

SVR Annual Report Summary 2023

Climate change and migration: What we know about the connection and what options there are for action



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1. The SVR Annual Report 2023: an overview¹

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges faced by humanity. Its consequences for the living and working conditions of people worldwide can no longer be overlooked. Accordingly, the issue is high on the political agenda, especially in Germany. Climate change also has an indirect and direct impact on migration processes, a fact that is increasingly recognised in relevant political forums. Yet still too little consideration is given to potential migration and refugee policy responses in this context.

In its Annual Report 2023, titled "Climate change and migration: What we know about the connection and what options there are for action", the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (SVR) turns its attention to this important issue through focusing on the following key questions. Part A (summaries of chapters A.1 – A.3) of the report asks how climate change influences global migration patterns, while Part B (B.1 – B.4) considers what this means for migration policy action, and the options available at the global, regional and national levels.

In the first part (Part A), the SVR Annual Report provides a review of current research on the connections between climate change and migration and discusses central conceptual and definitional questions. How are the diverse and complex connections between climate change and migration understood and conceptualised in the current scientific discourse, and what challenges are faced when researching climate change-induced migration? This is followed by an analysis of the empirical state of knowledge in relation to the scope, structure and specifics of climate change-induced migration, highlighting questions that currently remain unanswered. Part A of the report ends with an examination of the possibilities and limitations of forecasts and scenarios on climate change-induced migration. While forecasts on this subject are always fraught with uncertainty, it is unequivocally clear that migration as a result of climate change will increase.

The discussion of the current state of scientific knowledge also shows that climate change-induced migration largely takes place within countries, and that international migration tends to take place over short distances, for example to neighbouring countries. It demonstrates the broad and varied spectrum of options that may (or may not) be available to those affected, including the decision to migrate itself, and the specific political support required to make these options realistically feasible. This is not just a question of the extent to which individuals are exposed to environmental change; it is also about the social, economic and political factors that may affect the options available to them.

The second part of the report (Part B) focuses on political and legal responses to climate change-induced migration, and how the latter might be addressed through such means. It examines the policy options currently under discussion, some of which are already being implemented or tested at the global, regional and/or national level. The report finds that in order to address climate change-induced migration, migration policy levers must be applied as well as asylum policy levers: moreover, the nation state remains an important actor. The SVR therefore proposes a set of three instruments: a climate passport, a climate card and a climate work visa. These are instruments which can be implemented by Germany and other countries at the national level, but which are also transferable to other political levels (for example, the European Union).

The use of measures from the entire spectrum of migration policy, as recommended by the SVR, must be understood as a building block in an overarching strategy to mitigate climate change and to deal with its consequences. At all political levels, such a strategy first and foremost requires a consistent climate policy to limit CO₂ emissions and to achieve climate goals. Regarding the national level, such a policy must in

¹ In May 2023, the Expert Council on Integration and Migration published its comprehensive Annual Report: <u>"Klimawandel und</u> <u>Migration: was wir über den Zusammenhang wissen und welche Handlungsoptionen es gibt"</u>. This publication summarises the German-language long text version.

turn integrate a coherent external climate policy ("Klimaaußenpolitik") involving migration policy aspects and supported by all relevant ministries. In addition, financial agreements must be reached, for example on global funds. The guiding principle in creating all policy instruments must be ensuring that the costs of adaptation, disaster relief, reconstruction, sustainable development and the decarbonisation of the economy are distributed fairly across the globe. This is underlined by the significant financing agreement reached at the 27th UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt in 2022 (COP 27), under which financially weak states that are particularly hard-hit by the negative consequences of climate change will receive greater financial support in the future. Monitoring how this agreement is implemented in detail remains an important task. A fair division of responsibility globally, however, requires more extensive measures, such as global risk management and development policy approaches to promote local adaptations and technology transfers. In this context, the national, European and global levels need to work in a more joined-up way, with actions coordinated as much as possible; the interactions between different policy fields must also take greater priority than they have done to date. In line with its mandate,² however, the SVR here focuses primarily on migration policy and the opportunities for action that it offers.

This English summary of the German report is intended to provide interested parties with an overview of the main topics, findings and central recommendations of the SVR Annual Report 2023. To this end, Section 2 ("Summary of chapters and findings") first provides an executive summary of the contents and findings of the individual chapters covered by Parts A and B of the report.³ Section 3 provides an overview of central facts and figures presented in the report regarding the current state of scientific knowledge on climate change-induced migration. Finally, Section 4 provides a complete translation of the "Nine Core Messages of the SVR Annual Report 2023".

We wish you a profitable read, but not before expressing our sincere thanks to all those external experts who have supported the SVR in compiling its report over the past year. This year, the SVR had the honour of working with Prof. Dr Frank Dietrich (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf), Dr Lisa Thalheimer (Princeton University) and Rainer Ohliger (Netzwerk Migration in Europa e. V.). We would also like to thank Prof. Dr Walter Kälin (Platform on Disaster Displacement), Dr Francois Gemenne (The Hugo Observatory: Environment, Migration, Politics), Dr Kira Vinke (German Council on Foreign Relations), Prof. Dr Sabine Schlacke (German Advisory Council on Global Change) and Dr Raphaela Schweiger (Robert Bosch Stiftung), who kindly accepted the SVR's invitation to participate in a dialogic expert exchange.⁴

² For further explanations on the work of the SVR and its annual reports, see Section 5.

³ A complete list of the literature cited in the individual chapters can be found on pp. 128–144 of the German version of the report, available at https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SVR-Jahresgutachten_2023_barrierefrei.pdf

⁴ All expert reports, as well as the Annual Report itself, are available on the SVR website at: <u>https://www.svr-migration.de/</u> publikationen/jahresgutachten/2023/ (in German language only).

2. Summary of chapters and findings

Chapter A.1 – The link between climate change and migration: a scientific overview

Climate change is altering global migration patterns. Nevertheless, it is challenging to describe its effect on migration in concrete terms and to conceptualise it scientifically. The current state of research understands climate change as an underlying factor – or meta factor – influencing existing patterns and forms of migration. This is because migration always has multiple causes that interact in complex ways. In climate change-induced migration, environmental factors are entangled with social or societal drivers. As a rule, climate change does not generate new, discrete forms of migration with their own specific laws that are clearly distinguishable from other forms.

Migration triggered by climate change can mean that adaptation to the latter's consequences has failed locally. In certain constellations, however, it may also be a reasonable adaptation strategy. Yet climate change can not only trigger migration, but also make it more difficult; the people who are most affected by adverse environmental changes often do not have the means to escape unacceptable living conditions through migration.

Moreover, environmental events such as drought, flooding, hurricanes, etc., by no means affect all people in the same way. Rather, they always interact closely with other (e.g. social or economic) factors and often exacerbate existing social problems. The impact of climate change at the individual, societal and global level therefore depends to a large extent on the availability of (especially economic) resources. These can be used, for example, to create adaptation measures that increase resilience and thus mitigate climate change-induced problems.

Due to the complex interactions in climate change-induced migration, it is difficult to determine clear interrelationships and to weight environmental factors in relation to other causes of migration. Further research is needed to understand more precisely the mechanisms through which climate change affects migration and what key risk factors increase vulnerability to climate change-induced alterations in the environment.

Chapter A.2 – The scope and structure of climate change-induced migration: empirical findings

The links between climate change and migration are currently receiving increasing attention. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the multiple ways in which climate change and environmental factors can influence migration movements or migration decisions. There is already a solid base of knowledge in this field, and research continues into different temporal and spatial migration patterns. For example, in the case of sudden extreme events (such as floods, storms, etc.), people usually migrate for a short time to a safe place nearby. This is known as survival migration. In contrast, gradual environmental degradation (such as desertification, salinisation of groundwater, rising sea levels, etc.) more often leads to *permanent migration*. Here, those affected usually have more time to react to the impacts of climate change and prepare for migration; they do not have to leave their place of residence at short notice. In both cases, however, those affected have so far largely migrated within the same country (internal migration). If people do leave their country due to climate change, they mostly migrate regionally, that is, to a neighbouring country, and only rarely across continents.

However, other aspects and mechanisms are still in need of further research in order to improve understanding of the links between climate change and migration. In the past, it has been shown that a more granular investigation of this topic can change assumptions and conclusions, as well as the understanding of the mechanisms involved. For example, science has now moved away from an assumption of linear, large-scale or world-changing migration movements. Instead, it is becoming increasingly clear that the relationships between climate change and migration are often indirect, smallscale and context-specific, and depend on numerous socio-economic and political factors.

The impact of climate change is unevenly distributed in several respects. Across the globe, economically weaker countries are often in regions that are particularly affected, and therefore lack the means for effective adaptation measures. The situation is similar at the individual level: the people with the fewest socio-economic resources are often particularly exposed to climate change-induced environmental alterations. As a result, they often do not have the resources to migrate, even if they need to, and become trapped. But the challenges associated with climate change and migration do not only affect economically weaker countries. Even in countries with strong economies, disasters such as floods or forest fires repeatedly lead to destruction and migration; in such countries, however, there are usually more financial resources and more stable state structures available, which make it possible to adapt to the new conditions or at least to react to them more quickly and effectively. At the same time, since climate changeinduced migration mainly takes place within (rather than between) countries, its consequences will mainly affect countries that are already struggling with poverty and inadequate infrastructure. These countries cannot be left alone to deal with the consequences of ongoing climate change. Rather, the economically strong countries must take responsibility, especially in the context of their historical emissions.

Chapter A.3 – Projections and scenarios of climate change-related migration

In the case of climate change-induced migration, it is difficult to estimate the scale of future migration, as this will not only be influenced by environmental changes, but also by many other (for example social, economic or demographic) factors. However, the ability to project possible outcomes plays an important role in creating forward-looking policies. Forecasts can help to better assess future migration patterns. Projections based on "what if" scenarios illustrate opportunities and risks by showing, for example, how respectively neglecting or pushing ahead with climate targets, as well as demographic and economic developments, can affect the extent of future climate change-induced migration. In order to avoid misinterpretation of such forecasts and scenarios by the media and politicians, it should be explicitly stated when presenting them that the figures calculated are not a definitive prediction of

what the future will look like, but show us a possible future; whether it *will* occur is more or less uncertain, and depends on the questions asked, the method chosen and specific (political) actions. It is therefore not possible to precisely quantify the impact of climate change on migration.

However, there is a scientific consensus on one point: if climate change continues, more and more people will (have to) migrate in the future due to the resulting environmental changes and disasters. In the World Bank's second Groundswell report from 2021, even an optimistic projection could still see a minimum of 44.2 million people migrating within their respective countries by 2050; the most pessimistic projection puts the figure at 216.1 million. The Groundswell report figures are based on three future scenarios for six regions, each combining different climatic and socio-economic developments. In order to reduce the likelihood of the most negative scenarios occurring, action must therefore be taken as soon as possible, especially as climate change is happening faster and with greater consequences than previously anticipated, and the targets set at the Paris Climate Conference (COP 21) to limit the global temperature increase to at least 2.0 degrees Celsius, and ideally to 1.5 degrees Celsius, are unlikely to be met.

Chapter B.1 – Problems of perception, climate justice and approaches to action

Climate change-induced migration can be viewed from different perspectives, each highlighting different aspects of the phenomenon. In the political sphere, however, perceptions also decisively determine which analytical approaches are used and which solutions are developed. Perceptions are shaped by the roles of the persons or institutions involved. The different perspectives are each associated with a specific *framing* – the specific categories of thought, terminology and interests within which information is presented. This framing in turn determines how a problem is defined, which solutions can be imagined and who has to act.

The scientific, political and media discourse(s) on climate change-induced migration are dominated, broadly speaking, by four perspectives, each with their own framing, depicting climate migrants respectively as (1) victims of climate change, (2) a threat and security risk (and climate change-induced migration as a conflict driver), (3) people who actively adapt to climate change, and (4) political subjects. In reality, however, most participants in the scientific and political discourse are well aware that the phenomenon is more complex and cannot be understood from one of these perspectives alone.

Difficult moral questions also arise in relation to climate change and how to deal with its consequences. Both the responsibility for climate change and its impacts are distributed in a highly unequal - and unjust - manner, globally and socially. Discussions about climate justice and the "polluter pays" principle generally centre on the guestions of who should bear the costs of adaptations and damage repair, and which countries should receive climate migrants. There is a fundamental conflict, however, between the "global justice" principle and the "polluter pays" principle. The former demands that climate migrants should be compensated as fully as possible for their losses by the states which currently have the resources to do so, while the latter requires that responsibility is based on a state's level of greenhouse gas emissions and not on its ability to support those affected. It also follows from considerations of justice theory that the right to remain must be strengthened. People affected by the impacts of climate change should therefore receive support locally or in their country of origin.

In developing policy options, it is important that decision-makers as well as other participants in relevant debates are aware of the framings that affect their actions. Simplistic discourses should be systematically questioned, as they do not do justice to the multilayered subject matter. In developing solutions, the many different aspects and manifestations of climate change-induced migration (both positive and negative) should be taken into account, rather than neglecting important issues and interrelated impacts. Coordinated, interdepartmental approaches are needed. Expertise must be incorporated from different fields of knowledge and science. In addition, political negotiations – whether at the international, regional or national level – should also include the perspectives of those affected.

Chapter B.2 – Global approaches to climate migration

Climate change, flight and migration are global challenges. Accordingly, they are also addressed by states, international organisations and other institutions at the international level. There are binding international law provisions and non-binding agreements (soft law), as well as political initiatives and processes in the field of climate policy and global migration governance, that are intended to support states in dealing with climate change-related migration. A central question here is to what extent international policy and international law can reflect climate changeinduced migration. For example, are the rights of those affected, and the responsibilities and obligations of potential countries of origin and destination, already legally regulated or should they be regulated in the future? According to current legal opinion, climate change-induced migration is not generally covered by the Geneva Refugee Convention. Only in cases of extreme danger is it theoretically conceivable to apply the principle of non-refoulement. This would mean situations in which the consequences of climate change violate the right to life or constitute inhumane treatment. However, even this dynamic interpretation does not cover the regular case of climate changeinduced migration.

Climate change-induced migration is also part of the agenda of various international migration and climate policy processes and forums, largely driven by various non-state actors. Numerous guidelines, recommendations for action and compilations of best practices for dealing with climate change-induced migration have emerged, which in their entirety are fairly comprehensive, albeit all non-binding. What these approaches have in common is that they do not address climate change-related migration using the tools of refugee law, but primarily by applying the rules and options available under other migration processes. For example, states are called upon to jointly create legal migration channels so that people affected by climate change can adapt through mobility.

A fundamental question is whether a global governance system can and should be created for climate change-induced migration. It has been suggested, for example, that a new international legal instrument could be developed in order to close the protection gap for climate migrants at the international level. A binding mechanism, however, could not be created without first overcoming considerable political hurdles, and would also require ongoing monitoring to ensure that states meet their obligations. Another possibility is that national measures could be politically harmonised with the help of non-binding guidelines.

In the SVR's view, a new treaty or policy framework specifically for climate change-induced migration is likely to be politically unrealistic, and would be unlikely to address the complex issues involved in sufficient detail. Instead, states should implement existing guidelines and recommendations and, if necessary, test them jointly. In the opinion of the SVR, the various facets and impacts of climate change-induced migration can best be addressed by measures at the national and regional levels. These measures should in turn be coordinated globally and monitored more closely. Whether a new global approach will develop from this in the future remains to be seen. In the short term, this is neither to be expected nor would it be expedient.

Chapter B.3 – Regional management of climate migration

The regional level is particularly important for the political handling of climate migration. This is because migration in general, including climate change-related migration, often takes place between neighbouring countries. At the regional level, political actors can often agree on joint measures more easily than at the global level. Chapter B.3 focuses on the two instruments of refugee protection and free movement of persons.

As explained in Chapter B.2, climate change-induced refugee movements are generally not covered by the Geneva Refugee Convention. In parts of Latin America and Africa, however, the concept of "refugee" was decades ago defined more broadly than in the Geneva Refugee Convention. Although this was not done with climate change in mind, this broader definition has already been applied to climate change-induced migration. In 2004, the EU also broadened its definition of a "refugee with subsidiary protection" (Directive 2004/83/EC), which is similar to the understanding of the concept in Africa and Latin America. Such regional instruments are often transposed into national law. In Europe, refugee protection is usually granted on a case-by-case basis. It is not yet a general instrument for dealing with climate change-induced migration. However, certain refugee protection measures (such as the Temporary Protection Directive or resettlement programmes) could be adapted to apply to this form of migration. Humanitarian visas and other admission programmes are further options to grant legal entry to persons in particular need of protection. In addition, development cooperation programmes can be used at the EU level to support adaptation to climate change in affected countries and regions and to support states with high internal migration.

Free movement agreements – if they are designed in a correspondingly liberal manner – enable mobility regardless of the reasons for migration; they are thus an important factor for climate change-related migration where such migration takes place as an adaptation strategy. As examples from the Caribbean region (CARICOM, OECS) and East Africa (IGAD)⁵ show, such agreements are already being used in this way. Within the EU, the very extensive right of free movement may also become significant in the future for regional migration as a result of climate change. In principle, the above-mentioned instruments must be designed in such a way that they offer effective protection to those affected in the case of climate change-induced migration. They should allow for anticipatory, regulated and dignified migration.

Chapter B.4 – National measures: a proposal to reform the right of residence

Climate change, as a global problem, requires global solutions. This also and especially applies to crossborder migration, which by definition affects more than one nation state. Nevertheless, the nation state remains an important actor in this context. Different approaches by individual member states can function as pilots, offering potential solutions for regional measures. This is especially important given that decision-making at the EU level often takes many years.

Against this background, the SVR proposes a combination of three instruments (Figure 1) that could be implemented by Germany and other individual countries, but that could also be transferable to other political levels. The instruments are graded, according to how severely the countries of origin are affected by climate change, and are in this sense applicable across a spectrum of political ambition.

The first instrument - the most robust in terms of residence law - is a permanent right of residence: a climate passport, following a corresponding proposal of the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU). Nationals of countries that are losing their entire territory due to climate change would be entitled to a permanent right of residence with no further conditions, receiving a passport or its equivalent. As an industrialised country, Germany shares in the responsibility for climate change, and could offer such people a "substitute home", so to speak. In the opinion of the SVR, a climate passport defined in this way should be limited to groups of people whose country of origin or residence is fast disappearing or becoming uninhabitable due to climate change; the instrument would thus primarily apply to those (mainly island) states whose existence is threatened by climate change impacts such as a rise in sea level.

The second instrument, the *climate card*, would offer limited residence to people whose countries of origin are not under existential threat, but are so severely affected by the consequences of climate change that (temporary) migration becomes an adaptation strategy. In principle, it would enable such individuals to come to Germany, initially for a limited period of time, until the most serious consequences have been eliminated. The stay could be made

⁵ CARICOM: Caribbean Community; OECS: Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States; IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

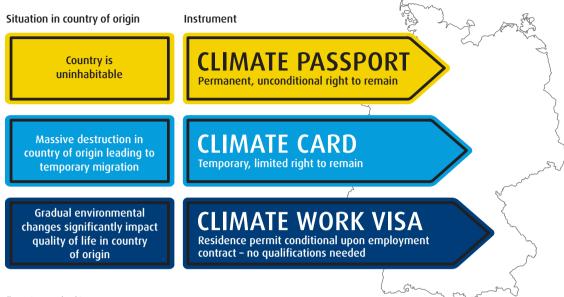


Figure 1 Managing climate change-induced migration to Germany: three instruments

Illustration: SVR/Keskin

permanent if necessary. The climate card is intended to enable and promote migration as a strategy for adapting to climate change, and therefore does not require that the physical territory as such is existentially endangered; this alone makes many more countries eligible for it. In contrast to the climate passport, a country-specific quota system is therefore not only possible but even necessary at this point. However, the granting of such residence permits should not and must not lead to the countries of origin being left alone to deal with the consequences of climate change, and the contribution of industrialised countries should by no means be limited to (temporarily) taking in people from affected countries. Rather, this must be combined with adaptation measures in the countries concerned, including financial and technological assistance to implement such measures.

The third instrument, the *climate work visa*, would be aimed at countries that are affected by climate change, but to a much lesser extent than in the first two cases. Specifically, it would facilitate access for nationals of certain states in order to provide them with alternative sources of income and new prospects through regular migration. This measure would allow significantly more migration than the climate passport and the climate card, because to be eligible, individuals would need to be economically self-sufficient and without non-contributory social benefits from the outset. The residence title would be conditional on more extensive requirements than the other two instruments, especially the existence of an employment contract. The so-called Western Balkans regulation, anchored in German law since 2015, is the model for this instrument, although it has nothing to do with climate change or with the question of how migration can contribute to dealing with its consequences. It was originally created in the context of asylum policy in relation to the countries of the Western Balkans and does not require any specific qualifications or language skills; instead, it opens up a special option of immigration for the purpose of gainful employment. The climate work visa, similarly, would differ fundamentally from the climate card precisely in that it is not designed as a humanitarian visa, and would thus be applicable to considerably more states and individuals than the climate passport and climate card. In this, too, its design draws on what has been learned since the introduction of the Western Balkans regulation, which limits the number of new entrants on its (initially temporary) work visa. Similarly, in the case of the climate work visa, eligible countries could first be defined before setting corresponding quotas.

3.

Facts and figures from the SVR Annual Report 2023

Extent and patterns of climate change-induced migration

In the vast majority of cases, climate change-induced migration takes place within countries (internal migration). The reasons for this could be, for example, sudden extreme weather events such as storms or floods. According to estimates by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in 2021 21.6 million of a total of around 38 million internal displacements were due to the latter (Figure 2). Where national borders are crossed, climate changeinduced migration usually takes place over short distances, e.g. to neighbouring countries. Long-distance intercontinental migration – for example from Africa to Europe – is rare in the context of climate change.

Sudden extreme weather events usually lead to short-term migration (survival migration). Permanent migration is more likely to occur in the context of gradual or long-term environmental changes such as coastal erosion, soil salinisation or desertification.

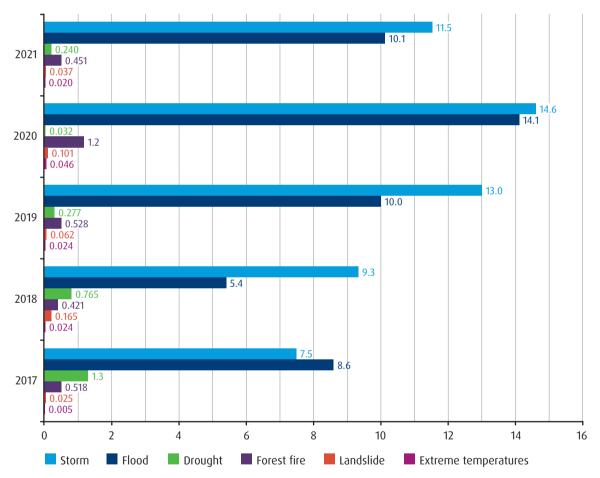


Figure 2 Global internal displacement due to weather-related disasters 2017–2021 (in millions)

Note: Only internal displacements related to (extreme) weather events are shown, not those caused by geophysical disasters or conflicts. The landslides category includes wet mass movements and mass movements; extreme temperatures include severe winter conditions. Individual migration movements within a country are recorded. A person who has to migrate several times within a year is recorded accordingly.

Source: IDMC 2022a; calculation and presentation: SVR

Climate migration is often indistinguishable from other forms of migration

The impact of climate change on migration is not always obvious. Even those affected may not directly link their migration decision to environmental changes. Data from the Mixed Migration Centre show that in Central and West Africa, the vast majority of respondents cited economic reasons in particular as the main reason for their decision to migrate; 69 per cent of respondents from Central African countries and 86 per cent of respondents from West African countries gave this response, with only 5 and 2 per cent of the respondents respectively naming environmental changes as the decisive reason for their migration (Figure 3). Climate change-related environmental changes and extreme weather events exacerbate existing social, economic and political problems in the countries of origin and thus also increase the pressure to migrate. It is possible, for example, that in the event of recurring drought or soil salinisation, the nutritional basis for the local population can no longer be guaranteed.

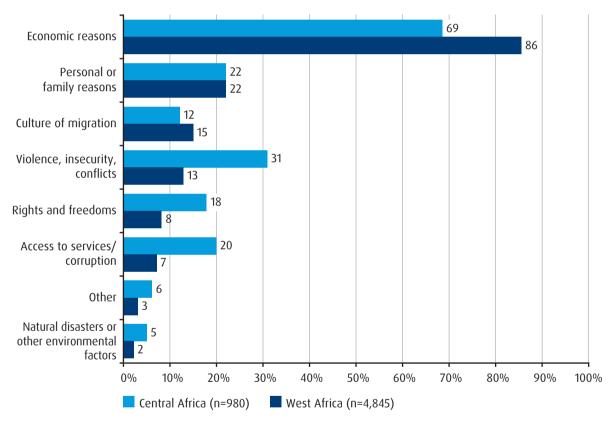


Figure 3 Reasons for a migration decision in 2021 according to respondents from Central and West African countries

Note: Interviews were conducted between February and September 2021 in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Libya, Tunisia and Sudan. The survey is not representative. The question was: For what reason did you leave (place of origin)?; multiple answers were possible.

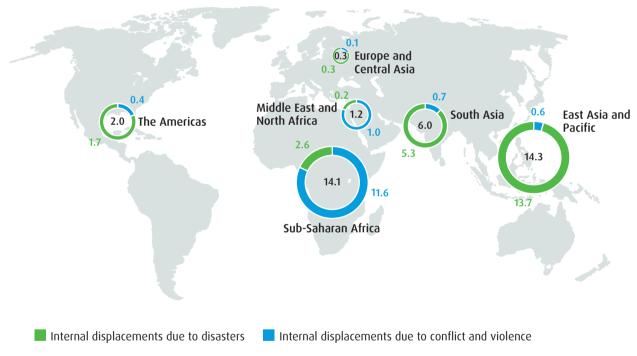
Source: Mixed Migration Centre 2022: 9; illustration: SVR

Climate change-induced migration is very unevenly distributed across the globe

Climate change-induced migration has so far mainly taken place in countries of the Global South. This is due not only to their geographical location, but also to the unequal global distribution of monetary resources for adapting to the consequences of climate change. Economically strong countries have more funds available for adaptation measures, population protection and disaster preparedness, as well as for state aid after extreme weather events.

In 2021, internal displacement due to disasters was by far the most common in East Asia and the Pacific (Figure 4). Here, the number of new internal displacements was around 13.7 million. In the regions of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, they were considerably lower at around 5.3 million and 2.6 million respectively. Europe and Central Asia are again significantly behind the other regions with around 276,000 new internal displacements. The underlying data set includes weather-related disasters (storms, floods, wildfires, drought, extreme temperatures) and geophysical disasters (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides). Geophysical events account for only about 5 per cent of all disasters.

Figure 4 Disaster and conflict-induced internal displacement in 2021 (in millions)



Source: IDMC 2022b: 11; illustration: SVR

Projections and scenarios on climate change-induced migration

There are currently various forecasts on the future development of climate migration. Since these are based on different methods, operationalisations and definitions and/or regional focuses in each case, the figures are often not comparable. The forms of migration (internal migration, international migration or both) are also not always clearly defined. However, the outcomes of all studies are identical in one respect; they all anticipate that climate change-induced migration will increase in the future (Figure 5). The latest projections range from 143 million to 1.2 billion by 2050.

Looking only at the development of future internal migration, this is strongly linked to further developments in the regions of origin and climate change. This is shown by the projections of the second Groundswell report from 2021 for six world regions (Figure 6).

The projections are based on three scenarios. In the first, most pessimistic scenario ("pessimistic reference"), low-income countries are characterised by high population growth, high urbanisation, low GDP growth and low education levels. In addition, emissions are high, so that climate change has a greater impact. In the second scenario ("more inclusive development"), emissions are at the same level as in the pessimistic reference scenario, but the disparities between the world regions are smaller and combined with more moderate trends in population growth, urbanisation, income and education. Here, population growth is lower in low-income countries, but higher in middle-income countries, than in the first scenario. The "more climatefriendly" scenario combines lower emissions with the development path from the pessimistic scenario. This results in a broad range of possible developments of internal migration until 2050, estimated from 44.2 million to 216.1 million.

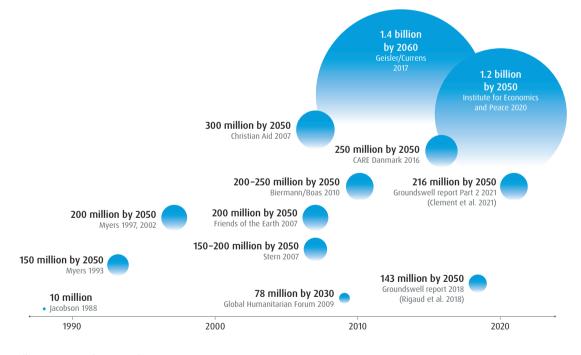


Figure 5 Frequently raised estimates on climate change-induced migration

Illustration: SVR/Deniz Keskin

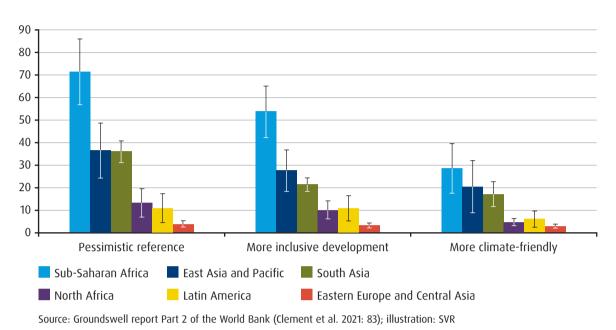


Figure 6 Projections of the future scale of climate change-induced internal migration by 2050 for six regions based on three scenarios (in millions)

Sources

The facts and figures presented in Chapter 3 are based on the sources listed below:

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Nine core messages of the SVR Annual Report 2023

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges faced by humanity. Global warming has complex and, for all aspects of life, existential consequences. Global, regional and local migration patterns are changing too. Migration as a direct consequence of climate change (known as climate change-induced migration) is increasing, but how and to what extent it takes place depends on a number of factors. Where, how and how fast is the climate changing? What measures are individual states and the global community taking to halt global warming and achieve agreed climate goals? How are people and states in different parts of the world dealing with progressing climate change and what measures are being taken to adapt? How consistently is climate change-related hardship being addressed? Will disaster prevention be made more of a priority? And will the burdens resulting from climate change be distributed more fairly - burdens which are currently borne disproportionately by the already disadvantaged countries of the Global South?

In its 2023 Annual Report, the SVR addresses the questions of what we know about climate changeinduced migration and what actions can be taken. At all political levels – national, regional and international – considerations relating to migration and refugee policy have begun to play a bigger role in the overall discourse on climate change. Nevertheless, these issues still do not receive sufficient attention. A global framework for action is still lacking. This is why nation states in particular are called upon to work towards coordinated solutions at the international level. Such solutions can be based on innovative national measures that in turn, can serve as models for policies at the supranational level.

The consequences of human-created climate change demand a swift response. This urgent need for action applies at every tier of politics and in many policy fields, but also to the economy and society. The issues at stake are well known. The decisive factor will be how quickly and to what extent CO₂ emissions are limited worldwide so that there is still a chance of achieving the Paris climate goals. All industrialised nations, and thus also Germany, bear a special responsibility here.

Climate change reinforces existing drivers of migration

Specific environmental disasters cannot always be clearly attributed to climate change, and environmental changes cannot generally be isolated from other factors that may trigger flight or displacement. However, a look at current research shows that climate changeinduced alterations in the environment and extreme weather events exacerbate existing social, economic and political pressures. As a result, they can also increase the pressure to migrate. If the fight against climate change and its consequences fails, migration will necessarily increase. However, climate changeinduced migration is not a new and clearly defined form of migration. Rather, it is closely interwoven with other forms of migration in terms of its causes and the underlying motives of migrating individuals.

In the future, connections between climate change and migration must be recorded more precisely and at an earlier stage to enable governments to respond. This requires, among other things, further research. Such research should not so much aim to identify precise figures in relation to climate change-induced migration; achieving such a goal continues to be problematic, as the interplay of the various factors is complex and in some cases no suitable data are available (see also Core Message 3). However, empirical studies and comprehensive data can help to drill down into the specific dynamics of climate change-induced migration and the risk factors for increased vulnerability. Research acts as an interface here; it can and should help decision-makers, as well as those affected, to develop sustainable adaptation strategies.

2 Climate change-induced migration is mostly internal or to neighbouring countries, rarely across continents

Climate change-induced migration is already evident all over the world, albeit to varying degrees. It primarily takes place within countries and between neighbouring countries. International migration across continents, for example from Africa to Europe, has so far been the exception. Intra-national mobility and migration regularly occur, however, as a result of for example sudden extreme weather events such as storms or floods. According to estimates by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 21.6 million of a total of around 38 million internal displacements in 2021 were due to such events. However, slowonset changes to the environment or recurrent severe weather events also lead to migration predominantly within countries and between neighbouring countries.

The countries of the Global South are particularly affected by the consequences of climate change. This is not only due to their geographical location, but also to the fact that they have fewer financial resources to draw upon. Economically strong countries – which are historically and currently especially responsible for the advance of climate change – can afford, for example, early warning systems, disaster protection and reconstruction and compensation measures. In poorer countries, on the other hand, which bear less historical responsibility in this matter, the necessary funds for such measures are usually lacking. It is thus not only the risks that are unequally and unfairly distributed across the globe, but also the opportunities to adapt to climate change. Here, it is essential to identify and implement fair solutions. People – and countries – that are especially vulnerable must not be left alone with the threats and the efforts required to deal with them.

3 Migration due to climate change will increase, even if forecasts are fraught with uncertainty

Forecasts and possible scenarios continue to be important instruments for forward-looking political action. They provide orientation and can highlight the areas where urgent action is needed. However, they cannot predict with absolute certainty how climate change-induced migration will develop in the future. This is due in part to data gaps, but also because individual migration decisions depend on numerous factors. Last but not least, there are also a number of unanswered questions regarding the further development of climate change. When and to what extent will carbon emissions be reduced? Where are adaptation measures taking place, such as the implementation of coastal defence systems or a transition to the use of drought-resistant plant varieties in agriculture? How do people choose to act in response to environmental change, and what decisions do they make for themselves and their families? Predictions about climate change-induced migration can differ significantly, depending on the assumptions that are made about how fast climate change will develop and how people affected by it will react, what methodologies are used to collect the data and which data are taken into account.

However, even if the extent of climate changeinduced migration cannot be predicted in detail, all available projections and scenarios point unequivocally in one direction: advancing climate change will lead to more migration overall. According to the second Groundswell report from 2021, even an optimistic projection could still see more than 40 million people forced to leave their homes, while a pessimistic reading would put this figure at well over 200 million. Those affected will predominantly move within their home country or to neighbouring states, but migration between continents will also increase. Despite their differences, however, current forecasts and scenarios unanimously show that there is an urgent need for political action. If no effective climate protection is implemented, and too little is invested in sustainable development and adaptation to the unavoidable

consequences of climate change, significantly more people will have to migrate in the future.

Forecasts and scenarios are a key tool for decisionmakers in shaping long-term and forward-looking policies. However, such estimates can also easily be taken out of context and instrumentalised. Therefore, the SVR believes it is very important that the scientific community presents and classifies forecasts and scenarios on this topic in a responsible manner. Actors in the media and in politics must demonstrate equal responsibility in how they respond, and must handle such predictions sensitively. To further this end, it is essential that the underlying premises of the research and the methodologies chosen, as well as remaining areas of uncertainty and the limitations of the science, are communicated transparently.

States should protect the right to remain while enabling migration as an adaptation strategy

Economically disadvantaged population groups are usually most affected by the impacts of climate change. At the same time, they have only limited opportunities to adapt to them in a way that is sustainable in the long term. Migration can be one adaptation strategy. However, to be effective and sustainable, it requires financial resources, education and/or professional qualifications, or even a personal network. People who are dependent on natural resources, such as those whose main source of income is agriculture or fishing, usually do not have sufficient means to start anew in another place. After migrating, they often find themselves in precarious employment and living conditions. Others simply lack the money to migrate, and as a result become "trapped populations".

Migration in the context of climate change should therefore be understood not only as a problem to be prevented, but also as a proactive adaptation strategy. For example, remittances to family members in the country of origin can compensate for the reduced income of the latter, enable investments to reduce dependency on weather events or support adaptation to new environmental conditions. In a similar way, migration should be facilitated by national governments as an investment in a sustainable future and accompanied by comprehensive integration measures, using the entire range of migration policy instruments to do so (see also Core Message 5).

At the same time, the needs of those who do not want to migrate because of a close attachment to a place, a culture or their familiar community must be taken into account. The SVR therefore recommends investing in adaptation strategies and designing them in such a way that remaining in the country or region of origin is not only possible, but also worthwhile from the point of view of those affected. The right to remain, and the realistic possibility of doing so, must be strengthened – for example, through increased climate protection, the expansion of disaster preparedness and needs-based adaptation measures on the ground.

5 Shaping climate change-induced migration requires engagement at all levels of government, using the entire range of migration policy instruments

Climate change-induced migration policy can only be shaped responsibly if its multi-layered framework conditions and its different manifestations are fully acknowledged. This requires the use of the entire range of available migration policy instruments. Where sudden (often temporary) migration cannot be avoided, for example where people need to escape an impending environmental disaster or its consequences, it may be useful to apply approaches that are more familiar from the field of refugee policy in its broadest sense. Such options may include, for example, the use of humanitarian visas or temporary legal protection, but also the suspension of repatriations to countries and regions affected by disasters. However, when it comes to enabling migration as a targeted adaptation strategy, migration policy instruments are more likely to be useful. These could be, for example, work visas or existing agreements on free movement of persons which allow people affected by climate change access to other countries (see also Core Messages 7 and 8).

In activating such instruments, all political levels - from the local to the global - must be involved. The different tiers, whether global, regional, national or local, should work in an interlinked and coordinated manner. The national level is particularly important here; regional or global forums can make recommendations or adopt agreements, but it is up to national governments to implement them. So far, the ability to formulate and implement a common policy approach at the global level has been lacking (see also Core Message 6). The SVR recommends that Germany should lead the way in promoting international cooperation within the EU and in global forums and, in addition, should develop new approaches to solutions in close coordination with the countries concerned (see also Core Message 8).

In shaping policy, questions of justice must also be taken into account. Responsibility for climate change is, in general, borne by those who do not suffer the worst effects of it. This injustice, which has brought about immense inequality, holds true both at a global level and within societies (see also Core Message 2). Countries that historically have high CO₂ emissions and consume many natural resources therefore have a special responsibility to drive forward climate protection and to support other countries financially and technologically (for example through technology transfer), or through new opportunities for migration, in order to fairly manage the consequences that arise as a result of climate change.

Instead of relying on new agreements, existing global agreements should be applied nationally and regionally

Climate change, flight and migration are global challenges. However, a form of "global governance for climate migration" does not yet exist. Legally binding instruments of international law such as the Geneva Refugee Convention can only be applied to climate change-related migration to a limited extent; the same applies to the human rights principle of nonrefoulement. For this reason, one proposal has been to create new regulations under international law that oblige states to grant protection to "climate refugees". A binding mechanism for this, however, could not be created without first overcoming considerable political hurdles. A renegotiation of the Geneva Refugee Convention would currently have little realistic chance of success. In many countries, the laws in relation to refugees are subject to increasingly restrictive interpretation; in some places they are effectively disregarded. The SVR therefore sees a high risk that renegotiating global agreements would not strengthen the existing protection regime, but rather weaken it.

Apart from binding agreements, however, various informal cooperation frameworks at the international level already exist that provide a good basis for migration and refugee policy approaches in the context of climate change-induced migration. These include the Global Compact for Migration, the Platform on Disaster Displacement and the Task Force on Displacement. Within this framework, states, international organisations and the scientific community have developed comprehensive guidelines and recommendations for action on climate change-induced migration.

The SVR recommends that migration and refugee policy strategies should be adapted to factor in climate change-induced migration, using existing structures and recommendations for action to tailor such strategies more precisely to concrete situations and to implement them effectively. This is especially relevant with regard to those countries and regions that are already suffering

greatly from the consequences of global warming. The SVR believes that a mosaic of local, regional and national approaches is better suited and more realistic than a global instrument that would have to be newly developed and negotiated. Nevertheless, the ability to act at a global level must be strengthened. To this end, the SVR recommends monitoring the implementation of the existing recommendations for action more closely and improving political coordination between national governments. The measures proposed in the Global Compact for Migration to deal with climate change-induced migration could serve as a basis for such monitoring. Existing solution-based approaches identified by various processes and forums should be consolidated in order to make these more easily accessible.

Promote regional solutions

Cross-border climate change-induced migration often takes place between neighbouring countries (see also Core Message 2). This is one reason why the regional level of governance plays a special role in addressing this kind of migration. Moreover, regional solutions are more realistic, pragmatic and quicker to implement than global ones. In particular, refugee protection and agreements on the free movement of persons can facilitate dignified and regulated migration, sometimes also enabling anticipatory migration. Examples from Latin America and Africa show that both instruments can be applied to climate change-induced migration.

However, people who migrate as a result of climate change face major challenges, as do the destination countries. If people migrate from one particularly vulnerable country to another, they face the risk of repeated displacement and social marginalisation. Here, again, the question of climate justice arises. How, for example, can the industrialised nations, including Germany and the other EU member states, support regional solutions in other parts of the world? An important element in this would be financial and technological transfers to countries that have contributed little to climate change but are disproportionately affected by its consequences.

In the EU, existing asylum and migration policy instruments can be shaped in such a way that they are applicable to climate change-induced migration – instruments such as the EU Directive on Temporary Protection, activated for the first time in 2022, the implementation of resettlement programmes and the granting of humanitarian visas. Above all, however, development cooperation programmes can be used at the EU level to promote adaptation to climate change in affected countries and regions and to support countries with high levels of internal migration. Independently of the European debate, Germany should take a pioneering role here and develop innovative new instruments (see also Core Message 8). Such initiatives can be coordinated with other states in a "coalition of the willing", sending a clear message. In this way, they could also be implemented at the European and global level in the long term.

Germany as pioneer: three migration policy instruments

Climate change requires rapid and immediate responses. Such responses are initially most likely to come from national governments. The SVR proposes a combination of three instruments that could be used by policy-makers in Germany to act effectively: a climate passport, a climate card and a climate work visa. (1) The climate passport would be the most robust

- of the three instruments in terms of residence law. Following a corresponding proposal of the German Advisory Council on Global Change, the SVR recommends granting such a passport to a clearly and narrowly defined group of persons: nationals of countries that are directly affected by climate change and losing their entire territory as a result (e.g. nationals of sinking Pacific islands). Such individuals should be able to obtain a humanitarian permanent right of residence in Germany. With a climate passport, Germany, as an industrialised country, would assume co-responsibility for climate change and could coordinate with other industrialised countries in this regard.
- (2) The climate card would be aimed at people from countries that are significantly affected by climate change but are not under existential threat. It is intended to enable individuals from such countries to come to Germany, initially for a limited period of time. The group of eligible persons would be significantly larger than with the climate passport, and as such, this proposal would require a countryspecific quota system. In this way, immigration via the climate card could be planned, similarly to humanitarian admission programmes. The selection of eligible countries would be the responsibility of the receiving country, in this case the German Federal Government. The climate card instrument would need to be combined with adaptation measures in the respective countries of origin so that it can be effective and people who have received a climate card can eventually return to their home countries.

(3) The climate work visa would be aimed at people from countries that are affected by climate change to a much lesser extent than those eligible for the first two instruments. This labour migration instrument could break new ground. Nationals of certain countries would be given easier access to the German labour market, opening up new sources of income and perspectives to them through regular migration. The residence title would be conditional upon the existence of an employment contract, without the need to evidence specific qualifications or language skills. The so-called Western Balkans regulation, which has been anchored in German law since 2015, could serve as a model here.

9 Use migration policy as a building block in an overall strategy to mitigate climate change and its consequences

Mitigating climate change and its consequences requires an overarching strategy. The use of measures from the entire spectrum of migration policy, as recommended by the SVR, must be understood as a building block in this. Such an overarching strategy must above all include a consistent climate policy, which in turn must integrate a coherent external climate policy involving migration policy aspects and supported by all relevant ministries. In addition, financial agreements must be reached, for example on global funds. Likewise, global risk management must be established and expanded, and development policy approaches must be developed and implemented to promote adaptation measures on the ground. The costs of these measures must be distributed fairly worldwide. A coherent overall approach therefore requires action both on climate change, and on climate change-induced migration, to be coordinated across ministries at the national level. But at the EU and international level, too, the interactions between different policy fields must take greater priority than they have done to date.

5. About the SVR and its annual reports

Mission: Independent Policy Advice

The Expert Council on Integration and Migration is an independent body providing research-based policy advice. Its reports aim to assist those bodies responsible for integration and migration policy, as well as the general public, in their opinion-forming processes. Germany is a country of immigration. Integration and migration are thus key issues of the future which will continue to pose significant challenges to politics and society in the coming years. This is why the Federal Government took the decision on 2 December 2020 to establish the Expert Council on Integration and Migration. It will continue the work of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, founded in 2008 as a consortium of private foundations.

Under the charter establishing the Expert Council on Integration and Migration, it is tasked with

- providing research-based information about trends, issues and evidence-based solutions in the fields of integration and migration, monitoring these trends and providing a neutral and methodologically sound assessment of them,
- providing actionable policy advice and taking a clear stance on current issues so as to be able to supply factual arguments for the public and political debate, objectivising information provided to the public and giving new impetus to the relevant debates

for the benefit of politics at federal, state and local authority level, as well as civil society.

The Expert Council on Integration and Migration is mandated with providing independent advice. Its assessments and evaluations are bound only by scientific criteria. It publishes all its statements, recommendations and reports.

Under the charter establishing the Expert Council, it has a threefold mission:

- The Expert Council draws up an Annual Report, which is forwarded to the Federal Government in the second quarter of each year and then published. The Annual Report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of integration and migration policy.
- Every two years the Expert Council publishes an empirically-based analysis of the integration climate in Germany, which may cover the country as a whole, the individual federal states and municipalities (Integration Barometer). Both people with and without a migration background are included in this analysis, which looks at a variety of groups so that account can be taken of the opinions and personal assessments of various population groups.
- The Expert Council also prepares, on its own initiative, position papers on individual issues or gives its opinion when requested to do so.

Council Members

The interdisciplinary Expert Council comprises a total of nine Researchers, who are each required to have specialist knowledge of and experience in their own disciplines within the fields of integration and migration as well as international research standing. The Council Members are appointed for a three-year term by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community with the agreement of the involved federal ministries and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration following consultations with the Chair of the Expert Council. Reappointment (generally only once) is possible. Appointments are based on a vote by an independent selection committee. The Expert Council on Integration and Migration elects a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson from among its Members for three years. The members of the Expert Council are:

Prof. Dr Hans Vorländer

Chairperson of the Expert Council

Chair of Political Theory and History of Political Thought at TUD Dresden University of Technology, Founder and Director, Center for the Study of Constitutionalism and Democracy and of the Mercator Forum for Migration and Democracy at TUD

Prof. Dr Birgit Leyendecker

Deputy Chairperson of the Expert Council Head of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Family Research (ICFR) at Ruhr University Bochum

Prof. Dr Petra Bendel

Chairperson (to 31 December 2022)

Professor of Political Science and Head of Research on Migration, Displacement and Integration at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg

Prof. Dr Havva Engin (since 1 January 2023)

Professor of General Pedagogy with a focus on Intercultural Pedagogy at Heidelberg University of Education and Head of the Heidelberg Centre for Migration Research and Transcultural Pedagogy (Hei-MaT)

Prof. Dr Viola B. Georgi (to 31 December 2022)

Professor of Diversity Education at the University of Hildesheim Foundation and Director of the Centre for Educational Integration, Diversity and Democracy in Migration Societies

Prof. Dr Birgit Glorius (since 1 January 2023)

Professor of Human Geography with a focus on European Migration Research at Chemnitz University of Technology

Prof. Dr Marc Helbling

Professor of Sociology with a focus on Migration and Integration and Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) of the University of Mannheim

Prof. Dr Winfried Kluth (since 1 January 2023)

Professor of Public Law at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU)

Prof. Dr Steffen Mau

Professor of Macrosociology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Prof. Panu Poutvaara, Ph.D.

Professor of Economics at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich) and Director of the ifo Center for International Institutional Comparisons and Migration Research, ifo Institute

Prof. Dr Sieglinde Rosenberger

Professor of Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria

Prof. Dr Daniel Thym

Deputy Chairperson (to 31 December 2022) Professor of Public, European and International Law at the University of Konstanz and Director of the University's Research Centre for Immigration & Asylum Law (FZAA)

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For more information, go to: www.svr-migration.de/en/