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# MIG-DHL

Migrants Digital Health Literacy

## Handbook

### Module 2

Main health issues when landing in a new country

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This handbook for module 2 is a part of the MIG-DHL Program containing 6 learning modules in total, which has been developed within the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership **MIG-DHL-Migrants Digital Health Literacy**.

## The training contents at a glance:

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### MIG-DHL Programm

Module 1: What is Digital Health Literacy and its relevance

**Module 2: Main health issues when landing in a new country**

Module 3: Healthcare Services

Module 4: Turning Digitally Literate

Module 5: Exploring Digital Health Tools

Module 6: Being Active in the Digital Health Environment

You can find more information at the homepage: <https://mig-dhl.eu/>

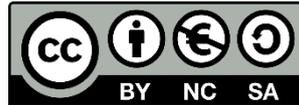


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## 2.0 Introduction

The following handbook belongs to the intellectual output 2 in the project MIG-DHL. This handbook covers all the six modules:

- 1.) What is Digital Health Literacy and its relevance?
- 2.) Main health issues when landing in a new country**
- 3.) Healthcare Services
- 4.) Turning digitally literate
- 5.) Exploring digital health tools
- 6.) Being active in the digital environment

The handbook itself is addressed specifically to trainers and supporters (social workers, health professionals, etc.). The idea is to provide deeper knowledge about the topics discussed in the training sessions, so the content of the training materials gets clearer to the trainer. Also, the trainer is prepared to answer questions, which are more detailed than the information given in the training materials. Therefore, this handbook provides a deeper knowledge and linkages to additional resources related to the content - primarily for the trainers, but of course also for other people who would like to learn more about the topics.

The structure of the handbook is orientated on the structure of the training programme. Every module has a chapter of around 6-8 pages.

This particular part of the handbook contains information relating to **Module 2: Main health issues when landing in a new country**. Therefore, here you will find the necessary theoretical information to support the contents and activities of **DPTA\_2. Module 2 “Main health issues when landing in a new country”** linked to raising awareness about the health issues migrants are particularly prone to when arriving in a new country. The training material focuses on factors that influence health before, during, and after migrants’ arrival in the host country.



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Each of these phases impacts the physical and mental health of migrants, and in some cases, they are interrelated and mutually dependent.

Health issues are not only manifested in disease symptoms. They also have to do with language and terms, and different ways of dealing with illness. Behind symptoms and their description, there are often also culture-specific narratives, thus migrants, as well as their doctors, should also be sensitized towards this kind of disparity. The module describes the most common diseases and corresponding treatments a migrant may face in the host country and how these can be addressed using digital means. Another goal of the module is to explore the main health determining behaviors that are related to and influence health and health outcomes. Moreover, the module aims to describe the front-line prevention strategies that migrants should be aware of when arriving in the host country.

## **2.1 Opening**

During the opening, you as a trainer should explain the session's objectives, the duration, the organization, and the activities. Please be aware that the learners might come from very different educational backgrounds and might not necessarily be used to a learning environment (any more). Therefore, you might open the session with a roundtable asking them about their background and interests. Try to find out more about their educational level, if this was not known before the training.

For this module, we assume that the learners are literate and sufficiently proficient in writing, reading, and understanding and that they have had a school career that has provided them with basic skills. We further assume that they are familiar with the use of mobile digital devices. Ask your group of learners about this so that you can better assess any deficits to tailor the training accordingly.

For the purpose of the training, it is necessary that the learners have access to a digital tool which could be their mobile phone, a tablet, or a PC.

Clearly explain the rules for the session, e.g. no whatsapping, taking phone calls, or chatting. Encourage active participation and take special care of those who might not participate actively in the session. There might be different reasons like shyness or lack of language skills.



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Present the practical activities and clearly formulate your expectations for active participation at the beginning as this training has no focus on listening but on exercising and learning by active involvement. Be aware that your learners might not be familiar with this didactic concept.

## **2.2 Risk factors for health issues according to different migration stages**

Risks of health for migrants arise at every stage of migration, starting from the country of origin (especially if coming from unstable situations or conflicts). Various risks may come up also during the journey and at the destination or transit country, but also at the stage of relocation. Therefore, ask the learners to reflect on various health risks that may arise from migration, with or without defining the stages. In the training material, the learners are asked to note down their experiences according to stages. Let them use flip charts or pinboards to note down everything they might find interesting. It is suggested to show the included introductory video followed by a detailed explanation of health risks according to the stages.

There is digital homework directly linked to this part of the training and learners are asked to create their own pocket guide on health issues according to their needs and interests. Via the training platform, you will be able to check the homework done and also stay in touch with the learners.

## **2.3 Exploring the physical and mental health of migrants**

Migrant populations are at risk of specific physical and mental health issues. In the training, learners will be introduced to the symptoms of health and mental health issues that are more prevalent in the migrant population. You will then facilitate a group discussion, exploring the illness narratives of the learners, aiming to overcome cultural barriers that may influence health literacy. You may start a discussion about e.g. the symptoms of health and mental health issues that are more prevalent in the migrant population.



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The perception of illness and the way it is dealt with can be very different depending on the cultural background. Symptoms of illness are interpreted differently and the point at which medical help is required can also vary. The assessment of when home remedies are sufficient and when a doctor should be consulted can differ culturally. Communication of illnesses also varies: There are illnesses that are shared with friends and others that are treated as taboo. The recovery process is also subject to different characteristics: e.g. does a sick person withdraw from family life or does the family play a role in recovery? What role does digital help play and how is it used? For your own preparation, it is suggested that you try to collect some information from colleagues or migrant support organizations in order to get sensitized.

According to WHO, the World Health Organisation, above all, infectious diseases like tuberculosis, HIV infection and viral hepatitis, respiratory diseases, and vector-borne diseases are most common in migrant communities. The following diseases are observed disproportionately: cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic lung diseases, many of which require the provision of continuous care over a long time, often for a lifetime. Probably your learners are aware of diseases that occur more frequently, but how to deal with them in order to maximize chances of recovery is not always clear. It is also often unclear at what point medical help and medication are absolutely necessary to alleviate symptoms and avoid subsequent health damage. Raising awareness about that is also a target of your training.

Suggesting specific health actions is the task of a doctor but you should make aware that medical treatment can be provided in different ways: in a pharmacy, in a doctor's practice, by a doctor visiting an ill person at home, in a hospital emergency room and digitally. Learners should be aware that more and more doctors are also offering digital treatment, especially in times of a pandemic. However, there are prerequisites for this and, as a rule, the doctor has to record a health status at a time. For your learners, digital treatment might have some



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advantages as it can be received via a mobile phone and the migrant does not have to come to a doctor's practice.

Talking about mental health might be a very sensitive issue and for some groups (e.g. refugees) access to counseling, treatment, and therapy (face-to-face and online) is not always possible at short notice. Refugees with post-traumatic stress are a vulnerable group for whom few preventive and therapeutic measures are available. Integrative, culturally sensitive approaches to treating refugees face complex challenges, such as cultural and language barriers, which require specialization on the part of medical experts. However, meanwhile, it is well-known that mental disorders are an issue in migrant communities and it should be discussed in your training, if possible. The training material includes several exercises and recommendations for implementation steps.

At any point, you should make clear that learners should always consult their doctor for the diagnosis and treatment.

#### **2.4. Prevention strategies**

This part of the training focuses on learning about disease prevention, exploring the most common prevention strategies, and understanding the importance of adopting prevention strategies. Your role as a trainer is to communicate respective information (e.g. about important topics like vaccination, vaccine-preventable diseases, nutrition (including treatment and prevention of malnutrition), the negative impact of alcohol and smoking, the importance of adopting physical activity throughout their life, and the recommended screening for chronic and other diseases. Following hygiene rules is an important primary prevention and easy-to-follow strategy that will also be discussed.



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You are encouraged to start a discussion about their perception of the proper nutritional habits and then deepen in their own nutritional habits and if they use digital means to get information, healthy tips, recipes, and dietary consultation.

You are also encouraged to start a conversation about their knowledge around recommended vaccination both in their origin and in the host country and how confident they are to search for the host country's national vaccination program for both children/adolescents and adults. In case your group of learners is composed mainly of women, please consider focusing on special topics like prevention of women's health, pregnancy, baby, and child care that can be found in the Annexes of the module.

In case there is a special interest in your learners' group in mental health, the training includes some material on the identification of mental health problems and building resilience of mental health is also found in the annexes.

## **2.5 References**

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