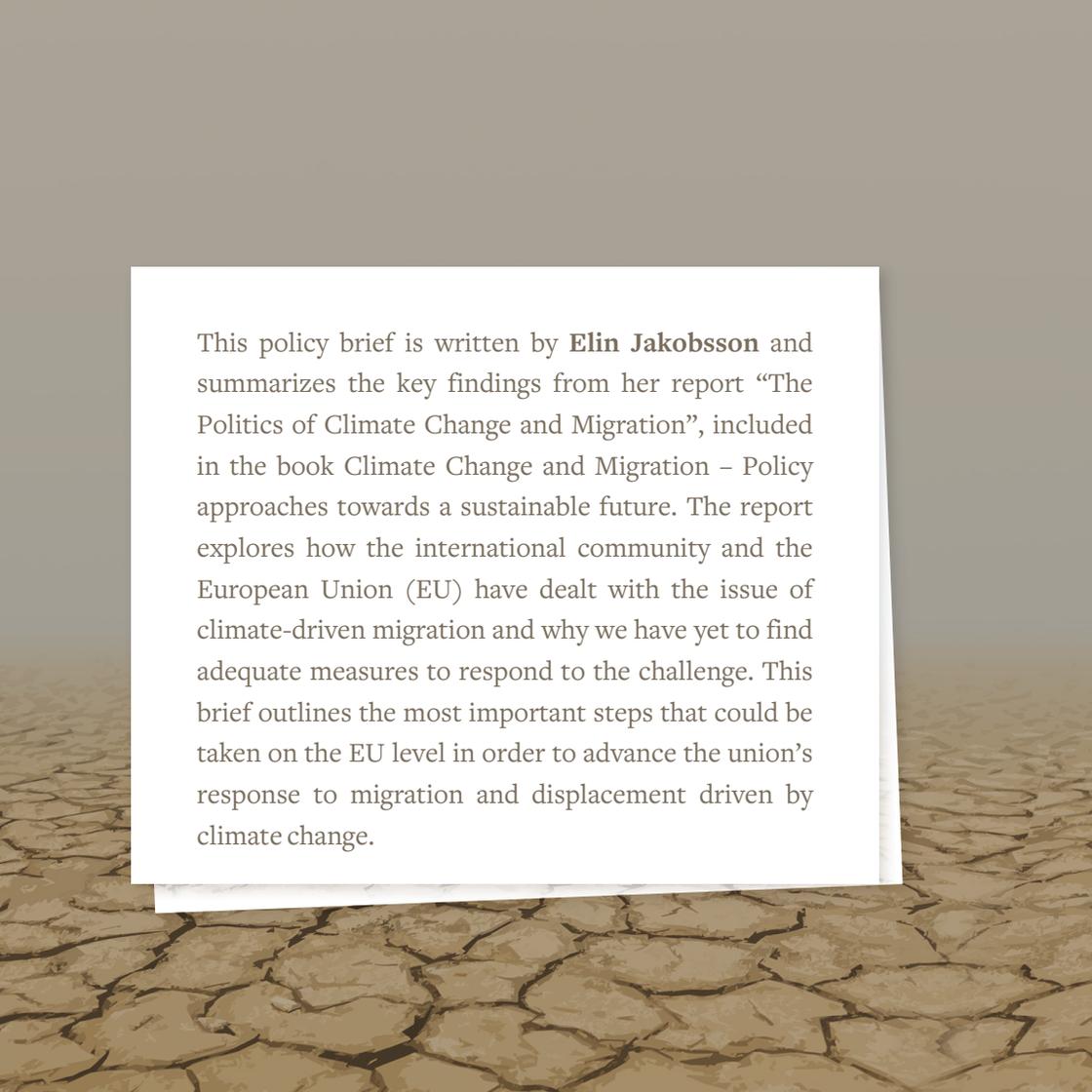


THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS





This policy brief is written by **Elin Jakobsson** and summarizes the key findings from her report “The Politics of Climate Change and Migration”, included in the book *Climate Change and Migration – Policy approaches towards a sustainable future*. The report explores how the international community and the European Union (EU) have dealt with the issue of climate-driven migration and why we have yet to find adequate measures to respond to the challenge. This brief outlines the most important steps that could be taken on the EU level in order to advance the union’s response to migration and displacement driven by climate change.



On a global level, we see that climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters are already causes of displacement. Convincing and far-reaching evidence shows how these factors interact with migration and mobility. Even if the majority of this migration is internal, there are still severe gaps in the international protection on a regional and international level which need to be adequately addressed.

What is climate-driven migration?

Climate-driven migration concerns migration patterns that are induced by environmental degradation or natural catastrophes of some kind. Climate change drives migration and displacement right now, and it is likely to increasingly do so in the future. Huge numbers of people are displaced every year as a result of different kinds of natural disaster. According to estimates from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) 17.2 million people were newly displaced in 2018, due to different kinds of natural disaster. This can be compared to the figure of 10.8 million displaced due to conflict or violence in the same year. The IDMC estimates that on average, 24 million people have been displaced each year since 2008. Precise estimates regarding the number of future climate-driven migrants and displaced people are difficult to come by, as is distinguishing climate-driven migration from other types of migration.

What has hindered the international community from responding to the challenge?

The lack of a unified view on definitions and scope of the policy issue at stake.

The group of advocates and their complex roles.

The lack of forums to discuss and negotiate actions on climate-driven displacement.

Different types of resistance that has caused the process to occasionally stagnate.

There is no “one-size-fits-all solution”

It is important to keep in mind that climate-driven migration and/or displacement encompasses a wide range of mobility patterns and causalities. An adequate response must therefore include different types of measures and solutions. The complexity of climate driven migration must not make us lose sight of the remaining legal gaps, with cross-border displacement being of outmost concern. In addition, policy makers must remember that, even though national and regional examples might lead the way – climate-driven migration, like all migration, cannot be properly addressed unilaterally.



How can policy-makers in the EU better address the issue of climate-driven migration?

1. More efforts need to be put into streamlining definitions in order to create a unified terminology and a common language on climate-driven migration. There have been conceptual advancements in the past few years but confusion and discrepancies related to the scope and definitions regarding climate-driven migration still persist.

2. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) gives more attention to climate-driven migration than has been given to previous agreements in the UN system. However, the suggested measures are not overly specified and it will be very much up to states to take these forward. With this in mind, the EU should make use of and safeguard the GCM as a forum for negotiations and discussions. In doing so, EU institutions and representatives should:

- a) Strive to advance and promote issues related to climate-driven migration in the GCM context.
- b) Encourage all member states to sign the compact.

3. A large group of climate-driven migrants are not sufficiently covered by existing protection mechanisms. EU protection for climate-driven migrants should therefore be strengthened. Such strengthening measures could include:

- a) To recognize natural disasters as a cause of forced displacement – and thus a provision to attain protection status within the frames of the new EU Qualification Regulation.
- b) To consider the possibilities of international protection even where there might be a theoretical option of internal flight in order to relieve pressure on local resources and ecosystems (especially as such pressure has proven to be a breeding ground for conflict).
- c) To assist people and states in need with finding safe spots after sudden-onset disasters. This can be done through humanitarian assistance, temporary permits or humanitarian visas.
- d) To assist international humanitarian organizations and exposed states with resettlement-like solutions for displaced people, where appropriate. This should also be considered for cases of slow-onset disasters (eg. droughts and sea-level rise), where relocation is needed as a way of supporting vulnerable communities who have fewer chances of maintaining their livelihoods as a result of environmental degradation.

Some climate-driven migrants may already be covered by European frameworks, even without specific references to climate change (eg. migrating workers or those fleeing from climate-induced conflict). In those cases, the EU must ensure that existing standards remain and are safeguarded.

About the project

This brief has been written by Elin Jakobsson, PhD, International Relations at Stockholm University for the project “Climate Change and Migration: policy approaches towards a sustainable future”. The project has been a collaboration between the green and liberal think-tank Fores and The European Liberal Forum.

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