

**Committee:** Council of the European Union (EU)

**Topic:** Re-examining the EU's Immigration Policy to Facilitate the Safety of Migrants in the Area of the Mediterranean

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**Position:** Deputy President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Tasos Tsiaousis, and I am in the 12th grade at the 1st Model High School of Thessaloniki “Manolis Andronikos”. This year I have the utmost honor of serving as a Deputy President in the 7th DSTMUN Council of The European Union. I would like to welcome you to the 7th DSTMUN session and congratulate you on selecting this specific committee. Your participation in such a conference broadens not only your academic but also your social horizons, a fact to bear in mind during every interaction with your fellow delegates. In a constantly evolving Europe, our involvement in European political matters is of major importance.

During this session, we will be debating upon a burning issue within the borders of the European Union, namely: **“Re-examining the EU's Immigration Policy to Facilitate the Safety of Migrants in the Area of the Mediterranean”**. The purpose of this study guide is to assist you in your research and preparation for the conference by providing you with useful and essential information from valid resources. However, you are encouraged not to rely exclusively on the study guide. The use of external resources is permitted as long as their validity and reliability are guaranteed.

In case any inquiries arise concerning the topic, the committee, or the conference in general, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email: [tassos2007gr@gmail.com](mailto:tassos2007gr@gmail.com)

I am looking forward to meeting you and working with you in person.

Sincerely,

Tasos Tsiaousis

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has been encountering the complexities of immigration for years, a challenge that has aggravated over the past decade due to increased flows provoked by political instabilities, economic fluctuations, and conflict in the neighboring regions. The Mediterranean Sea, what used to be a region of cultural exchange, has now transformed into a site full of illegal refugee trafficking that endangers hundreds of thousands of lives every year, a dangerous portal for those wishing to escape their hardships.

The Mediterranean immigration crisis reached a peak in the mid-2010s, mainly caused by the Syrian Civil War, which resulted in numerous flows of thousands of refugees, immigrants (legal or illegal), and asylum seekers from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia embarking on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean. Although legal migrants seemingly face no threat in their host countries, their settlement in the Mediterranean Basin can be challenging. In the meantime, neighboring countries such as Türkiye tend to take advantage of the current crisis by using refugees as a bargaining tool.

Over the years, the European Union has established strict rules and regulations in order to accommodate the constantly increasing refugee flows. Yet, member-states have opposed such policies claiming their inability to assign equal responsibilities to all member-states. The result is usually an unbalanced distribution of arriving migrants across the European Union leading to the overaccumulation of migrants in frontier regions (such as Greece, Italy, and Spain), jeopardizing the safety of arriving populations and causing conflicts with the locals. However, due to the said conflicts with the locals and the conflicts between the refugees, the governments of the host countries are not always able to guarantee the safety and security of the refugee camps and the detainment centers. Adding to these security concerns is the unsafe passage of the refugees through the open sea of the Mediterranean, where authorities cannot always control and save sinking ships.

Taking everything into account, it is evident that the situation in the Mediterranean Region cannot be overlooked. Therefore, member-states need to re-examine and re-consider current policies to combat this issue. In the following guide, the topic will be analyzed in detail and some effective workable solutions that the member-states can include in their policies will be proposed.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**Asylum seeker**

“In the EU context, a third-country national or stateless person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.”<sup>1</sup>

### Arab Spring

“A wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region’s entrenched authoritarian regimes”<sup>2</sup>, which resulted in democratic uprisings and civil wars.

### European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)

“The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, commonly known as Frontex, is an agency of the European Union. In coordination with the border and coast guards of member states, it exercises border control of the European Schengen Area, a task within the area of freedom, security, and justice domain.”<sup>3</sup>

### Immigrant

“In the EU context, a person who establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU Member State or a third country.”<sup>4</sup>

### Migrant

“In the EU/EFTA context, a person who either:

- 1) establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country; or
- 2) having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU/EFTA Member State ceases to have their usual residence in the EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months.”<sup>5</sup>

### Refugee

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<sup>1</sup> “Asylum Seeker”. *Migration and Home Affairs - European Union*, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/asylum-seeker\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/asylum-seeker_en)

<sup>2</sup> “Arab Spring”. *Britannica Encyclopedia*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>

<sup>3</sup> “Frontex”. *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontex>

<sup>4</sup> “Immigrant”. *Migration and Home Affairs - European Union*, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/immigrant\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/immigrant_en)

<sup>5</sup> “Migrant”. *Migration and Home Affairs - European Union*, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/migrant\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/migrant_en)

“In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive) does not apply.”<sup>6</sup>

### Mediterranean Basin

“In biogeography, the Mediterranean Basin, also known as the Mediterranean Region or sometimes Mediterranea, is the region of lands around the Mediterranean Sea [...]”. “The Mediterranean Basin covers portions of three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia [...]”. “By definition, the Mediterranean Basin extends from Macaronesia in the west, to the Levant in the east [...]”. “The European portion of the Mediterranean Basin loosely corresponds to Southern Europe.”<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1: Physical and political map of the Mediterranean Basin

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Early Signs of Migration in the Mediterranean Basin

Migration across the Mediterranean Sea began increasing in the mid-1990s, primarily driven by economic migrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa headed to Italy and Spain, seeking better living conditions. However, this movement was not yet officially recognized as a migration crisis, as migration flows were mostly under control. The majority of moving populations crossed from Morocco to Spain (Canary Islands), or Libya to Italy, commonly known as Western Mediterranean Route, Western African Route, and Central Mediterranean Route<sup>8</sup> respectively.

<sup>6</sup> “Refugee”. *Migration and Home Affairs - European Union*, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/refugee\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/refugee_en)

<sup>7</sup> “Mediterranean Basin”. *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean\\_Basin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_Basin)

<sup>8</sup> “Migratory Routes”. *Frontex*. <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/migratory-routes/>

## Arab Spring

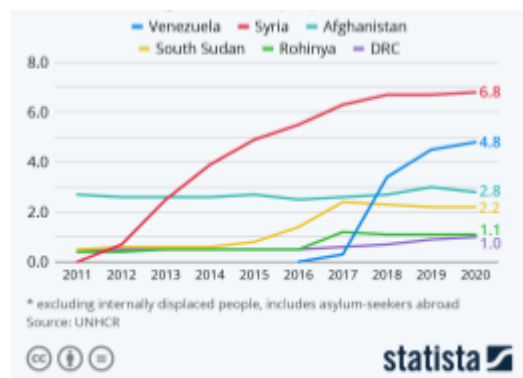
The Arab Spring(2010) - led to significant political instability and provoked civil wars in several key countries of North Africa and the Middle East. This turmoil contributed to a dramatic increase in the number of people fleeing their countries and attempting the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean to Europe.

## The Libyan Civil War

The tension provoked by the outbreak of the Libyan Civil War (March 2011), which intensified after the assassination of Muammar Gaddafi (Former Prime Minister of Libya) in October 2011, in turn, leading to the involvement of NATO forces in Libya to impose order and promote stability in the region. However, this intervention plunged Libya further into chaos. The collapse of state authority allowed human traffickers to operate with complete impunity and caused the collapse of the Libyan Border Control. The fall of Muammar Gaddafi caused most of the previously established international agreements and regulations between Libya and EU member-states (primarily Italy) to corrupt, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of migrants using Libya as a transit point to Europe. Thus, Libya ultimately evolved into a central departure point for migrants attempting to reach Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route.

## The Syrian Civil War

Following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011 refugee flows towards Europe showed a sudden increase which further escalated. By the peak of the conflict in 2015, more than 6.4 million Syrians were internally displaced, and over 5.6 million had fled the country as refugees.<sup>9</sup> The majority of refugees initially sought safety in neighboring countries such as Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. However, these host countries due to limited resources and multiple hosting inabilities (e.g. deteriorated living conditions in refugee camps, insufficient infrastructure, etc.) commenced forwarding populations into the European Union primarily from Türkiye to Greece or from Libya to Italy. The influx of Syrian refugees into the EU created a significant humanitarian crisis, particularly on the Greek islands and in other Southern European countries that were the initial entry points into the EU. Refugee camps were quickly overwhelmed, leading to below-standard living conditions, overcrowding, and shortages of necessities and medical care.



**Figure 2: All refugees caused by the Syrian Civil War between 2011 and 2020**

<sup>9</sup> World Vision Staff. "Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help". *World Vision*, 15 Jul. 2024, <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

## Major Fatalities

Through the years, the Mediterranean Sea has become one of the deadliest migration routes in the world. In their attempt to cross it by all means, thousands of refugees and migrants have lost their lives due to the usage of overloaded and unseaworthy vessels, inadequate rescue operations, human exploitation, and many other factors. Several major incidents have contributed to the high fatality rate, counting up to 30 thousand migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea from 2014 to 2024.<sup>10</sup>

### Lampedusa Shipwreck (Italy, 2013)

On 3 October 2013, an overcrowded fishing boat from Libya with 518 people on board sank half a mile off the Italian island of Lampedusa. Passengers of the fatal journey had paid 1,600 USD each to be illegally transported to the European Union hoping for a better future. The ship ended up capsizing in the Italian rural waters during a common practice for trafficking vessels: captains turn the engines off when approaching the coast for the coastguard to rescue the seemingly helpless vessel without the responsible heads of the mission getting arrested as they have already disappeared into the crowd. In their attempt to attract attention from the shore by setting fire to a blanket, fire spread on the deck of the ship. Passengers endeavored to avoid the flames, causing an uneven weight distribution and ultimately leading to the capsizing of the vessel, resulting in 366 confirmed deaths and several passengers missing. No children under the age of 12 survived. This was the first major fatal refugee-trafficking incident in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>11</sup>

### Pylos Shipwreck (Greece, 2023)

On 14 June 2023, a vessel traveling from Libya to Italy with 750 Egyptian, Syrian, Pakistani, Afghan, and Palestinian passengers on board capsized in the Greek rural waters 50 miles southwest of Pylos. After several days of sailing, the boat entered the Greek rural waters and did not request help after contacting the Greek Shipping Ministry. Later on the same day, the boat approached a Maltese cargo ship and was supplied with food and water. At 1:40 a.m. on Wednesday 14th, the Greek coastguard was alerted that the engine had malfunctioned and the boat started capsizing. After fifteen minutes the boat fully submerged. Only 104 out of 750 individuals were rescued. The coastguard, through their correspondent, stated that “It (was) one of the biggest (search) operations ever in the Mediterranean”. Despite the size of the operation, the international



**Figure 3: Aerial photograph of the boat on Greek rural waters hours before sinking**

<sup>10</sup> “Deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea 2014-2024”. *Statista Research Department*, 4 Jul 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1082077/deaths-of-migrants-in-the-mediterranean-sea/>

<sup>11</sup> Nelson, Zed. “Lampedusa boat tragedy: a survivor’s story”. *The Guardian*, 22 Mar. 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/22/lampedusa-boat-tragedy-migrants-africa>



community was heavily disappointed by the administration of the rescuing resources, and the effectiveness of the mission was further examined by the Greek authorities.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusion

After having explored all the causes and consequences of the modern immigration crisis in the Mediterranean Basin, one can realize that the European Union has evolved into a massive detention center for all incoming refugees from neighboring continents. Moreover, the EU has been politically divided with people either embracing the settlement of incoming migrants and others who fiercely oppose it, projecting cultural erosion, etc. Despite all the legal and humanitarian attempts of the EU, several aspects of the issue remain unsolved and people continue to lose their lives in the Mediterranean Sea. The current established EU regulations (which will be analyzed below) have been proven inadequate for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and native populations. On the one hand, the safety and personal integrity of migrants cannot in any way be guaranteed. On the other, numerous issues occur concerning the administration and hosting of the incoming refugee flows, often resulting in tensions between migrants and locals. Thus, the EU must re-examine its immigration policy to facilitate the safety of migrants in the Mediterranean Basin.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### Cyprus

Cyprus, due to its geographic location in the Eastern Mediterranean close to Syria and Lebanon, has been affected by the migration crisis, although to a lesser extent than Greece, Italy, Spain, or Türkiye. However, in recent years, Cyprus has seen an increase in asylum seekers and irregular migrants, steadily evolving into one of the EU member-states with the highest per capita rates of asylum seekers, a potential entry point for refugees and migrants. This surge has been attributed to the tightening of migration controls in other parts of the Mediterranean, causing some migrants to attempt entry via Cyprus. Cyprus has also faced significant challenges in hosting the increased flow of migrants, as reception facilities have been stretched beyond capacity, leading to poor living conditions and difficulties in providing adequate services and support to asylum seekers.

### Greece

Greece has been one of the most affected countries during the Mediterranean migration crisis due to its geographical location at the southeastern border of Europe. The Aegean Sea, which separates Greece from Turkey, became a primary route for asylum seekers and

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<sup>12</sup> Syed, Armani. "What to Know About Greece's Deadliest Migrant Shipwreck in Years". *Time*, 15 Jun. 2023, <https://time.com/6287419/greece-deadly-migrant-shipwreck/>

migrants attempting to reach Europe, particularly during the peak years of the crisis in 2015-2016. Aegean islands like Lesbos, Chios, Samos, and Kos, became the first entry points into the EU for many refugees and migrants crossing from Türkiye. The sudden influx overwhelmed the asylum system of the Greek Government and reception facilities. Refugee camps, such as Moria, Lesbos, became infamous for their overcrowded and inhumane conditions, with inadequate shelter, sanitation, and medical services which triggered the UNHCR. At its peak, the detainment camp of Moria, designed to hold 3,000 people, ended up hosting more than 20,000 refugees. Greece was a key participant in the EU-Türkiye Statement of March 2016, which aimed to curb the flow of migrants by allowing the return of irregular migrants from Greece to Turkey, an agreement that failed shortly afterward. Many migrants arriving in Greece sought to continue their journey to northern and western Europe, leading to “secondary movements.” Under the Dublin III Regulation, Greece was responsible for processing many of these asylum claims, but the capacity of the country to handle them was limited, leading to significant backlogs. Greece has been receiving substantial humanitarian aid and support from the EU and international organizations, but the issue remains.

### **Italy**

Italy has been another key frontline state in the Mediterranean migration crisis, primarily due to its proximity to North Africa. The Central Mediterranean route, which runs from North Africa to Italy, has been one of the most fatal migration routes, with many attempting the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. Italy, particularly the islands of Lampedusa and Sicily, became the main entry point for migrants departing from Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt. Many of these migrants were from sub-Saharan Africa, as well as conflict zones like Syria and Somalia. Italy was at the forefront of search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean by launching plans such as *Mare Nostrum* and *Triton*. Similarly to Greece, Italy faced significant challenges with overcrowded reception centers and inadequate facilities. Many of these centers struggled to provide basic services, and the Italian asylum system became overwhelmed by the sheer number of applications. Italy was heavily involved in the 2015 relocation mechanism of the European Union, designed to distribute asylum seekers across EU member states. However, the mechanism faced resistance from several countries and Italy received less support than needed, leading to political tensions within the EU. The migration crisis has had significant political repercussions in Italy, contributing to the rise of populist, anti-immigration parties such as the League (Lega) and the Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle). These parties criticized the EU's handling of the crisis and pushed for stricter immigration controls.



## Spain

Spain has played a significant role in the Mediterranean migration crisis, especially along the Western Mediterranean route and the Western African route. The geographical position of Spain, with territories such as the Canary Islands and its enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the North African coast, made it a key entry point for migrants from Africa. Migrants from countries like Morocco, Algeria, and countries of sub-Saharan Africa have used Spain as a gateway to Europe. The Western Mediterranean route primarily involved sea crossings from Morocco to mainland Spain, while the Western African route involved crossings from West Africa to the Canary Islands. In 2018 and 2019, Spain saw a significant increase in migrant arrivals, overtaking Italy as the main entry point for irregular migrants to the EU. Many migrants attempted to cross the Strait of Gibraltar or the longer, more dangerous route to the Canary Islands. The Spanish borders of North Africa, Ceuta, and Melilla, which have been frequent targets for mass crossings by migrants seeking entry into the EU, have been fortified to prevent illegal entry. These borders have often been sites of intense confrontations between migrants and Spanish border guards, leading to serious human rights concerns. Spain has also closely worked with Morocco to control migration flows, including funding and technical support for border management. This cooperation has been crucial in reducing crossings but has also raised concerns about the treatment of migrants by Moroccan authorities. Similarly to other frontline states, Spain faced challenges with overwhelmed reception facilities and ensuring adequate living conditions for migrants.



**Figure 4: Detailed Migratory Routes in the Mediterranean Basin**

## Türkiye

Despite not being a member-state of the EU, Türkiye has played a dual role in the Mediterranean migration crisis: as both a host country for refugees and as a key transit country for those attempting to reach Europe. The strategic location of Türkiye, bordering Syria, Iraq, and the Mediterranean Sea, made it a crucial player in managing migration flows into Europe. Türkiye hosts the largest refugee population in the world, with over 3.6 million Syrian refugees registered under temporary protection, in addition to hundreds of thousands from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and other countries. Its policy has primarily focused on providing temporary protection, rather than long-term integration, resulting in significant challenges for both refugees and host communities. Apart from Greece, Türkiye was a central actor in the EU-Türkiye Statement of March 2016, as previously mentioned. Türkiye intensified border controls and took measures to curb human smuggling networks, reducing the number of migrants attempting to cross the Aegean Sea to Greece. However, the

country faced criticism for its treatment of refugees and migrants, including reports of pushbacks and inadequate living conditions.

### BLOCS EXPECTED

#### Bloc 1

The first bloc consists of countries which are the most affected by the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Basin - which usually geographically belong to the South, feel underprivileged or manipulated by the current policies concerning immigration, and request additional funding or better distribution through the EU. Member-states expected to join are Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain.

#### Bloc 2

The second bloc consists of countries which are either least affected by the immigration crisis in the Mediterranean Basin or countries that are for any reason benefited from the current regulations. Such EU members usually geographically belong to the North.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

| Date              | Description of event                                                         |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 2011      | Beginning of the Evros Fence construction (Greek-Turkish border, Greek side) |
| 15 March 2011     | Outbreak of the Syrian Civil War                                             |
| 20 October 2011   | The Assassination of Muammar Gaddafi                                         |
| 3 October 2013    | Lampedusa Shipwreck (Italy)                                                  |
| 26 June 2013      | Dublin III Regulation                                                        |
| 19 July 2013      | Enforcement of the EU Relocation Mechanism                                   |
| 23 September 2014 | U.S.A Intervention in the Syrian Civil War (peak of conflict)                |
| 18 March 2016     | EU-Türkiye Statement                                                         |
| 19 August 2022    | Granting of the extension of the Evros Fence                                 |
| 14 June 2023      | Pylos Shipwreck (Greece)                                                     |

## RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### EU-Türkiye Statement

On 18 March 2016, the European Council and Türkiye reached an agreement aimed at stopping the flow of uncontrolled migration and EU borders illegal crossing via Türkiye to Europe. Until that day, the Government of Türkiye used to take advantage of its increasing migrant populations and use it as a bargaining tool against Greece. This policy not only provoked upheaval in the Greek frontline islands but also aggravated the general immigration crisis the EU already had to encounter. According to the EU-Turkey Statement, the Government of Greece established the right to forward back to Türkiye all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible. Moreover, the government of Türkiye pledged to cooperate efficiently with the European Union and work towards improving the living conditions inside Syria. The EU funded Türkiye with 3 billion EUR for concrete infrastructural projects.<sup>13</sup> Although this agreement originally seemed to be the solution to the problem in the area, the Government of Türkiye did not respect it, as it had been refusing for three years (since the signing of the agreement) access to its territory and the return of asylum seekers rejected by the Greek authorities. The Greek Council of State officially recognized the failure of the agreement with its decision no. 177/2023.<sup>14</sup>

### Dublin III Regulation

The Dublin III Regulation is a central piece of the European Union's asylum policy framework, establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining which member state is responsible for examining an asylum application lodged within the EU. The regulation was adopted on 26 June 2013 and entered into force on 19 July 2013.<sup>15</sup> According to the Dublin III Regulation, although transfers and redistributions of migrant populations can be granted, the predominantly responsible EU member-state for the asylum application is the one a migrant first arrives at (First Entry Point). This regulation also prioritizes family unity among migrants and ensures viable hosting conditions: if the asylum seeker has a family member who is legally resident or has been granted asylum in an EU member state, the same state is responsible for processing the asylum application for the rest of the family. On 23 September 2020, the European Commission adopted the New Pact on Migration and Asylum following consultations with the European Parliament, recognizing that: “no EU member-state should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility and that all member-states

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<sup>13</sup> “EU-TURKEY STATEMENT & ACTION PLAN”. *European Union Foreign Affairs - AFET, Legislative Train Schedule*, 20 Nov. 2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan>

<sup>14</sup> “The EU-Turkey deal is collapsing 7 years after its signing”. *Refugee Support Aegean*, 16 Mar. 2023, <https://rsaegean.org/en/they-eu-turkey-deal-is-collapsing/>

<sup>15</sup> “Dublin III Regulation - Document 02013R0604-20130629”. *EUR - Lex*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02013R0604-20130629>

should contribute to solidarity constantly.”. However, the limitations of the regulation and the uneven distribution of responsibilities - despite the agreement - have highlighted the need for comprehensive reform. As the EU continues to grapple with the challenges of migration and asylum, investing in a more effective and fair Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is required.<sup>16</sup>

### PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

#### Search and Rescue Operations

The European Union (EU) has implemented a range of measures to respond to the immigration crisis in the Mediterranean Basin that intensified in the mid-2010s. The response of the EU has involved a combination of humanitarian aid, border security enhancements, etc.

#### Operation Mare Nostrum

“*Mare Nostrum*” (English: *Our Sea*) was a naval operation led by Italy initiated by the Italian Government on 18 October 2013 following the fatalities of the Lampedusa Shipwreck. The purpose of this operation was the effective response to humanitarian emergencies in the Strait of Sicily, Italy, in the Mediterranean Sea. *Mare Nostrum* included among others the mobilization of the Italian Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri, Financial Police, and The Italian Red Cross. However, the operation was eventually terminated on 31 October 2014, as it was considered to be expensive and there was criticism that it encouraged more migrants to attempt crossing the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>17</sup>

#### Operation Triton

Following the end of *Mare Nostrum*, the EU launched a new joint operation called “*Triton*” on 31 October 2014, managed by its border agency, *Frontex*. The operation was initiated per the request of the Italian Government and commenced activity on 1 November 2014 with an estimated monthly budget of 2.9 million EUR. Except for Italy, multiple member-states (Croatia, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain, etc.) actively participated by providing technical and human resources.<sup>18</sup> Although *Triton* seemingly had many capabilities the operation ended up costing more than 9 million EUR per month, while EU member-states started showing less willingness to

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<sup>16</sup> “Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin Regulation)”. *European Union*, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation_en)

<sup>17</sup> “Mare Nostrum Operation”. *Marina Militare, Ministero della Difesa*, <https://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> “Frontex Joint Operation ‘Triton’”. *The European Commission*, 31 Oct. 2014, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/MEMO\\_14\\_609](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/MEMO_14_609)

provide further funding for the project. In the meantime fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea were progressively escalating, as more and more migrants were encouraged to attempt the perilous journey, hoping they would be assisted. The operation was terminated on 1 February 2018.<sup>19</sup>

### Operation Sophia

Officially known as EUNAVFOR Med (European Union Naval Force Operation), Operation Sophia was launched on 22 June 2015 following the tragedy of the April 2015 migrant shipwrecks. Its mandate included the interdiction of vessels suspected of engaging in the smuggling of migrants from Libya, the seizure of such vessels, and even their disposal in certain cases.<sup>20</sup> Operation *Sophia* included the cooperation of the Libyan Coastguard and provided it with special training on effectively tackling outcoming flows. The project had low effectiveness and was terminated on 31 March 2020.<sup>21</sup> Although multiple operations followed, none of them had a significant impact.

### EU Relocation Mechanism

In September 2015, in response to the overwhelming number of asylum seekers arriving in frontline states like Greece and Italy, EU Member States signed a redistribution plan throughout the EU. The plan included the relocation of a total of 160,000 asylum-seekers including 106,000 from Greece and Italy. The UNHCR actively supported the redistribution plan from the beginning.<sup>22</sup> The program, however, faced strong opposition from several Eastern European member-states which were forced to receive migrant populations, thus aggravating their condition to alleviate others. The relocation mechanism was terminated on 21 June 2019 with far less than aimed migrant populations being redistributed.<sup>23</sup>

### Evros Fence (Greece - Türkiye border)

The Evros River is a natural border that separates Greece from Türkiye which - through the years - has evolved into One of the most heavily militarized borders of Europe. The construction of the fence commenced in January 2011 under the PASOK government as a response to the incoming migration flows from Türkiye into the European Union via the

<sup>19</sup> "Operation Triton". *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Triton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Triton)

<sup>20</sup> "Mediterranean Operation Sophia". *Legislative Train Schedule, European Union Naval Force*, 20 Nov. 2024,

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eunavfor-med-operation-sophia>

<sup>21</sup> Papastavridis, Efthymios. "EUNAVFOR Operation Sophia and the International Law of the Sea". *Maritime Safety and Security Law Journal*,

<https://www.marsafelawjournal.org/contributions/eunavfor-operation-sophia-international-law-sea/>

<sup>22</sup> "UNHCR calls for the EU relocation scheme to continue". *UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency*, 26 Sep. 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-calls-eu-relocation-scheme-continue>

<sup>23</sup> "Permanent EU relocation mechanism". *Legislative Train Schedule, European Union Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs*, 20 Mar. 2024,

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/package-strong-asylum-policy/file-permanent-eu-relocation-mechanism>

Evros River. There were concerns that Greece was transforming into a transit country for asylum seekers heading to northern EU member states, as well as a destination country for those who were unable to continue their journey.<sup>24</sup> On 19 August 2022, the Greek Migration Minister Notis Mitarakis announced the granting of the extension of the fence by 80 kilometers and its further enhancement with a high wire mesh. Today, the fence has a total length of 140 kilometers and has prevented the entry of 250,000 illegal migrants via the Evros River.



**Figure 5: Evros River extended fence**

If there have been previous attempts to solve the issue you should provide a short evaluation of them, briefly explaining the most important advantages and/or disadvantages of the measures taken. Do not include only UN attempts. Search for attempts of other organizations as well (e.g. EU, Arab League, NATO, etc.). In the case that there have not been any previous attempts to solve the issue, this section may not be included in the study guide.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Humanitarian VISA Programs

To guarantee the safety of migrants, the EU could launch special short-term VISA programs different from asylum applications, that allow migrants to enter EU grounds more easily and legally only for a short period to temporarily escape their hardships or to avoid a threat. However, after the expiration of the VISA, temporary migrants must leave the European Union unless their asylum application has been granted.

### Utilization of Technology

The governments of EU member-states could invest in advanced surveillance technology assisted by artificial intelligence (AI), to efficiently monitor and analyze migration routes. Thus, by making use of the collected data, the EU could predict upcoming migration routes. This method would allow for quicker response times better management of incoming migrants and sufficient reinforcement of targeted EU borders.

### Regional Development Hubs

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<sup>24</sup> Dimitriadi, Angeliki. "A Steel Fence for Europe's External Borders". *ENA - Institute for Alternative Policies*, <https://enainstitute.org/en/publication/a-steel-fence-for-europes-external-borders/>



To reduce migration flows the European Union could also focus on the root of the problem: the reason migrants leave their homeland in the first place. In this case, the EU could potentially Create EU-funded development hubs in deteriorated countries (located in North Africa, the Middle East, etc.). These hubs would focus on creating economic opportunities, improving infrastructure, and enhancing local governance. By boosting local economies, these hubs could minimize migration flows as the migrants' desire to leave no longer exists.

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