action. Moreover, Germany should strengthen its role in implementing civil approaches for crisis prevention and conflict resolution by enhancing its capacities for mediation and humanitarian diplomacy. Arms exports and security cooperation initiatives should be examined carefully so as to stop them exacerbating conflicts further or increasing the risk of human rights violations.

2. Securing livelihoods and creating new opportunities for development: The German government should work towards improving the overall conditions for national development and prospects for individuals in current and potential countries of origin of refugees and irregular migrants. It should support state institutions and local administrations in providing basic services for all and give more attention to inclusive urban development. A particular focus should be on sustainable food security, quality education and health systems and on building and strengthening social protection



systems. The German government should also promote sustainable economic development and greater diversification in the industrial and service sectors, putting special emphasis on favourable conditions for investment, vocational training and fair trade relations.

3. Halting climate change and coping with its impacts in a spirit of solidarity: The German government should take ambitious steps to advance climate action and environmental protection in Germany and worldwide. Climate change is exacerbating water scarcity, extreme weather events and the extinction of species, jeopardising agricultural production and negatively affecting the livelihoods of many people. It can also exacerbate conflicts of use and, together with other factors, become a driver of displacement and irregular migration. Industrialised and emerging countries have a special responsibility in the climate crisis: they are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases but poorer countries are particularly affected by

the negative consequences. The German government should develop a mechanism with which to provide significant support, on top of climate protection investments in Germany, for climate change mitigation measures in developing countries and emerging economies (“climate matching”). These measures should be aimed at encouraging the further development and implementation of the respective national climate change mitigation targets and the use of renewables. In addition, Germany should provide targeted support to the most vulnerable countries, helping them to adapt to changed climatic conditions, cope with damages and losses that have already occurred, and protect themselves against future climate risks. Moreover, the German government should lobby for the international community to recognise climate-induced displacement and support the people affected, for example through regional protection agreements and climate passports.

4. Supporting displaced persons and host countries:

The German government should not only try to alleviate acute hardship but also seek to identify long-term solutions for people who have already been forced to leave their home countries. Possible solutions include voluntary repatriation, integration in the host country, resettlement or an otherwise secured transfer to third countries. The German government should support host countries by way of multi-annual compacts. At the same time, it should take in more refugees via orderly resettlement procedures and, to that end, forge an alliance with like-minded states. Right now, a relatively small number of countries receive the bulk of global refugees. The international community has so far failed to provide sufficient support to host countries, despite the commitments made in the Global Pact on Migration and Refugees in 2018.

The German government should also make internal displacement more of a political focus and contribute to mitigating its impacts, because the people concerned often do not have the same rights as their fellow citizens who are not affected by displacement. That is one of the reasons why the internally displaced of today are often the refugees of tomorrow.

5. Managing German and European refugee and migration policy in a humane and coherent manner:

The German government should urgently work towards designing its migration, asylum and refugee policy in such a way as to ensure that refugees and irregular migrants are treated with dignity. This is not just a matter of human decency; it is also necessary in order to give Germany credibility when calling on other countries to comply with international standards. The German government should step up its existing efforts to ensure compliance with the law at the EU's external borders and on EU territory. In addition, it should strengthen legal migration routes, both by creating safe refugee routes and by expanding labour and education migration. It also needs to do more to promote return in order to reduce incentives for irregular migration, and, in particular, invest in voluntary return and reintegration. All this will only be possible if the German government makes an effort to build fair partnerships with other countries.

In order to achieve these five goals, the government will need not only to demonstrate its political will but also to ensure **sufficient, multi-annual, flexible and targeted funding**. The Commission calls on the German government to scale up its funding for mitigating the root causes of displacement and irregular migration and to support countries that are particularly affected. It expressly encourages the government to merge its financing instruments and procedures and make them more effective. The Commission is aware that the COVID-19 pandemic is placing an additional burden on public budgets in all policy fields. It is, however, convinced that tackling the root causes of displacement and irregular migration by means of efforts to prevent conflict and strengthen resilience will cost less overall than dealing with the aftermath.

Charting the right course: Required decisions in the upcoming legislative term

Mitigating the root causes of displacement and irregular migration and supporting people who leave their home countries because of hardship and a lack of prospects is an **ongoing task** for the international community that can only be tackled in **global solidarity**.

The Commission's mandate was to submit proposals to the German government and the German parliament (Bundestag) for mitigating the root causes of displacement. Some measures may have an impact in the short or medium term. Others will require patience and perseverance. But all measures have to be initiated now. To do that, the **German government** and the **Bundestag** depend on the support of **civil society**, the **federal states (Länder)** and **municipalities**.

The recommendations put forward in this report focus on the **international dimension** of displacement and irregular migration. Implementing the recommendations will require close collaboration with the European Union, with partners and with countries of origin and host countries worldwide, as well as with regional and international organisations.

The German government should campaign resolutely for a **fair global order** so that differences in prosperity are reduced and the prospects of people worldwide to build themselves a viable future in their home countries are improved. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations provide the framework for this.

But concrete steps will need to be taken in Germany, too. By making far-reaching changes both at home in Germany and in the European Union we can help to reduce the root causes of displacement and irregular migration. Some examples of what can be done to help are: ambitious climate action in order to achieve the Paris climate targets, fair trade relations with developing countries and, in the interest of crisis prevention, restrictive arms exports.

In Chapter 3, the Commission made numerous recommendations which, in their entirety, can help to reduce the causes of displacement and irregular migration, protect refugees and internally displaced persons more effectively and support host countries. The following **15 recommendations**, in particular, should be part of the **negotiations to form a new government** in autumn 2021 so they can already be implemented during the next legislative term. All of these recommendations are directed at the German government and at the German parliament (Bundestag), the institution that is responsible for the financial and legal framework.

- 1** The government should set up a **Council for Peace, Security and Development** as an interministerial decision-making body at the federal level, with a view to enhancing its own strategic capability and increasing its contribution to global crisis prevention, and so as to play a more active role in shaping collaborative international initiatives aimed at resolving ongoing conflicts. By consulting external experts, the Council shall ensure that scientific and civil society expertise and independent positions are taken into account, and also that transparency is created. More information → [Chapter 3.1.1](#)
- 2** In its partner countries, the German government should support **strong state institutions that aim to protect people's rights and meet their needs** so as to ensure the provision of basic services for the population and improve investment conditions, which will help create new job and employment opportunities. This is the basis for good living conditions and development prospects. In its development cooperation activities, Germany – together with non-governmental organisations and political foundations – should put special emphasis on strengthening democratic institutions and opportunities for participation. In light of the fact that authoritarian governance is on the rise in many countries, collaboration with civil society should be expanded. In addition, cooperation with regional organisations such as the African Union should be strengthened. More information → [Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.1.2](#)
- 3** The German government should consistently involve **women** as independent actors in all of its strategies and measures and protect women's rights in order to successfully reduce the root causes of displacement and irregular migration. Self-determination, equal rights and higher levels of female participation have a positive impact on crisis prevention, peacebuilding and sustainable development. This requires that women have access to quality health care including family planning, education, and opportunities for employment and participation. Germany should also campaign systematically for the protection of women against discrimination and violence, and for women's rights. Displaced women require particular support and protection. More information → [Chapters 3.1.2, 3.2 and 3.4](#)
- 4** In order to reduce poverty in a sustainable way, the German government should push for the establishment of adaptive **social protection systems** in the partner countries of German development cooperation and, in particular, in fragile contexts. A joint effort with international partners could provide up to one billion additional people with access to at least one social protection service within the next five years. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for such protection. The German government should focus its support primarily on establishing and expanding social protection systems in the countries of origin and host countries of displaced persons and irregular migrants. More information → [Chapter 3.2.3](#)
- 5** The German government should massively scale up its support for the **expansion of basic health care structures** and formulate a long-term approach in this context, in order to help achieve the SDG of sustainable universal health coverage. Access to such structures must also be ensured for displaced persons, stateless persons and irregular migrants. The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has made the importance of health care more evident than ever. The German government should step up its efforts, together with the World Health Organization and the European Union, to bring about faster and more equitable access to vaccines and medicines in developing countries. More information → [Chapter 3.2.2](#)
- 6** The German government should make **quality basic and secondary education** a top priority of its development cooperation in order to improve life and career opportunities through quality education for girls and boys alike. Funding in the education sector needs to reflect this priority and must not be reduced as part of the "BMZ 2030" reform process. This also applies when, in development cooperation, a focus is rightly placed on vocational training and the creation of skilled jobs. Digital education opportunities should be expanded and digital literacy strengthened. For more information on basic and secondary education → [Chapter 3.2.2](#) For more information on vocational training → [Chapter 3.2.5](#)

- 7** In addition to pushing climate change mitigation action in Germany and Europe, the German government should **provide massive support for countries of the Global South to assist them in the climate-smart transformation of their economies**, with a view to mitigating climate change as a driver of displacement and irregular migration, and strengthening countries in their sustainable development and modernisation efforts. It should develop a mechanism whereby climate protection investments in Germany are the basis for additionally providing a significant share of funding for climate mitigation action measures in developing countries and emerging economies (“climate matching”). The aim of these measures should be to promote the further development and implementation of countries’ own climate targets and, in particular, support the expansion of renewables. More information → [Chapter 3.3.1](#)
- 8** The German government should step up more targeted support for ways to **adapt to climate change** so as to stop the impacts of climate change from forcing people to leave their homes. This means looking ahead and supporting regions where adaptation is necessary and still possible, as well as regions that are likely to become the future destinations of climate-induced migration and displacement. Coastal cities, for instance, are frequently destinations of domestic migration whilst themselves being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. More information → [Chapter 3.3.2](#)
- 9** The German government should step up its support for sustainable **urban development** in developing countries in order to improve the living conditions in poor urban districts and create viable prospects for refugees and internally displaced persons outside of refugee camps. The only way it will be possible to improve the living conditions of particularly vulnerable people, ensure good governance, and still protect the environment and the climate is if rapid urbanisation, especially in less developed countries, is managed appropriately. More information → [Chapter 3.2.1](#)
- 10** The German government should place more political emphasis on the situation of **internally displaced persons** and affected countries, with the aim of creating prospects for the people concerned. In contexts of protracted internal displacement, in particular, it should focus its support on promoting long-term solutions and also use development policy instruments to that end. Therefore, the German government should support the work of the UN High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement set up in 2019 and lobby for an appropriate follow-up process. More information → [Chapter 3.4.2](#)
- 11** The German government should support **host countries** that are particularly affected by refugee movements, particularly in crisis regions, in order to create prospects for a sustainable future for the people and the host communities. Such support should be agreed upon for a five-year period and should be plannable, significant and verifiable; it should also go beyond humanitarian aid. The pertinent compacts should be concluded in close collaboration with international partners within the framework of the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, and be extendable in case of need. More information → [Chapter 3.4.1](#)

- 12** The German government should initiate an **Alliance for Resettlement** with a view to ensuring that at least the members of that alliance permanently take in a certain quota of recognised refugees. Alongside Germany, possible members could include other EU countries, the United States, Canada and Japan. Each member state should resettle at least the number of refugees per year that corresponds to a share of 0.05 per cent of the country's own population so as to increase resettlement figures, which are currently at an all-time low. For Germany, this means committing to the resettlement of 40,000 people per year. Highly vulnerable persons, in particular women, children and victims of sexualised violence from the world's biggest humanitarian crisis regions, should be given first consideration. Moreover, the German government should create safe routes for refugees so as to provide swift support for people in acute crisis situations and expand the **issuing of humanitarian visas** for this purpose. Specifically, the government should let a significant number of particularly vulnerable people, for instance from Yemen, travel to Germany via safe routes under a pilot project. In addition, the German government should explore possibilities for asylum applications from third countries outside the EU. More information → [Chapters 3.4.1 and 3.5.1](#)
- 13** The German government, together with other EU member states, must work towards ensuring **compliance with the applicable law at the EU's external borders** so that violations of human rights obligations cease. Two tasks are highly important in this regard: preventing push-backs, and ensuring minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers within the EU. It is not enough to call on developing countries and authoritarian states to respect human rights; Germany and Europe themselves have to consistently ensure respect for human rights. More information → [Chapter 3.5.2](#)
- 14** The German government should conclude **substantial migration partnerships** with relevant countries of origin in order to create more safe migration routes and jointly manage migration. Such partnerships could combine concrete offers for labour migration and possibly visa-free travel on the one hand with realistic agreements for the return of people who are required to leave on the other. Voluntary return should always take precedence. For the purpose of making a strategic selection of countries, discussions should be held during annual summits on asylum and migration in coordination with the partners who are involved in integrating refugees, i.e. civil society including diaspora organisations, the private sector, the federal states (Länder) and local authorities. This aspect should also be included in the ongoing negotiations on the implementation of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum with EU partners. More information → [Chapters 3.5.3 and 3.5.4](#)
- 15** The German government should step up its efforts to come up with **German strategies** on mitigating the root causes of displacement and irregular migration **that are coherently coordinated between the federal ministries**, and should make available sufficient **human resources** for mainstreaming these strategies more effectively in European and international discussions. The German government should increase funding and improve its own strategic capabilities by improving the coherence of its **financing**. The financing of measures that reduce the causes of displacement and irregular migration should be based on robust multi-annual plans in order to provide reliability for the people affected and for partners. This should also enable flexible responses to evolving challenges. More information → [Chapter 3.6](#)

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