

III. The global refugee crisis and its impact in Europe

LINA GRIP

Europe is currently experiencing large-scale, crisis-driven immigration resulting from the world's largest displacement crisis since World War II. Approximately 60 million people were displaced globally in 2015.¹ More than a million people were estimated to have reached Europe in 2015—an unprecedented number in recent times.²

The rapid increase in the number of refugees seeking protection in Europe in recent years has become a humanitarian crisis, which has involved an increasing number of deaths of refugees in transit, human trafficking and exploitation. The rapid increase in arrivals of people in need of international protection has also caused a crisis in the upholding of legal frameworks and practices at the national and regional levels. The normative principles and political coalitions that sustain pan-Europeanism took a large knock during the 2008 financial crisis and are now under serious threat.

The current refugee crises in context

The current influx of refugees to Europe needs to be put into both a historical and a global context. Globally, the current refugee crisis is having a significantly greater impact on countries outside of Europe. None of the 10 countries currently sheltering the most refugees, for example, are in Europe. The crisis in Syria is largely responsible for the increasing refugee populations in those countries and across the Middle East.³

There have been several major refugee crises since 1945, including after the end of World War II; during the Third Indochina War, 1978–91; in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994; and during the break-up of Yugoslavia, 1991–2001. World War II generated the largest refugee crisis

¹ For various reasons, the figures for refugees and displaced populations are estimates. These include the inability of the UN and other international agencies to reach some conflict zones, the difficulties of assessing repeat population movements, as well as concerns that numbers may be over- or understated depending on political interests, and that national systems of data collection for entry and exit into neighbouring countries are not always reliable. However, reasonable estimates are possible using figures produced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of the total number of individuals and families displaced by ongoing conflicts, which are based on the registration of individuals and families with the organization. However, these figures do not include unregistered individuals who may have entered a country through informal networks or those who do not need UNHCR support. Other figures used include those of national organizations managing asylum seekers. See the discussion in chapter 2, section III, in this volume.

² UNHCR, 'A million refugees and migrants flee to Europe in 2015', Press release, 22 Dec. 2015; see also UNHCR, 'Refugee figures' [n.d.], <<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d.html>>.

³ Kent, A., '10 countries sheltering the most refugees', *Wall Street Journal*, 21 Sep. 2015. On the Syria conflict see chapter 4, section II, in this volume; and on the impact of the refugee crisis in the Middle East see chapter 2, section III, in this volume.

in Europe. The number of Europeans displaced between 1940 and 1945 is estimated at 40 million.⁴ Clearly, post-war Europe in the 1940s had fewer resources for dealing with large numbers of refugees than the comparatively democratic and wealthy Europe of today. Indeed, Europe leaned heavily on the United States, and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was established in 1943 to repatriate and assist the refugees who came under allied control.⁵

In the late 1970s a sharp increase in the number of refugees in Indochina, especially the refugee exodus from Viet Nam by boat, caused the UN Secretary-General to convene a series of international conferences on refugees and displaced persons in South East Asia. In 1979 the crisis was intensified by the refusal of Malaysia and Thailand to accept any more refugees. At the 1979 conference, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA agreed to offer 260 000 resettlement places per year to refugees in the region. Western states at the time felt pressured to take refugees fleeing communist regimes, but there was also strong sentiment about the inhuman treatment of 'boat people':

The most widely held interpretation of the events, by the US and many other countries and agencies is that ... in forcing people to risk their lives at sea Vietnam is practicing a form of genocide... Vietnam's refugee machine includes special government offices whose function is to persecute and expel the ethnic Chinese and to make them pay in gold for the privilege of risking their lives in overcrowded small boats.⁶

In 1991 Yugoslavia started to break apart and the subsequent wars created nearly 1.7 million refugees and 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁷ The crisis coincided with deeper EU integration in the form of the 1992 Treaty on European Union, the realization of the Single Market and the creation of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The failure of the EU 'peace project' to prevent a recurrence of war and ethnic cleansing in Europe was arguably a key driver of closer integration.⁸

Thus, the current refugee crisis in Europe is neither unprecedented nor unique in regional or international terms. Nonetheless, it poses extraordinary challenges to the contemporary 'European project' and some of its core values, such as freedom of movement and human rights.

⁴ DePillis, L., Saluja, K. and Lu, D., 'A visual guide to 75 years of major refugee crises around the world', *Washington Post*, 21 Dec. 2015.

⁵ US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration', Holocaust Encyclopedia, <<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005685>>.

⁶ Stein, B., 'The Geneva Conferences and the Indochinese Refugee Crisis', *International Migration Review*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 1979), pp. 719–20.

⁷ Cottey, A., *Security in 21st Century Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2013), p. 249.

⁸ Kühnhardt, L., *Crisis in European Integration: Challenge and Response, 1945–2005* (Berghahn Books: New York/Oxford, 2005), p. 13.

Definitions

The definition of refugees set out in the 1951 Convention was initially limited to the European geographical context, but later expanded to a global setting to mean any person who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁹

All EU member states are parties to the 1951 Convention. One of the key narratives of the crisis, however, has been how to define who should be counted as a refugee as opposed to an economic migrant. According to the UNHCR, migration is a voluntary act by people who:

choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases education, family reunion or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government.¹⁰

However, one of the limitations of the discourse (and the data) is that there are even more nuanced definitions of different groups such as asylum seekers, IDPs, returned refugees and so on (see box 11.1).

The 2015 humanitarian crisis

The UNHCR estimates that over one million people crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe in 2015—more than twice as many as in the previous seven years combined. The vast majority entered through the eastern Greek islands from Turkey, or various parts of Italy from Libya. About 50 per cent of the sea arrivals came from Syria, 20 per cent from Afghanistan and 8 per cent from Iraq. In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that over 34 000 people crossed by land from Turkey into Bulgaria and Greece in 2015.¹¹ Although not all of those who arrive claim asylum, the vast majority do: 1 255 600 people sought asylum in the EU in

⁹ United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, entered into force 22 Apr. 1954, as amended by the 1967 Protocol, which removed ‘the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention’.

¹⁰ UNHCR, ‘Refugee or migrant: which is right?’, UNHCR Viewpoint, 27 Aug. 2015.

¹¹ UNHCR, IOM (note 2). Another significant flow recorded was the movement of 168 000 refugees from Ukraine to Russia.

Box 11.1. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) populations of concern

Refugees Individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and several related regional statutes and specific interpretations.

Asylum seekers Individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined.

Internally displaced persons People or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border.

Returned refugees Former refugees who have returned to their country of origin spontaneously or in an organized fashion but are yet to be fully integrated. Such returns would normally only take place in conditions of safety and dignity.

Returned IDPs Those IDPs who were the beneficiaries of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities and who have returned to their areas of origin or habitual residence.

Stateless persons Defined under international law as persons who are not considered to be nationals by any state under the operation of its law. In other words, they do not possess the nationality of any state.

Others of concern Individuals who do not necessarily fall directly into any of the above groups, but to whom UNHCR extends its protection and/or assistance services based on humanitarian or other special grounds.

Source: Adapted by the author from the UNHCR Population Statistics Database, <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=1.142422322.1838606709.1422528458>.

2015.¹² The main reason for the large upswing in the number of people seeking refuge in Europe was the conflict in Syria (see chapter 4 and figures 11.1 and 11.2).

As was the case in the previous two years, Germany received the highest number of new asylum applications in Europe in 2015. The German authorities received 476 649 formal applications for asylum during the year— more than double the number in 2014.¹³ At the same time, Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees registered 1.1–1.2 million refugees arriving in Germany in 2015 using its 'EASY system' (which distributes asylum applicants to a specific initial aid facility). Although this number almost certainly includes errors and double counting, refugees are now estimated to account for about 1 per cent of the German population. Hungary received the most refugees per capita in Europe in 2015, as more migrants tried to make the journey overland through Greece and the western Balkans. More

¹² Eurostat, 'Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015', News release, 4 Mar. 2016.

¹³ German Ministry of Interior Affairs, '2015: Mehr Asylanträge in Deutschland als jemals zuvor' [2015: More applications for asylum in Germany than ever before], 6 Jan. 2016.

than 1450 people per 100 000 of Hungary's population claimed asylum in the first half of 2015.¹⁴

The sharp increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea (see figure 11.3) was largely caused by the increased difficulties in accessing the EU overland, in particular due to the closure of several land borders.

In 2014–15 the Mediterranean Sea was the deadliest sea route worldwide. More than 7000 migrants and refugees are presumed to have lost their lives at sea (see figure 11.4), the highest number ever recorded. Given the large increase in the number of people making the crossing, there was a proportional decrease in the number of people who died or went missing in the Mediterranean in 2015 compared to the previous year.¹⁵ This could indicate that ongoing rescue missions (see below) had an impact on saving lives, at least in the short term. In absolute terms, however, 2015 was a low point in the failure to protect civilians at sea, surpassing already high casualty levels in 2014 and significantly worse than five years ago.

Deaths also occurred at land borders. In late August 2015 the bodies of 71 people were found inside an abandoned lorry near the Hungarian border.¹⁶ In addition, human rights abuses were frequently reported throughout the year. Refugees have been subject to push-backs, detentions and inhuman and degrading treatment, such as overcrowding and lack of shelter, food, water and hygiene services.¹⁷ Refugees have reportedly encountered police abuse in Hungary, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and unacceptable detention conditions in Hungary, Macedonia and Greece. Hungary criminalized irregular entry for asylum seekers, in contravention of international law.¹⁸ There is also growing concern about the safety of immigrants and refugees in overcrowded facilities in several European locations.

The number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe grew dramatically during 2015, and thousands have gone missing in the past year. For example, more than a quarter of the 13 026 unaccompanied children who reached Italy in 2014 disappeared on arrival.¹⁹ The IOM has reported a large increase in the number of refugees trafficked for sexual exploitation. It is

¹⁴ The figure includes a relatively large number of people from the Balkan states arriving overland, about 8% of the total, see BBC News, 'Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts', 4 Mar. 2016.

¹⁵ Asylum Information Database, 'Common asylum system at a turning point: Refugees caught in Europe's solidarity crisis', Annual Report 2014–2015, pp. 26–27.

¹⁶ Harding, L., 'Hungarian police arrest driver of lorry that had 71 dead migrants inside', *The Guardian*, 28 Aug. 2015; and UNHCR, 'Bodies found in a truck near border, while asylum seekers flow into Hungary', *Briefing Notes*, 28 Aug. 2015.

¹⁷ Amnesty International, *Europe's Borderlands: Violations Against Refugees and Migrants in Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary* (Amnesty International: London, July 2015).

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Europe's refugee crisis: An agenda for action', 16 Nov. 2015.

¹⁹ Save the Children, 'On their own: a call to relocate the most vulnerable in Europe' [n.d.], <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/On_their_own1.pdf>, p. 1.

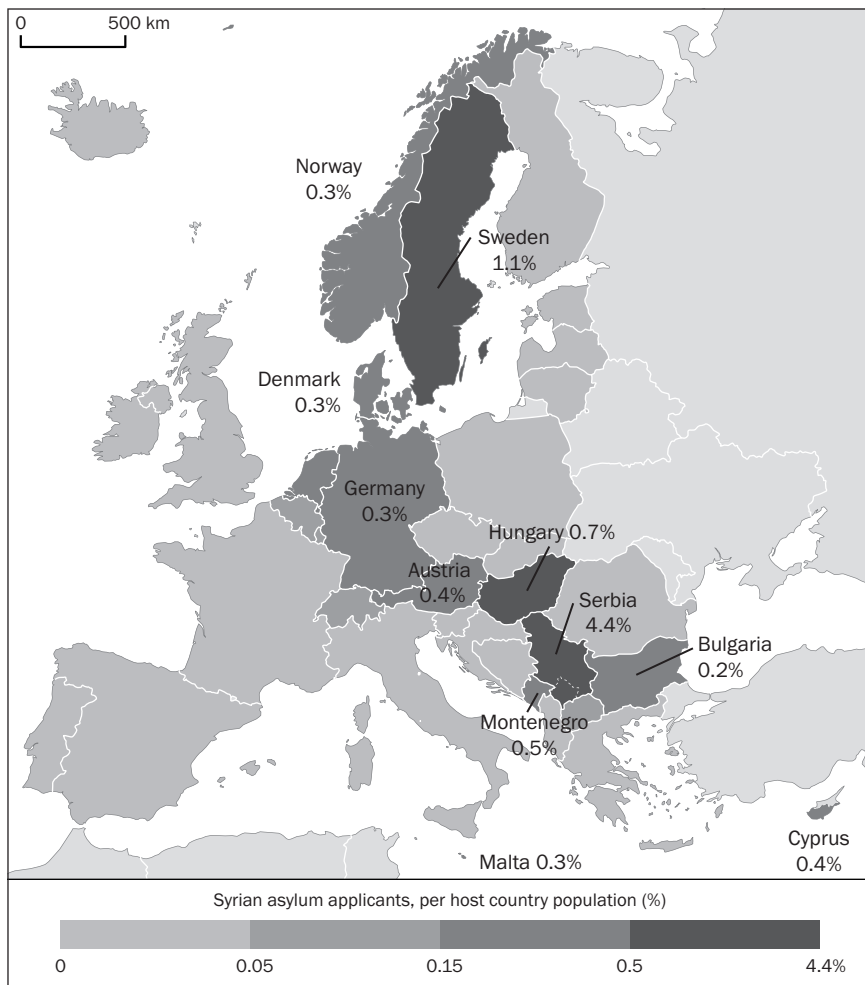


Figure 11.1. Syrian asylum seekers in Europe, July 2011 to December 2015, as a percentage of the host country's 2014 population

Credit: Hugo Ahlenius, Nordpil, <<https://nordpil.se/>>.

Sources: Eurostat, 'Population on 1 January by age and sex, 2016', <<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/population-data/database>>, Accessed 19 Apr. 2016; and UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'Asylum-seekers (monthly data), 2016', <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers_monthly>, Accessed 19 Apr. 2016.

assumed that many of the missing children are trafficked into the sex and drugs trades or forced into child labour. Europol's Chief of Staff has claimed that criminal gangs are systematically targeting these children.²⁰ In 2014

²⁰ Save the Children, 'The political push to give unaccompanied refugee children a UK home', Save the Children (blog), 4 Dec. 2015.

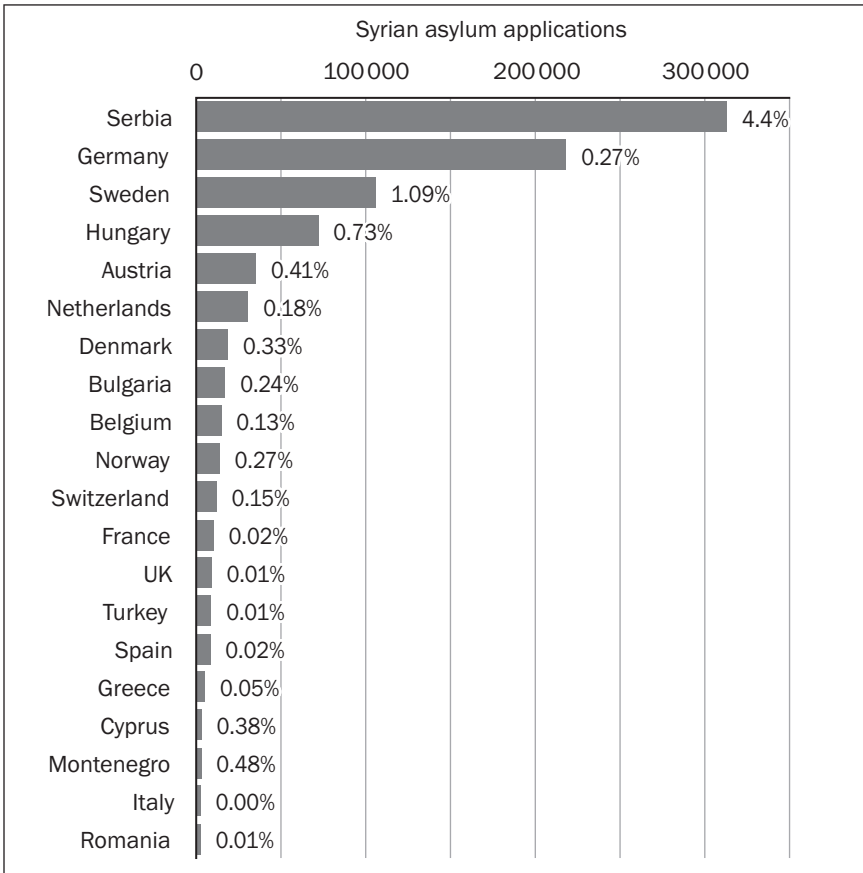


Figure 11.2. Asylum applications from Syrian nationals, by European country, April 2011 to December 2015

Credit: Hugo Ahlenius, Nordpil, <<https://nordpil.se/>>.

Sources: Eurostat, 'Population on 1 January by age and sex, 2016', <<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/population-data/database>>, Accessed 19 Apr. 2016; and UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'Asylum-seekers (monthly data), 2016', <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers_monthly>, Accessed 19 Apr. 2016.

the number of victims of trafficking among migrants arriving in Italy was estimated to have increased by 300 per cent compared to 2013.²¹ The aftermath of the war in Yugoslavia contains important lessons for Europe when assessing current risks. By 2001 the IOM was reporting that the Balkans had emerged as a significant region in the trafficking of women and children to western Europe. The war in Yugoslavia also showed a 'tremendous amount

²¹ Asylum Information Database (note 15).

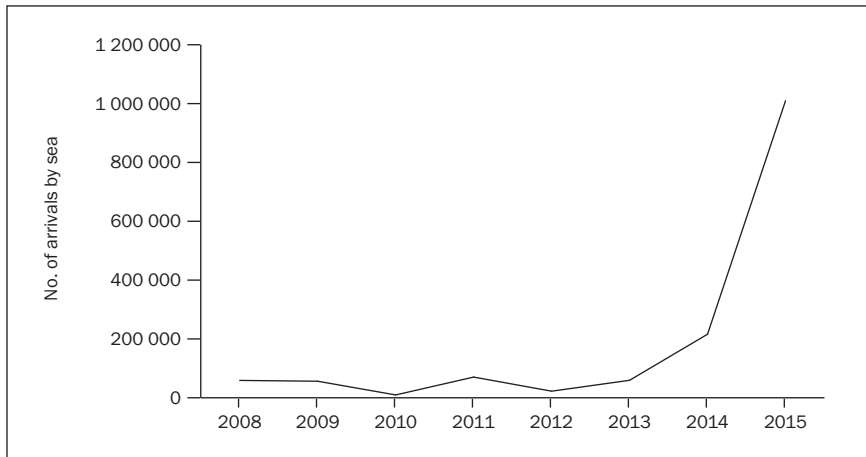


Figure 11.3. Number of refugees and migrants reaching Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, 2008–15

Source: UNHRC, ‘Evolution: Mediterranean Sea’, 16 Jan. 2016, <<http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>>.

of crossover’ between those smuggling refugees across borders and gangs exploiting people in the sex trade or as forced labour.²²

Targeted attacks on refugees also increased in 2015. In Germany, for example, the number of reported attacks increased from 199 in 2014 to 924 in 2015.²³

Responses

The EU institutions and member states

The impact of the refugee crisis in Europe provoked a number of responses in 2015. In May the European Commission issued its European Agenda on Migration, a policy initiative that revisited the EU’s approach to migration and asylum in order to provide new impetus.²⁴ An overhaul of migration policy had been one of the first initiatives promised by the new Commission on taking office at the end of 2014. According to one analyst, however, ‘the European Agenda does not seem to constitute a major shift in the thinking

²² Sherwood, H., ‘Unaccompanied young refugees in Europe “at risk from criminal gangs”’, *The Guardian*, 1 Nov. 2015.

²³ Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), Study on crimes against refugees in Germany, ‘Deutlich mehr Anschläge auf Asylbewerberheime’ [Significantly more attacks on refugee homes], cited in *Tagesschau*, 13 Jan. 2016, <<http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/anschlaege-asylunterkuenfte-bka-101.html>>.

²⁴ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A European Agenda on Migration, COM (2015) 240 final, 13 May 2015.

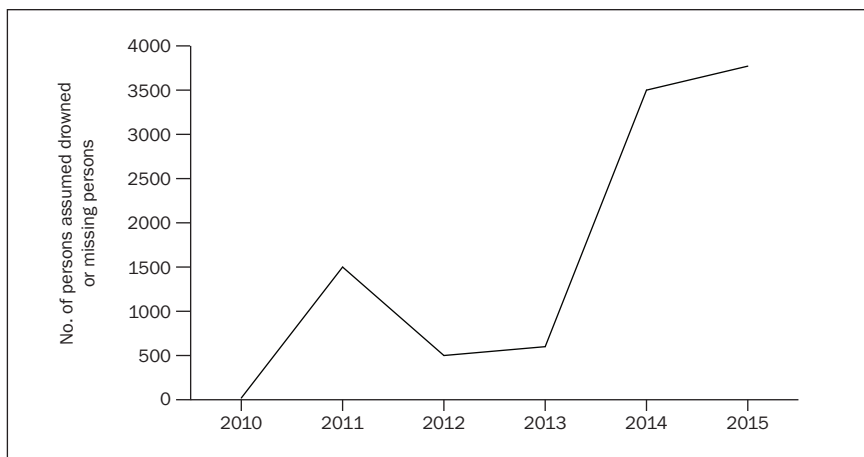


Figure 11.4. Number of persons assumed drowned or missing in the Mediterranean Sea while attempting to cross to Europe, 2010–15

Source: UNHCR, ‘Evolution: Mediterranean Sea’, 16 Jan. 2016, <<http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>>.

on migration and asylum, and the “innovative” parts of the agenda relate mainly to proposals for immediate action triggered by the above mentioned tragic events’.²⁵ Nonetheless, it did contain a number of noteworthy developments. The Agenda included a proposal to set up so-called hotspots—EU resourced multi-agency registration centres located in the frontline member states to help them meet their obligations under EU law and assist with identifying, registering and fingerprinting incoming migrants.²⁶

The Dublin Regulation was adopted in 2013 to enable a fast determination of the member state responsible for examining an asylum application, and to prevent abuse of asylum procedures.²⁷ The amended regulation, which has been in force since 2014, has been severely criticized across the EU for failing to address the pressures on the member states with external EU borders, while forcing asylum seekers to have their claims determined in member states with which they may have no particular connection. Since EU member states must examine any application for international protection by a third country national or a stateless person who applies on the territory of any one

²⁵ Asylum Information Database (note 15), p. 10.

²⁶ European Commission, A European agenda on migration (note 24).

²⁷ Regulation (EU) 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast), also known as the Dublin Regulation.

of them, including at the border or in the transit zones, there have been serious delays in the examination of asylum claims.²⁸

In two Council Decisions in 2015, EU member states agreed to relocate 160 000 refugees from the frontline countries of Italy and Greece to other member states over a period of two years. The relocation scheme, which was set up for the benefit of Greece and Italy, will be a test of pan-European solidarity and whether agreed mechanisms can be implemented in times of crisis. As of December 2015, few refugees had been relocated according to the decision.²⁹

The European refugee status determination system is individualized in order to provide a fair assessment for individuals seeking protection, and to minimize abuse of the asylum system. The system is slow, complex and expensive and has been overwhelmed by the demand. Greece's Asylum Service, for example, can currently process a maximum of 1500 applications per month if it wishes to respect all the requirements. This figure is less than half the average daily inflow of refugees to the Greek islands in 2015.³⁰ EU member states have therefore defined so-called safe countries of origin that do not qualify for asylum. Not surprisingly, different EU member states define which countries are safe to return to in different ways. In France, for example, only 26 per cent of applications from Eritrea were successful in 2014, whereas the recognition rate for that country in most other EU member states was above 75 per cent.³¹ Germany piloted a programme for making a quick determination of refugee status in its smaller cities in 2015. Under the programme, nationals from safe countries of origin can be notified of decisions about their status within two days.³²

From Schengen to fences on external borders

The Schengen Agreement allows people to travel across the internal borders of the 26 participating states without border checks irrespective of nationality.³³ The police may carry out spot-checks at the internal borders and in border areas, provided that such checks are not equivalent to border checks. If there is a serious threat to the public or to internal security, in the form

²⁸ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 'Dublin Regulation' [n.d.], <<http://www.ecre.org/topics/areas-of-work/protection-in-europe/10-dublin-regulation.html>>.

²⁹ Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L239, 15 Sep. 2015, p. 146; and Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L248, 24 Sep. 2015, p. 82.

³⁰ Stavropoulou, M., 'Refugee protection in Europe: time for a major overhaul?', *Forced Migration Review*, no. 51 (Jan. 2016), p. 8.

³¹ Asylum Information Database (note 15), p. 42.

³² *Deutsche Welle*, 'Germany's BAMF showcases fast asylum center', 18 Dec. 2015.

³³ On cooperation in the Schengen area see the EUR-Lex website, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3A133020>>.

of foreseeable events or events that require immediate action, Schengen countries can temporarily reintroduce border controls at their internal borders. Such border controls should be a last resort and their duration must not exceed 2–6 months, depending on the cause.

In 2015, 11 Schengen countries—Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden—implemented some form of border control in response to the large influx of people seeking international protection.³⁴ (France introduced further border controls when it declared a state of emergency following the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November.) The border between Hungary and Serbia was completely closed in mid-September.³⁵ Following the discovery of 71 bodies near the Hungarian border, Austria reintroduced controls on its eastern Schengen borders on 30 August 2015 for an as yet undefined period of time.³⁶ In addition to border controls, EU member states have built more than 235 km of fences at the EU's external borders, including a 175-km fence along the Hungary–Serbia border, a 30-km fence along the Bulgaria–Turkey border, which is to be extended by a further 130 km, a 10.5-km fence in the Evros region along the Greece–Turkey border and an 18.7-km fence along the borders of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla with Morocco. These border fences were intended to reduce the number of illegal land crossings, but have resulted in refugee flows being redirected from land routes to sea routes.³⁷

Military and NGO interventions at sea

In order to prevent further loss of life at sea and to disrupt the human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Mediterranean, on 18 May 2015 the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a military EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation. This resulted in the launch of an EU military naval operation in the southern central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED/Operation Sophia) on 22 June 2015.³⁸ The operation is focused on the route between Libya and Italy, and was sanc-

³⁴ European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs, 'Temporary reintroduction of border control', <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/index_en.htm>.

³⁵ BBC News, 'Migrant crisis: Hungary's closed border leaves many stranded', 15 Sep. 2015.

³⁶ European Commission, 'Commission issues opinion on temporary reintroduction of controls at internal borders: Germany and Austria acting in compliance with Schengen Borders Code', Press release, 23 Oct. 2015.

³⁷ Amnesty International, *The Human Cost of Fortress Europe: Human Rights Violations Against Migrants and Refugees at Europe's Borders* (Amnesty International: London, 2014); Amnesty International, 'Refugees endangered and dying due to EU reliance on fences and gatekeepers', 17 Nov. 2015; and FRONTEX, Eastern Mediterranean route [n.d.], <<http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/>>.

³⁸ Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/972 of 22 June 2015 launching the European Union military operation in the southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L157/51, 23 June 2015.

tioned by the UN Security Council.³⁹ After an initial phase of surveillance and assessment of smuggling networks in the area, in September EUNAVFOR MED assets began to board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking in international waters.⁴⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2240 provided EU member states with the necessary legal guarantees to conduct operations in international waters under the second phase of the EU's naval operation, which commenced on 7 October.⁴¹ Two FRONTEX operations in the Mediterranean—Triton and Poseidon—complement the military operation.⁴²

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières operated several search and rescue ships in the central Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea, the latter with Greenpeace. These rescued tens of thousands of people in 2015.⁴³

The majority of on-arrival support is carried out by not-for-profit voluntary organizations. The work of established international NGOs has been complemented by a number of new initiatives. In Germany, for example, more than 700 aid initiatives help refugees on arrival and with integration.⁴⁴ One of the more visible examples is Refugees Welcome, which started as a response to the detention camps and offers alternative housing for refugees in private accommodation through flat sharing with local nationals. The tasks of the organization then grew to incorporate a number of on-arrival assistance services, such as housing and legal advice. The initiative began in Germany in November 2014 but was operating in nine countries by the end of 2015, with work being planned in many others.⁴⁵

Understanding the crisis

The impact of the refugee crisis on Europe can be explained partly as a result of extreme external pressures in the form of the unprecedented number of forcefully displaced people in the world, and partly as a result of the shortcomings of the Common European Asylum System, particularly the Schengen zone and the Dublin System (which also contradict each other). It is important, however, to put the current crisis into longer-term perspective.

³⁹ United Nations, 'Adopting Resolution 2240 (2015): Security Council authorizes member states to intercept vessels off Libyan coast suspected of migrant smuggling', SC/12072, Meetings coverage, 9 Oct. 2015.

⁴⁰ European External Action Service, European Union Naval Force: Mediterranean Operation Sophia, update, 15 Dec. 2015.

⁴¹ UN Security Council Resolution 2240, 9 Oct. 2015.

⁴² Frontex, 'Frontex expands its joint operation Triton', Press release, 26 May 2015.

⁴³ Doctors without borders, 'MSF ends search and rescue operations in Central Mediterranean', 5 Jan. 2016.

⁴⁴ 'Ehrenamtliches Engagement für Flüchtlinge' [Volunteering for refugees], <<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zc6TdvfelKuY.kUvriXoSREXw>>.

⁴⁵ Refugees Welcome, <<http://www.refugees-welcome.net/>>.

In 1992–95 there were about 3 million people in Europe who had been displaced by the war in Yugoslavia. At that time, the EU had 12 member states and neither the Schengen zone nor the single market had been established. Member states were also fully responsible for controlling their borders. In Sweden, for example, which was the second largest per capita recipient of refugees in Europe in 2015, only at the end of the year did the number of people seeking asylum surpass the number in 1992—at a time when Sweden was not yet a member of the EU. By mid-October 2015, 86 223 people had applied for asylum in Sweden compared to 84 018 in 1992.⁴⁶ In 1992 Sweden's population was 8.64 million: in 2014 it was 9.75 million.⁴⁷

Second, the impact of the refugee crisis cannot be understood in isolation from the context of the 2008 financial crisis and the political changes and discourses it has influenced in Europe. The financial crisis weakened the principles of solidarity and fuelled the growth of nationalism. In particular, the financial crisis highlighted the eroding confidence among many citizens in the EU's institutions and its legal frameworks. The response to the financial crisis has seen the rise of large-scale anti-austerity social movements, as well as the rise of nationalist and Eurosceptic ideologies that increasingly self-identify with these broad social movements. Certain strands of anti-austerity and xenophobic politics portray refugee costs as competing with citizens' interests in times of declining social welfare as a result of cuts in social spending. Just as the 2008 financial crisis influenced the emergence and growth of both progressive anti-austerity protest movements, such as the Occupy movement, and reactionary and xenophobic movements within the EU, the refugee crisis has influenced both social protection activism and coercive measures, as well as a roll back of existing EU cooperation more generally.

Although the net beneficiaries of the crisis have been few and far between, some groups stand out. First, there are the migrant smuggling networks. A Europol survey of 1500 asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants found that 90 per cent had paid a criminal gang to reach Europe. The study concluded that human smugglers made profits of \$3–6bn in 2015.⁴⁸ The second set of beneficiaries is the emerging for-profit service providers that offer refugee camps, housing and so on throughout Europe, often contracted by local government, national authorities or international organizations,

⁴⁶ *Dagens Industri*, 'Flyktingrekord sattes i helgen' [Refugee record this weekend], 12 Oct. 2015.

⁴⁷ Statistiska Centralbyrån, 'Befolkningsstatistik 1992. Del 4, Födda och döda, civilståndssändringar m m' [Population statistics 1992: part 4, vital statistics], p. 18; and Statistiska Centralbyrån, 'Folkmängd 2014' [Population 2014], 19 Feb. 2015, <http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Befolkning/Befolkningens-sammansattning/Befolkningsstatistik/25788/25795/Behallare-for-Press/385509/>.

⁴⁸ McDonald-Gibson, C., 'Refugee crisis: human traffickers "netted up to £4bn last year"', *The Independent*, 16 Jan. 2016.

including UNHCR. In some countries, such as Norway and Sweden, this is likely to be a highly lucrative business in the next few years.⁴⁹

The third group of beneficiaries is the political parties with strong anti-immigration agendas. Such political parties increased their support in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland in 2015. This increase in support is reflected in successes in local and regional elections in particular—including the success of the French National Front in regional elections, where it won 28 per cent of the national vote in the first round of voting and finished first in six of France's 13 administrative regions, winning more than six million votes. The party was routed in the second round of voting, however, when the French Socialist Party urged its voters to support the Conservative Party.⁵⁰ Even where they have not gained power, political parties that strongly oppose migration have influenced national policies and the discourse on migration across Europe, at least temporarily shifting the views of moderate parties during the second half of the year.

⁴⁹ Donahue, B., 'Meet the two brothers making millions off the refugee crisis in Scandinavia', Bloomberg, 6 Jan. 2016.

⁵⁰ Palmer, J., 'The rise of far right parties across Europe is a chilling echo of the 1930s', *The Guardian*, 15 Nov. 2013; Bremmer, I., 'These 5 facts explain the worrying rise of Europe's far right', *Time*, 15 Oct. 2015; and 'Fear, anger and hatred: the rise of Germany's new right', *Der Spiegel*, 11 Dec. 2015.