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# Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat

Mapping and Documenting  
Migratory Journeys and Experiences  
*Final Project Report*

## Introduction

### Executive Summary

This report provides a unique, in-depth analysis of the impact of EU policies in addressing the so-called European migration or refugee 'crisis' in 2015 and 2016. *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat* undertook 257 in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 271 participants across seven sites in two phases: Kos, Malta and Sicily from September-November 2015, and Athens, Berlin, Istanbul and Rome from May-July 2016.

Uniquely, the project focused directly on the impact of policies upon people on the move, drawing together policy analysis and observational fieldwork with in-depth analysis of qualitative interview data from people making – or contemplating making – the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. As such, the report provides previously-unconsidered insights into the effects of policy on the journeys, experiences, understandings, expectations, concerns and demands of people on the move.

In addition to providing seven site-based case study analyses, the project also provides the first detailed assessment of policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration* in terms of policy effects both across routes (eastern and central Mediterranean) and over time (2015 and 2016). The findings and analysis summarised in this report are presented with the aim of informing policy developments, moving forward.

### Recommendations

This report emphasises that, if the EU is to play an effective role in finding positive ways forward from the so-called European migration or refugee 'crisis', policy developments need to be grounded in an appreciation of – and responsiveness to – the journeys and experiences, as well as the understandings, expectations, concerns and demands of people on the move.

We propose that policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration* can be developed to respond to such a challenge through:

- The replacement of a deterrent approach with interventions that address the diverse drivers of unauthorised movement
- The revision of migration and protection categories to reflect appreciation of the intersecting drivers and conditions that render people on the move as precarious
- The opening of sufficient safe and legal routes to the EU for people who otherwise have to resort to precarious journeys
- The investment in reception facilities and improved access to key services
- The halting of policies that violate or restrict access to rights
- The advancement of accurate and rights-oriented information campaigns

*Photos on cover: anti-clockwise from top left corner:*

*Sea-Watch Boat - a German NGO conducting search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean*

*Two young men waiting to leave Kos island*

*No Border graffiti in informal camp, Athens*

*People watching the ferry from Kos to the mainland*

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## Report Outline

This report presents research findings in five parts:

**Part 1** contextualises the project with reference to migratory dynamics and policy responses, and sets out the project rationale and approach as well as the methodology in further detail. This part of the report includes information about arrivals and border deaths along both the central and eastern Mediterranean routes to Italy and Greece, as well as an overview of policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration*. Part 1 also includes information about research design and implementation, including details about our research tools, participant recruitment and sampling, ethics, and analysis.

**Part 2** presents an analysis of the seven sites along two routes in terms of the two phases of analysis. Phase 1 is presented first, examining findings from interviews in Kos, Malta and Sicily in September-November 2015. This is followed by Phase 2, comprised of an analysis of interviews carried out in Athens, Berlin, Istanbul and Rome in May-July 2016. Each site-based analysis includes details of the migratory and policy or political context, an overview of the research, plus key findings.

**Parts 3-5** offer an overarching analysis of the current policy agenda with reference to our analysis of migratory journeys and experiences across routes, sites and phases:

**Part 3** involves thematic analysis of migratory journeys and experiences.

**Part 4** provides a thorough assessment of *A European Agenda on Migration* and related policies in light of the analysis in Part 2 and Part 3.

**Part 5** discusses ways forward from the so-called European migration or refugee 'crisis' and details our policy proposals in further detail.

## Further Information

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**Contacting the Team:** Please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Vicki Squire, with any queries or comments about this project and report: [V.J.Squire@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:V.J.Squire@warwick.ac.uk)

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# Part 1: The Project

This wife and mother travelled from Syria to meet her husband, who had been waiting for her in Germany since the summer of 2015. She arrived in Greece with her two young children in February 2016. When arriving to the Greek-Macedonian border at Eidomeni, her documents were suspected to be forged so she and her children were unable to pass. Once her papers had been reissued the border was closed, and they have been waiting in Athens since that time.



“...there was a rocket launching pad right behind my house. For the children, this was the main reason that we left. They became sick, they wouldn't let me go... At night they're asleep, they'd wake up crying. And the same thing happened to me. And my husband was not with us. We are on the road to our house alone, me and my two kids, and there were violent clashes, bullets entered our house many times... We couldn't go on. It was a danger to the children.”

**SYRIA:**  
The wife and mother of two describes how she felt obliged to leave Syria because of the constant danger she and her family faced.

“They took us to jail in Turkey. They clothed us too, our clothes had been ruined, full of water, the children started crying, we couldn't handle it. They also imprisoned us for about 6 hours. The smuggler came, he paid them money and he took us out. We still want to return for the third time.”

**TURKEY:**  
While attempting to cross the sea the wife and mother was arrested by the Turkish Coastguard.

“The Turkish guard showed up, they grabbed a knife to cut the boat to drown us. So we all lifted the small children... We lifted up the small children and are telling them: 'We have children with us, God is great, God is great', in one voice. Then, they were agitating the water around the boat, to drown us... They wanted us to drown, they didn't want to save us. The goal was to drown us. ...We are searching for life.”

**AEGEAN SEA:**  
The wife and mother of two describes an attack against the boat that she and her children were travelling on from Turkey to Greece.

“We waited in Eidomeni for about 10 days... Our hope ended... They closed the border but they opened the door to the smugglers. You opened the door to illegal migration. You're saying that you want legal migration but it's the opposite. I don't mean you personally, I'm talking about the European countries. You opened the door to human trafficking.”

**GREEK-MACEDONIAN BORDER (EIDOMENI):**  
Reflecting on her experience of the closure of the 'Balkan route' in 2016, the wife and mother questions the actions of European leaders.

“A few days ago I had to go to Omonia; someone was walking behind me spitting on me. We weren't like this. We're Arab. We're Syrians, our dignity is precious to us. The Syrians are well known for this. You put them in this position?... Stop the war in Syria and return us. We don't want anything else. And if you don't want to stop the war, at least let us live in security.”

**ATHENS 1:**  
The wife and mother shares her experience of racism and discrimination in Athens.

“You opened the doors, now assume responsibility, take us to our husbands, our families, to someplace safe... You know our husbands are in Germany, why this wait? This routine? As if the objective is to break up the families. This child needs a father... I miss my husband, they miss their father, we have a right to be together as a family. Why don't they speed up the procedure, my husband doesn't have residency 10 months in. What are they waiting for?”

**ATHENS 2:**  
The wife and mother expresses her frustration at having to wait a long period to reunite with her husband in Germany.

**SUM-UP:**  
When we met this wife and mother in May 2016 she was in Athens waiting to join her husband in Germany. She raised concerns about family reunification and the importance of allowing husbands, wives and children to live as families again. We later found out that she and her two children had been smuggled through the airport in July 2016, to join her husband in Germany.

## Part 1: The Project

### Migratory Context

The Mediterranean Sea is by no means a new site of migratory passage, but has arisen as a particularly prominent one over recent years. In particular, this reflects the heightened numbers of sea arrivals to the European Union (EU) associated with the ‘Arab Spring’ in 2011. Such a rise was followed by a temporary decline in sea arrivals in 2012, before being followed by a rapid increase to unprecedented levels from 2014 onwards (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Numbers of Sea Arrivals and Deaths at Sea**

Year	Arrivals via Central and Eastern Mediterranean Routes (Frontex)	Arrivals via the Central Mediterranean Route (Frontex)	Arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Frontex)	Deaths at sea (IOM)	Deaths at sea (UNHCR)
2010	60,200	4,500	55,700	-	20
2011	121,300	64,300	57,000	-	1500
2012	53,100	15,900	37,200	-	500
2013	64,800	40,000	24,800	-	600
2014	221,590	170,760	50,830	3,279	3500
2015	1,039,332	153,946	885,386	3,784	3771
2016	363,660	181,126	182,534	5,098	5096

During 2014, Frontex (2017a, 2017b) recorded 221,590 people as arriving by boat, with this rising to 1,039,332 in 2015, and remaining relatively high at 363,660 in 2016. Arrivals primarily arrived to Italy through the central Mediterranean route in 2014 and 2016, and to Greece via the eastern Mediterranean (Aegean) route in 2015. In this context, arrivals via the Mediterranean Sea have played a critical role in framing the EU’s approach to migration more broadly.

Related to increasing arrivals, there has also been a significant increase in the number of recorded deaths at sea in the Mediterranean. However, these have not increased in terms that directly correlate with arrival statistics. While arrival figures have always fluctuated, deaths at sea have continued to rise steadily, from 3,279 in 2014 to 3,784 in 2015 and 5,098 in 2016 (see Table 1). Increased deaths thus represent another concern, alongside increasing arrivals, that has been important in framing the EU’s policy response over recent years.

*Note: Arrival statistics in Table 1 are derived from Frontex data on “illegal border crossings” via the central and eastern Mediterranean routes. Frontex notes on its website that “illegal border-crossings at the external borders may be attempted several times by the same person”. The use of Frontex data has been the subject of controversy on these grounds. We use Frontex data in this case over UNHCR (Operational Portal – Mediterranean) data, because the latter includes some minor inconsistencies and limitations for the years covered in Table 1. Statistics on recorded deaths at sea are presented from the IOM (Missing Migrants Project) and UNHCR (Operational Portal – Mediterranean) side by side. Data on deaths at sea is notoriously difficult to collect, and there are often discrepancies in data collected by different actors; hence representing two data sets is helpful in this case.*

### Policy Response

The European Union (EU) redefined migration policy in the Commission’s Communication, **A European Agenda on Migration**, in response to this dramatic increase of arrival figures and in the context of what many proclaimed as a migration or refugee ‘crisis’ marked by increased deaths at sea. This Agenda involves a range of key actions formulated under a four-pillar approach (see Box 1). It aims to “build up a coherent and comprehensive framework to reap the benefits and address the challenges deriving from migration”, while responding to the “immediate imperative” to “protect those in need” (European Commission, 2015: 2). In this regard, the Agenda both provides a series of short and medium term solutions to address pressing priorities, while also providing a framework for the development of a longer-term approach grounded in a Common European Asylum System, shared management of the European border, and a new model of legal migration (European Commission, 2015: 17).

#### Box 1: A European Agenda on Migration

**A European Agenda on Migration** comprising key actions under “four pillars to manage migration better” was launched by the European Commission on 13 May 2015. The pillars are understood as “four levels of action for an EU migration policy which is fair, robust and realistic”. These four levels include:

- **Reducing the incentives for irregular migration:** this includes actions designed to address the root causes of irregular and forced displacement in third countries; actions to fight smugglers and traffickers; and actions to ensure the effective return of irregular migrants.
- **Border management - saving lives and securing external borders:** this includes actions to strengthen the role of Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (subsequently re-launched as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in October 2016), and to ensure standardised border management across the Union; actions to coordinate coast guard functions and further develop Smart Borders proposals; and actions to strengthen the capacity of third countries to manage their borders.
- **Europe’s duty to protect: a strong common asylum policy:** this includes actions to ensure coherent implementation of the Common European Asylum System; and actions to ensure greater responsibility sharing across Member states through revisions to Dublin system.
- **A new policy on legal migration:** this includes actions toward a well managed regular migration and visa policy; actions to ensure effective integration; and actions to maximise development benefits for countries of origin.

Three implementation packages in 2015 further built on key actions listed in the Agenda. These include a European-wide relocation scheme (see Box 2) and an EU Action Plan on Migrant Smuggling as part of a first implementation package on 27 May 2015; an extended relocation programme, as well as an Action Plan on Return, and setting up Trust Funds for Africa and for Syria (see Box 3) as part of a second implementation package on 9 September 2015; and a series of actions toward revising European border security (see Box 4) as part of a third implementation package on 15 December 2015.

### Box 2: Relocation and Resettlement

In July 2015, the Justice and Home Affairs Council agreed to establish a relocation mechanism, and pledged to relocate 40,000 persons from Italy and Greece. ('Relocation' refers to the distribution of people already in the EU between Member States). The distribution of persons in need of international protection was established according to the specific context of each Member State. In September 2015, the Council agreed to relocate an additional 120,000 persons from Italy and Greece. Hungary was included in this proposal but refused to be a beneficiary country and did not participate in the scheme. This number was reduced to 98,225 people after the Council adopted an amendment on 29 September 2016 to make 54,000 places not yet allocated available for the legal admission of Syrians from Turkey to the EU. According to the European Commission, less than 14% of the relocations had been completed as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and a number of Member States, in addition to Hungary, refused to participate in the scheme. The Council also agreed, through multilateral and national schemes, to the resettlement of 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection. ('Resettlement' refers to the transfer of people in need of protection from a country outside of the EU to an EU Member State). Progress on resettlements has been more positive than on relocations.

### Box 3: Third Country Partnership Frameworks and Compacts

As part of its comprehensive strategy in addressing migration, the European Council reaffirmed the need to cooperate with third countries to stem arrivals in October 2015. The Valletta Action Plan of November 2015 reiterated the EU's commitment to mainstreaming migration into Member State development cooperation and also established the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. With a focus on results, the European Commission subsequently set out plans for a Partnership Framework aimed at establishing partnerships or 'compacts' with third countries of origin and transit, with a focus on preventing loss of life, increasing return rates, and enabling migrants and refugees to remain close to home. This was followed up with a programme of investment in Ethiopia aimed at granting employment rights and opportunities for refugees, and a Council agreement on partnership priorities and compacts with Jordan and Lebanon. Migration remains central to the EU's external priorities and progress has been made on implementing the Partnership Framework, establishing new structures and instruments with priority countries and Member States.

### Box 4: EU Border Security and Search and Rescue (SAR)

The European Commission's policy response to the '2015 crisis' has been marked by a continued emphasis both on tough external border security and on the humanitarian imperative to save lives. New initiatives include the extension of Frontex's mandate and the establishment of an integrated European Border and Coast Guard system designed to monitor external borders and identify emerging threats with effect from October 2016. A third dimension focusing on the increasingly militarised identification and disruption of smuggling networks has also intensified with the launch on 22 June 2015 of the European Union Naval Force - Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia). The coupling of border security and SAR has been a defining feature of the central Mediterranean route over recent years. This follows the Italian Navy's humanitarian-military operation, Mare Nostrum, which conducted SAR operations far beyond the Italian SAR zone, and which according to the Italian Navy was responsible for saving 150,810 lives between October 2013 and October 2014. When Mare Nostrum ended in November 2014, Frontex's more limited Joint Operation Triton was launched in its place.

As the *European Agenda on Migration* has developed over time, key elements introduced or discussed in the 2015 document have been implemented and further substantiated across a series of concrete sites. Notable in this regard are developments with regard to EU-Turkey joint action (see Box 5), the hotspot approach (see Box 6), and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS, see Box 7).

### Box 5: EU-Turkey Joint Action

Following a series of informal meetings, the EU and the Republic of Turkey activated a Joint Action Plan on 29 November 2015, following its initial proposition in October 2015. This Plan prescribed cooperation toward the support of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey as well as toward the prevention of irregular migration to the EU. The EU committed 3 billion Euro under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, while the Commission proposed a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme for Syrian Refugees in Turkey on 15 December 2015. However, unauthorised arrivals continued, leading to the announcement of the EU-Turkey Statement on the 18 March 2016. This Statement committed the EU and Turkey to a series of measures, including:

- The return of all new irregular arrivals post 20 March 2016 from Greece to Turkey
- Prevention of irregular migration from Turkey to the EU
- The 1+1 Scheme, whereby for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands another Syrian would be resettled to the EU
- An additional 3 billion Euro from the EU to be mobilised by end of 2018, once the 3 billion is fully used

The Statement is significant in two ways. On the one hand, the reduction of unauthorised arrivals to as few as 40 weekly in 2017 is largely attributed to EU-Turkey joint action. On the other hand, the Statement is seen a model of future partnerships and cooperation framework with neighboring third countries such as Libya, which remain critical transit routes to the EU.

### Box 6: The Hotspot Approach

Hotspots were initially introduced by the European Commission as part of its Agenda in May 2015. The hotspot approach aims at better collaboration between national authorities and European agencies (specifically the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex, and Europol) in identifying, registering and fingerprinting new arrivals. Hotspots were first set up in Greece and Italy in the autumn of 2015 and were gradually rolled out over time. They are located on Greek island arrival sites and sites in Lampedusa, Sicily and southern Italy. Hotspots are designed for short term stay to screen and register new arrivals. However, the hotspot approach has extended and developed over time in Italy and Greece. Most notably, the nature and purpose of the hotspots changed in Greece in particular, following implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement on 20 March 2016. Rather than temporary spaces of transit, hotspots effectively changed into sites of detention where arrivals wait until asylum applications are processed and/or they are returned to Turkey. Those arriving to such centres before they became hotspots were transferred to the mainland and thus did not experience this transformation into *de facto* detention spaces. Hotspots in both Greece and Italy often exceed capacity, with overcrowding and poor conditions widely reported at Greek hotspots in particular.

### Box 7: The Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

The EU has in the longer-term sought to develop a Common European Asylum System through introducing a range of legislative measures between 1999 and 2005. These were revisited (recast) between 2011 and 2013. In May 2016, as part of the **European Agenda on Migration**, the Commission called, once more, for further reform of the CEAS and presented a series of proposals to create “a fairer, more efficient and sustainable system for allocating asylum applications among Member States”. The proposals include changes to the Dublin system (including a ‘fairness mechanism’ to distribute asylum applications across the EU and a focus on the prevention of secondary movements), the reinforcement of Eurodac (the biometric database of the EU), establishing a European Union Agency for Asylum, and greater convergence of asylum rules on reception, procedures and qualification/rights for beneficiaries of international protection.

In sum, the EU policy response to increased arrivals and increased border deaths across the Mediterranean Sea has led to **A European Agenda on Migration** that involves wide-ranging policies which have developed rapidly over time. This includes policy initiatives that precede the Agenda as well as policy initiatives that have been formed following the initial framing of the Agenda. In this regard, our research takes **A European Agenda on Migration** as a broad policy framework, while recognising that it does not operate in isolation but rather intersects with a range of agenda and policy initiatives both at the level of individual Member States, and beyond at the global and regional levels. Most notable at the global level is The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (see Box 8).

### Box 8: The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

In September 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of commitments towards refugees and migrants, known as the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. 193 States declared, *inter alia*: profound concern for the large number of people who have lost their lives in transit; profound solidarity with – and support for – the millions who are displaced globally; full commitment to protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrants; support for countries affected by large movements and commitment to more equitable responsibility-sharing. To these ends, two processes are underway leading by 2018 to: (i) a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and (ii) a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and Global Compact on Refugees.

## Project Rationale and Approach

Given the speed at which the European Agenda on Migration and associated EU policies have been put into place over the past months and years, there is an urgent need to assess recent policy developments in their various dimensions. **Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat** is an international collaborative project that assesses the European Agenda and EU policy in the field of migration from the perspective of people on the move directly. In taking seriously the claim that policies associated with **A European Agenda on Migration** are designed not only to “manage migration better” (European Commission, 2015: 6) but also to “save lives” (2015: 3), the project considers whether the policies that have been put in place are an effective response to the “human tragedy” of border deaths (2015: 2) and can create a genuinely “ethical” (2015: 2) approach based on a commitment to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms (2015: 2).

Addressing this question in the context of an emphasis on the formation of new global compacts emerging from **The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants** (see Box 8), the project considers whether the European Agenda and associated EU policies are fit for purpose for the aims of saving lives, enacting solidarity with the displaced, protecting rights, and sharing responsibility for people moving in precarious situations. The research asks: How effective are the policies associated with this Agenda in addressing contemporary migratory dynamics? To what extent are such policies able to address the challenges that the European migration or refugee ‘crisis’ brought to the fore? And how might policies be developed most effectively in order to address the challenges and tragedies that characterise the precarious situation of people on the move to the EU today?

**Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat** seeks to address these questions by assessing the impact of EU policy interventions on those that they affect most directly: people on the move themselves. Critically, it addresses people who have undertaken – or plan to undertake – the precarious journey toward Europe as those who are best placed to provide insight both into the challenges that policy interventions need to address, as well as into ways in which policies can be renewed to address such challenges. By examining the journeys, experiences, understandings, expectations, concerns and demands of people on the move, the project thus produces a timely and robust evidence-base as grounds for informing policy developments. It asks:

- How do people on the move negotiate their journeys? What understanding do they have of current policies? How do they narrate or express their expectations and experiences of movement and arrival?
- How are routes and methods of travel affected by policy developments? What legal and social challenges arise in the context of current policies? In what ways might policy engage migration more effectively?

The project addresses these questions across different geographical sites and through the lens of different migratory routes, and seeks to pay attention to the experiences of diverse groups and individuals.

## Methodology

**Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat** is an ethnographic research project that combines site-based observational research with in-depth qualitative interviews that are designed to amplify the voices of people on the move.

## Research Tools

We conducted 257 in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 271 participants who have made – or who have contemplated making – the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea by boat. Interviews were complemented by participatory and non-participatory observation at the locations where interviews were carried out. The use of visual maps was integrated within the interview in order to facilitate discussion of the journey and experiences *en route* (See Map 1 and Map 2). Where appropriate, participants were invited to represent their route on the map as they described their journey and experiences.

Map 1: Map to Trace Routes During Interviews



Map 2: Map to Trace Routes During Interviews



Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format, which gave thematic structure to the questioning based on our overarching research questions, but without fixing the interview too rigidly. Open-ended questions provided a guide for the individual interviewer, yet also enabled flexibility dependent on the particular research participant's responses to different thematic areas of questioning.

Emphasis was on supporting research participants to share their experiences of departure, transit and arrival; to address the ways in which they made decisions and gained information throughout the migratory journey; and to draw out their experiences of and responses to policy interventions along the way. A semi-structured interview format nevertheless facilitated a responsive approach, allowing participants to 'speak back' to the research and to share their experiences in a participatory way. This renders the project findings unique in the sense that the qualitative data produced is not replicable or standardised, but instead represents a reflexive engagement between research team and research participants.

### Sites and Phases

Research for this project was carried out in two phases. The first phase was completed during September-November 2015 and involved 136 interviews with a total of 139 participants at three island arrival sites: Kos, Malta and Sicily. Difficulties in recruiting research participants in Malta due to reduced arrivals resulting from an 'agreement' with Italy during the time-period of our research led to some of the interviews being carried out at this site between December 2015 and March 2016. The second phase was completed during May-July 2016 and involved 121 interviews with a total of 132 participants at four urban sites: Athens, Berlin, Istanbul and Rome.

The project findings benefit from the diversity of sites where data have been collected, because it enables consideration of data **both** at sites of immediate arrival (Phase 1 - islands) **and** at sites along key migratory routes (Phase 2 - urban centres within and outside of the EU). Our focus is on the eastern and the central Mediterranean routes: Phase 1 covers Kos on the eastern route and Malta and Sicily on the central route; Phase 2 covers Istanbul and Athens on the eastern route and Rome on the central route. Berlin (Phase 2) does not strictly relate to either route but is a site where claims were being processed, all of which related to journeys along the eastern through to the Balkan route at the time of data collection. Hence, we categorise Berlin as an eastern route site for the purposes of this project.

The research design greatly benefits from the time lapse between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 was carried out during the height of the so-called 2015 migration or refugee 'crisis', and as the European Commission was launching the Agenda of 13 May 2015 (see Box 1). Phase 2 was carried out soon after the EU-Turkey Statement came into effect on 20 March 2016 (see Box 5). Phase 2 was also differentiated from Phase 1 because the Western Balkan route had closed, and the hotspot approach had begun functioning in both Greece and Italy (see Box 6). While we did not carry out interviews with research participants in hotspots during Phase 2, many had travelled through hotspots in Italy and some had been registered in Greek hotspots prior to their effective formation as sites of detention following the EU-Turkey Statement (see Box 5). Undertaking research across different phases thus allows appreciation of changes over time for people on the move, in differing contexts, and under changing policy environments.

Indeed, the diversity of sites chosen in Phase 2 not only captures important dynamics related to policy shifts over time, but also to those related to differing stages of the migratory journey. Many research participants in Istanbul and Athens reflected during interviews on the effects of the EU-Turkey Statement for new and previous arrivals. Participants in Berlin had arrived before the closure of the Balkan route, while those in Athens had arrived after the border closures and had often been waiting for some months. By contrast, research participants in Rome were often very recent arrivals, having arrived weeks or even days prior to being interviewed. Our research design therefore enables the findings to shed light on policy effects in diverse migratory as well as policy contexts. Undertaking research across various sites and in different phases, as well as exploring experiences at different stages in migratory journeys, thus provides for a rich understanding of the impacts of policy on people arriving - or seeking to arrive - to the EU by boat.

## Recruitment of Research Participants

Research participants were accessed differently across sites, dependent on the local context. At many sites, participants were recruited through different reception facilities, both formal and informal. They were also accessed through local contacts (NGOs and other gatekeepers), or through direct approaches by interviewers at well-known gathering places, such as local squares and parks. In some cases, research participants who had heard about the research from others approached interviewers to offer an interview. Difficulties of access were an issue for all researchers in the majority of locations where we undertook our research; hence the team was forced to make pragmatic decisions using snowball sampling, which was adapted to enhance the sample of participants interviewed with the emphasis on diversity.

## Sample Description

We not only sought to speak to participants across a number of geographical sites, but also focused on engaging a diversity of research participants in order to reflect the heterogeneity of people on the move. This includes a diversity along the lines of nationality (see Table 2), gender (see Table 3) and age (see Table 4). While the majority of our interviewees arrived in 2015 or 2016, we also interviewed people who had arrived earlier (see Table 5), including some who had more complex journeys than the majority who had travelled from Turkey-Greece, or from Egypt and Libya to Italy and Malta.

Our research does not seek to be representative of the entire migratory population arriving to the EU across the central and eastern routes. This would be an impossible task given the complexity of migratory dynamics, data limitations on migratory populations, and difficulties in accessing research participants. Rather, our research seeks to amplify the voices of people on the move in terms that provide insight into different experiences and perceptions both of the migratory journey and of arrival to the EU. Given the highly challenging context within which the research was carried out, we do not purport to have captured the full diversity of journeys, experiences and voices that research in this field might uncover.

## Research Ethics

The research for this project was undertaken only after having been cleared by the University of Warwick Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and included an enhanced emphasis on full consent, research participant anonymity, and data confidentiality. All investigators and researchers, including translators and transcribers, are bound by a signed agreement covering participant anonymity and data confidentiality. The full consent of all research participants was obtained, either in written form or through an agreement that was recorded and noted by the interviewer at the beginning of each interview.

In-depth qualitative interviews with people in precarious legal and social situations are complex, time-consuming and emotionally challenging. The project team has been committed throughout the research process to providing a supportive and engaged experience for research participants, rather than simply extracting data for the purposes of research. Interviews therefore often lasted up to an hour and a half, and sometimes even longer. Moreover, it was not always appropriate to ask all questions on the interview schedule. In some cases, emotional issues or research fatigue was an issue; hence a reflexive and flexible approach grounded in respect for research participants remained paramount over data collection concerns throughout the research process.

## The Interview Situation

The majority of interviews were recorded and transcribed. In the rare cases where audio recording was not agreed, detailed notes were taken during the interview and written up as soon as possible thereafter by the interviewer, again with full consent of research participants. Where possible, interviews were carried out without the aid of an interpreter, though this was dependent on the language skills of individual research participants and interviewers. Over the whole sample, the majority of interviews involved translation, though a significant proportion were carried out directly in English, French and Arabic. Where interpreters were employed, they were asked to give verbatim translation and were bound by a strict confidentiality agreement. Research participants were clear that the information shared via translators was for the purposes of the research project only.

Table 2: Sample by Route: Nationality

Citizenship	Eastern Route	Central Route
Afghanistan	35	1
Bangladesh	2	0
Benin	0	1
Burkina Faso	0	1
Cameroon	0	1
Chad	0	1
Comoros	0	1
Ivory Coast	0	6
Egypt	0	2
Eritrea	0	13
Ethiopia	0	16
Gambia	1	8
Ghana	0	3
Guinea	0	2
Iran	3	0
Iraq	14	1
Mali	0	9
Mauretania	0	1
Morocco	0	1
Nigeria	0	18
Pakistan	6	2
Palestine	3	1
Senegal	0	7
Sierra Leone	0	3
Somali	0	16
Sri Lanka	0	1
Sudan	0	5
Syria	83	2
Togo	0	1

Table 3: Sample by Route: Gender

Gender	Eastern Route	Central Route
Female	29	23
Male	113	87
Trans	0	1
Unaccompanied minors (all male)	5	13

Table 4: Sample by Route: Age

Age Group	Eastern Route	Central Route
<18	8	13
18-25	50	65
26-35	49	36
36-45	19	7
46-55	12	0
>55	5	1
Unknown	4	2

Table 5: Sample by Route: Arrival Year

Arrival Year	Eastern Route	Central Route
2002	0	2
2005	0	4
2007	0	2
2011	1	6
2012	2	
2013	3	15
2014	9	33
2015	95	28
2016	36	34
No participant response	1	0

## Analysis

In order to ensure that the team engaged fully and appropriately with the complex data gained via our interviews, the team employed a multi-layered analytical approach. This comprised involvement of all investigators in data collection, involving observation at fieldwork sites and participation in a selection of interviews to ensure data quality and to enhance the whole team's understanding of the research process. Following transcription of the interviews, investigators undertook an initial manual analysis in order to draw out key themes and patterns emerging from the interview data at each site. Subsequently, the transcribed data was thematically coded using software and analysed both in relation to interview questions as well as in relation to themes and patterns identified at the stage of initial manual analysis. This multi-layered approach to the analytical process reflects our commitment as a research team to engaging with participants, as well as interview data, in an active way at all stages of the research process.

### Terminology

This report cautions against the uncritical use of categories such as ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ while also emphasising that ‘irregular’ migrations are produced as such through policies that facilitate the movement of some people over others (see Squire, 2011). We thus only use these terms when reflecting on the policies in which they are used, while mobilising alternative terminology in the narration of our research.

In particular, we refer to people on the move in precarious conditions as a means to emphasise the limitations of the refugee/migrant, forced/voluntary and political/economic divides. We also refer to unauthorised migration as an alternative to irregular migration, the latter of which is embedded within the policy framework of *A European Agenda on Migration*. While we acknowledge critical trajectories of conceptualising ‘irregular migration’, the report uses the alternative term of unauthorised migration for specific contextual reasons. Our use of this term does not imply a value judgement on the nature of the migrations under analysis, and retains an emphasis on the conditions that produce ‘irregular’ or ‘unauthorised’ migrations.

## Part 2: Analysis of Sites

**INTRODUCTION:**  
 This husband and father worked for the US Army and multiple foreign companies in Afghanistan, and on this basis was targeted by the Taliban in the summer of 2015. He fled in February 2016 after various attempts on his life and threats to his family, and arrived in Greece during March of the same year. Despite being granted asylum in Greece, he struggles to survive economically and lives in a tent by the port. His wife and three children are still in Afghanistan.



“...the Taliban dropped a letter. I have the letter here now. They said that they knew I was working for a foreign company and that they were following me for a long time and knew I lived here. They warned me that next time if they caught me they would destroy me... So that time I decided I should leave Afghanistan.”

**AFGHANISTAN:**  
 Many of those working for foreign organisations in Afghanistan are threatened and targeted by violent attacks. The husband and father shares how the Taliban threatened him and his family.

“I didn't care about borders. All I cared about was to save my life, seriously. I thought I could find a safe place and find work and that's all. Maybe in Turkey. Turkey is a good place. But if they find you are illegal in Turkey they will deport you back to Kabul. This is the reason I came here, and also because of the language since they don't speak English much.”

**IRAN - TURKEY:**  
 When escaping violence or threats many simply aim to reach a place of safety, yet subsequently experience new challenges that compel them to move further. After entering Iran legally, the husband and father explains that he found a smuggler to take him further, without knowing about the border closures in Europe.

“I'm sure they cannot stop [smugglers]. I am 100% sure. Not European countries, not in the Middle East. Because they have power. If you close the way they will find a different way. Even if you find and close passageways through borders they will soon find new ways. They are like mice.”

**GREECE (CHIOS):**  
 When border policing is intensified in a particular area smugglers often find different routes in response to the on-going demand of people to reach safety. Having been smuggled to the Greek island of Chios by boat, the husband and father reflects on the futility of the European fight against smugglers.

“Asylum means nothing now. I'm like other refugees. The ID, the passport, do nothing for me. Since asylum was granted and residency issued why have they not given me a house or a safe place? Or maybe they could give me my passport and some money so I can go to some other European country.”

**ATHENS 1:**  
 Being recognised as a refugee does not always translate into material support, and some struggle with poverty and homelessness despite being in Europe legally. Despite being granted asylum very quickly upon arrival in Greece, the husband and father describes how he has not been offered any support.

“Life in here is very very hard. Let me explain. For food you have to stand in line for 2 hours for breakfast which is at 9 AM and lunch which is at 3 PM. Dinner is at 9 PM. And the only thing to eat is boiled potatoes in water without any oil or salt on it. They bring them dry. How can you eat this? It's also very hot. And then life inside the tent ... I'm sure has a temperature higher than 45 degrees Celsius and lots of kids who one day were poisoned with the food because we all had a stomach ache in here... It is very hard.”

**ATHENS 2:**  
 With thousands of people stranded in Greece, support is often insufficient. The husband and father shares the difficulties he faces in Piraeus Port, where he lives in a tent.

“Do something for my country. First they should talk with the people who are responsible for destroying my country, Afghanistan. They should talk to them. Why? If it is not stopped there and if the war continues in Afghanistan, I'm sure all people will break out of the borders and leave to save their lives.”

**ATHENS 3:**  
 Many people wish they never had to leave their home countries, and would return if they could. When asked what he would like to say to European leaders, the husband and father calls on them to improve conditions in Afghanistan.

**SUM-UP:**  
 When we met this husband and father in July 2016, he lived in a tent at Piraeus Port, Athens. This has since been closed and he subsequently moved to another camp within Greece. Despite having been granted asylum in Greece, he did not have the money to collect his passport with the asylum visa from the immigration office. He was looking for work in the hope of raising the money to get his passport and buy a ticket to northern Europe.

## Part 2: Analysis of Sites

### Phase 1: Kos, Malta, Sicily

#### Kos



Street View, Kos

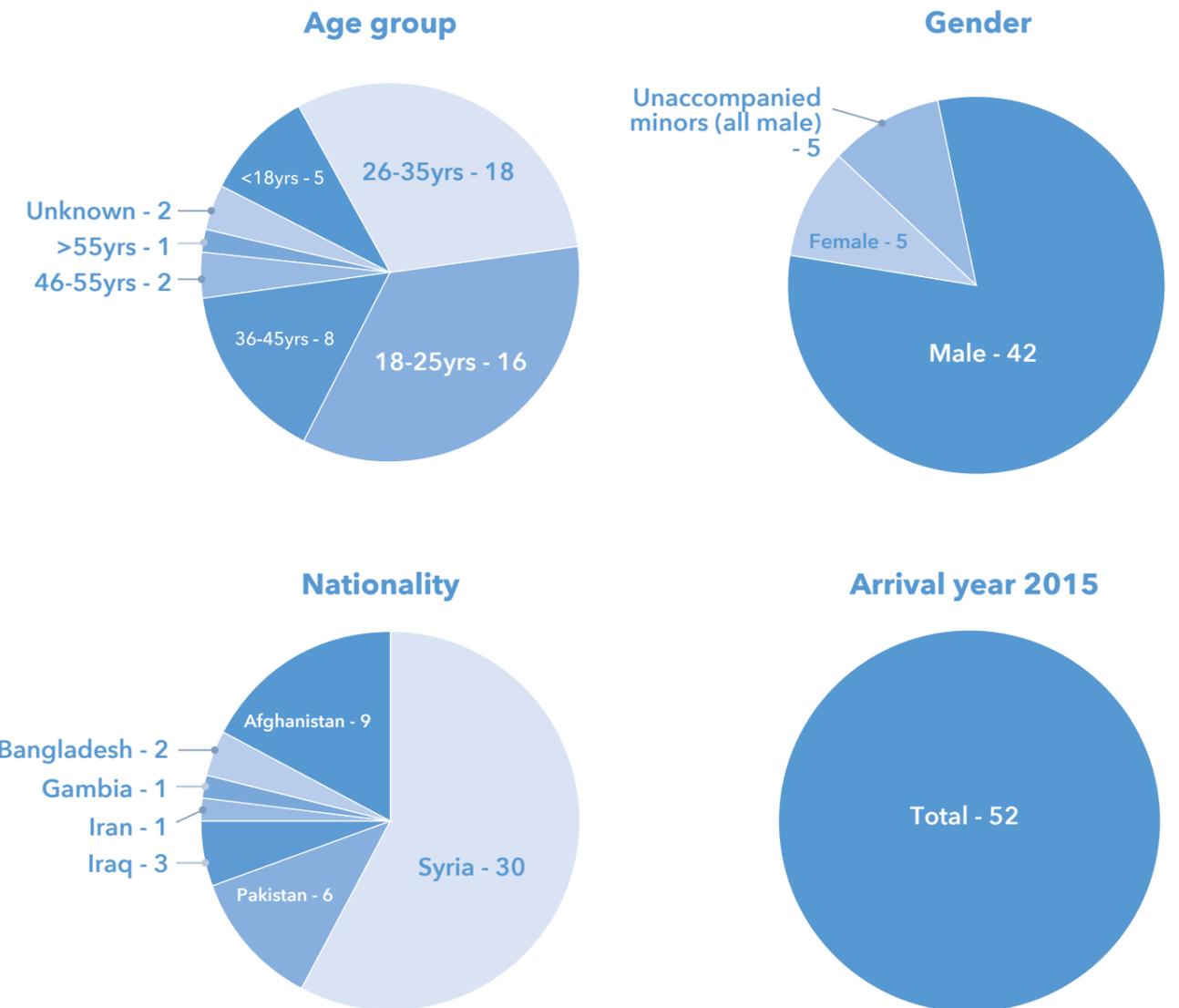
#### Context

- The Greek maritime border was on the receiving end of mixed migratory flows since 2013, mainly due to the closure of the land border with Turkey through the Evros fence. Data from the Hellenic Police (2017) indicated that in 2013 11,447 persons had entered Greece, with the number reaching 45,000 in 2014.
- UNHCR (Operational Portal - Mediterranean) data also indicated that arrivals peaked in 2015: during that summer, Lesvos registered the largest portion of arrivals (445,000) with Kos and Chios having 98,000 arrivals each. In total, 851,316 entered the EU via Greece in 2015. UNHCR also indicated that the number of Syrian arrivals, in particular, increased greatly during 2014 and 2015.
- Kos, part of the Dodecanese islands, is situated directly opposite Bodrum, a coastal town in Turkey. Geographical proximity is a crucial factor since people were able to cross from Turkey to Greece without the need to be accompanied by smugglers. Departing from the coastline of Turkey, they crossed to the islands of Lesvos, Chios, Kos, and Samos in inflatable rafts. The island of Kos was in the spotlight because of the increase in arrivals and the absence of any organised structure by the municipality to receive the refugees.
- Greece functioned, at the time, as a transit site for the overwhelming majority of arrivals reaching the islands. Absence of reception facilities, infrastructure and preparedness on the Greek side, combined with unwillingness to apply for asylum in Greece or lack of knowledge about the possibility to do so, meant that the majority of refugees sought to continue their journey towards western or northern Europe.

According to UNHCR, 84% of arrivals in Greece in 2015 came from the world's top ten refugee producing countries, namely Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Eritrea. Our interview sample reflects this.

#### Research overview

- A total of 51 interviews took place, with 29 Syrians, 9 Afghans, 7 Pakistanis, 3 Iraqis, 2 Bangladeshis, one Gambian and one Iranian. Participants were between 17 and 62 years old, with the majority being between 20 and 35. The sample included 5 women. Most participants had arrived on Kos in September 2015.



- Interviews were conducted with new arrivals, prior to their departure for Athens. Most interviewees were planning to continue onwards through the Western Balkans to western and northern Europe, while some were still undecided.
- There were no official reception facilities on Kos; conditions were very poor with all interviewees having to fend for themselves, use their own resources and rely on minimal assistance provided by the host population or civil society organisations. Many were sleeping outside in parks and on the streets.

## Key findings

- **Absence of legal means of entry to the EU**, especially for those seeking asylum, not only pushed people to undertake dangerous crossings but, perhaps more crucially, was seen as facilitating rather than combatting smuggling. Though many interviewees thought that anti-smuggling operations would be a positive step, this was seen as requiring that the EU provide legal channels for migration and asylum, in parallel.

“The smugglers are not bad... they are helping people... If this is true about the fight against the smugglers, they can go there and bring people in Europe legally so that the smuggler doesn't have to work. Find a way for people to come legally so they don't have to pay the smugglers.” (Interview in Kos, 1.48, minor from Syria)

- In terms of the choice to travel, the route of travel, and the destination, **interviewees filtered diverse forms of information**. Presence of friends and/or family influenced the choice of destination, as did the likelihood of an asylum claim being accepted. In addition, knowledge of a country's attitudes towards refugees or migrants was influential, as were fears that borders might close/were closing further along the route. The latter was particularly significant during the period when our research was conducted.

“The people that had come from other countries to help us, they have brought maps with them that show us which of the routes is better, now they are saying that is better to go through Croatia...” (Interview in Kos, 1.39, male from Iran)

- Despite a relatively large number of NGOs and volunteers on the ground, at the time of our research, **there was limited presence from international organisations (UNHCR, IOM) and the Greek Asylum Service**. There was **no coordinated process**, either for the management of the NGOs operating on the ground or for accessing information on asylum in Greece. There was also no asylum processing centre in the islands, forcing people to either reach Athens or the island of Rhodes to apply for asylum.

“No one provided any information on asylum here...No one.” (Interview in Kos, 1.44, male from Syria)

- **Social networks and free communication applications played a unique role in shaping on-going movements** from Kos, with information being passed rapidly about routes, border controls, reception conditions and asylum processing via platforms and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Viber and WhatsApp. These enabled instantaneous communications while *en route*. Indeed, the primary source of information of our research participants on registration procedures and onward travel to Athens were fellow travellers, whereas official information by the police and by international organisations, was virtually non-existent.

“The only thing I know is that...the night they gave us that small piece of paper, and I said I was 16 they told me not to say I am a minor – they told me to say I am older, over 18. Because they said that if you are minor, you should be taken to a camp, and because there is no camp here, they have to keep me in jail. For two months I will be in jail. But if I say I am 18, then I can go to Athens.” (Interview in Kos, 1.36, minor from Afghanistan)

- **Syrians were prioritised on arrival** to receive registration papers that would enable them to reach Athens. In contrast, the registrations of sub-Saharan Africans, North Africans, Iranians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and, to a lesser extent, Afghans, often took longer. No information was provided either about the length of the process, or the likelihood of successfully obtaining paperwork enabling travel to mainland Greece.

**Interviewer:** “You are here for about two months, you lived throughout the touristic season in Kos. Did you know anything about Kos before coming here? Or maybe on the conditions here?”

**Participant:** “The Pakistanis don't move at all from their places... the names for the Syrians were really fast while for the others nothing... every night the police publish a list, when you see your name in that you will come here in order to get your fingerprints. After that every night we were going the list had 500 hundred names, 450 of them was Syrians and the other 50 was Pakistanis so the days were passing by, we were coming every night but nothing. Then happened... that UN brought the ship here in order the Syrians to leave... I don't have any money and my papers are expired... Yesterday I was sitting there at the police station and I asked the interpreter what will happen with me and he told me that they may put me in jail, or keep me here for some time – maybe 2 years – and then sent me somewhere else depending on UNCHR or they could deport me back to Iran. I don't know what they will do with you he told me.” (Interview in Kos, 1.39, male from Iran)

## Malta



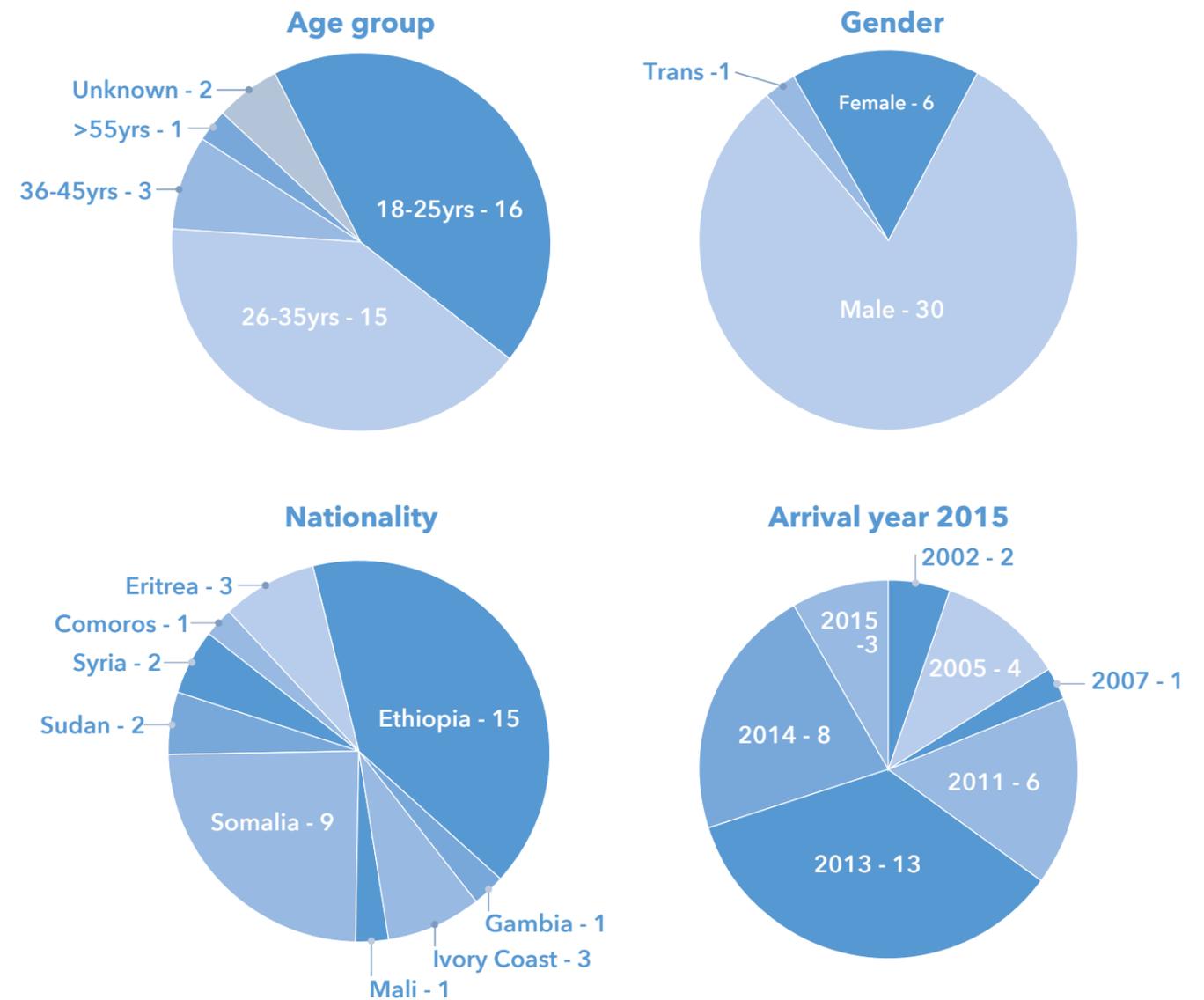
Marsa Open Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Malta

### Context

- An island of 316,000 square kilometres and with a population of 423,000, Malta is the most southerly EU Member State. UNHCR (Malta Asylum Trends) figures indicated that between 2002 and 2015 around 19,000 people arrived by boat across the Mediterranean Sea without authorisation.
- In the context of events since 2015, however, arrival figures reduced significantly, rendering the Maltese case anomalous in the central Mediterranean region. According to the UNHCR, 104 people arrived without authorisation by boat to Malta in 2015; in 2016 there were 25 new arrivals, all of whom were medical evacuations.
- Since 2001, Malta applied a form of mandatory detention for up to 18 months if an applicant's claim to asylum was rejected. This policy was widely criticised. The Maltese Government subsequently published a new Migration Strategy in December 2015, which included putting an end to automatic detention and reducing detention to 9 months (Maltese Ministry for Home Affairs, 2015).
- Despite Dublin regulations that stipulate that certain claimants can be returned to the first country of arrival within the EU when they seek asylum, the UNHCR estimates that, since 2002, fewer than 30% of the total boat arrivals remain in Malta. UNHCR also documents 3,800 people as having been resettled to the United States or other EU Member States, while others chose to leave Malta on their own initiative either without or after obtaining travel documents.

## Research overview

- A total of 35 interviews took place, with 15 Ethiopians, 9 Somalis, 3 Eritreans, 3 Ivorians, 2 Sudanese, 2 Syrians, and one person each from Comoros, Gambia, and Mali. Research participants were between 19 and 59 years old, with the majority being between 19 and 29. The sample included 6 women and one transgender interviewee identifying as female.
- Given the uniqueness of the Maltese case in terms of the aims of the research, our strategy was to focus initially on unauthorised boat arrivals to the island within the last 18 months (i.e. since 2014), and then to extend as far back as 13 years. Participants had thus arrived between 2002 and 2015.
- Overall, the Maltese context illustrates the dynamic nature of migratory routes and the dangers of seeing the 2015 'crisis' as a homogeneous event across diverse sites.



## Key findings

- Research participants felt forced to leave their country of origin even if their intention was not always to reach Europe. Many recounted **stories of corruption, violence, and war**.

"I just want to escape... I think they [pro-Assad forces] want to kill me because last time they killed all my friends." (Interview in Malta, 2.01, male from Syria)

"The situation was fucking bad... Al-Shabab told us: 'come and unite with us to kill the enemy in the country and be like a bomb'. After they beat us, they cut us, they put us inside a room and locked it." (Interview in Malta, 2.04, male from Somalia)

- Rather than a particular destination, what mattered most for most of our research participants was finding peace, security, and the conditions for a better life. The general expectation was that human rights would be protected in Europe; however, most participants claimed that **Europe has not met these expectations**.

"I thought that when you enter the EU your human rights are immediately respected, you are given proper document, and then you pursue a normal life. When I came here it was nothing like that." (Interview in Malta, 1.03, male from Ethiopia)

- We found a general **lack of knowledge of EU policies** on the part of research participants. Some indicated an awareness of search and rescue, **but did not expect to be rescued**. They were also often unaware of the extent of deaths in the Mediterranean region prior to embarking and some did so unwillingly.

"We were forced to get on the boat. We had no choice - to stay in Libya? And to die? In a war zone? We were targeted by the mercenaries working for Gaddafi, so there was no other way - it was coordinated by the government. You walk on the street and then city buses take you to the boat, to the sea port. And then they search you and if you have the money they take. No fixed price. The regime was forcing people onto the boat." (Interview in Malta 1.26, male from Ethiopia)

- **Smuggling networks** were described as **complex and heterogeneous**, involving organised groups and informal contacts. Conditions were often brutal.

"The Libyans who live in the desert caught us and demanded money. I paid them \$4,700 and asked to go to Tripoli. If you don't pay them they keep you in the desert and you may die there. I stayed with them for 1 month and 25 days. While we were kept there 28 persons died - 27 males and 1 female. Early in the morning they give us a glass of water and some rice at night." (Interview in Malta, 1.07, male from Somalia)

- Duration in detention seemed to have decreased over time, and access to information was described as improved - however, **most participants did not understand the asylum process**.

- Some interviewees who had been granted some form of international protection had been **stuck in Malta as a result of the Dublin rules** for up to a decade. Rejected asylum seekers were effectively stranded in Malta with return not being an option for many, and with limited access to rights.

"They need to change the policy for those who are living long time in Malta. Ten years is not the same as one day. But you spend ten years here, you treated are like you are here only for one day. You must know how to treat people. People are suffering and yet they are contributing to the economy." (Interview in Malta, 1.23, male, Ivory Coast)

## Sicily



Lampedusa Hotspot, Sicily

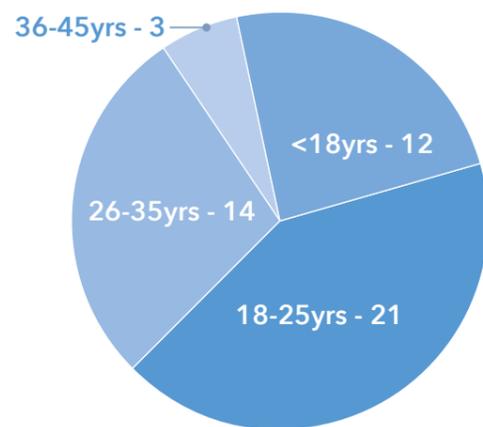
## Context

- Italy is a long-standing arrival-point for migration to the EU, and has served both as a state of transit and settlement. Arrival figures rose during the years preceding our research, with the UNHCR (Operational Portal - Mediterranean) recording 170,100 new arrivals in 2014, and 153,842 in 2015. UNHCR statistics also showed that, at the time of our research, Sicily was the main arrival point in Italy, receiving 68% of arrivals to the country during 2015 when the research took place.
- In 2015, 138,422 of those arriving in Italy left from Libya, 11,142 from Egypt, 2,471 from Turkey, 940 from Greece, and 549 from Tunisia (Innocenti, 2016). UNHCR recorded a total of 12,360 unaccompanied minors arrived in Italy via boat in 2015.
- Italy has pursued a multilateral approach to migration governance since the 1990s. This involves cooperation with Tunisia (1998), Morocco (1998), Algeria (1999), Egypt (2007), as well as operational cooperation with Libya throughout the 2000s. Unrest in Libya in 2011 partially destabilised these relations, while the *Hirsi Jamaa* case against *refoulement* (return to possible persecution or serious harm) prevented Italian 'pushback' practices to Libya and elsewhere.
- Highly publicised tragedies of deaths at sea led to the Italian humanitarian-military operation Mare Nostrum in 2013, which involved search and rescue (SAR) operations beyond the Italian SAR zone. The EU Frontex Joint Operation Triton replaced Mare Nostrum in November 2014 (see Box 4).

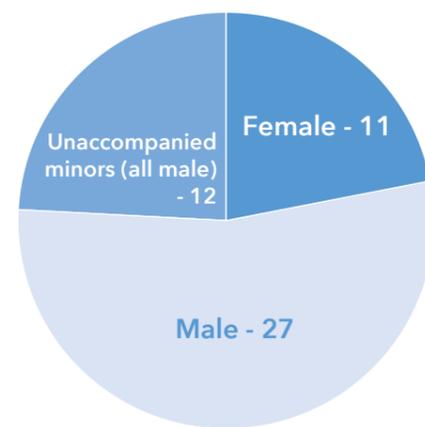
## Research overview

- A total of 50 interviews took place in Sicily with 10 Nigerians, 8 Malians, 6 Senegalese, 6 Gambians, 2 participants from Eritrea, Egypt, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Pakistan respectively, and one participant from Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Iraq, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Togo respectively. Research participants were between 16 and 43 years old, with the majority being 25 years or younger. Our sample in Sicily included 11 women as well as 12 unaccompanied minors. Research participants arrived in Sicily between 2007 and 2015, with 94% arriving in 2014-15.

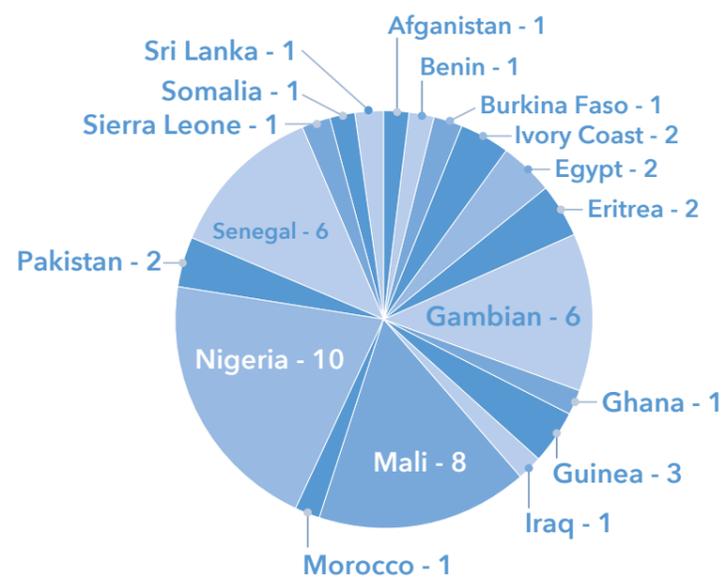
### Age group



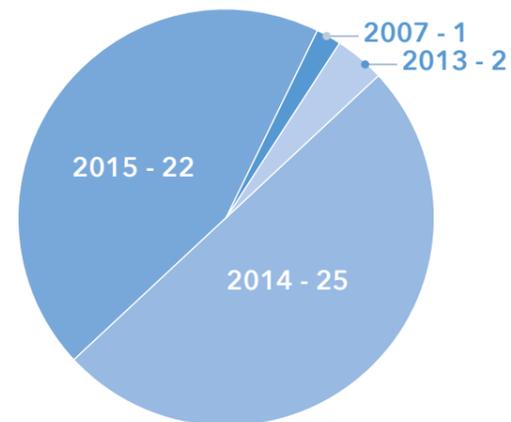
### Gender



### Nationality



### Arrival year 2015



- Our research strategy involved an initial focus on arrivals post-Mare Nostrum, and was then extended to include arrivals during and pre-Mare Nostrum, focused on the years 2013-2014. This reflected Sicily's role not only as a site of initial arrival, but also as a site marked by high levels of state-sponsored reception and by what the Italian Interior Ministry described in 2015 as a high ratio of migrants to citizens. 46 interviewees were housed in formal reception centres of various kinds, with 4 finding themselves in an informal reception situation.
- Not all new arrivals stay in Italy, claim asylum and enter the complex reception system. In 2014, more than 42,000 Syrians arrived in Italy, but less than 500 applied for asylum in the country. Similarly, more than 34,000 Eritreans arrived in Italy in 2014, while less than 500 applied for asylum (Italian Interior Ministry, 2015). This is reflected in our interview sample.

## Key findings

- Arrivals to Sicily had left their countries of origin for a variety of reasons. Many pointed to **conflict or persecution as the main cause of migration**, with a sizeable minority emphasising personal or familial conflicts that posed a risk to their safety.

"My father did not recognise me, so I am a child without a father. My mother, my mum, she argued with my dad, because he did not recognise me... He was a powerful politician and sent my mum to prison, for three years... He wanted to put me in prison, too... I left [for the Ivory Coast]. The war found me there, so I fled with my friends." (Interview in Sicily, 1.11, male from Senegal)

- Most interviewees were not informed about European policies and did not have explicit ideas about what to expect. Indeed, **few initially intended to come to Italy or Europe**, with many experiencing more fluid and fragmented journeys in search of peace and work.

"My idea was not to reach Italy. I didn't know Italy if not for the football. I never thought to come in Europe, because here I have not family. My family is only in Ivory Coast and Burkina. But is my family who pushed me to go to Mali. In Mali there was a war, then I moved to Algeria, otherwise I would have stayed there. I wasn't lucky enough to stay in Algeria, if not I would have to stay there. I didn't want to go in Libya, the situation is too crazy to go there. It have been really hard to me to stay in Libya... all these circumstances pushed me to reach here. I went in Algeria and I failed... I went in Libya and there was the death... When I arrived here, Italians gave me the life, everything I need, I don't know what better they could give me." (Interview in Sicily, 1.38, male from Ivory Coast)

- Many had **fled conditions in Libya**, having initially intended to stay there. Some of those travelling through Libya pointed to the closure of return routes and the violence faced by those seeking to evade the boat crossing. Many had experienced indiscriminate detention for long periods of time by unaccountable authorities, as well as long periods of working without pay.

"...if you are in Libya, you can't come back. I had many friends that wanted to come back to their countries but the roads were blocked. My friend Mohamed tried to come back and they put him in prison. With another person (his name also was Mohamed), we worked in a shop where there was somebody who brought people here. Someone pays, I have not paid... the Tunisian who gave us work, he didn't pay us... he brought us here." (Interview in Sicily, 1.30, male from Nigeria)

- Relationships with those facilitating migratory passage were highly ambiguous across our sample, with **few reporting having paid fees directly to enter the EU**.

"You can meet some good guys that can take you because of the war, you want to escape. You can meet people that take you [for free], and people that take you for money" (Interview in Sicily, 1.38, male from Ivory Coast)

- Several of our interviewees were **forced onto a boat** to Italy, while others reported being helped onto the boat without having any knowledge about where they were going.

"...in the midnight like that her husband put me inside his car... the next day after they drive in the night I see myself near the sea. I don't even know that sea... He said: 'Just look at people, if I see people enter inside the boat I should enter'. I start crying, I say: 'No!' Because the sea is very big, I was afraid! I say: 'No, take me back! Take me back!' The man say: 'Stay here! ...That is the way I enter the boat.'" (Interview in Sicily, 1.04, female from Nigeria)

## Phase 2: Athens, Berlin, Istanbul, Rome

### Athens



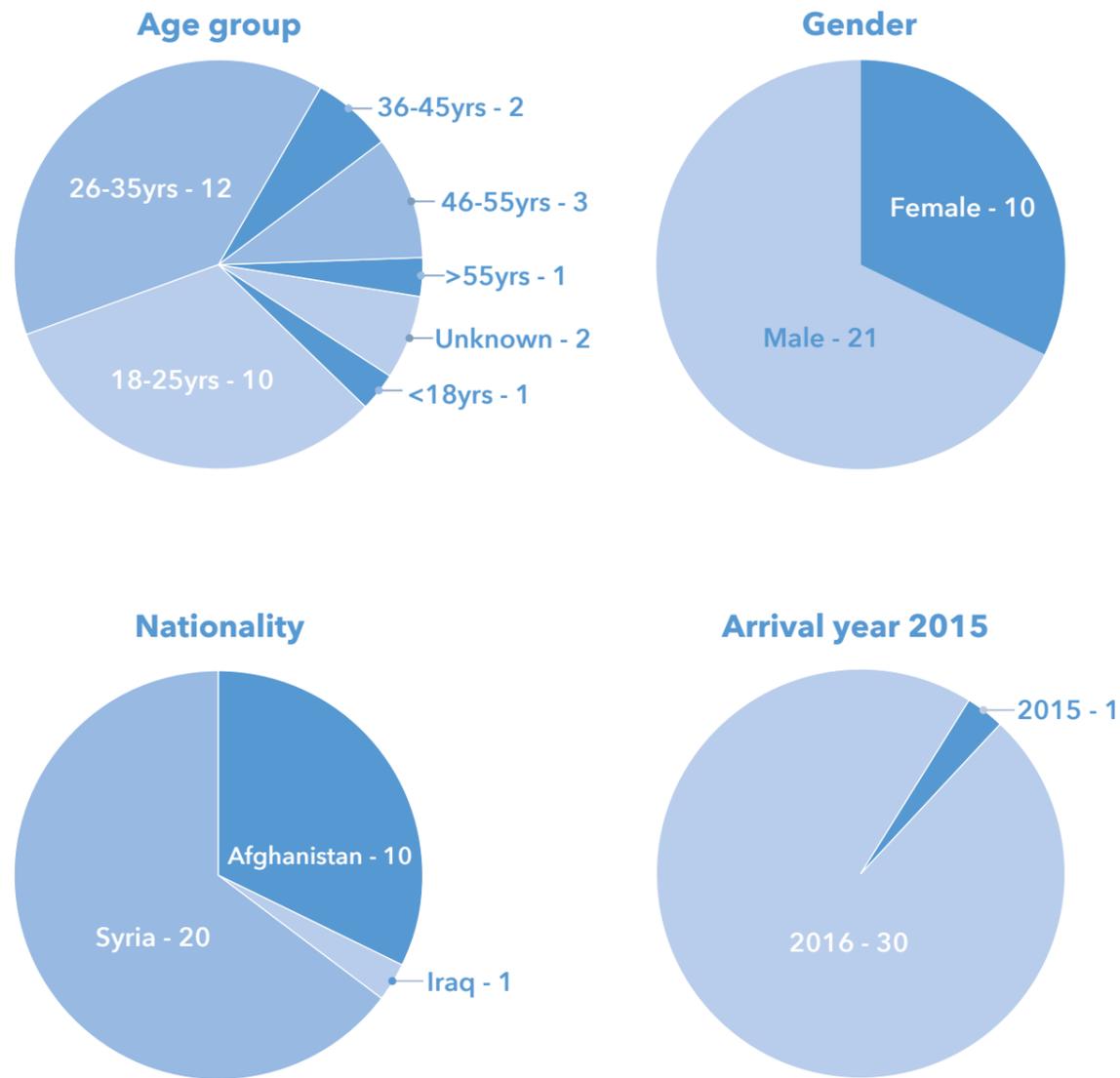
Informal Camp (Elliniko), Athens

### Context

- The *de facto* humanitarian corridor of 2015 through the Western Balkans came to an official close on 9 March 2016. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia announced in early January it would allow only Syrians with valid travel documents, Eritreans, and Iraqis to cross. When Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia also introduced tight restrictions in March 2016, the route became effectively impassable.
- Though figures fluctuate, in June 2016 during the period when research was carried out in Athens, the Greek government reported the number of migrants in Greece to be 57,235 (Hellenic Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunication and Media, 2016). Of those almost 5,000 were living in informal camp-like structures, such as Elliniko and Pireus port in Attiki.
- In line with the European Agenda, the first hotspot was set up on the island of Lesbos on 16 October 2015. Two further hotspots were introduced in Leros and Samos respectively, with Chios's hotspot set up on February 2016 (see Box 6). By the end of October 2016 approximately 15,000 people were located in the hotspots on the islands (ECRE, 2016), having arrived after the EU-Turkey Statement was put into action on 20 March 2016 (see Box 5).
- Since the EU-Turkey Statement, two different types of asylum processing have taken place. On the mainland asylum applications began to be examined on merit, while in the hotspots European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and asylum service representatives first processed claims based on admissibility.
- From this time, if an asylum claim lodged in the hotspots were found inadmissible or manifestly unfounded then the applicant was eligible for return to Turkey. The European Commission (2017b) announced on 2 March 2017 that Greece had only returned 1,487 persons to Turkey since the Statement, with the majority being rejected asylum seekers or having opted out of the asylum process. An additional 944 persons were returned as of 3 April 2017 (DG Home Affairs, 2017).

## Research overview

- A total of 30 interviews took place in Athens, with 10 Afghans, 19 Syrians and one Iraqi. Participants were between 17 and 56 years old, with the majority being between 25 and 35. The sample included 9 women. Most participants had arrived in Greece in February or March 2016, with one having arrived in August 2015.



- Interviews took place in the old airport of Elliniko, an unofficial 'hosting' space for roughly 2,500 people mainly from Afghanistan; at the informal camp in Piraeus (before it was shut down in late July 2016); at the City Plaza Hotel near Victoria Square (where people were squatting with the support of local activists); as well as at a UNHCR-rented apartment for participants in the relocation scheme.
- The range of sites enabled diverse feedback from research participants, since many had spent weeks or months moving between them (for example from Piraeus, to Elliniko, to City Plaza Hotel).

## Key findings

- Participants reported **limited access to official information** regarding documents and asylum procedures on arrival.

"Information on relocation: nothing at all. I'm telling you we had no information. We spent 2 months in Khalkida. I told my husband if we stay here, we'll stay here forever, no one will ask..." (Interview in Athens, 2.20, heterosexual couple from Syria)

"I never saw any organisations and no organisation ever came to us. The last thing was that they took us, I mean they moved us in buses, to a military camp in Kavala. Really far. No one would come there ever." (Interview in Athens 2.25, female from Syria)

- In this context, participants often highlighted the **role of civil society in supplementing the absence of official information** on arrival.

"There were no organisations but there were a team of volunteers from Drama" (Interview in Athens, 2.23, male from Syria)

- The closure of the Western Balkan route transformed Greece **from a place of transit into a place of 'strandedness'**. This was evident in experiences of increased delays in registration, asylum application processing, and the relocation mechanism, all of which were experienced by our research participants. The change in policies, including the EU-Turkey Statement, were interpreted as punishment by many of the participants.

"I see it as punishment. The whole EU, specifically Greece is the main door for the EU...why did the Germans make agreement between the Turks and the EU? Before they close the borders. They close the borders first and after one month they start talking about EU limits." (Interview in Athens, 2.13, male from Syria)

- Many who could have applied for family reunification or relocation from Greece to other EU Member States were no longer able to do so, because significant delays, or legal prohibition in effect led to the **closure of legal pathways** (see, for example, the Berlin site below). Moreover, many participants highlighted how residence policies across some EU states led to family reunification being too slow, delayed or non-existent as a legal pathway.

"European policy is like subjection. Honestly, subjection. They opened the door of refuge to us and subjected us to coming. Why did they close it on our face as soon as we arrived?" (Interview in Athens, 2.24, male from Syria)

- Many Syrian nationals in particular reported being forced to undertake the dangerous journey to Europe due to **significant delays in family reunification** through the embassies as well as in processing asylum applications in EU states.

"We thought we'd leave Syria through reunification so that I don't expose the kids to the dangers of the sea. But when we stayed in Syria the danger to us increased a lot. We thought: 'We'll travel. People are crossing the sea, the Lord might save us.' We went, and we arrived here." (Interview in Athens, 2.19, female from Syria)

- Participants highlighted the problems of the **differentiated treatment of nationalities**. Syrians were prioritised for registration, the issuing of documents and asylum processing (for those passing through hotspots), while Afghans, Iranians and other nationalities faced considerable delays. Differentiation was also noted by participants in relation to relocation, with the European mechanism available only to Syrians and Eritreans.

- Limited reception capacities** in Athens were highlighted by all participants as a critical challenge, particularly given the extreme temperatures during summer (and impending winter) months. The conditions for participants located in informal camps were sub-standard, and alternative options for accommodation, subsistence, and medical support were limited.

- Asylum in Greece for the majority of our research participants was not an option, not only due to delays but also due to the **absence of a broader support system for asylum applicants in terms of shelter, subsistence and integration opportunities**, including employment options.

“They told us that with asylum in Greece they don’t give you money for your living expenses, and there’s no work, you know? We want to live. A person without work doesn’t live.”  
(Interview in Athens, 2.31, female from Syria)

## Berlin



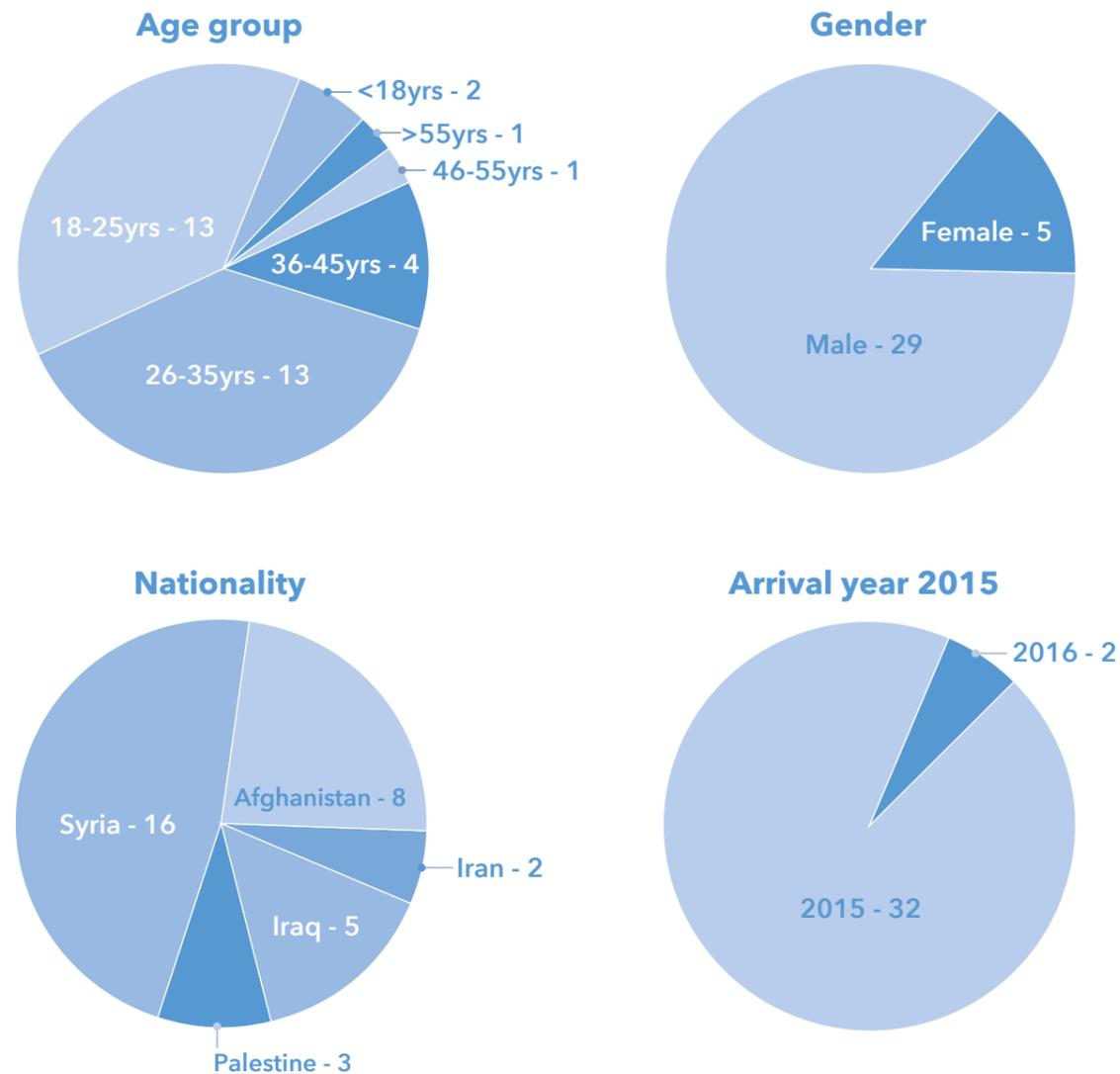
Emergency Accommodation Facility, Berlin

## Context

- From 2014 onwards, asylum applications in Germany rose due to migration along the so-called ‘Balkan corridor’. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees reported that Germany received 173,000 asylum applicants in 2014, 442,000 in 2015 and 643,000 between January and September 2016 (BAMF, September 2016). Germany was a key arrival and asylum processing site for those travelling via the eastern route during the period when we carried out our research.
- Germany divides asylum applicants evenly between 16 federal states, and applicants are sent to accommodation facilities and emergency housing throughout Germany, including Berlin. Formal registration often took several months at the time we carried out our research. During this registration period, asylum seekers are only entitled to benefits in the town or district to which they are sent. They require permission to move elsewhere.
- Under German Law, there are five possible outcomes for an asylum applicant: constitutional asylum (political persecution by state actors); refugee status under the Refugee Convention; other forms of protection, such as subsidiary protection or ‘*Duldung*’ (tolerated stay) that prevent removal (*Abschiebungsverbot*); removal on safe third country/Dublin Regulation grounds; and refusal.
- In 2015, the vast majority of Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis were granted full refugee status. However, following further asylum restrictions in 2016 (Asylum Package II), applicants were increasingly granted subsidiary protection (1 + 2 years), with a restriction on family reunification for 2 years.

## Research overview

- In June 2016, 31 interviews were conducted with a total of 34 participants, including 16 Syrians, 8 Afghans, 5 Iraqis, 3 Palestinians from Syria, and 2 Iranians. Research participants ranged from 16 to 63 years old, with the majority being between 20 and 30. The sample included 5 women.
- All participants had passed through Greece between May 2015 and February 2016, prior to enforcement of the EU-Turkey Statement. Most had travelled along the eastern Mediterranean and then across the Western Balkan route, arriving in Germany after October 2015.



- Interviews in Berlin were carried out in three sites housing new arrivals: an initial reception centre and two emergency accommodation facilities.
- All research participants were in the asylum process and mostly awaiting the asylum hearing. In December 2015, personal interviews replaced paper decisions, slowing down the asylum process. The few granted residence permits were unable to find housing in Berlin due to lack of available accommodation, forcing them to remain in the facility.

## Key findings

- Journeys were very varied. Many participants faced **ill-treatment by smugglers but also by some officials and police**; others travelled from Greece to Germany without significant issues. There were differing accounts of the availability and support of NGOs, civil society and the public on the journey.

“When we got there we had to wait for our turn to give our fingerprints. At this point, the Serbian army beat us. They didn’t want anybody to talk or to complain or to say anything because we --- imagine that we were breathing for air, no air, and if anybody says anything, they would immediately beat him.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.01A, Palestinian male from Syria)

- **EU rules on fingerprinting were not followed in transit EU countries:** these were largely ignored, applied in an *ad hoc* manner, or applied differentially without clear pattern. We found evidence of misinformation being provided about the purpose of fingerprinting, with many fingerprinted in Greece being told they were ‘criminal fingerprints’ with no effect on asylum claims.

“The information I got through friends, and I got confirmation from LAGeSo, because he gave me two examples, if you give one fingerprint, for one finger only, this is called criminal fingerprint, that’s what happened in Greece. That’s what happened in Passau. And I asked in LAGeSo, when they took our fingerprints, they took 10 fingers, and also the full hand. That’s what is called asylum fingerprints.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.09, male from Syria)

- Participants gave evidence of **enduring trauma and growing desperation** (the most serious being 1 attempted suicide and 1 miscarriage) due to: poor reception conditions, including minimal privacy, lack of showers and insufficient toilets; use of facilities intended to be temporary housing of 3-4 nights being extended to several months; slow, bureaucratic asylum procedures in Berlin; lack of information generally; and delayed family reunification.

“When we first entered Tempelhof, that hanger there were only tents. So it was very depressing sight. You feel yourself that you are not in a developed country. I... when I first saw that site, I thought I’m back in Syria. It’s very uncivilised, unbelievable. There were only three sockets to have your mobiles charged, and all the camp came to have their mobile charged. The bathrooms were outside. About 20 toilets for 600 people. You can’t enter the toilet, you have to queue. No bathrooms, no, no shower facilities. We had to wait for about 2 weeks, buses came to take us to a swimming hall. 10 showers were available, you take shower with each other. I was surprised, is this Germany?” (Interview in Berlin, 2.30, male from Syria)

- **Poor administration and treatment** by some security and other staff at LAGeSo (Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales - [State Office of Health and Welfare], responsible for registering asylum registrations and related requests) was a widespread concern for participants. Berlin was repeatedly identified by participants as providing poor reception and processing facilities. Examples of this include cases of passports being removed (e.g. by the police) with potential serious consequences for the applicant.

- Participants stressed a **sense of unfairness due to what were perceived to be arbitrary or political policy changes** (e.g. a lack of clarity on timings of the granting of status, with more recent arrivals granted permission to remain before others); and discrimination between nationalities with Syrians being treated more favourably (Afghans frequently expressed this concern).

“So here unfortunately, they are giving the priority to Arabs, people from Syria, so unfortunately it’s not fair... behave the same with everyone. Our only wish is to address our problems, to look after us. Because we also experience fighting in our country.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.06, female from Afghanistan)

## Istanbul



Workshop and Living Space, Istanbul

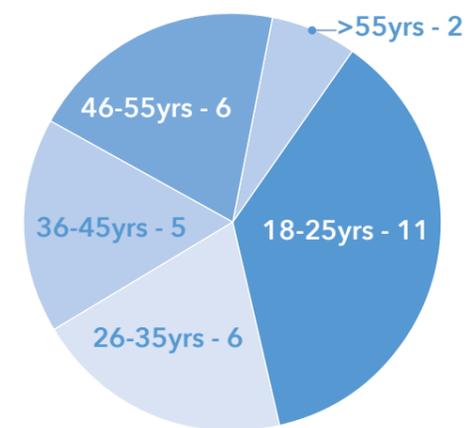
### Context

- With a population of 81 million, including temporary residents, Turkey shifted post-2010 from a country of emigration to a country of positive net migration. Istanbul hosts 19% of the country's population, and is an important migratory destination and transit point for people on the move.
- The first Syrians fleeing conflict arrived in 2011. In 2014, Turkey became the world's largest host country to people fleeing conflict. According to UNHCR (Global Focus - Turkey), an estimated 2.75 million Syrian and 350,000 non-Syrian refugees will be living in Turkey by early 2017. Turkey retains a geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, denying those from non-European countries the possibility of legal protection under the Refugee Convention.
- In 2013, Turkey adopted the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), establishing a legal framework for asylum. However, the geographical limitation remained in place. The new Law also established the Director General of Migration Management (DGMM), the designated agency responsible for the registration of asylum seekers and status decisions. In October, 2014, the Temporary Protection Regime (TPR) was established under the LFIP, providing a legal framework and procedure for the reception and registration of Syrian nationals and stateless persons seeking 'temporary protection' in Turkey.
- The EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan adopted on 29 November 2015 required Turkey to open its labour market to Syrians with temporary protection (Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection), to introduce new visa requirements for Syrians and other nationalities, to enhance security efforts by the Turkish coast guard and police and to improve information sharing. In return the EU committed 3 billion Euros towards a Facility for Refugees in Turkey (see also Box 5).
- On 7 March 2016, Turkey agreed to the rapid return of all people not in need of international protection crossing from Turkey into Greece, and to accept all people intercepted in Turkish waters for travelling without authorisation. Operations to dismantle smuggling operations were also stepped up. Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement 1 for 1 return policy (where the EU agreed to resettle one Syrian from Turkey for each Syrian returned to Turkey from the islands following unauthorised entrance) began on 20 March 2016.

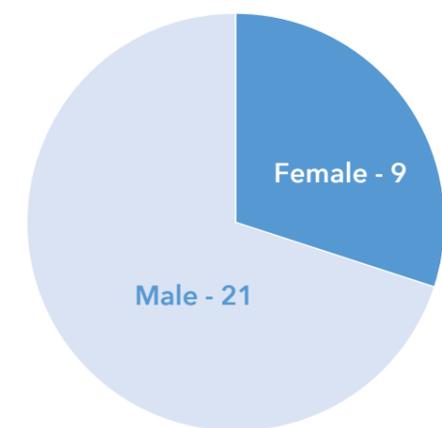
## Research overview

- Data collection commenced following the EU-Turkey Statement. This influenced recruitment procedures: smugglers were no longer operating openly in the streets, as such, and research participants were not easy to access. Recruitment was therefore conducted through local contacts (NGOs and personal connections).
- 30 interviews were conducted with a total of 30 research participants, including 17 Syrians, 8 Afghans, and 5 Iraqis. Interviewees were between 18 and 63 years old, with the majority being between 18 and 35. The sample included 9 women. Research participants had arrived in Turkey since 2011, with the majority having arrived since 2014.

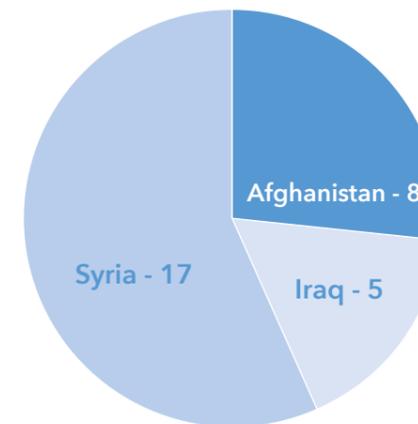
### Age group



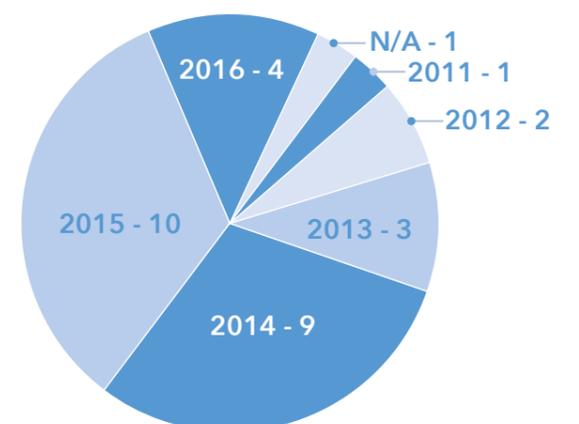
### Gender



### Nationality



### Arrival year 2015



- Interviews took place in a range of neighbourhoods, from the more affluent central districts to working class neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city. This reflects the different spaces in which people who aspired to reach Europe lived, worked, and passed through. Across these diverse neighbourhoods, interviews were concentrated in two kinds of sites: in public spaces, such as cafés, and in private rented apartments, some of which housed up to 26 individuals.

## Key findings

- The protracted war in Syria, closed borders and visa restrictions all contributed to **highly fragmented journeys** for participants whom we interviewed. For some, Turkey initially offered temporary shelter; for others, it was a point of transit. Over time the situation for many had become more desperate, with their experiences compounded by a sense of hopelessness, and no durable solution. For many, the dispersal of family members along with the lack of possibility for reunification or meeting due to visa restrictions was a source of deep distress.

“I was expecting to find a job, settle down, bring my family and live here. Here is my situation, until it [the war] ends in Syria. That’s what I imagined... But I’m dying inside. So let me go out, at least it’s away from bombing, away from destruction, away from arrests, away from homelessness, away from beatings, away from the humiliation happening in Syria, the daily death in Syria... Far from aerial bombing. Far from death. True I’m far from my parents. On the flip side – I’m away from my parents, far from my children, far from my wife, far from my mother, far from my brother, who’s the only one left in Syria. But in return, I escaped death. And death is everywhere.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.02, male from Syria)

“The main reason is that Egypt isn’t letting any Syrians in. It’s forbidden for Syrians to enter and they started to need a...visa to enter. As I told you, I have a brother in Saudi Arabia and Britain. We are dispersed. We want a country that we can all be together in, even if once a year. We didn’t find this thing.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.11, female from Syria)

- Participants across nationalities highlighted the significance of **barriers to accessing asylum or international protection via the UNHCR**. Findings highlight a lack of information and transparency, long delays, opportunity costs (loss of wages), and lack of trust in the authorities as reasons for failure to access to protection. Afghani nationals specifically highlighted the lack of protection available to them.

“Nothing is clear, and they do this on purpose. The same thing with the work permits. In the beginning of 2016, Turkey said it would legalise work permits for us. But I don’t know anyone who has a work permit. And this refugee ID, the kimlik as it’s called, I’m actually not able to get it for 3 reasons. The first is because I entered through the airport. The second is because I don’t have a lease—and many of us are living in shared housing without a lease so it makes it impossible. And the third is because my visa is expired on my passport. Actually, I tried to renew my visa and they told me that the only way to do this was to exit and re-enter. So I paid a fine at the airport because my visa expired and flew to Cyprus where they let me stay only 2 days because it was expired and then returned to Istanbul. At the airport I applied for a year-long visa but they issued me one for 19 days.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.04, male from Syria)

“Even if we wanted to be registered by UNHCR, they have stopped registering Afghans. Before applying with the Turkish police in the cities, they ask for the rent contract and it is impossible for us to get...I know that some Afghan families went to Ankara and got registered but it’s just a paper, a letter to send you to cities and towns that are far. And after going to the satellite city, you have to rent a house before you go to the police. And there are no jobs there. The living conditions there are very bad for asylum-seekers.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.14, male from Afghanistan)

- Even those registering for temporary protection claimed that rights do not translate on the ground. Regardless of status, access to healthcare is generally poor, housing is expensive and participants reported **widespread discrimination in work and services**. For non-Syrians a lease contract was required to register for asylum – often leading to homelessness. Participants widely reported exploitation and poor working conditions – largely in textile factories within the city.

“Without work, humans can’t work. They must work. But one work differs from another. The work here, it is work for animals. In the morning, you leave the house and you work for 12 hours. You have to work 12 hours to secure your bite of food and rent for the house. I’m trying to find a better house. If I move now and show you this house, it’s not a person to live in. From the smell of the dampness, from the insects.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.20, female from Syria)

“I just have to say that the situation is not good for me here because I don’t have accommodation and a place to live. And even if I had the money to rent a flat, they don’t rent to single men.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.12, male from Afghanistan)

- **Plans to travel were put on hold** for various reasons by most participants, including: all legal options having been exhausted, knowledge of poor conditions in Greece and closed borders as a reason for delay, fear of travel by boat, depleted funds and massive increase in smugglers fees, a perception of relocation as lengthy and inaccessible. Whilst many of our research participants expressed a desire to leave Turkey, they had largely given up hope of attempting any crossing or finding a legal avenue for travel in the short-term.

“Since the crisis started in Syria, I never considered the Syrians refugees because I was sure that they will go out [of the country] and come back. After some time. Because we never expected the crisis to last that long but when it lasted a long time, people wanted to move on with their lives. I lived in a denial for three years or more and then when I came here, OK, I am legal in Turkey but I’m still treated as a refugee. You know? You’re stuck here. You’re stuck.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.13, male from Syria)

Rome



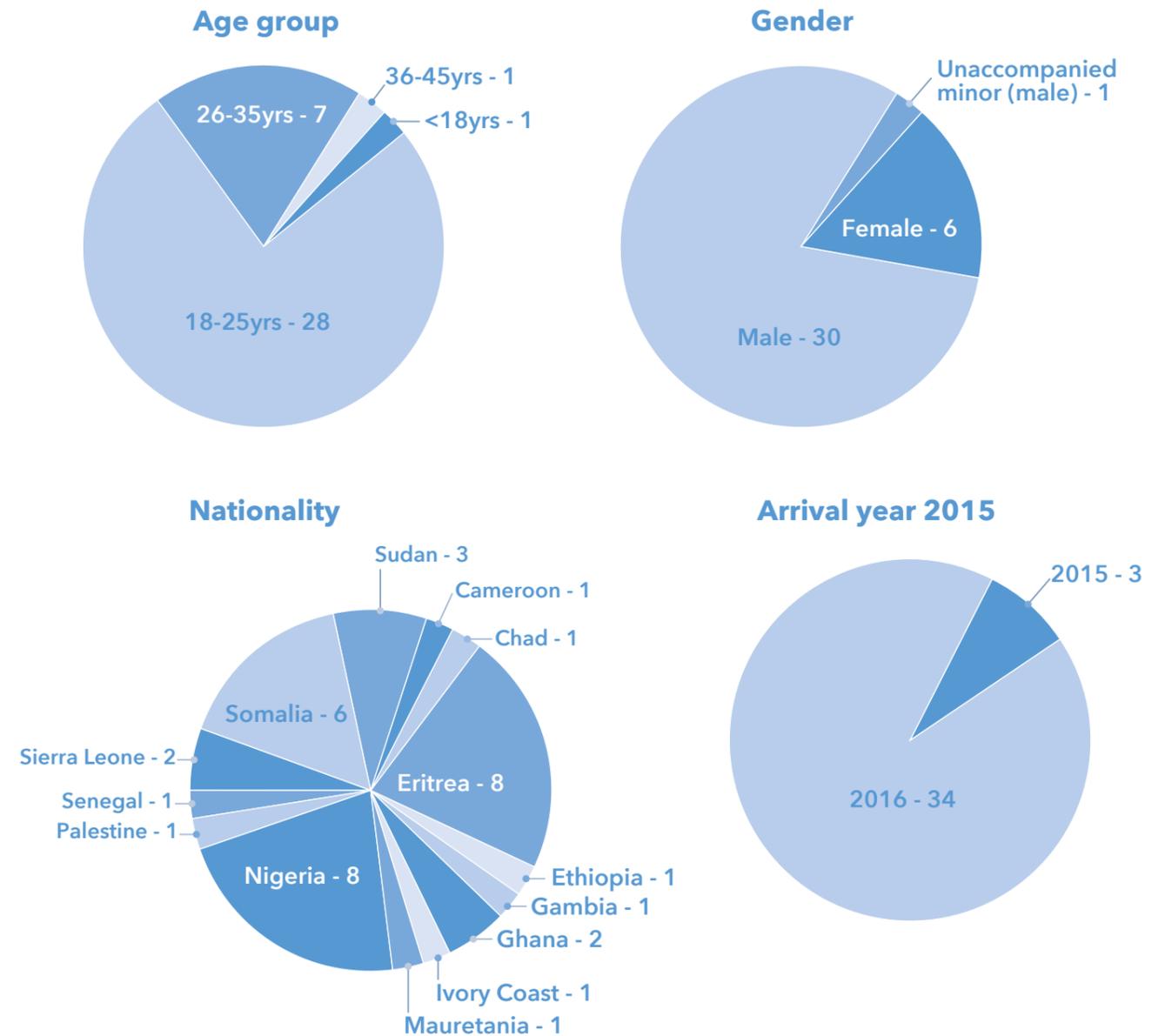
Informal Street Camp (Baobab), Rome

Context

- Despite a shift of focus to the eastern Mediterranean route in 2015, the European Commission (2017a) recently emphasised the resurgent strategic importance of the central Mediterranean route; a route that United Against Racism called the ‘most dangerous in the world’. The IOM (Missing Migrants Project) reported 5,098 deaths in 2016.
- The central route has been the focus of intensified border security and anti-smuggling measures. Launched in November 2014, Frontex Joint Operation Triton focuses both on border protection and supporting search and rescue on the route; since June 2015 *Operation Sophia*, formerly EUNAVFOR MED Task Force, has sought to disrupt the business model of traffickers and smugglers (see Box 4).
- Between January 1st and December 31st 2016, UNHCR (Operational Portal - Mediterranean) reported 181,436 unauthorised arrivals to Italy by sea, of whom 21% originated from Nigeria, 11% from Eritrea, 7% from Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and The Gambia, and 6% from Senegal and Mali.
- Italy, alongside Greece, was the first EU Member State to introduce the new hotspot approach announced as part of the European Agenda in May 2015 (see Box 6).
- A two-tier reception system exists in Italy involving: Regional Hubs and Temporary Reception Centres (CAS), managed by the Ministry of Interior and Prefectures; and reception facilities provided by the System for Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), managed by local municipalities. Emergency centres and hotspots further diversify the reception environment in Italy.

Research overview

- In May and June 2016, 30 interviews were conducted in Rome, a major urban hub in the Lazio region of Italy. A total of 37 participants of 14 nationalities were interviewed, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of migratory dynamics across the central route.



- All participants arrived by without authorisation boat between September 2015 and June 2016. The age of the sample ranges between 17 to 39 years, and includes 6 women.
- Interviews took place at two sites: an emergency accommodation facility (CAS) and around the informal street camp called Baobab. Until its eviction in October 2016, Baobab was a key contact point for those outside the reception system and seeking to travel to other EU countries. Residents of the CAS had entered the Italian asylum system and were awaiting their hearing.

## Key findings

- **While multi-faceted, reasons for leaving countries of origin revealed systemic exposure to various forms of violence.** This included political violence (e.g. Boko Haram) and gendered violence (e.g. rape, Female Genital Mutilation), as well as situations where there was no access to basic protection and rights.

“It is because of insecurity in our countries that there are many illegal refugees coming into Europe. Total insecurity is pushing us to migrate... I only want to live in security, I live in fear.” (Interview in Rome, 2.11, female from Cameroon)

- The idea of a single, linear, migratory ‘route’ across the central Mediterranean is a misnomer; **journeys were fragmented, involved multiple transit countries, and the destination was often unclear.** Many journeys were long and included years of work and often forced labour, imprisonment, and kidnapping. Physical abuse and psychological distress were widely evident. Italy was rarely perceived as an ultimate destination *en route*.

“At first I didn’t want to come to Europe, I wanted to go to another Arabic country... I thought about doing some business in Libya, but then I discovered that there is no security, I can’t be free over there. There is always danger, for everybody. I have discovered a different reality from what I initially imagined in Libya... They treat everyone like slaves.” (Interview in Rome, 2.10, male from Syria)

- Deterrent border security measures often missed their target: **prior knowledge about military operations in the Mediterranean region, the hotspot approach, and deportation was scarce;** misinformation contributed to a lack of awareness of conditions and border closures.
- The ‘success’ of the hotspot approach has been asymmetric: the European Commission (2016) claimed that, between December 2015 and January 2016, 87% of arrivals were identified, fingerprinted, and registered (rising to 100% between January and February 2016). However, our research also showed that access to information and protection was systematically denied and that **fingerprints were often obtained by coercion or force.**

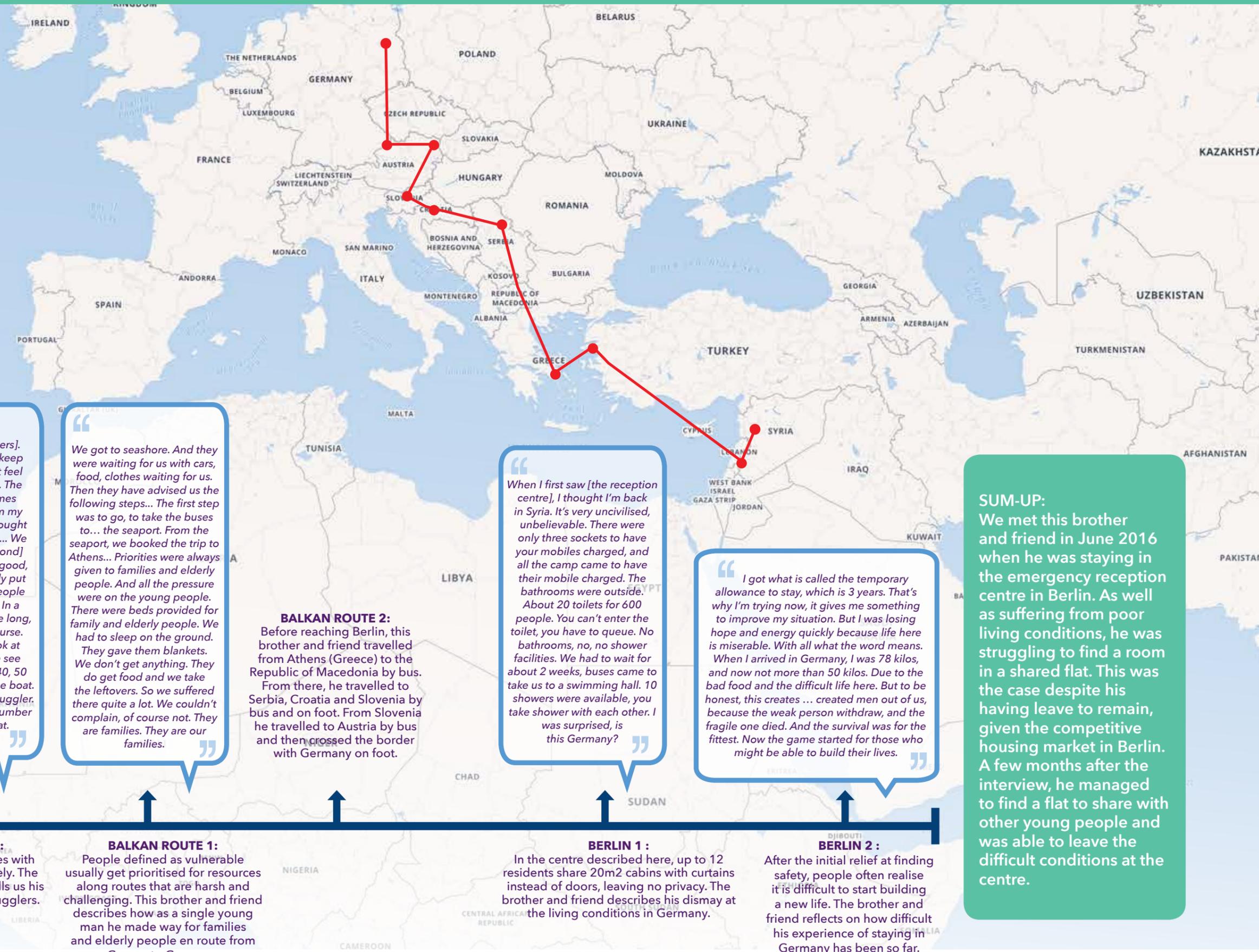
“In Sicily they make you a bracelet and they control you with a pistol. They gave me treatment for scabies. They take us to a police station - some of us tried to escape. Then they fingerprinted us. There are many people who are burning their fingers to stop.” (Interview in Rome, 2.14, male from Eritrea)

- Informal settlements in Rome highlighted the inadequacies of both the hotspot and relocation approach at EU level as well as the national response. Some participants were stranded due to Dublin regulations, and **basic access to information and support was often dependent upon NGO and volunteer activities.**
- Participants **demanded more information and opportunities to integrate** - from access to education to the ‘right to stroll’ in public space.

“I just want to move, to walk in the streets, to look around everywhere, to get to know the area I find myself in: do I have the right to go outside?” (Interview in Rome, 2.20, male from Nigeria).

# Part 3: Migratory Journeys and Experiences

**INTRODUCTION:**  
This brother and friend escaped conscription in Syria, seeking to continue his postgraduate studies rather than kill people in warfare. He arrived in Germany in October 2015, where his brother and friend are already located. While this brother and friend has secured the legal right to remain, he is nevertheless struggling to survive.



“ I was called, summoned to the army, I didn't want to join the army. If I join the army, I have to kill people. I don't want to kill anybody, not from any side. Either opposition, or the regime. Furthermore, I wanted to do my postgraduate studies. ”

“ I tried two [smugglers]. The first one didn't keep his promise. I didn't feel comfortable to him. The second one is, comes from my home, from my city, Aleppo. He's brought some comfort to me... We were lucky, the [second] smuggler was quite good, I must say. So he only put 20, altogether 22 people on board the boat. In a boat, which is 9 metre long, a plastic boat, of course. When we had a look at the other boats, we see that there were 30, 40, 50 people on board in the boat. So we had a good smuggler. He only put a small number of people on boat. ”

“ We got to seashore. And they were waiting for us with cars, food, clothes waiting for us. Then they have advised us the following steps... The first step was to go, to take the buses to... the seaport. From the seaport, we booked the trip to Athens... Priorities were always given to families and elderly people. And all the pressure were on the young people. There were beds provided for family and elderly people. We had to sleep on the ground. They gave them blankets. We don't get anything. They do get food and we take the leftovers. So we suffered there quite a lot. We couldn't complain, of course not. They are families. They are our families. ”

**BALKAN ROUTE 2:**  
Before reaching Berlin, this brother and friend travelled from Athens (Greece) to the Republic of Macedonia by bus. From there, he travelled to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia by bus and on foot. From Slovenia he travelled to Austria by bus and then crossed the border with Germany on foot.

“ When I first saw [the reception centre], I thought I'm back in Syria. It's very uncivilised, unbelievable. There were only three sockets to have your mobiles charged, and all the camp came to have their mobile charged. The bathrooms were outside. About 20 toilets for 600 people. You can't enter the toilet, you have to queue. No bathrooms, no, no shower facilities. We had to wait for about 2 weeks, buses came to take us to a swimming hall. 10 showers were available, you take shower with each other. I was surprised, is this Germany? ”

“ I got what is called the temporary allowance to stay, which is 3 years. That's why I'm trying now, it gives me something to improve my situation. But I was losing hope and energy quickly because life here is miserable. With all what the word means. When I arrived in Germany, I was 78 kilos, and now not more than 50 kilos. Due to the bad food and the difficult life here. But to be honest, this creates ... created men out of us, because the weak person withdraw, and the fragile one died. And the survival was for the fittest. Now the game started for those who might be able to build their lives. ”

**SUM-UP:**  
We met this brother and friend in June 2016 when he was staying in the emergency reception centre in Berlin. As well as suffering from poor living conditions, he was struggling to find a room in a shared flat. This was the case despite his having leave to remain, given the competitive housing market in Berlin. A few months after the interview, he managed to find a flat to share with other young people and was able to leave the difficult conditions at the centre.

**SYRIA:**  
Many young men fleeing war in Syria see themselves as conscientious objectors. The brother and friend describes how he left Syria to escape conscription.

**AEGEAN SEA:**  
People's experiences with smugglers vary widely. The brother and friend tells us his experience with smugglers.

**BALKAN ROUTE 1:**  
People defined as vulnerable usually get prioritised for resources along routes that are harsh and challenging. This brother and friend describes how as a single young man he made way for families and elderly people en route from Greece to Germany.

**BERLIN 1 :**  
In the centre described here, up to 12 residents share 20m2 cabins with curtains instead of doors, leaving no privacy. The brother and friend describes his dismay at the living conditions in Germany.

**BERLIN 2 :**  
After the initial relief at finding safety, people often realise it is difficult to start building a new life. The brother and friend reflects on how difficult his experience of staying in Germany has been so far.

## Part 3: Migratory Journeys and Experiences

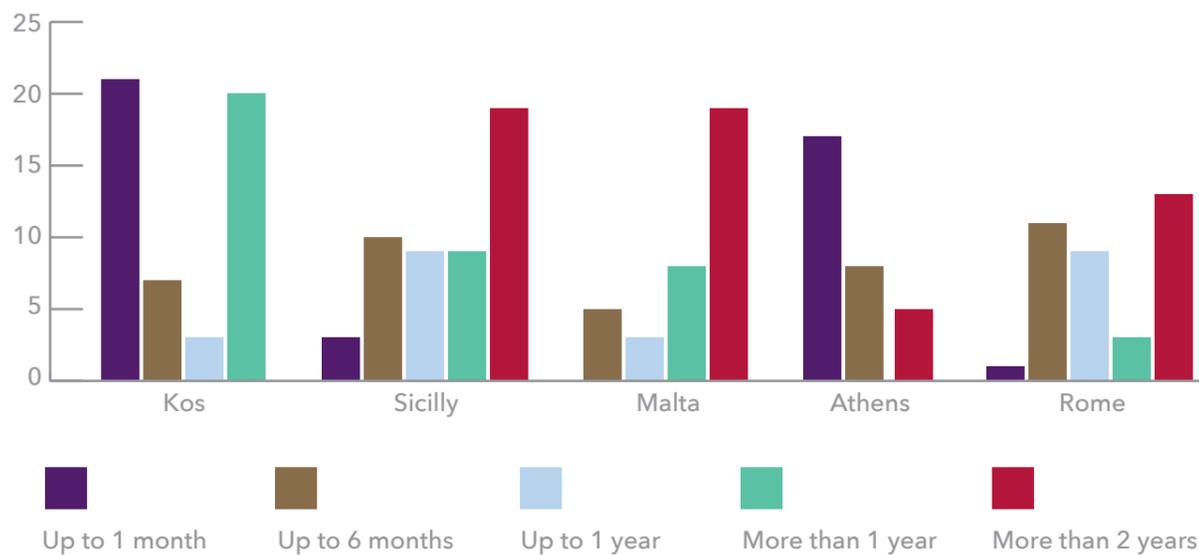
This section provides an overarching analysis of migratory journeys and experiences across routes, sites and phases, in preparation for our assessment of policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration* in Part 4.

### Fluid and Fragmented Journeys

The journeys of our research participants diverged significantly depending on the routes via which they had travelled. The period of arrival for our participant sample is not uniform across sites for various reasons, including changing policies, diverging migratory dynamics, and access issues. Direct comparison is therefore difficult. However, **generally the length of journey from country of origin to the first point of arrival in the EU was faster on the eastern route than on the central route.** Individual journeys lasted between 2 days to 4 years – most lasting less than 6 months – on the eastern route to Athens, and between 1 month and 8 years – most lasting more than 6 months – on the central route to Rome respectively in 2016 (see Bar Chart 1).

A similar pattern is evident if we focus on island arrival sites. Individual journey durations on the eastern route to Kos in 2015 were between 2 days and 12 years, with most lasting less than 6 months. This compared to journeys lasting between 1 month and 13 years – most lasting more than 1 year – on the central route to Sicily, and between 3 months and 26 years – most lasting more than 1 year – on the central route to Malta (see Bar Chart 1). Notably, these times include lengthy periods of residence in states such as Sudan, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon, Dubai, or Turkey.

Bar Chart 1: Individual Journey Duration from Origin to the EU



Many did not view the site at which they were interviewed as a place of destination. **Research participants across all sites considered their presence as temporary and were waiting to move onward elsewhere,** though this was less relevant in Berlin as a site where asylum claims were in process and most people were seeking residency rights.

Despite the difficulty of direct comparison between the sites, some clear tendencies emerged:

- In **Rome and Sicily**, we found a mixed picture of some who had planned to stay and others who were planning to move on without delay.
- In **Athens and Kos**, the majority planned to continue their journeys to other destinations. However, the different phases of our research also reveal the impact of policies on migratory journeys. Kos was a site of delayed mobility, with nationalities reaching the mainland at different speeds depending on how long the registration process took facilitating onward travel to Athens. Syrians were prioritised over nationalities such as Afghans, Pakistanis or Nigerians, who could be delayed for weeks or even months. Athens, by contrast, presented a more mixed situation, bringing together those experiencing delays in their journey with those stranded for an unknown length of time in Greece. Many, at the time of our research in Athens, expressed the desire to continue their journey. Unable to do so since the closure of the Balkan route, they were effectively stranded in Athens. However, we also found that many remained active in considering ways of continuing their onward journeys. For those eligible to participate in relocation, which some of our participants did, the journey was delayed until their transfer to another Member State.
- In **Istanbul**, a sense of delay was also evident. Plans to continue onward travel nevertheless remained pressing for many of our research participants, despite the effects of the EU-Turkey Statement (see Box 5). Others, who had intended to leave to Europe, were resigned to remaining in Turkey due to the Statement and changes in policies, at least for the immediate future.
- In **Malta**, there was in general a greater sense of strandedness rather than delay, given the longer duration of stay for many with whom we spoke.

Overall this points to significant differences across routes and across different phases of our research, as well as to differences depending on the stage that people are at in their journey.

### Eastern Route

Notably, **many on the eastern route were focused on a particular destination or onward trajectory even in the face of border closures.** Despite this, our findings indicate that people on the move adapt migratory plans according to shifting circumstances. During the first phase of our research, and as routes were beginning to close along the eastern route in particular, we found that **use of social media and free communication applications were particularly significant as people adapted their travel plans** according to the swift sharing of information about routes (see Case Reflection 1).



Young Men Waiting to Leave Kos Island

### Case Reflection 1: Social Media Use in Kos

Interview participants in Kos provided clear evidence of the use of social media in obtaining information about EU and state policies as well as details on how to obtain the services of a smuggler and the nature of the routes to EU. The information was often detailed, though at times inaccurate. However, people on the move were clearly reliant on social media and messaging services, and these sources of information facilitated changes in routes and choice of destination.

**Interviewer:** "Are you aware whether you can receive refugee status in Greece or in the EU in general?"

**Participant:** "I was not told anything on this... I know that if you give your fingerprints in Hungary, you have to stay there. You cannot leave. But for Greece I do not know anything."

**Interviewer:** "How did you receive this information?"

**Participant:** "Facebook... Youtube." (Interview in Kos, 1.20, male from Syria)

**Participant:** "Hungary decided today that if you enter the country illegally, you will be in jail for 3 years."

**Interviewer:** "How do you know this?"

**Participant:** "I saw in the internet... It was uploaded on Facebook... anybody that crossed their borders illegally will be in jail for 3 years and he will have to work in hard jobs... obligatory. If I cross through Hungary, by 99% I will go in Germany, because Germany does not recognise the fingerprints of Hungary. And of what I hear, you should not cross illegally, you have to cross from their entry point... otherwise it is illegally and you cannot enter..." (Interview in Kos, 1.27, male from Syria)

**Interviewer:** "Did you know anything about Kos before coming here?"

**Participant:** "No, before I came here I didn't know anything... but through internet and Facebook that I use... I saw and heard that the conditions here were very bad. But now that I am here... the conditions are much better." (Interview in Kos, 1.50, male from Afghanistan)

**Research participants in Istanbul during the second phase of analysis could not continue their journeys** due to the closure of the Balkan route and the difficulties of travel after the EU-Turkey Statement came into effect on 20 March 2016 (see Box 5). They were often aware of the EU-Turkey Statement and its implications for onward travel, which prompted a reconsideration of their travel plans.

"[After the EU-Turkey Statement] it didn't change a lot. They didn't deliver on any of the promises they promised the Syrians. Like the refugees registered with the UN to leave to Europe by plane and to end the smuggling. But nothing changed. The only thing that changed is that Syrians can no longer enter or leave Turkey. They're besieged in Turkey. Maybe I or someone else was hoping to leave Turkey. I can no longer. Where will I go? I can't go anywhere except to return to Syria. Just this. This is the one solution." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.05, male from Syria)

Many in Istanbul had explored different routes by which to travel, and were waiting for conditions to improve and/or to find funds before further continuing their journey. **Though they were effectively stranded, many remained focused on onward movement regardless** - sometimes in order to join family members who were already in Europe.

Despite conditions of strandedness for thousands of people, our findings from the eastern route therefore indicate that **decision-making remains fluid on the part of those compelled to move who face border closures and a lack of safe and legal routes**.

### Central Route

It is **on the central route** in particular that we see most starkly a pattern of fluid decision-making and fragmented journeys, whereby **people on the move often did not plan a European destination in advance but instead undertook multiple journeys, moving from place to place in search of safety, peace, and sustainable living circumstances**. Most notably, we found that many who had travelled to Libya as a planned destination subsequently had to flee as conditions worsened or did not meet expectations.

"When I arrived in Libya, I thought I would have found life easier there, that I could work to make some money. I start helping people back home, mothers and brothers back home. As soon as I arrived in Libya, I found that that place was not so peaceful. ...as soon as we reach the country... wow... what we thought what we found there is going different. So, to come back and cross the Sahara desert, to come back... you could still lose your life. Now, the only thing is at least to work in Libya, to accumulate some money and finance your journey to the Mediterranean, to cross... still, you could still lose your life. This is vice-versa: going back to the Sahara? You could still lose. Coming to Italy? You could still lose your life. Now you have to make a question now." (Interview in Sicily, 1.01, male from the Gambia)

"In Libya one day you work you collected the money and another man comes with a gun on his hand and asks to take your money. This is the situation in Libya even if you work and get money someone force you and take the money away from you by a gun." (Interview in Rome, 1.01, male from Mauritania)

Such **fluid and fragmented journeys are by no means unique to the central route**. Similar issues were raised by those travelling via the eastern route who initially went to Jordan, Lebanon, Iran or Turkey only to find that conditions too difficult to remain.

"I wasn't feeling comfortable in Lebanon. I had a job there but I had to pay for the... the police, general security. 200 dollars to have my papers renewed. And I have to pay also for my family. On the same time, it was - I wasn't feeling comfortable being a Syrian in Lebanon. Let's tell you - when I got into having any air conditioning fixed for somebody, I buy copper, I buy materials from my own pocket to have a computer fix... sorry an air conditioning fixed costs 50 dollars but because I am Syrian he pays only 30 or even 20 dollars. So it was quite a loss for me. Hardly cover the rent of the house, my expenses. I tried, on the same time I tried to save money to send them back to my family in Syria. I realised there would be no future in Lebanon and I saw the people leaving for Europe here and decided to join them." (Interview in Berlin, 2.27, male from Syria)

"I didn't care about borders. All I cared about was to save my life, seriously. I thought I could find a safe place and find work and that's all. Maybe in Turkey. Turkey is a good place. But if they find you are illegal in Turkey they will deport you back to Kabul. This is the reason I came here, and also because of the language since they don't speak English much." (Interview in Athens, 2.38, male from Afghanistan)

Despite differences across routes and over time, our findings thus highlight **a more general pattern of fluid and fragmented migratory journeys**, whereby a person who makes a decision on a pathway, and follows it through from origin to destination, is rare.

### Intersecting Drivers and Conditions of Flight

That migratory journeys are fluid and fragmented is indicative of the limitations of characterising precarious migrations across the Mediterranean in terms of 'push' factors that drive movement from countries of origin, and 'pull factors' that attract migration to destination countries. By contrast, our findings suggest that the **migratory journeys and experiences are reflective of intersecting drivers and conditions of flight**.

#### Intersecting Drivers of Flight

Intersecting drivers of flight refer to the ways that **people on the move experience various dangers or harms from which they need to escape, not only in countries of origin but also throughout the migratory journey**. For our research participants, these included: war/conflict, the threat of terrorist/cult groups, being targeted by governments for conscription or for punishment, family problems, societal ostracism, kidnapping, torture, extreme discrimination and exploitation, absence of employment, limited prospects of integration and access to education, language difficulties, governmental exclusion of non-nationals, and violence by authorities or by local populations.

"...the Taliban dropped a letter. I have the letter here now. They said that they knew I was working for a foreign company and that they were following me for a long time and knew I lived here. They warned me that next time if they caught me they would destroy me... So that time I decided I should leave Afghanistan." (Interview in Athens, 2.38, male from Afghanistan)

"...there was rocket launching pad right behind my house. For the children, this was the main reason that we left. They became sick, they wouldn't let me go... At night they're asleep, they'd wake up crying. And the same thing happened to me. And my husband was not with us. We are on the road to our house alone, me and my two kids, and there were violent clashes, bullets entered our house many times... We couldn't go on. It was a danger to the children." (Interview in Athens, 2.15, female from Syria)

What is significant is that **differing drivers of flight are often connected rather than separate, and often accumulate over the course of the migratory journey**. In our research, we found that secondary movements are particularly complex in this regard. For example, one of our research participants from the Ivory Coast described how she fled persecution only to find herself in extreme poverty in a neighbouring state:

"There was a political party in Ivory Coast called Laurent Gbagbo's FPI who actually is in prison. Well, my husband was part of the youth of the FPI and that's why he was threatened a lot until 2010, 2011 when we had elections... At the evening, when we came home, we found a letter under the door: 'If you don't stop, we will behead you', letters like this or they wrote us messages on the phone... One day when he left, he came back, he found the door open. They destroyed the door, they took everything, everything stolen from the house, the TV, the fridge, there was nothing left... he came looking for me and we left for Togo. ...But in the situation we have been in Togo, we didn't have any of that. Nothing. We only had a bit of money to eat. Often we eat one time a day, often we didn't eat. It wasn't easy at all in Togo, it wasn't easy." (Interview in Sicily, 1.34, female from Ivory Coast)

Another explained how, on fleeing oppression in Eritrea she experienced discrimination, robbery and threats in Sudan:

"There is racism in Sudan, between Muslims and Christians. The soldiers or the policemen come and they take half of what I earned, and they say: 'that is for us'. But they don't behave like this with everyone, only with Christians from Eritrea. If you try to say no, they will either kill or jail you." (Interview in Rome, 1.09, female from Eritrea)

Intersecting drivers of flight here do not refer to 'mixed migration flows', which imply that people who flee for differing reasons come together along routes. Rather, our emphasis on intersecting drives of flight indicates that **individual migratory journeys result from multiple cross-cutting drivers, which render people precarious in ways that compound one another over time** (see also Case Reflection 8).

#### Intersecting Conditions of Flight

Intersecting conditions of flight refer to the ways in which **societal or cultural discrimination, as well as institutionalised practices of exclusion, further compound precariousness for particular groups of people on the move**. Our findings indicate that people faced additional challenges, which could either prompt or inhibit on-going movement, yet which nevertheless rendered the migratory journey increasingly challenging at various stages. For example, illness or disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, family position/responsibilities, educational background, and/or financial situation were all aspects that we found led to increased precariousness on the part of our research participants (see Case Reflection 2).

#### Case Reflection 2: Intersecting Drivers and Conditions of Flight

The case of a Syrian Kurdish brother and sister provide important insights into how gender intersects with other factors, such as age and family position, to influence the decision-making process and the complex and multifaceted experiences of migration. The siblings were living together in Istanbul, together with the wife and children of the brother, and their older parents. The brother sent his younger son to Europe in the hope that they would be able to follow through with family reunification. At the time of the interview his key concern was securing an education for his children and, as such, he was actively searching for ways to reach Europe, including through the use of smugglers:

"We will take care of ourselves and we will leave. This is the goal. Living here without schools, we can't bear it." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.18, male from Syria)

The siblings' parents are too old and frail to make the sea crossing, and as such, reluctantly resigned themselves to remaining in Istanbul. Whilst the sister wished to leave, she had accepted her role as carer and planned to remain with her parents.

Overall, our findings thus indicate the importance of policies that address both the intersecting drivers of flight that render people precarious, as well as intersecting conditions of flight that further perpetuate precariousness throughout the migratory journey.



Boat Cemetery in Lampedusa

## Violence en route

The precariousness of the migratory journey not only relates to drivers and conditions of flight, but also to practices of authorities and third parties along the way. Our research participants repeatedly practised their inability to access legal routes to safety. **Where safe and legal routes are not open as migratory pathways, people face additional risks and harm as they have no choice but to travel via unauthorised means.** This includes experiencing violence at the hands of smuggling networks, as well as at the hands of authorities.

### Smuggling Networks

Our research participants reported varied experiences with smuggling networks, with many explaining that **there are both 'good' and 'bad' smugglers.**

“So, from Afghanistan until Pakistan, those people were really not good. They were shouting and beating the people between the way. But when I came from the Iran until Turkey, that person was a good person and he was facing friendly. And also from Turkey to Greece, that smuggler was also good, he was not like... But from Afghanistan until Iran, yeah, we saw a lot of problems with this person. He was always beating the refugees. He was always shouting on the people.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.19, male from Afghanistan)

**Smugglers in Libya were overwhelmingly reported as brutal and cruel,** with many on the central route having experienced robberies, kidnappings, beatings, dehydration, starvation, and death threats. Most had also witnessed violence against others, and some even reported witnessing murder. Accounts of sexual abuse were also evident.

“The day we were supposed to take the boat... we were kidnapped... We endured five days of kidnapping: beatings, traumas, and even rape by old people... They mistreated us every day. We had to pay to free ourselves. So we paid the ransom and after five days we were liberated. We were stripped off, forced to undress in front of the men, and then body-searched, even in the buttocks; we were searched everywhere, as they were looking for money... I wake up at night and relive the trauma, I endured 5 days of kidnapping, 5 days of violence, each night a man would abuse me.” (Interview in Rome, 2.11, female from Cameroon)

Though generally less severe, many travelling via the eastern route spoke of the **lack of care of smugglers in Turkey,** due to their focus on making money over ensuring that people survive the journey.

“Smugglers don't care about ...lives [of the people they are smuggling]. They just think about money.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.08, male from Afghanistan)

“In general, I hate smugglers. Because they don't have a conscience. They throw you into something, and it turns out to be something else. Because I stopped at the sea, he told me while standing at the shore you can see the island. It doesn't take 2 hours. But, he didn't say any true words. All he cares about is money. He doesn't care about the people he's smuggling, if they will die or be in danger, he doesn't care.” (Interview in Athens, 2.19, female from Syria)

On the other hand, many of our research participants also indicated that **smuggling networks involve a range of actors,** including acquaintances, friends, and family in some instances.

“To cross Eritrea I was alone to Sudan. But, yes, by the help of friends I crossed the border to, with the help of some friends, smugglers, I cross to Egypt and from Egypt also there are smugglers that help me to Italy.” (Interview in Rome, 2.12, male from Eritrea)

In addition, our research participants sometimes reported evidence of and/or belief in sustained **cooperation between smugglers and police or militia.**

“The smuggler was Iranian and I believe that they had paid off the Iranian police. So with the Iranian guards we didn't really have any issues.” (Interview in Athens, 2.07, male from Afghanistan)

“I think this is an agreement with the Turkish government to smuggle people. I don't see, it's... I don't think it's very hard to control the seaside. The country like... the country like Turkey, with its almighty force, or the ship, the army, they can control the sea. Because smugglers already know about the Turkish government. So dealing with, done with smugglers, on the open road on the street, and the police don't see them? No, they see it. But they don't interfere with them. But I think there is a big head inside the head... the Turkish government, the head of the smugglers, I mean.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.10, male from Iraq)

“[The middleman in Libya] called - they even communicate with the [Libyan] police - and told his affiliates about the migrants who have money and who haven't, who want to pay to be freed from detention, who want to pay to board the boat. They also contact the policemen... Yes, the police themselves participate in smuggling people, but when they do this, they don't wear police uniform - they put on civilian clothes.” (Interview in Malta, 1.15, female from Ethiopia)

Overall, our findings indicate that **smuggling networks are far-reaching, with limits that are difficult to ascertain, while levels of violence and exploitation vary widely across different smuggling networks.**

### Authorities

As well as violence associated with the use of smuggling networks, our research participants also highlighted examples of **violent encounters with different authorities both within and outside of the EU.**

Within the EU, a total of 12 out of 30 research participants in Berlin spoke about **violence along the Balkan route.** This was a particular problem noted at the border between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.

“The only police that he was really aggressive with us. It was a Macedonian police. That they, the only police that they beat us.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.19, male from Afghanistan)

Violence was also reported on initial arrival to the EU, including several cases in Maltese detention centres, and references to the **force used to obtain fingerprints** in Italy. Violence on the part of the Greek Coastguard was also highlighted as an issue, particularly in Kos during Phase 1 of our research.

“When we were in the water and they threw a rope to us... we tried... because the boat was already destroyed... And we were trying and when we were in the water, swimming, to reach [the shores] ...instead of trying to rescue us they were taking photos, instead of rescuing us they were taking photos... and while we were trying to get on the ship they hit me... They slapped me twice. They hit me! This was the rescue [by the Greek Coastguard].” (Interview in Kos, 1.26, male from Syria)

## Border Crossings

Research participants along both the central and eastern routes spoke of **violence at various stages of the journey, including at border crossing regions** between Iran and Turkey, Syria and Turkey, Sudan and Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan, Morocco and Spain, and inside Burkina Faso.

"I wanted to tell the [Turkish] gendarmes [at the Syrian-Turkish border] that I'm running from death, let me in. They didn't understand Arabic. They tried talking to me in Turkish, I didn't understand. So, I thought I'd talk to them in English. I started in English, he got furious and started beating me. He thought I was ISIS. He started beating me with the butt of the gun... until he started sticking the gun into my head. I got scared at that moment, I thought: 'Am I going to die here, is this possible?' I took the gun from him. I didn't point it at him, I took it and threw it away. He got surprised. I didn't shoot him, for example, even though I could. I took it and threw it away. Here he left me. He put us in a car, and they drove us back to Bab el-Hawa crossing. They wrote down our names and sent us back, after all the painful beating." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.02, male from Syria)

Examples cited also included **violence at sea by non-EU coastguard authorities**.

"The Turkish guard showed up, they grabbed a knife to cut the boat to drown us. So we all lifted the small children... We lifted up the small children and are telling them: 'We have children with us, we have children with us, God is great, God is great', in one voice. Then, they were agitating the water around the boat, to drown us... They wanted us to drown, they didn't want to save us. The goal was to drown us. ...We are searching for life." (Interview in Athens, 2.15, female from Syria)

Overall, 67 of our research participants spoke of violence they had encountered at some point during their journey by various authorities or police, with 9 further participants describing violence that they had experienced by members of local communities. This all indicates that **people on the move who are unable to access safe and legal routes in the face of intersecting drivers and conditions of migration experience multiple forms of violence**.



Disembarkation Debris in Kos

## The Search for Rights

Research participants also pointed to problems that they experienced on arrival to the EU regarding their access to rights, in particular, the right to seek asylum, the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, housing and necessary social services, and the right to education and to health (Articles 14(1), 25 and 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 12, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Though conditions varied across the different sites of our research, our findings indicate that **a lack of basic rights and services and a failure to provide adequate information is widespread**. These difficulties extended to research participants in Istanbul, who became stranded there once the EU-Turkey Statement coming into effect on 20 March 2016 (see Box 5).



Graffiti Near Informal Street Camp (Baobab) in Rome

## Living Conditions

In terms of the conditions in which people were living, these varied not only between – but also across – the sites where we carried out our research. Conditions ranged from people living in tents in open urban spaces in Kos, Athens and Rome, to people living in a fully communal squatted hotel with private family rooms in Athens (see Case Reflection 7). In Berlin, a former hotel was transformed into an official reception centre with two-bed rooms and private bathrooms, while in Istanbul and Malta participants reported living in sub-standard and overcrowded rented accommodation. Reports of extreme overcrowding and of people living within places of work were common in Istanbul in particular. Even for those in preferable situations, however, **poor living conditions were a widespread concern**.

"Look there, there are 5 people sleeping under the tree. They can steal them here, taking from the jackets. There's no rights, no humanity... Do you think it is right someone to sleep [on the street], do you think it's respecting human rights?" (Interview in Rome, 1.01, male from Mauritania)

## Facilities and Services

Concerns were raised across sites about **inadequate food and clothes provision**, about a **lack of sanitation** facilities and items, as well as about **overcrowding and lack of privacy**. An **inability to access basic services such as healthcare and education** was also a significant concern. In Kos, for example, there was considerable delay in the provision of mobile portable toilets and women were suffering urinary tract infections as a result. Extreme temperatures were a problem in Athens, where people camping in exposed tents reported widely variable temperatures during the day and night, as well as across seasons.

"Life in here is very, very hard. Let me explain. For food you have to stand in line for 2 hours for breakfast which is at 9a.m. and lunch which is at 3p.m. Dinner is at 9p.m. And the only thing to eat is boiled potatoes in water without any oil or salt on it. They bring them dry. How can you eat this? It's also very hot. And then life inside the tent... I'm sure has a temperature higher than 45 degrees Celsius and lots of kids who one day were poisoned with the food because we all had a stomach ache in here... It is very hard." (Interview in Athens, 2.38, male from Afghanistan)

Access to services such as **education, healthcare and housing** was an issue even for those who had gained residence status, such as in Berlin where research participants described the impossibility of finding flats even with authorisation to do so.

"They gave me the house care, gave me papers to look for a flat. I'm looking for flat brokers. They want a lot of money, I can't afford it. 2500, 3000 Euros wants the broker for it. And I don't have it, a lot of money." (Interview in Berlin, 2.04, male Palestinian from Syria)

Our findings thus indicate that effective **access to services and basic rights provision is severely lacking within the EU and in Turkey.**



Tents Outside Informal Camp in Athens

### Failure of Official Information Provision

In addition to this, research participants reported a **widespread failure of official information provision on arrival to the EU.** This is again evident across sites, with the majority reporting having received no information from state officials or NGOs working with the government about asylum procedures and processes on arrival (see Table 2).

Official information provision for those arriving to Greece before closure of the Western Balkan route and before the EU-Turkey Statement was particularly low (see data on Berlin and Kos, Table 2). For initial arrivals this increased slightly for those arriving after border closures came into effect (see data on Athens, Table 2). However, of the eight participants in Athens who were provided with information on arrival, four were only informed about family reunification and / or relocation, and not about the possibility to apply for asylum in Greece. In Malta, information provision was more mixed, with slightly fewer not receiving any information on asylum than those that were. Notably, information provision in Malta occurred in detention (which is mandatory for new arrivals), and primarily by visiting NGOs. In Italy information provision was also limited, with few in Rome reporting that they had been informed of asylum procedures either on initial arrival or at a later date. Please note that figures for Sicily in Table 2 include those who were provided with information after having been transferred to a reception centre.

Table 6: Official Information Provision on Asylum Procedures

Research Site	Informed on Arrival	Informed Later	Not Informed	Unclear Participant Response	No Participant Response	Total
Kos	2	0	41	7	1	51
Malta		14	18	1	2	35
Sicily		11	8	4	27	50
Athens	8	5	13	4	0	30
Berlin	1	3	17	3	7	31
Rome	8	0	13	3	6	30

### Information Sharing

Many research participants reported the importance of **information-sharing through networks of people on the move, as well as through family members.** This often occurred through social media (see also Case Reflection 1), with internet and television news also a significant means of information-sharing on the eastern route in particular. The latter were notably more limited on the central route, with many research participants lacking mobile phones as a means of communication following the boat journey from Libya. Word of mouth was more significant on the central route in this regard, though was also prominent on the eastern route. In this context, the accuracy of rights-based knowledge varied.

### Barriers to Asylum and Family Reunification Procedures

Many research participants emphasised **barriers and delays in accessing asylum and family reunification procedures within the EU, as well as in the processing of claims.** This was particularly notable for people travelling on the eastern route during Phase 2 of our research, both in Athens and Berlin.

There is no order here... They don't keep the appointments. There is no coordination. Never.... Where are human rights? Europeans are the first to say that human rights are above everything else. So where are they?" (Interview in Athens, 2.33, female from Syria)

On the central route, in Rome and Sicily specifically, some were provided with seven-day decrees to leave Italy without being provided with the option to apply for asylum.

"...just like that, they left us on the street and they would just give you this seven-day document to leave the country. And then they will just leave you on the street, finish, nothing to do... [Some journalists] told us that ...it's expulsion document so... we have to come to Rome so they can deport us... And they say: 'It is written that you have 60 days to make an appeal, so that [the expulsion order] can be cancelled'. That was the time I got hope." (Interview in Rome, 2.08, Male from Ghana)

Research participants in Istanbul during Phase 2 emphasised the **difficulties in accessing UNHCR protection programmes prior to arrival in the EU** (see Case Reflection 3).

### Case Reflection 3: Accessing UNHCR Protection Programmes in Turkey

Long delays and a lack of information and/or transparency contribute to a sense of despair and lack of confidence in UNHCR protection mechanisms in Turkey. Homelessness and labour exploitation further reinforce a sense of precariousness, wherein basic survival and some semblance of security is prioritised over navigating the time-consuming registration process. Many of our research participants in Istanbul reported allegations of corruption within UNHCR, with many disillusioned after having approached the UNHCR for protection without an adequate response:

"I'll give you an example. So as soon as I heard about the resettlement plan that was part of the EU-Turkey deal I wanted to register for it. But no one knows how you do that. I finally got a contact through friends at UNHCR and got through to her to ask about registration. She said someone would call me the next day. The next day I got a call from a Turkish man who spoke less English than I speak Turkish. And he read off a form for me that said that Turkey decides who they want to resettle and then forward that on to the UNHCR. So, basically, Turkey controls the resettlement." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.04, male from Syria)

"They have problems with registering. After I was released from Kumkapi detention, I came to this mosque [where we met for the interview]. You saw the guy who is in charge of the toilets of the mosque downstairs. He found me in those tough conditions and he found me a job. So, I started working. Of course, the job place gave me shelter inside the workshop. And yes, you may ask if I am registered by UNHCR. I think it is better to talk about that for you. I have to go to Ankara to take the referral letter and after that I have to rent a house, I have to pay for the transportation to go to Ankara. I have just 50 liras in my pocket, how can I be registered in Turkey? I live in that workshop and I earn some money just to get along" (Interview in Istanbul, 2.10, male from Afghanistan).

Overall, our findings indicate the predominance of **sub-standard living conditions, a lack of facilities and services, a failure of official information provision, and an ineffective rights framework within the EU as well as in Turkey**. This left our research participants in search of rights not only on immediate arrival, but also many months after having entered the EU.

## Part 4: Assessing the European Agenda

**INTRODUCTION:**

This uncle, brother and husband left Iraq for Syria in 2005, before returning to Iraq in 2012 due to the Syrian conflict. He left for Turkey legally to escape conflict and insecurity in Iraq, travelling as a carer for his young nephew who had cancer and was unable to get treatment in Iraq. He is trying to find a legal route to Europe to join his wife who has been resettled in Germany.

“...in Iraq, it’s normal to kill people. Imagine. This is what we have come to. It’s a bad situation... We have a generation of young people who don’t know how to think. They have no humanness, they have no mercy. Maybe a young guy, younger than 15 years old, kills you. In cold blood. It is the most normal of things and you can’t do anything. He goes about his life normally.”

**IRAQ - SYRIA - IRAQ:**  
Years of fighting and militarisation have led to high levels of violence in Iraq. The uncle, brother and husband reflects on the conditions that he left behind in Iraq.

“The very day that Mosul fell [to ISIS]. The very same day I was on the road. We were delayed in northern Iraq: ‘Did something happen?’ ‘Mosul fell to ISIS.’ The road was closed and we had to go to Kirkuk and then to Erbil. Honestly, I don’t know those roads but the important thing was that we were going to be delayed and I had the medicine [for my nephew] with me. It needed to stay cold so every while I had to put it on ice. I was on the road for 3 days.”

**IRAQ:**  
People who leave their home countries often find that conditions worsen while they are away, making any plans to return impossible. The uncle, brother and husband recalls how he travelled from Iraq to bring medicine to his terminally ill nephew in Turkey when Mosul fell to ISIS.

“...after [my nephew] died my wife came and saw me. I was in very bad shape. She was patient with me, I am thankful. She said: ‘why don’t you apply [for a visa to Germany]?’ She said: ‘submit your papers to the embassy, maybe they will accept you.’ I told her: ‘no problem, I’ll apply.’ I had the marriage certificate and everything with me. I got an appointment for the interview at the German embassy.”

**IRAQ - TURKEY:**  
Family reunification is one of the few legal routes to reach Europe, yet families are often dispersed across various different countries. After his nephew died of cancer in 2015, the uncle, brother and husband describes how he wanted to reunite with his wife in Germany.

“They had the passport for 7 months. 7 months my passport was at the German embassy. I went to my house and I found the postman at the door. He gave me the package. Inside the package, I found the passport and a paper that explained the reasons [for the rejection] ... My Syrian neighbors, and my Iraqi neighbors and all sorts of people, were seeing my study at the German Institute because I was going to Germany. Do you know where these people are now? They are in Germany and I am here. All of them went illegally.”

**ISTANBUL 1:**  
While many assume they will be able reunite with family members, their applications are time-consuming and not always successful. The uncle, brother and husband explains how his application for family reunification was rejected.

“I got depressed. And my goals for life became zero. Zero. There were no goals. I started thinking like an 80-year-old. Everything was closed. I tried to get out of this phase. Living as if dead, is this better? You could go crazy.”

**ISTANBUL 2:**  
Long periods of uncertainty followed by a negative decision are not uncommon in asylum, resettlement, and family reunification processes. After his application was rejected, the uncle, brother and husband shares that he struggled with depression.

“Europe has an aging population so they want young people. If they raise them, they serve Germany or Finland or Sweden. So they serve the family man. But the single guy, if he is above 28 or 30, they won’t receive him. You have to be 20. If they don’t benefit from you, they don’t let you in. It’s all calculations. We know this.”

**ISTANBUL 3:**  
With limited legal routes to Europe, many are left feeling unwanted. The uncle, brother and husband describes his feeling that, at 38-years old, he is not viewed as useful to European countries:

**SUM-UP:**  
When we met this uncle, brother and husband in June 2016 he remained stuck in Turkey despite his efforts to join his resettled wife in Germany. He told us that he was waiting to secure money for a smuggler, and that he would be willing to leave by whatever means necessary once he can afford it - whether by land or by sea.



## Part 4: Assessing the European Agenda

This part of the report provides an assessment of *A European Agenda on Migration* and related policies in light of the analysis in Part 2 and Part 3.

### *The Ineffectiveness of Deterrence*

Deterrence is a complex approach when understood in terms of the “reduction of incentives for irregular migration”, as outlined *A European Agenda on Migration* (see Box 1, Pillar 1). This is because it includes a range of initiatives, from development cooperation and humanitarian aid, to anti-smuggling measures and initiatives designed to facilitate returns.

In relation to the more punitive deterrence mechanisms such as detention and returns, our findings indicate that **deterrence is largely ineffective**. This is because knowledge of such measures by those on the move is limited, and because intersecting drivers and conditions of migration are more significant in the decision to migrate than preventative measures (see Part 3). In this context, our research highlights a concern that **deterrent policies risk alienating and even breeding contempt** in populations that are compelled to flee a range of complex interlocking drivers of migration - in particular those who come to Europe with an expectation of finding freedom and a rights-based approach.

#### A Lack of Knowledge

It is important to note that findings varied across routes as well as across different national or regional networks. We found that **knowledge of EU policy developments on the whole was generally lacking**, but was more advanced in research participants on the eastern route than for those on the central route, most evidently in light of extensive knowledge of border closures and EU-Turkey Joint Actions (see Box 5; see Case Reflection 1; see also Part 3 - The Search for Rights, Information Sharing).

“I was expecting... that maybe it was in one month that you can finish your documentation. I heard that when you come once they ensure for you a work and you can find after one month you can have your papers.” (Interview in Rome, 2.01, male from Mauritania)

One area in which we found knowledge was more widely shared across routes was with regard to the implications of fingerprinting in terms of Dublin rules, which require many people to have asylum applications processed in the first country of arrival within the EU. However, a lack of knowledge of deterrent measures was notable on the central route (see Part 2 - Malta and Rome sites). **Limited knowledge of measures such as detention and returns, as well as about the formation hotspots, suggests that deterrence is not an effective approach.**

#### The Predominance of Migration Drivers

Importantly, our research suggests that deterrence is not likely to become effective simply by furthering the knowledge of deterrent measures in populations who may consider migrating. This is because of the heavy weight attributed by our research participants to **the significance of migration drivers over the attraction of Europe in the decision to migrate.**

Across both routes, our research participants overwhelmingly described their **migration as necessary** in light of challenges that they had faced in countries of origin as well as neighbouring regions or transit states (see Part 3 - Intersecting Drivers and Conditions of Flight).

On the **central route**, many who had travelled via Libya **never planned to come to Europe**, with conditions in Libya and the difficulties of returning through a country where they had already suffered torture, abuse, forced labour and imprisonment in dire conditions rendering onward travel to Europe their only option. Seven of our research participants on the central route described a process of being forced onto boats to Europe, either against their will or without their knowledge of what was happening, often after requesting money from employers (See Part 2 - Malta, Sicily and Rome sites).

“I told him that I need only 3,000 Euros to send it for my kids, he told me ok no problem... he told me to sit inside his car... I trust this man so much that I never think any bad intention about this man, I know he cannot do any bad against me... I don't know, we just entered like a bush... Before I realise they just... tied me down, took me, there is nothing I can do: only me, four, five people or six people... Then they just throw me. ...I can hear some sound of sea, the breeze of the sea.” (Interview in Rome, 2.08, male from Ghana)

Many on the **eastern route** - in particular Syrians - described **Europe as a last resort** in the face of bad treatment or difficulties of access in Arab countries. Young men from Syria frequently described how they sought to flee conscription as part of a corrupt regime, as part of an opposition group they could not support, or as part of ISIS. Others in Turkey talked about their lives as being akin to what might be called a ‘living death’, where work in irregular conditions predominates and life is reduced to basic survival.

All of this is indicative of the predominance of drivers of migration over the so-called ‘pull’ of Europe, highlighting both the ineffectiveness of deterrence as well as **the significant harm that deterrent measures pose to people on the move in precarious situations.**

#### The Risk of Alienation

A particular concern that these findings raise is the extent to which deterrent policies risk **alienating and even breeding contempt on the part of those who are fleeing dangerous and harmful conditions**. This is a particularly significant concern in the context of people fleeing terrorist groups in the expectation of finding the EU as a place of freedom, protection, dignity and human rights. This includes people fleeing ISIS in countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq via the eastern route, as well as those fleeing groups such as Al-Shabab and Boko Haram from sub-Saharan Africa via the central route (see Case Reflection 4).



No Border Graffiti in Informal Camp in Athens

### Case Reflection 4: Alienation in Turkey

Our interviews in Istanbul provided powerful testimony to the growing cynicism about governments and EU policy, as options to move diminished and conditions remained extremely difficult in Turkey.

"There's many things I would propose! The first thing is that those Syrians who are crossing by sea. They're reaching Europe. They were paying thousands of dollars to reach Europe. The government could open routes, through airplanes, boats, legal routes. And it's not going to cost anything. Either way, the Syrians are paying money. They are searching for a safe land. Why are you saying to them: 'Come to our safe land but endanger yourselves on the sea and in the forests'? I'm not able to understand this idea. You're receiving Syrians but why don't you receive them in a way that is safe for their lives? How many children died in the sea? For what? It's not just Bashar al-Assad or al-Nusra Front or ISIS that caused this. You [Europeans] are also the cause of this. You are the cause of this because you closed the routes to them. You are forcing them to take a road in which there is death. It's the same thing. It's the same idea as staying in Syria during a war. They should open the legal routes, through visas, for example. So that Syrians can travel legally and not have to leave through the route of the sea and the forest." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.05, male from Syria)

"I would ask them [EU policy-makers] to think about cases like me. The people alone without any support here. That they themselves don't determine their lives. So, with these policies, what are the options for people like me? Do they think about cases like me? If they classify the people in big categories, if they think about the Syrians and other nationalities, they are always talking about humanity and human rights, but what is the option for us? The person who has not been the determiner in their life." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.09, female from Afghanistan)

"Help us solve the problem of our country. Help the people who are forced to come to you without having to risk their lives and their children. There are two routes for assistance and they're not taking either of them. They are forced to accept just those who reach their land. But they don't care about the rest. Let them be humanitarians. They're always bragging about their humanitarianism. Let them act on their humanity..."

**Interviewer:** "So you feel that there is a discourse of humanity but it's not executed..."

**Participant:** "No execution. It's just a speech. Words. It's only words. They are capitalists not humanitarians." (Interview in Istanbul, female from Syria)

The risk of alienating such groups through deterrent policies is high, especially for young people during their formative years, many of whom have experienced brutal treatment *en route*.

Arriving to sub-standard conditions, and facing the potential prospect of deportation exacerbates feelings and experiences of precariousness. **For people who have fled terrorism and conflict in the belief that the EU provides rights and protection, deterrent policies are likely to be counter-productive in the longer-term.**

"In Libya it is like, everything is cheap. Even food, materials it is cheap. But you need peace. You need something that is relaxing. When I came here, even now, in front of each other... I go somewhere in the night, it is like free. You are feeling free. The most things we want the human being is freedom. It is only freedom. It wasn't... every time you hear something, gun shots, bombs, like it is weird. It is hard to live in Libya. There is no rule. Every, anyone can kill you any time. He has that right. There is no rule. He can take your money, anything. It is normal..." (Interview in Malta, 1.31, male from Eritrea)

### Summary

In sum, our evidence suggests that a deterrent policy agenda is ineffective and counter-productive due to:

- The limited knowledge of such initiatives on the part of people on the move
- The overwhelming dominance of intersecting drivers of migration
- The risk of alienation and even the breeding of contempt where deterrent policies intensify the precarious situations of people on the move who are seeking rights and freedom.

### The Limits of Anti-Smuggling

While anti-smuggling measures form part of a deterrent policy framework that seeks to "reduce the incentives of irregular migration" (see Box 2, Pillar 1), it can also be addressed as a key dimension of the emphasis on "saving lives and securing external borders" (see Box 1, Pillar 2). For example, anti-smuggling initiatives involve aspects such as the training of the Libyan Coastguard, and have been presented as key in saving lives and securing the external border of the EU (see Box 4). Our findings suggest **anti-smuggling measures are unlikely to prevent migration via criminal networks, and fail to protect people on the move from danger and harm.**

### On-going Need

As with deterrence, a key issue here is that the intersecting forces that drive migration are much more prominent for our research participants than the risks associated with travelling via smugglers. This is important in understanding the continued journeys of people even in the face of brutal smuggling networks and increasing numbers of border deaths. Indeed, testimonies from our participants who faced death in making the journey suggest that **the need for smugglers persists regardless of the increasing costs and dangers of such journeys.**

"...I had no choice and I could not go back, so I think that it's risky but it's easier... I think to come forward is the best, because if you try to go back, if you pay your money, ya, if you try to go back, if you pay for the traffickers to go back, they will take you out to the desert in the middle of nowhere and come back again, so it's better you come forward not to go back." (Interview in Malta, 2.05, male from Gambia)

"If I go back, I'm going to die anyway. If I die while crossing the sea, it doesn't matter. It's about my luck and I decided to go... I did not have any other choice." (Interview in Malta, 1.02, male from Ethiopia)

Given that the difficulties of making dangerous journeys through smuggling networks is not a deterrent of migration for many fleeing intersecting drivers and conditions of migration, anti-smuggling initiatives inevitably face the problem of on-going needs that drive smuggling networks in contexts where there are **no alternative routes to safety.**

Even where routes have been successfully closed, such as in cases where people have been stranded in Athens following closure of the Balkan route or in Istanbul following the EU-Turkey Statement (see Part 3 - Fluid and Fragmented Journeys), questions arise as to the sustainability of such closures. Our research participants in Istanbul often described unsustainable living conditions and increased risks and costs of travel that had left them **waiting to make the journey, rather than giving up on travel entirely** (see also Part 2 - Istanbul site).

"My dear, I can't say anything other than the serious truth. All our thoughts are confused. I mean, crossing to Europe has become impossible. And settling here is very difficult. And returning to Syria is impossible. We are not able to make a decision. We don't know. We're lost." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.16, female from Syria)

“Our hope is still to go to Europe. If they open the Greek-Macedonia border... my son is in Germany. I want to go. As soon as I have the opportunity, I will go. I won't stop.” (Interview in Istanbul, 2.18, male from Iran)

Rather than preventing travel, **route closure often leads to the extended duration of migratory journeys regardless of increased costs and dangers**, as people search for alternative routes in light of drivers of flight that compound one another and increase experiences of precariousness over time.

### Increased Risks

More than simply pointing to the ineffectiveness of anti-smuggling initiatives, the on-going need for smugglers where safe and legal routes are closed or limited raises further concerns that **anti-smuggling measures pose an increased risk to people fleeing danger and harm**. Indeed, we found that many participants were forced to wait in situations that are not sustainable, with many contemplating more dangerous routes under conditions of increased precariousness connected to the length of time during which they are forced to travel.

Some of our participants even discussed **using smugglers to escape the EU** in light of difficulties faced on arrival and the impossibility of returning by other means (see Case Reflection 5).

#### Case Reflection 5: Self-Motivated Return from Europe

In 2016, a series of reports suggested that people who had made the dangerous journey to the EU were using smugglers in order to return to countries or regions of origin. Some research participants with whom we spoke supported these claims, both in Berlin and Istanbul (see also Squire and Touhouliotis, 2016). This is indicative of the growing desperation of people who had arrived to the EU. People described conditions in which they no longer felt human, due to the treatment they faced on arriving to the EU. Far from returning to a situation of safety and rights, many described self-motivated return from Europe as allowing for the prospect of reuniting with family members and regaining dignity in the face of humiliation – even in the face of death.

“Unfortunately, a lot of people decided to go back. I was, I tried also to go back to Syria. One month ago, I told them: ‘Please pay for my air fare to get back to Syria, consider me an Iraqi, consider me an Afghan, coming from Afghanistan, pay for me.’ My home mate, my roommate came from Afghanistan. They gave him the flight ticket and 300 dollars to go back to Afghanistan. And I told them: ‘Do the same to me, I will go back to Syria’. And they said: ‘No.’” (Interview in Berlin, 2.05, male from Syria)

“At a certain point, some people start to think to go back. We felt ourselves as animals, not human beings. The security staff [here], doesn't allow you to go out or come inside... They make you feel as if: ‘you are my slave, the moment you disagree with me, I will throw you out’. I'm not saying each and everyone is bad, but... because there are some good people as well.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.30, male from Syria)

“I told a friend of mine who decided to go, why you are leaving... why you are going back to death? He said: ‘I would rather die with my family than to live here and my family is dead’.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.20, male from Iraq)

Far from indicating that conditions in regions of origin are safe, our research findings suggest that conditions in the EU are so bad that **many are losing hope in finding a life of peace and safety**. As part of a deterrent approach that ignores the on-going needs of people facing various drivers and conditions of flight, **anti-smuggling measures lead to increased risks for of people on the move in precarious situations, while perpetuating a smuggling industry that responds to need**.

### Summary

Overall, our research suggests that anti-smuggling measures are ineffective as well as potentially harmful because:

- Intersecting drivers of migration are often more pressing than the risks of travelling via smuggling networks
- When experiencing the need to flee, the search for alternative routes is not prevented by the increased costs and dangers of travelling via smuggling networks
- People fleeing danger and harm who have no choice but to travel with smugglers face increased risks in the face of anti-smuggling measures
- Anti-smuggling as part of a deterrent approach further exacerbates the drivers of migration, posing increased harms to people on the move and paradoxically feeding a smuggling industry that responds to need

### The Failure of Reception and Asylum

A key aim of the European Agenda is to provide a “strong common asylum policy” grounded in improved standards of reception and asylum procedures, which is backed up by measures to ensure the effective identification and processing of asylum claimants (see Box 1, Pillar 3). Our research findings suggest that **reception conditions across various EU states often fail to meet sufficient standards**, while the emphasis on monitoring access to asylum is based on inappropriate assumptions about the drivers of migratory dynamics and often involve practices that potentially **harm people and prevent their ability to claim to asylum**.

### Sub-standard Living Conditions

Many of our research participants in the EU described **sub-standard living conditions**, across a range of accommodation types (see also Part 3 – The Search for Rights). As evidenced in our site-based studies, concerns were raised across the board and we did not find such stark differences related to more or less resourced states as might be anticipated (such as between Berlin and Athens, for example). However, direct comparison is difficult due to the differing types of sites in which we undertook research, as well as the differing lengths of time that participants had stayed in particular facilities or locations.

One point to note is that some of the Berlin participants did discuss the improvement of particular facilities in which they had been hosted over time, which contrasts with those who had remained as longer-standing residents of facilities elsewhere. Another point to note is that throughout our research we also found **examples of good practice**, largely resulting from the activities of **informal groups**. These range from local NGO and activist groups who were supporting people living on the streets in Kos (see Case Reflection 6), to a squat in Athens enabling residents to create value within the community based on their existing skills (see Case Reflection 7).



A Makeshift Shelter in a Kos Park

### Case Reflection 6: Solidarity on Kos Island

Doctors without Borders, Solidarity Kos and Boat People Foundation were key groups supporting new arrivals in Kos during our research. These groups provided emergency medical and subsistence support. There were also local individuals who offered help, such as one woman who invited families in the park back to her house to have a shower and eat a meal. These support mechanisms were invaluable in a context where the support of authorities and international organisations was notably lacking:

"No one helped us except the Doctors without Borders, but when we need medicines they are on time... the same about the food. Other than that... nothing else."

**Interviewer:** "Who gives you medicines?"

**Participant:** "The one is the organisation which have some flowers on their back, green, red various colours and they have something written in their shirts [Boat People Foundation]. They wear white clothes, they also give water but after noon they give us also medicines." (Interview in Kos, 1.50, male from Afghanistan)

### Case Reflection 7: Contributing to Community Life at City Plaza, Athens

Squatted in April 2016, City Plaza Hotel in Athens had been abandoned for seven years before activists transformed it into temporary housing for refugees stuck in Greece. Self-organised and funded by a range of supporters and initiatives, City Plaza is independent of state agencies and large donor organisations. The hotel hosts around 400 refugees, including more than 180 children, who live together with local and international activists on site (see also Squire, 2016a, 2016b).

Rather than selecting people based on their presumed vulnerability, deservingness, or legal status, the emphasis has been on taking in residents with different nationalities, religions, genders, needs and skills. By hosting people who need additional support as well as those can provide it, City Plaza fosters a culture of mutual respect and solidarity. Pregnant women, newborns, single men, people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, teachers and translators live together and support one another in City Plaza. All residents agree to abide by a basic set of rules, and to participate in the activities that keep the collective living arrangements running, including cleaning, providing communal meals, and language classes. Decisions are taken collectively in a range of cross-represented assemblies.

With its emphasis on self-organisation, participation, shared decision-making and mutual support and solidarity, City Plaza stands in stark contrast to EU hotspots and other reception facilities. It also contrasts with practices of charitable organisations and international organisations that victimise recipients by regarding them as unable to take independent decisions or responsibilities. As such, City Plaza shows that people in precarious situations can be meaningfully engaged in taking decisions about their living conditions, allowing them to begin to rebuild their lives and contribute to community life without being constrained by their status:

"I don't want to discriminate between this person and that person because we are all human. My father and mother, may god protect them, raised me on something, which is Food. If I share a plate with you, I will never betray this even if my head is one the line... I will help anyone. I work [as a barber in City Plaza] every day for 4 hours, I shave any person, I try and help any person, I try and clean. I don't retract from work because I didn't see a hotel here, I saw a family. I feel like I'm a member, that that is my sister and that is my sister and that is my friend." (Interview in Athens, 2.21, male from Syria)

### Monitoring Access to Asylum

The European Agenda not only stresses the importance of improved reception standards, but also of monitoring access to asylum. This reflects a concern over the possible 'abuse' of European asylum procedures, a matter explicitly emphasised in Pillar 3 of the European Agenda, under the heading of 'Europe's Duty to Protect'. This claim relies on a perception of Europe as an ideal destination to which people seek to move, whether or not they face persecution in their home country. Our findings problematise two dimensions on which this perception rests: (1) **oversight of important protection needs** and (2) **overestimation of the EU's 'pull factor'**.

First, our findings challenge the **oversight of protection needs** on the basis of the division of migration into political/economic or forced/voluntary categories. Our findings suggest that such distinctions overlook how **drivers of migration involve intersecting dynamics that render simplistic categorisations of migration insufficient** (see Part 3 – Intersecting Drivers and Conditions of Flight). This is evident in considering the issue of so-called 'secondary movements' (see Case Reflection 8).

### Case Reflection 8: Secondary Movements and Intersecting Drivers of Flight

An example of intersecting drivers of flight is provided by the case of Afghans in Iran. Afghans have made their way to Iran since the 1980s. Iran is currently hosting about 950,00 Afghans who are registered as refugees (UNHCR, Population Statistics, Iran) and between 1.4 and 2 million who are unregistered and without documentation (European Commission, Echo Factsheet, Iran, April 2017c). Regardless of legal status, Afghans have faced numerous difficulties with access to services and assistance. Despite a change in policy in May 2015 which allowed undocumented Afghan children to attend school, as well as a regularisation plan for those without documentation, Afghans continue to experience limited rights in Iran. Over time, there have been reports of serious maltreatment of Afghans by the Iranian government and its officials, with summary deportation, abuse, labour exploitation and, more recently, enforced recruitment to fight in pro-government armed groups in Syria. These conditions in Iran forced many to make the journey to Europe in 2015 and 2016. In this situation, secondary movements reflect intersecting drivers of migration that render simplistic categorisations of migration problematic:

"All my kids were born in Iran. We've lived 20 years in Iran, the reason why we came to Europe is that we didn't have any documents in Iran. We were not allowed to freely walk or travel to, across Iran, even we were not allowed to walk in the city in Iran... Unfortunately, I was punished, receiving punishment under the name of Islam, although I'm Muslim. So I had to come to Europe, I had planned for my kids to raise here, to be educated here. We were hoping that Afghanistan get peaceful and we return to Afghanistan, so my kids become a doctor, engineer and teacher." (Interview in Berlin, 2.06, Afghani male from Iran)

"...we wait to the situation getting better in Afghanistan, but every year, it's getting worse and worse, every year. So Iran is also, it's like hell for the refugees, but it's... from the security, it's a better country. That's why we stayed in Iran for a long time. But when we see ...saw that our country is not getting better, so we decided to leave Iran also." (Interview in Berlin, 2.16A, Afghani male from Iran)

Second, our findings again challenge the **overestimation of the EU's 'pull factor'** for people on the move (see also Part 4 – The Ineffectiveness of Deterrence). Many of our research participants spoke of their view of Europe as a place of freedom and human rights, while many also noted that it had not lived up to these expectations (see also Part 2 – Berlin, Malta and Rome sites). However, many also spoke of **the difficulties of leaving home, of leaving behind family members, and of changing cultures**.

“Eleven months in Germany. I’m attending Praktikum [internship] courses and integration course. I’m trying to integrate, but my mind is with my family in Syria. This confuses me. It doesn’t allow me to concentrate. I’m also, my worry is about my family, always that I get only humanitarian asylum, which will not allow for Familiennachzug [family reunification]. This is one of the European policies, and policy-makers. So waiting now, let’s say, for 11 months and you get [a] one year residence permit, you don’t have the right to apply for family reunion. Maybe if the policy-makers got my papers more quicker, it means I have my children with me now. Maybe I won’t be able to see them for the coming two years.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.02, Kurdish male from Syria)

In addition, the ‘pull’ of the EU is questionable given that many arrived without ever having planned to come to Europe. Some made the decision out of desperation and others were even sent to Europe without their consent (see Part 4 – The Ineffectiveness of Deterrence; see Part 3 – Fluid and Fragmented Journeys; see also Part 2 – Sicily site). This all suggests that the ‘pull’ of the EU is largely overstated.

### Rights-Based Concerns

In addition, our research raises several **rights-based concerns related to the monitoring of access to asylum**. First, we raise a concern regarding **fingerprinting procedures** as these are currently implemented in hotspots and elsewhere as part of the *European Agenda on Migration*. Findings indicate that some arrivals have been forced to provide fingerprints against their will, sometimes in highly problematic ways.

“If you don’t get fingerprinted then use the force, they beat you to get fingerprinted. Whether like it or not, do it by force. They get your hand like this, they clean it very well. Me, I have done everything to avoid this fingerprint, even I cried. By force, cleaning my hand like by this, and then by force they have me done the fingerprints. Whether we like or not, by force they do this, take the fingerprints by force then they release you. Once they took our fingerprints they don’t care about us later. Almost all of the people have left. They are lucky, those who escaped.” (Interview in Rome, 2.14, male from Ethiopia)

We also found that many research participants distinguished between two types of fingerprints: criminal and asylum, which they had been informed by officials were different types of fingerprinting as the former would not affect their asylum claim.

“I already asked before giving my fingerprints what kind of fingerprints is that, they told me it’s the criminal fingerprints. And they will certainly not force me to give my fingerprints for an asylum seeking.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.11, male from Syria)

This differentiation of types of fingerprinting is a significant cause of concern, which we do not believe to be founded or appropriate. Given a broader policy context in which different databases are increasingly linked up to one another, **at minimum any policy of distinguishing types of fingerprinting is one that needs to be clearly defined and justified**.

A second concern that our findings raise relates to the **lack of provision of rights-based information for new arrivals to the EU**. A strong asylum policy requires that all potential applicants have clear information about asylum procedures and about their rights. Yet our findings suggest that information provision was limited (see also Part 3 – The Search for Rights). Arrivals who qualified for relocation from autumn 2015 appear to be an exception here, since increased effort was made to share information on relocation with those qualifying (i.e. arrivals from Syria and Eritrea). By contrast, some new arrivals not qualifying for relocation in Italy reported being provided with seven-day deportation orders without adequate information provision – sometimes even based on the inaccurate recording of their personal data. **Rights-based information is lacking, and marked by a problematic differentiation between different groups of people on the move**.

The increasing limitation of rights is a third concern here. Many of our research participants raised concerns about policy changes that led to delays in family reunification and other protection procedures (see also Part 2 – Athens, Berlin, Kos sites). In particular, **the effects of policy changes in Member States such as Germany have led to the limitation of rights to international protection**, including through more restrictive family reunification procedures (see Case Reflection 9).

### Case Reflection 9: Family Reunification

‘Family reunification’ refers to a situation where a third country national in an EU Member State is permitted to be joined by members of his or her family from a country outside the EU. The family reunification rules that apply to third country nationals, including asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and refugees are set out in EU law. However, there are different practices and time-periods applied by Member States to different categories of claimant, which is confusing for the individual, and changes in Member State practice have created uncertainty, confusion and even trauma. For example, the shift from refugee status for Syrians to subsidiary protection in 2016 was identified by interview participants as a cause of deep concern (see also Part 2 – Berlin site):

“I love my wife. I love my wife and I want to bring her over to Germany. And I was recently wedded. I hope I can be able to get her to Germany. I have a hope to get her to Germany. But I don’t know what’s going on, psychologically I’m collapsed. Wait, wait, wait... We are fleeing war, special conditions. Help us with family reunion, there are thousands of us stranded all over Europe, to expedite formalities. So they tell me to go to the regime, get papers, get passports, this is ridiculous. I think the policy-makers are trying to push, let’s put it in other way, they are trying to push on the refugee crisis to compel, to force the refugees to go back home. Because they realised later on that they did make a mistake. Or maybe they want the refugees who are already in Europe to phone their family members and friends back home, saying: ‘It’s very bad in Europe, don’t come.’ This is my personal opinion. The politician, the policy-makers, they have different ideas. I hope that the first priority will be the family reunification.” (Interview in Berlin, 2.05, male from Syria)

Overall, our findings suggest that questionable fingerprinting procedures, a differentiated and impoverished approach to providing information on asylum and rights of protection, as well as the increasing restriction of rights works against a strong asylum policy. In effect, these challenges to a rights-based approach **risk harming people on the move in precarious situations, by preventing their effective claim to asylum or to protection** via routes such as family reunification.



Informal Camp (Captain Elias) in Kos

## Summary

To summarise, our research indicates that an emphasis on the duty to protect and on a strong asylum policy in the European Agenda is limited and questionable because:

- Receptions standards continue to be differentiated between countries, yet are reported to be insufficient across a range of sites within the EU
- The monitoring of access to asylum is based on inappropriate assumptions that overlook the intersecting drivers of migratory dynamics and overstate the 'pull' of the EU
- A series of rights-based concerns potentially harm people on the move and prevent effective claims to asylum. Some key concerns raised here include:

Forcing people to provide fingerprints and providing inappropriate or partial information about different types of fingerprinting in ways that potentially pose harm to people on the move

A differentiated and impoverished approach to information provision that fails to provide information on asylum procedures and rights to protection

A context characterised by increasingly restrictive measures that curtail rights to asylum and family reunification

## The Constraints of Legal Routes and Development Partnerships

The final pillar of *A European Agenda on Migration* stresses the importance of developing a "new policy on legal migration", which involves the opening of selected migration routes to the EU and ensuring effective integration of those present (see Box 1, Pillar 4). While aspects of this pillar are beyond the remit of our research, we note that there has been relatively **slow progress** on these dimensions of the European Agenda. This is significant given that the lack of safe and legal routes was an increasing concern for many of our research participants:

"What I wanted to say is... since you know there are smugglers, you know there are smugglers bringing us here and our lives are in danger... You should bring them yourselves so that there are no smugglers anymore. And there should be some control at the police, how they treat people. And what we want is our voices to be heard everywhere, you can do that. We are all humans. You are free. And we want to be like you. The issue is not coming here and taking photos...photos...photos... We need results. You should make thing easier for the people, you should help them leave legally." (Interview in Kos, 1.02A, female from Syria)

In light of this, we emphasise our concerns that sub-standard arrival conditions (see Part 4 – The Failure of Reception and Asylum) and deterrent policies (see Part 4 – The Ineffectiveness of Deterrence) lead to harm and risk working against effective integration in the longer-term.

## Root Causes

While our research does not speak to development issues directly, and while the emphasis on addressing 'root causes' is indeed one that our research indicates as important, our findings raise concerns that **initiatives to address root causes are not adequately developed or justified, often implicate a pernicious and counter-productive deterrent approach, and are likely to raise complex new challenges** that do not adequately respond to the drivers of flight that compel people to enter the EU. Significant efforts have been made to embed development initiatives over recent months. However, Third Party Partnerships, so-called 'compacts' and related initiatives are often associated with the prevention of migration, and have been notably more prominent than efforts to open up new legal routes to the EU.

Many of our research participants emphasised the importance of addressing what can be referred to as the 'root causes' of migration. For example, the **difficulties of surviving in countries of origin and the injustices associated with intersecting drivers that necessitate movement** were often issues highlighted by research participants across the central route:

"France colonised us. We are free, but we are not free. We are free, but France is still there. He go everywhere, to take everything. And then everybody want to go to France. France takes, but does not make. He takes boats, planes, fish... he take everything." (Interview in Malta, 1.27, male from the Comoros)

A similar point about **longer histories of injustice and their current significance** was emphasised by another on the central route, in response to the question of whether she believed that she had a right to enter Europe:

"White people normally go to Nigeria, they are safe, they are ok. I know that very well... God created everybody... So it is the same. Everybody is free. You are free to go to Nigeria, there is your choice. So your push allows us enter Italy freely without no problem, that is what we want." (Interview in Rome, 2.06, female from Nigeria)

On these accounts of migration drivers, **'root causes' are much deeper-rooted than is conventionally understood in development narratives**, and are grounded in an understanding of the equal right to free movement.

The issue of 'root causes' was also a concern for many of our research participants travelling along the eastern route. However, these also do not follow conventional development narratives, instead taking the form of a **demand for EU states to take political action** to support populations that are not sufficiently protected by their own governments:

"Why, what's the main cause of the people, they are emigrating? He is coming for this reason, she is coming for another reason, they are coming for another reason... I am coming for another reason. But the main problem all the same. That's the ... lack of peace. This is the main problem. They should help us there. They [EU policy-makers] should.. they should... just... if they want they can remove these terrorist groups... by helping our government, and by... they know... they are the politicians, they know... they can. They can... if they want they can. So, they can stop this immigration. If there is no Daesh, there will be no immigration, if there is no Taliban, there is not the immigration. If there is no Al-Qaeda, there is no immigration." (Interview in Berlin, 2.31, male from Afghanistan)

"If Europe wants to, they can stop this war. They can stop this war. It's been 6 years. 6 years of war. Killing and destruction and planes and bombing. What happened? 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, 6 years. And there is still war. By force, people will migrate." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.18B, Kurdish male from Syria)

Our findings thus indicate that **the demand on the EU to address 'root causes' is present in a form that exceeds the terms of the current development agenda**.

## Border Security

Many of our research participants had travelled through states that the EU seeks to partner with through so-called 'compacts', including Ethiopia, Lebanon, Jordan, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The majority had also passed through Libya and Turkey, states with which the EU seeks to work to **improve border security**. Our findings indicate that there are many challenges that arise in these contexts, including **widespread discrimination and restrictive policies toward people fleeing from neighbouring states and regions** (see also Case Reflection 8):

“We wanted to leave because in Sudan we had no right, but at least in Europe we get food, clothing, a shelter where we can sleep, whereas there we had no right. You get in and you decide what to do, you live on your own, and for this reason I thought: ‘what am I waiting for?’ There is racism in Sudan, between Muslims and Christians. If we sell, trade, they take part of our earnings. The soldiers or the policemen come and they take half of what I earned, and they say: ‘that is for us’. But they don’t behave like this with everyone, only with Christians from Eritrea. If you try to say no, they will either kill or jail you. So we decided to leave.” (Interview in Rome, 2.09, female from Eritrea)

While the improvement of conditions for people in neighbouring regions is not in itself necessarily an area of direct concern, coupling such initiatives with border security measures does indicate that the EU seeks to use such initiatives to prevent migration to the EU. Without safe and legal routes, these trap people who experience complex drivers and conditions of flight in situations of danger and harm. **Development initiatives that are coupled with border security measures rather than with sufficient and well-designed safe and legal routes thus often perpetuate danger and harm.**

### Summary

Overall, our findings suggest legal routes are insufficient and development partnerships and initiatives are problematic mechanisms for addressing contemporary migrations because:

- Slow progress on legal routes, coupled with insufficient access to such routes, poses significant risks to people on the move, while sub-standard reception practices and deterrent policies work against integration in the longer term
- A limited understanding of ‘root causes’ exemplifies a gap between development policy and the drivers of flight, rendering the likelihood of policy success unlikely
- The coupling of development measures with border security concerns through initiatives such as Third Country Partnerships and ‘compacts’ with priority states risk trapping people in precarious situations and conditions of danger or harm.



Residents Use Linen to Create Privacy in Berlin Reception Centre

## Part 5: Ways Forward from the European Migration or Refugee ‘Crisis’

**INTRODUCTION:**  
 This mother of six fled the war in Eritrea. As a half-Eritrean, half-Ethiopian Christian in Sudan she faced discrimination and threats, and all her documents were taken from her. She escaped for Europe with her three youngest children, but left without her husband due to persecution by family members. She arrived to Italy in April 2016.

“  
 I went to the courthouse, because over there a son without a father cannot go on. So I took care of him until he was 6, then gave it to his dad, who told the boy to forget about me because I abandoned him. I then tried to contact this son once he got older, but he replied that I was dead to him, 'you are dead mom'.”

**ERITREA:**  
 Many families are split through warfare, and in this case the mother's estranged son is now in Sweden. The mother recalls how, during the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, rape by an Eritrean soldier led to the birth of her son.

“  
 There is racism in Sudan, between Muslims and Christians. The soldiers or the policemen come and they take half of what I earned, and they say: 'that is for us'. But they don't behave like this with everyone, only with Christians from Eritrea. If you try to say no, they will either kill or jail you.”

**SUDAN 1:**  
 It is not uncommon for states neighbouring conflict zones to be unsafe for refugees. The mother describes how she wanted to leave Sudan because of the risk of incarceration or even death.

“  
 They don't speak to me; they don't consider me at all. He loves me but he always listen to what his parents tell him, his mom, uncles and all these things. For this reason, I decided to go away with my children, I ran away with them.”

**SUDAN 2:**  
 Family conflict is often an additional factor that can push people to escape. As well as fleeing war, conflict and life-threatening discrimination in Sudan, this mother also fled the poor treatment of her husband's family resulting from religious differences.

**CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN:**  
 Before reaching Rome (Italy), this mother of six travelled through Egypt and Sicily.

“  
 In Sicily they didn't give any money, only some food.”

**SICILY:**  
 Sicily has been a key arrival point to Europe in particular since the 'Arab Uprisings' in 2011, and resources are often limited. The mother explains the situation she found on first arriving to Europe.

“  
 Europe is the only place that has the power to protect me, and help me. For me being a refugee is very tiring, because for each of us [it] is better staying in our country, our roots. But here there is a freedom, whereas from where I am from there are dictators, and I don't have the freedom.”

**ROME:**  
 Many people who have fled to Europe express gratitude for the support they receive, while also struggling to deal with the new challenges that they face. While this mother experiences relief on arriving to Europe, she also explains how it is a difficult experience.

**SUM-UP:**  
 When we met this mother in May 2016 she was living in a reception centre in Rome and was waiting to be relocated to another EU country. She didn't know where she would end up living, or how much longer she would have to wait. When people successfully apply for relocation in the EU they find out a few days before leaving where they will be taken, and rarely are taken to the place they would choose.





"Yeah as I told you for me the most important thing is to consider us as stakeholders. To listen to us and then we could have... because they cannot see the pain when a child is on the sea. Because I was with my child. I really don't want to see any child to cross that sea. I know the pain. I am in a safe country but I am still having nightmares at night of the sea, the Sahara, the torture. And there are many people who went through this who had a worse situation than me. And who are very educated and who could have helped. So the EU should stop generalising and then try to take us seriously. Consider us as humans, humans who can contribute not only to the economy but also in policy making. We can contribute and that would be a better solution. I think. Because we are experts in our life. Nobody is more expert than us. I lived it for 9 years, and somebody come in Europe and sit in Norwegian parliament and says that he knows better than me about migration... I don't think so. I don't think so"

(Interview in Malta, 1.26, male from Ethiopia)



"My suggestion to policy makers in Europe is that before focusing on returning, stopping people to come, use money to try to build something for people - home - and that will stop them coming. We have to build factories and industries and then people start working there. For example, cocoa, we can start to make chocolate in Africa." (Interview in Malta, 1.21, male from Mali)

"...change our situation, because after 10 years in the country if you have only one year residency permit, every year you have to renew, you know, that is something that is really bad... Those who are doing the research, what they can be help to us? Or what they can think that we can do together to change our situation to better?" (Interview with Malta, 1.22, male from Ivory Coast)

"Africa, especially the area we are coming from - Gambia, a very small country and one of the poorest in Africa - So, what I could say... we could have been helping out from other European countries, better the life that was in Gambia, I believe most of the people would not come through this journey. If there are more job opportunities, more better life in Gambia, nobody would sacrifice his life to come to Libya. Yeah. I think this is what I would have comment. It's education!" (Interview in Sicily, 1.01, male from the Gambia)



"The problem is that there are consultants, there are a lot of people... they give information, they give funds to help, to stop migration, but if you give funds and you don't follow them, they will go to the wrong hands, they are lost and that will not solve the problem... There are people who cross the sea because they have no alternative at home, they say that there is no opportunity than maybe to die at sea... it is the living conditions there, so the funds they give us are good but if there would be, I don't know, visa for students..." (Interview in Sicily, 1.37, male from Togo)

"I can only thank the European Union for saving lives, young people, immigrants. It is not easy to attend to the immigrants, all that. I use the opportunity to thank the European Union." (Interview in Sicily, 1.11, male from Senegal)

"We don't want Europe. We want our country. But the war isn't ending. The regime is standing. Just a bunch of gangs saying we want freedom and he doesn't want to give it. It's a universal war. We're just a pawn in their hands and they are playing with us—Russia and America and Europe and Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Give us back our country, we don't want any of Europe! Syria is amazing, Syria is paradise. We had rights. We had a house, a store, a car. It's all gone. We want security, we're looking for the opportunity to work, for a future for our kids. Is this wrong?" (Interview in Athens, 2.15, female from Syria)

"Where are human rights? Europeans are the first to say that human rights are above everything else. So where are they?" (Interview in Athens, 2.33, female from Syria)



"What would I request? Open the border. Open a route for people, just as people who have money are able to pay for smuggling. There are a lot of people who need to go. They need to get medical treatment, they need safety, they need housing. Open a route for these people." (Interview in Athens, 2.30, female from Syria)

"In whatever country there is war like Syria and Afghanistan, both countries should be equal. They are Syrians and we are Afghani and they always care about the Syrians more than us. They shouldn't think that the Afghani is an animal. We have good people and bad people in all countries. We should all be in safe places with our families and everyone will be happy. All refugees." (Interview in Athens, 2.34, male from Afghanistan)

"More than ten times I told in Sozial [Office for Health and Social Affairs in Berlin] here that if you listen... people have their own experiences. Someone has experience on engine, car engine, some people are in producing shoes. Some people are producing carpets, some people farmers, he was farmer. So... a mechanic, like a doctor, or pharmacist. People have their different experiences. So they should treat it as like bring them facilities, provide - by providing these facilities so the people can just... they can get busy, they can also educate their childs, their childrens... Otherwise here we face the same... the same problems, no education, no shelter, no facilities - so what's the difference between here and there?" (Interview in Berlin, 2.31, male from Afghanistan)



"If it's possible to reach the decision makers, the procedures are very slow and this is killing us. I'm thinking of going back to Syria, but this means a death to me. I'm wanted by the regime... Please tell them to expedite things. We are tired." (Interview in Berlin, 2.05, male from Syria)

"Don't consider us as a trade. We have a lot of good people among us. They need only a little bit of support." (Interview in Berlin, 2.30, male from Syria)

"Who is responsible? It is the politics of the powerful countries. They are responsible. They are capable of stopping the bloodshed [in Syria]. Greed and politics are making us ignorant. We are dying in the sea. We are dying under the bombs. We are dying at the border, they are killing us at the border. The powerful countries are watching us. They are silent. International silence." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.16, female from Syria)

"Just I will say that I want safety and it doesn't matter which country. Anywhere but I want safety. And law. Justice. Safety and Justice." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.08, male from Afghanistan)

"In Europe, every person above 20 years old doesn't have a right, doesn't care of their mother or father. This is the issue we are all suffering from actually. All refugees. This is the most basic issue



for Syrian refugees or any refugee for that matter. It's not allowed for any refugee to do family reunification for anyone other than their spouse and their children. Only. For the mother, no. For the father, no. This is the obstacle in Europe that all the refugees are suffering from. There's a lot of difficulty to do family reunification." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.17, female from Syria)

"Our proposal to European policy makers is that they facilitate the affairs of refugees. Facilitate the affairs of refugees, especially for us from Mosul, and help us through the UN. So that we don't stay here. It's not necessary that it be America or Australia. There is Germany and Spain and Italy. Let them open their doors so that the UN can resettle us. Resettle us in Germany, Italy." (Interview in Istanbul, 2.29, male from Iraq)

"Europe - they say that human right is human right. But when we arrive here we see nothing human rights... After all these risks of desert and the sea, they saved us from the death but they put us different death, they saved us from the sea but they are putting us in hunger and despair. So you saved our life, try to listen us, try help us change our life. Don't save us from death and put us in misery." (Interview in Rome, 2.16, male from Sudan)

"Total insecurity is pushing us to migrate. Politicians need to solve that issue. War is terrible, I have seen girls wearing bombs, I even know some of them. I left in order to not have to carry bombs and to have to blow myself up. If security issues are not solved, migration will only continue to increase. This is my message." (Interview in Rome, 2.16, female from Cameroon)



"Well, as for me what I think should be done is to help people in Africa, yes, especially the vulnerable people, yes especially those people that are in need. They should go down to Africa to understand the mind-sets of the people, their situation, yes, what's really the cause for their miseries in their home, yes... we like Africa, we like our home because that is our home but due to some reasons will make you run away from your country... the problem of corruption they should try and amend it, try hard for children to go to school. As for me I dropped out of school, yes, I dropped out from school because of monetary issue, yes, so they should support education" (Interview in Rome, 2.16, male from Sierra Leone)

## Policy Development

*Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat* has highlighted a **range of problems** that policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration* face, not only in addressing contemporary migratory dynamics but also in responding to various challenges that the so-called European migration or refugee 'crisis' brought to the fore. Importantly, it has done so by assessing the impact of EU policy interventions on those that they affect most directly: people on the move themselves.

Critically, the project has emphasised the ways in which people who have undertaken - or who plan to undertake - the precarious journey across the Mediterranean Sea toward Europe by boat are **best placed to provide insight** both into the challenges that policy interventions need to address, as well as into ways in which policies can be renewed to address such challenges. We thus draw on our analysis of the journeys and experiences, understandings, expectations, concerns and demands of people on the move with the aim of informing policy developments, moving forward.

Rather than provide a summary of the multiple findings evidenced throughout our report, we propose a series of policy developments based on our in-depth qualitative analysis of our interview and observational data and assessment of policies associated with *A European Agenda on Migration*. By engaging the EU's overarching policy framework through the rich insights that our research participants have shared with us, our proposals seek to amplify the voices of people who have moved - or plan to move - across the Mediterranean Sea by boat. We do so in order to **redress a policy debate that to date has been heavily skewed** toward the concerns of constituencies within the EU.

Our proposals are certainly challenging to address in the current context. However, we are convinced that **a continuation of policies that fail to address the demands of people on the move will continue to be ineffective** in saving lives, protecting rights, and sharing responsibility for people moving in precarious situations. Indeed, as we have highlighted throughout our analysis in Part 4, they also risk being counter-productive in various ways.

Hence, we not only stress the **urgency** of our proposals for those arriving more recently or seeking entrance to the EU under conditions of precariousness, but also for constituencies that already have an established presence within the EU. More broadly, we stress that the proposals developed here are also important in the context of developing global compacts arising from the 2016 New York Declaration, which emphasise the importance of developing a humane and rights-based approach to refugees and migrants.

## Policy Proposals

On the basis of our detailed analysis of 257 in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 271 participants; observational data across three island and four urban sites in two phases (2015 and 2016 respectively); and policy developments associated with *A European Agenda on Migration*, we propose the current policy changes:

- **Replace a deterrent approach with interventions that address the diverse drivers of unauthorised movement:** Our findings challenge the assumption that deterrent measures are effective in preventing precarious forms of migration to the EU, and affirm the need to address diverse drivers of flight along various migratory routes. We therefore propose that a deterrent agenda is replaced by one that effectively addresses interconnected drivers across source, neighbouring, and transit regions, while respecting the rights of those who are compelled to escape unsustainable living conditions that are manifest in various forms.
- **Revise migration and protection categories to reflect appreciation of the intersecting drivers and conditions that render people on the move as precarious:** Our findings indicate that current protection mechanisms do not reflect the diverse forms of violence and conflict that people seek to escape; the multiplicity of sites that people flee; and the fragmented and fluid journeys involved. We therefore propose that the categories of 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration are rejected in favour of diversified categories that are based on a deeper appreciation of international refugee and human rights law, and that are more reflective of the realities of current migratory journeys and experiences.
- **Open sufficient safe and legal routes to the EU for people who otherwise have to resort to precarious journeys:** Our findings suggest that the EU's current approach to migration not only fails to address the challenges facing people on the move in precarious situations, but often also intensifies these through exposing people to harm as well as to violence *en route* by various authorities and third parties – including some police and border authorities, as well as some facilitators of unauthorised migration. We therefore echo our research participants in stressing the importance of opening multiple safe and legal routes to the EU, such as through the revision of visa policies and extension of schemes designed to facilitate travel via authorised pathways.
- **Invest in reception facilities and improve access to key services:** Our findings expose a failure to provide adequate reception facilities across the EU, as well as a need for improved access to key services such as housing, education and medical care. Sub-standard facilities and a lack of access to services are also evident for those unable to leave for the EU following the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, who report inadequate living conditions and severe workplace exploitation at a systemic level. We therefore stress the urgency of investing in reception, and of ensuring that access to key services is addressed as a priority issue across all areas of policy formation.
- **Halt policies that violate or restrict access to rights:** Our findings uncover a series of rights-violations and areas of concern with regard to the ability of people on the move to access rights. This includes practices of fingerprinting by force and without proper scrutiny, both in hotspots and more widely. It also includes differentiated treatment and delays in the processing of asylum and family reunification claims across the EU, as well as individual Member States. We therefore call on the EU to reaffirm and substantiate its commitment to policies that ensure international protection obligations, as well as human rights, and economic, social and cultural rights are met in full.
- **Advance accurate and rights-oriented information campaigns:** Our findings indicate that the level of knowledge about migratory routes and conditions within the EU vary across different routes and sites of arrival. Regardless of this, arrivals generally have limited or inaccurate understanding of procedural processes once they have entered the EU. This is perpetuated by the failures of official information provision, which is imperfectly supplemented by practices of information sharing through social networks. We therefore propose the development of rights-oriented information campaigns that mobilise social networks, in order to offer clear and accurate information on admission and asylum processes across transit and arrival sites.

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## Research Team

### Principal Investigator



**Dr Vicki Squire** (Warwick) is Reader of International Security at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick. She is author of *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum* (2009), *The Contested Politics of Mobility* (2011), and *Post/Humanitarian Border Politics between Mexico and the US: People, Places, Things* (2015). Dr Squire is currently Leverhulme Research Fellow on the project *Human Dignity and Biophysical Violence: Migrant Deaths across the Mediterranean Sea*, as well as PI on *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat*. She tweets @vidkowiaksquire



**Dr Maria Pisani** (Malta) is a Maltese academic, practitioner and activist. She is the co-founder and director of Integra Foundation, Malta. Maria is a lecturer with the Department of Youth and Community Studies, University of Malta. She also coordinates the Centre for Critical Migration Studies with The Critical Institute. Dr Pisani has published extensively in international journals and contributed to edited texts. She is an Editorial Board Member on the *International Journal Disability and the Global South* and the *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*. Dr Pisani combines this work with her interest in critical pedagogy and engaging praxis as a project of social transformation towards social justice.

### Co-Investigators



**Dr Angeliki Dimitriadi** (Athens) is Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). Her research focuses on irregular transit migration and EU policies on migration and asylum. She has published articles in refereed journals and regularly comments in the international and Greek media on current migration issues. Her book, *At the Margins, Looking In: Irregular Afghan Migration to Europe*, is forthcoming from Palgrave.



**Dr Dallal Stevens** (Warwick) is Reader of Law at the University of Warwick. Her expertise is in the fields of refugee and asylum law, on which she has researched and taught for many years. Dr Stevens has written widely on asylum law and policy in the UK, EU and Middle East. Much of her work has revolved around the construction of the asylum seeker within a contemporary perspective, although she has also examined the plight of the refugee in a historical context. Dr Stevens is regularly asked to undertake media and other public engagements on refugee and asylum issues. In October 2017, she will be commencing a project *Access to Refugee Protection in the Middle East* as a Leverhulme Research Fellow.



**Professor Nick Vaughan-Williams** (Warwick) is Professor of International Security and Head of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick. In 2015 he was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize for outstanding research in Politics and International Relations. His research, supported with grants from the British Academy, ESRC, and Leverhulme Trust, focuses on the relationship between sovereignty, subjectivity, and the spatial dimensions of security. Professor Vaughan-Williams has published nine books as author, co-author, or co-editor. His latest single-authored monograph is *Europe's Border Crisis: Biopolitical Security and Beyond* (2015). His book *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (2009, 2012) was Gold Winner of the Association for Borderlands Studies Book Award.

### Research Fellow



**Dr Nina Perkowski** (Warwick) is Research Fellow on the Crossing the Mediterranean by Boat project. From May 2017 she will take up a position at the Institute for Criminological Research at the University of Hamburg. She completed her PhD in Politics at the University of Edinburgh in November 2016, exploring the entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights and security in contemporary EU border governance, with a focus on Frontex. She tweets at @ninaperkowski.

### Researchers

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**For more information please contact:**

Dr Vicki Squire (Principal Investigator)

✉ [v.j.squire@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:v.j.squire@warwick.ac.uk)

Department of Politics and International Studies

The University of Warwick

Coventry

CV4 7AL

United Kingdom

🌐 [warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed](http://warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed)



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