

GlocalMIC

Global Cities: Preparing to Protect Migrants in Times of Transboundary Crises?

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WHY GLOCALMIC?

Crises are no longer exceptional events — they are part of our governing reality. Climate-related disasters, pandemics, interstate conflicts, cyber-attacks, and economic disruptions increasingly overlap and reinforce one another. Many of these crises are transboundary in nature: they cross borders, policy domains, and levels of government. Yet they are ultimately experienced locally.

Global cities such as Barcelona, Bangkok, Berlin, Bogotá, or Mexico City are deeply interconnected hubs of mobility, trade, and political exchange. They are also home to large and diverse migrant populations — including people in situations of legal, economic, and social vulnerability.

When crises hit, migrants are often disproportionately affected. Loss of employment, restricted access to services, unclear administrative status, language barriers, and housing precarity can quickly compound risks. At the same time, local actors – including local authorities and/or civil society – are usually the first to respond – providing emergency assistance, coordinating services, and mediating between national policies and local realities.

GLOCALMIC starts from a practical concern:

Are global cities prepared to protect migrants when different types of crises occur?

This question is not only academic. It matters for:

- Urban emergency planning and risk management
- Social services and migrant inclusion policies
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Long-term urban resilience strategies

Strengthening preparedness to protect migrants is not a niche issue — it is central to building inclusive, resilient cities capable of coping with both sudden shocks and chronic stress.

WHAT IS GLOCALMIC'S OBJECTIVE?

GLOCALMIC examines the extent to which global cities are prepared to protect migrants when diverse crises unfold.

The project looks beyond a state-centred lens and focuses on the city level, where crisis impacts materialise and where concrete protective measures are implemented. It studies how local governments anticipate risks, coordinate actors, mobilise resources, and learn from past crises.

The project is guided by two core assumptions:

- Global cities possess administrative capacity and adaptive potential that position them to lead preparedness efforts.
- Through their connections with other cities, civil society, businesses, national governments, international organisations, and migrant communities, they can influence broader governance dynamics.

Preparedness is understood not simply as having plans on paper, but as the ability to reduce harm, adapt to changing conditions, and transform institutional practices that limit protection.



HOW IS GLOCALMIC DEVELOPED?

GLOCALMIC unfolds in two main steps.

First, the project develops a clear and practical framework to understand what “crisis preparedness to protect migrants” means at the city level. This includes reviewing existing research on crisis management and local migration governance, and translating it into a set of concrete dimensions and indicators that can be applied to cities in different regions.

Second, the project maps and analyses how selected global cities perform in practice. It collects and compares data on preparedness conditions, identifies enabling and constraining factors, and examines how preparedness efforts shape local and trans-local governance dynamics. Through this comparative perspective, the project seeks to understand why some cities are better positioned than others to protect migrants in times of crisis.

RELEVANCE

By focusing on preparedness — rather than only on emergency response — GLOCALMIC contributes to policy discussions on:

- Anticipatory governance
- Urban resilience
- Inclusive crisis management
- Multi-level and transnational migration governance

In a context of cascading and overlapping crises, strengthening cities' capacity to protect migrants strengthens cities' capacity to protect everyone.

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