Title

The EU's Internal and External Responses to the European Immigration Crisis

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5995641f

Journal

Global Societies Journal, 5(0)

Author

Salazar, Joshua

Publication Date

2017

Copyright Information

Peer reviewed

CONCEPTUAL PAPER

The EU's Internal and External Responses to the European Immigration Crisis

Joshua Salazar[1]

Abstract

Over the past two decades, millions of immigrants have begun to seek refuge within the European Union due to its open economy, stable job market, and security. This paper will help readers better understand the motives behind the current "European Immigration Crisis." It highlights EU legislation and systems that have been proposed or have been put into effect throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and their effectiveness. In particular, it examines the Commission's efforts as well as individual member states' responses within the Council and to the Commission. There have been growing internal concerns regarding the ongoing crisis, which many believe may be threatening the EU's stability and identity. As a result, some member states have responded with reluctance to aid crisis relief efforts. Nonetheless progress has continued and various political shifts have occurred within the EU. For these reasons, the Commission and member states have begun to reassess their roles and put the European immigration crisis at the top of their agendas. This opens up entirely new prospects, raises new questions, and presents new efforts towards the preservation, protection, and promotion of global integration, cooperation, and unity.

Keywords

European Commission; European Council; member states; immigration; immigrant.

[1] Department of Global Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Corresponding author: joshua_salazar@umail.ucsb.edu.

1. Introduction

For most of the 20th century the European Union's (EU) dialogue surrounding migration was largely focused on internal migration as a spillover from the implementation of the single market. The implementation of a single currency pressed EU leaders to further their attempts at creating a more unified union, market, and economy; therefore, the presence of internal EU borders had to be addressed. The Schengen project was without a doubt an attempt to better support the single market; thus, erasing all internal border controls in EU member states signaled both a shift of consciousness and a new harmonization of immigration policies.

A different type of migration manifested as refugees began travelling across EU borders towards the end of the 20th century—external and non EU-member state migration. However, this external migration flow did not start to become a major topic of concern until the 1990s. The Fall of Communism in 1989 unleashed both sharp tensions and a large influx of refugees from Eastern European countries, thus serving as the cornerstone for immigration and policy reform in the EU. However, it is worth mentioning that the failure of Communism and the breakup of former Yugoslavia, yielded an unleashing of immigrants, various internal conflicts and wars spanning through the turn of the century.

Before delving into the current migration crisis, it is important to briefly highlight the history of mass migrations and asylum-seeking migrations into the European Union. Asylum seekers refer to individuals who have left their home country as political refugees with the hopes of

More recently, the ongoing social, political, and economic instability of countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Syria has displaced countless individuals—dawning the European immigration crisis. This then prompts the questions: how have the EU and member states responded to the continuing waves of immigrants entering EU territories and how have their relationships and responses changed in regards to the crisis over the past decade? Some member states have outwardly expressed, and realized, that they are ill-equipped financially, institutionally, and militarily to handle the immigration crisis. Thus, this has led many to respond to the crisis with persistent reluctance. This paper will closely examine and argue that the EU Commission has taken on a more central role in addressing this crisis by assisting member states with the handling of immigrants and by becoming more adept at exercising its powers. And at the same time, it has become more vocal with member states in order to harmonize immigration and asylum policies at the European level with the hopes of alleviating this global humanitarian crisis and saving countless innocent lives. In addition, it will highlight the magnitude of the crisis which acted as the catalyst for legislative and administrative reforms.

2. Examining the European Immigrant Crisis

2.1 Asylum Seekers

seeking the protection in another. In other words, asylum seekers can refer to individuals who have left their home country as political refugees hoping to seek the protection of another country. After the Fall of Communism and the subsequent breakup of the former Yugoslav Federation and the

Kosovo wars in the 1990s, Europe began to face one of the largest immigration influxes since World War II. Research by Eurostat notes that in 2001, the European Union (EU) was handed 424,180 asylum applications as a result of the Yugoslav conflicts (Eurostat, 2015). According to the European Commission, the onset of the post Communism crisis led 627,000 people to seek asylum in 1992 and 425,000 individuals to seek asylum within the EU in 2001 (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017a). Moreover, Eurostat adds that the number of asylum applications would only further decline to 225,150 in 2008 (Eurostat, 2017a). It would not be for another 11 more years after the Yugoslav migration that the EU saw another asylum-seeking immigration wave of that size.

Theodora Dragostinova and other scholars have widely debated this contemporary discourse—i.e., the influx of European immigration—coining it as the "European migration crisis" (Dragostinova, 2016). From 2013 to 2014, Eurostat reports that Europe saw an approximate 50% increase of asylum seekers—from 430,000 to 630,000, and over a 100% increase in EU asylum seekers from 2014 to 2015—from 630,000 to 1.3 million (Eurostat, 2017a). More recently, Eurostat announced that in 2016 the number of asylum seekers slightly dropped to 1.2 million (Eurostat, 2017b: 1-2). These trends reflect the rising tensions and the sheer reality of this grave enigma. It underscores the magnitude of the crisis and the necessity to reform immigration and asylum policies, and institutions. If the Commission had not started to have an active role in regulating external migration two decades ago, then the EU's stability would be much more at risk as a result of today's crisis.

2.2 Syrian Case Study

Immigrants yearning to be accepted in the EU often face much oppression in their home country—including disenfranchisement from political affairs or obstacles in labor mobility. Christopher Kozak (Kozak, 2015) notes how countless Syrian refugees are caught in the midst of a civil war, and they have fallen victims to Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad's, "airstrikes and barrel bombs" due to his ongoing efforts to have his army in 'all corners.' Henceforth, the continuous strife in countries such as Syria has yielded massive migration, caused migrants to lack proper documentation, and has led many to seek asylum in the EU. According to FRONTEX, in 2014, from Syria alone, the EU received over 120,000 asylum applications, and 79,169 immigrants from Syria were detected at various EU border crossing points (FRONTEX, 2015: 18). Eurostat also released a press statement highlighting that, in 2016, they granted protection status to over 400,000 Syrians, or approximately 57% of the total, resettled, 710,400 asylum seekers (Eurostat, 2017c: 1). Although many immigrants remain stuck at border camps, at sea, or holding centers, these statistics underscore both the EU's increased efforts to control and resettle the large influx of immigrants.

2. 3 Commission-Led Programs and Institutions

The efforts that the EU has made in response to the European refugee crisis have had a great impact with the prolonging and saving of immigrants' lives. Most member

states agree on the notion that they should all try and save as many lives as possible. On 3 October 2015, in an effort to reach Italy's southern isle of Lampedusa, approximately 500 immigrants drowned due to their boat capsizing. This event brought shockwaves throughout the EU community, ultimately putting pressure on both the EU and member states to act. Sadly, this event is only one tragedy of a plethora. Nonetheless, this event is often marked as the cornerstone because it catalyzed member states to pledge various relief efforts within the European Council, with the goal of trying to "bring an end to the conflict and . . . peace [in Europe]" (European Council, 2015a). According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, a similar tragedy took place in April 2016 just off the coasts of Libya, where "as many as 500" died due to their overcrowded boat capsizing—of which only 41 survived (UN Refugee Agency, 2016). In the opening weeks of 2017, Lizzie Dearden writes that "[A]t least 226 asylum seekers . . . lost their lives attempting to reach Europe" due to freezing temperatures, wretched conditions, and rough seas (Dearden, 2017). The International Organization for Migration *conservatively* estimates that 10,000 migrants have died en route to the EU via the Mediterranean Sea (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Thus, the mounting tragedies taking place all through the Mediterranean or Aegean Sea, and on land have begun to grasp the attention of the EU Commission, member states, and the global population.

2.4 Monetary Aid

Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich note that much of the EU's financial efforts, allocated by the Commission, are designed to help war-torn and economically depressed countries rebuild and stabilize their economy, infrastructure, security, and life, thus they reduce the incentives for immigrants wanting to leave their country and "bring about political change" (Fandrich, *et al.*, 2014: 9). There have been numerous donations of humanitarian aid by the Commission and member states too. Numerically, the Commission boasts how the EU remains at the forefront with the highest, monetary, and humanitarian response—donating over €5 billion to help with "economic and stabilization assistance" (European Commission on European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2017: 1). The Commission, along with many other NGOs, have created various recovery programs and increased humanitarian efforts in order to decrease immigration flows, thus reflecting their increasing role in the crisis. The EU has even pledged "one billion euros to . . . food programs" in order to help sustain immigrants (Open Society Foundation, 2016). Adil Çifçi, et al., assert that such efforts rehabilitate a country's food supply, finance the rebuilding of institutions, foster educational development, and ultimately lead to the "protection of the civil population" (Çifçi, *et al*., 2011: 5). The Commission notes that the EU Regional Trust Fund, created in December 2014, is one program that has yielded "a more coherent, faster and integrated EU response to the crisis (European Commission on European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, 2016)." The Commission further argues that the European Refugee Fund has helped guarantee asylum seekers "access to consistent, fair, and effective asylum policies" (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017b). Therefore, this further reflects an adamant presence to address the immigration crisis

and it too shows how the Commission has begun to expand its efforts by creating and supporting various programs to assist the European immigration crisis.

2.5 European Border and Coast Guard Agency: FRONTEX

Aside from financial support, Commission-led institutions—over the past decade—have begun to take greater control on the immigration crisis by creating security institutions and executing border operations. Helena Ekelund (Ekelund, 2014: 99-116) explains how FRONTEX was first discussed and passed within the Council in October 2004 (ibid., 2014: 109). This is one security agency that continues to successfully monitor and manage the EU's external borders. And it too, is responsible for alleviating immigration pressures on member states. Furthermore, Ekelund (ibid., 2014) writes that FRONTEX—under the jurisdiction entailed by the Council and Parliament—created the Rapid Border Intervention Team (RABIT) in July 2007, in order to address security threats via special operations (ibid., 2014: 100). RABIT is specifically designed to quickly aid member states faced with massive amounts of immigrants at their borders. As a result, RABIT has executed numerous operations such as Operation Triton or Operation Hermes. Operation Hermes coordinates missions to monitor the borders of the central Mediterranean. Operation Triton's base country is in Italy, and it, like Operation Hermes, also monitors sea borders and assists in the handling of recently-arrived immigrants through rescue operations.

Therefore, the Commission's increasing efforts through rescue operations, legislative reform, and financial support further underscore how it has taken on a greater role in addressing the immigration crisis. These relief efforts have combatted food and shelter insecurity, saved immigrants from the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, and prolonged their lives as a whole. More importantly, the immigration crisis has helped to awaken the EU community, leading to the Commission's growing competence to establish, reform, and harmonize both immigration policies and institutions. The Commission's increasing initiatives to better address the immigration flows have helped to treat asylum seekers with respect (and not as terrorists) and to support the construction of democratic institutions. In sum, these Commision-led efforts underscore the Commission's acquisition of a more central role in addressing immigration concerns.

3. Legislative and Administrative Reforms

3.1 Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

In spite of the controversy regarding immigration into the EU, the creation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)—that began as an official European project approximately two decades ago—acted as the cornerstone for an official European legislation and system on migration, and it too further reflects the Commission's rising role in addressing immigration concerns. The CEAS also reflects their acknowledgment of their responsibility to assist refugees. The Commission's establishment of the CEAS was nonetheless an ethical response prompted by the amassed and displaced individuals. Nevertheless, the CEAS

continues to help immigrants—whose life is at risk back in their original country—because it grants them international protection. Papademetriou (Papademetriou, 2016) states that although the CEAS has helped save many from returning back to their own country, it is still difficult to aid others due to the immigrants' "lack of travel document[ation], lack of detention facilities, and other factors." Seeking asylum is the aspired goal among immigrants emigrating into the EU because many want to rebuild their lives in more socially and economically stable countries—mostly northern European countries. With this being said, this has led the Commission to take on a more proactive role—by seeking alternative measures—in order to save these immigrants' lives and futures.

3.2 European Agenda on Migration

Another effort that parallels the Commission's increasing assertions to address the migration crisis and further their European Agenda on Migration, is the implementation of a so-called quota system or temporary relocation system for recently-arrived immigrants.[2] The European Commission notes that relocation efforts refer to the transfer of persons, in need of international protection, from one EU member state to another (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016a: 1). In sum, the refugee relocation program lessens the burden of member states with high amounts of immigrants because it helps relocate them to other member states in proportion to their population. In May 2015 the Commission created the EU Temporary Relocation

System for asylum seekers which required member states to examine asylum seekers upon their first country of arrival—also known as the Dublin system. The Agenda aims to strengthen common asylum policies, improve external border management, but also reduce the incentives for immigration. The Commission, in working with member states who have a dramatic population of immigrants—i.e., Italy or Greece—has helped to alleviate their domestic pressures by relocating immigrants to other member states as entailed by this relocation system. In order to yield equivalent redistributions, the Commission notes that, "[T]hey will be based on criteria such as GDP, size of population, unemployment rate and past number of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees" (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2015: 4). Since this system's establishment in September 2015 and as of 12 May 2017, the Commission notes that they have resettled 18,418 refugees from Italy and Greece (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017c: 1). This system not only establishes a shared responsibility among member states to assist relief efforts, it also reflects the Commission's increasing efforts to take control of the crisis. However, this also shows how the Commission has not acted unilaterally; meaning, they have taken the interests and needs of member states into close consideration in order to ensure a fair distribution of asylum seekers.

3.3 The Return Directive and Asylum Procedures Directive

As it was already formerly mentioned, the Commission has begun to establish a legal framework in order to recognize, resettle, protect, and or return immigrants. The following paragraph shall outline one directive which has helped to

---

[2] This relocation quota system is part of the European Agenda on Migration–originally announced May of 2015.

reinstate political stability in the EU. In order to better address the amassing migration crisis into the EU, the Commission also revised the Asylum Procedures Directive in 2015. This directive presented major reforms because it made asylum procedures more efficient and fair, and required all member states to examine such applications according to harmonized, high quality standards (European Commission Press Release Database, 2013). Eur-Lex explains how the Return Directive, created by the EU Commission in 2008, outlined the "common standards and procedures" for the detainment and return of immigrants who have attempted to bypass the EU's legal documentation and (asylum) application process (EUR-Lex, 2008)[3]. In order to both demarcate the detention and return procedures of such immigrants, grasp control of the crisis, and assert their power over immigration policy harmonization, the Commission has taken measures to ensure that "the implementation of the Return Directive [is coordinated] across all member states" (European Commission Press Release Database, 2015). However, according to the Commission, the Directive does not "apply to those who [have] appl[ied] for asylum or are in need of protection and fear war or persecution" (ibid.). This shows that the Commission has not only recognized the necessity to assist these immigrants, but also, to take better control of the immigrant population—siding with member states—and in doing so, they have better stabilized and solidified immigration imbalances and procedures. On the other hand, many immigrants dispose of their legal documentation because if they are

found to be immigrating under circumstances not protected by the CEAS, they will be returned via the proceedings disclosed by the Return Directive[4]. Although this directive is a direct response to the increasing trends of unpermitted immigration into the EU, it signals an increased coordination and harmonization of both immigration policies and concerns at the European level. This directive also reflects none other than the Commission's rising role to address immigration concerns, and this directive also shows how the Commission has begun to push for a stricter, more supranational agenda on migration.

3.4 Gridlock and Divisions Among EU Member States

Although member states have engaged in and contributed to the dialogue with the Commission to address immigrants entering the EU, as the European migration crisis has progressed, sharp cleavages have also emerged between member states and the Commission at the legislative and implementation levels. Such divisions between some member states and the Commission converge to various degrees. There has been a growing necessity to catalyze a nexus among sharply divided member states. The subsequent paragraphs will outline these divisions and the resentful discourse taken on by various member

---

[3] *Unauthorized* immigrants refer to non-EU nationals who are residing on EU territory or who lack prior approval as defined by: the Blue Card Directive, Seasonal Workers Directive, Intra-Corporate Transferees Directive, or Single Permit Directive.

[4] The Return Directive was one preliminary measure that the EU took to better establish a more united union and address the increasing migrant flows into the EU as a result of increasing EU enlargements. Thus, the EU places a heavy weight on legal documentation; and although in some cases immigrants may purposely and improperly dispose of their travel documentation, most other instances come as a result from the persistent violence happening in these immigrants' home countries which includes, but is not limited to, forced migrations, raids and fires.

states.

The gridlock between member states and the Commission has come as a result of member states wanting to protect their interests, market, and themselves *first*. The euBulletin (Unattributed, 2015) quotes Juncker stating that member states' blasphemous response to lower official development assistance (ODA) is 'scandalous' (ibid.). ODA refers to financial support given to countries in order to promote economic and social reconstruction or development. This reluctant responses further underscores the necessity for the Commission to take on a European Migration Agenda, to be more assertive, and as the Eubulletin notes, it too is why '[The Commission] won't change its ideas regarding legal and [unauthorized] migration' (ibid.).

3.5 Slovakia, Hungary, France, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom

Member states, such as Slovakia and Hungary, have become increasingly reluctant to recognize, support, and implement the Commission's efforts such as the quota system or asylum applications. One reason is that they fear that the massive immigrant relocations would disrupt the stability of their domestic, economic, social, and labor markets. In response, Italian leaders, Paolo Gentiloni and Matteo Renzi have called to both the Commission and member states to act in solidarity and to cooperate with Italy's and the Commission's efforts to relocate migrants and to assist financially. In fact, Papademetriou writes, that in December 2015 both Slovakia and Hungary expressed their refutation of the Commission's efforts by "fil[ing] court proceedings against the [Commission's] plan" to establish a quota system

(Papademetriou, 2016). This case has since made its way to the EU's Court of Justice, and Reuters reporter Gabriela Baczynska writes that in May 2017, defendants—i.e., Slovakia, Hungary, and more recently, Poland—"defended their refusal to take in asylum seekers, drawing a clear rebuke from Germany and others who [have] stressed the need for European solidarity" (Baczynska, 2017).

Despite France's traditionally highly approving views of Muslims, they have become increasingly reluctant to cooperate with asylum relocation efforts from Syria or Afghanistan due to their uneasiness and precaution set forth by the Paris terrorist attack of 2016, among more recent terrorist attacks in Stockholm and London—the former being in April of 2017 and the latter in March of 2017. To further underscore the evidence of member states' reluctance toward a more harmonized immigration policy and the heightened tensions among member states and the Commission, immigration analyst, Frank Keith recalls Hungary's Foreign Minister, Péter Szijjártó, noting the EU's proposed relocation efforts as "unfeasible, unrealizable, and nonsense" (Keith, 2015: 18). Marian Chiriac recalls the views of Romania's previous prime minister, Victor Ponta, whose remarks paralleled those of Szijjártó; he too denounced the Commission's "mandatory quotas [as] not [the] solution to Europe's migration crisis" (Chiriac, 2015). Thirdly, French presidential election runner-up, Marine Le Pen, also expressed racist epithets towards immigrants, asserting that they "have no reason to stay in France" (Branford, *et al.*, 2017). These xenophobic remarks have garnered, and they continue to garner, widespread support among nationalists. For these reasons, this further highlights the catalysts to the Commission's rising role and their assertive responses.

In late October of 2015, Slovenian and Swedish governments announced that they would be imposing stricter asylum policies and decreasing their immigrant intake as part of their effort to restabilize and adapt to their recently-handed immigrants. Therefore these similar reluctant and resentful responses have hindered immigrants' possibilities of relocation. In early 2016, Slovakian Prime Minister, Robert Fico, asserted that "migrants cannot be integrated. It's impossible" (Unattributed, 2016). This quote reflects traces of the deeply-rooted and racist sentiments in European political discourse. Patrick Strickland (Strickland, 2016) writes that Hungarian officials have begun to increase border presence by "sending an additional 1,500 police and army officers" to their border, and of the 177,135 asylum applicants that they received, only 146 were approved by Hungary (ibid.). The fact that many of these immigrants either identify as Muslim or are coming from predominantly Muslim countries, has begun to incite fears and reluctance among Hungarians to cooperate or accept immigrant quotas. Hungary's current prime minister, Viktor Orbán, like many other contemporary European far-right nationalists, possesses strong anti-Islamic sentiments and is determined to impede relocation efforts due to his fear that immigrants' Islamic ties would undermine the very face of "European Christianity." These case studies reflect some member states' hindering responses, and they too reflect the catalysts for the Commission's necessity to take on a greater role during this global discourse.

The following paragraph will further examine member states that have impeded the amelioration of European immigration crisis. France, like Hungary, has also responded to the immigration crisis in an unwelcoming fashion. Crisafia, Elliot, and Treanor underscore how France's former Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, has defended his stance by "opposing [immigrant] quotas" and protecting France's borders, arguing that the "very idea of Europe will be questioned" if such measures are not taken (Crisafia, *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, these responses halt the process and cooperative efforts with the recognition, dialogue, and harmonization of general immigration policies. Second, Gareth Mulvey outlines how the UK has taken on "a firm approach, [and] that [they] will not assist in any EU-wide resettlement" efforts (Mulvey, 2015). Such measures not only delegitimize the proposals and power of the Commission but also negatively affect immigrants in the long-run. If countries, such as the UK or Hungary, continue to respond with such reluctance and ambivalence, then immigrants will not be relocated and integrated successfully, or in a timely fashion. In recognizing the latter opinion, such countries argue that the large immigration waves are undermining nationalistic ideals. Therefore these notions have led member states to reaffirm not only their national rights but also their citizenship. Moreover, these similar responses reflect the sharp divisions that exist between the Commission and some member states when it comes to immigration; and they too show how member states are willing to jeopardize their relationship with the EU in order to put their country's needs and interests first. Addressing the magnitude of the immigration crisis has proven difficult, but it has nonetheless yielded many successes, including the growth of leadership of the Commission, and the strengthening of immigration policies.

Member states have also begun to retake control of their borders—reflecting a more realist approach—thus, yielding amassed tensions between member states

and the Commission, and leaving millions of immigrants displaced. Migration analyst, Rahsaan Maxwell, argues that many EU member state and citizens believe that immigrants still possess a strong allegiance to their host country, and that they may become a potential threat (Maxwell, 2010: 25). Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten write that "anti-immigration [views] and [the] opposition to the presence of Islam" are common sentiments among member states (Geddes, *et al.*, 2016: 93). In other words, many Europeans believe that these immigrants would ultimately undermine their societies and values. Moreover, there has been a dramatic rise in far-right nationalist leaders such as: the United Kingdom, Hungary, Austria, Poland and France. And there has also been a dramatic increase in the amount of strong nationalistic sentiments expressed. These anti-multiculturalist epithets have halted relocation efforts, undermined the global cosmopolitan project and immigrants' humanity, but more importantly, have jeopardized the lives of countless refugees. Therefore one may conclude that racial, cultural and social hierarchies and narratives are still very much alive in European geopolitics.

3.6 Undermining the European Commission and the Schengen Agreement

It is important to further examine member states' discourse of reluctance— i.e., with the Commission and with the crisis—because it helps readers better understand why the Commission has taken on a more assertive role. In spite of all the Commission's efforts to help combat the crisis, some member states have continued to express great concerns for their country's

security and stability. Many argue that their country's security and stability are put at risk by the mass relocations of refugees. As a result, many countries have begun to speak and act unilaterally or, in other terms, according to their own interests— disregarding and even abandoning many EU proposals—by increasing border controls and even refusing to accept immigrants. Although the Commission has tried to act in solidarity with member states, relocation efforts of immigrants remains an ongoing struggle. The refugee relocation program, however, has only proved partially effective because member states continue to reject asylum seekers due to their lack of capital, negative sentiments, or capacities. As a result, this delays relocation and other aid efforts for immigrants, and underscores the necessity to have the Commission take on a more central and proactive role.

John McCormick and Jonathan Olsen note that Schengen states reserve the right to "reimpose border controls"— according to a conditional clause under the Schengen Agreement—if it is a "particular need" (McCormick, *et al*., 2014: 243). Countries possessing strong nationalist sentiments have become apprehensive in admitting immigrants due to the wide array of (Middle Eastern or African) cultures and customs, and their polarity to the dominant customs and or ideologies of EU member states. Moreover, Ruud Koopmans examines how countries, such as the UK, that have limited welfare systems, have been left with no choice but to remain reluctant in accepting immigrant quotas, due to fear of their own collapse (Koopmans, 2009: 21). In early 2016, Hungary responded to the crisis by enforcing not just their border security, but also by building a fence. They believe that their open borders and massive immigration influxes are threatening their well-being and social policies. Hungary has

also increased their border security and technology. Immigrants arriving at Hungary's borders are met with a daunting surprise. Reuters notes that a cadenced loudspeaker announces in English, Farsi, and Arabic, "Attention, attention. I'm warning you that you are at the Hungarian border. If you damage the fence, cross illegally, or attempt to cross, it's counted to be a crime. I'm warning you to hold back from committing this crime" (Dunai, 2017). Obstacles such as these continue to push these immigrants out of the EU community and from existence.

Geddes and Scholten highlight a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, which found that 70% of Italy and Greece's population feel that immigrants are a burden on their country and that they are taking all of their jobs and benefits (Geddes, *et al*., 2016: 14). Another study conducted by the the Pew Research Center in 2016 reflects a stagnancy where a median 59% of member states still believe immigrants increase domestic terrorism (Poushter, 2016). Thus, immigrants become racialized and dehumanized from these essentialist stereotypes and narratives. Europeans have become increasingly concerned with the massive influx of immigrants because they also fear that they pose a threat to their national security and peace. Ethnically-prejudiced member states, in many cases, withhold jobs within the tertiary from immigrants, therefore leading to a further negation of immigrants' humanity and increasing the unemployment statistics for immigrants.

Ramping up border security, however undermines the Schengen Agreement of 1985—a milestone in the harmonization of EU migration policies—which led to the overall abolition of border checks. Thus re-enforcing border security not only puts tremendous pressure on the

Schengen area and the single market, but also on the Commission to act more assertively. These uncooperative efforts lead the Commission to take a back seat in implementing legislation. Ultimately, member states reserve the right to engage in and support the political discourse of the immigration crisis. Therefore the implementation efforts of the Commission lays, ultimately, in the hands of the member states' bureaucracies; thus if member states fail to parallel or cooperate with the efforts of the Commission, the policies will not be implemented, and the immigration crisis prevails.

Greece, among other EU countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, has been receiving an increasing number of asylum seekers. A Commission report released in May 2017 notes that approximately 2,500 immigrants have been successfully relocated from Italy and Greece since October 2015 (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017c: 1). According to another Commission-released report in November 2016, there have been 24 EU countries that have pledged to accept a quota of the 11,305 immigrants currently in Greece; however only 5,376 have been effectively relocated (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016b: 2). Likewise, the Commission also notes that 24 EU countries have pledged to accept a quota of the 4,954 currently in Italy, however only 1,549 have been effectively relocated (European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016c: 2). One reason for this failure in the relocation process is Italy and Greece being short-staffed in reviewing asylum applications. The Commission adds that countries such as Greece and Italy need to progress faster, increase their steadiness and have a more active involvement with relocation efforts if they wish to fulfill relocation quotas (European Commission on

Migration and Home Affairs, 2016d: 6).

4. Responses Within the European Council

In order to assess a deeper commitment of EU institutions to a more harmonized immigration policy, it is important to analyze the responses of the European Council to the immigration crisis, to see if their initiatives have paralleled those of the Commission. In December of 2014 the Council recognized and agreed upon a collective accountability to assist with the crisis. The Council even called upon the Commission "to provide guidance on how to incorporate and strengthen migration . . . policy dialogue and programming" (European Council, 2014: 2). Thus, the increased coordination and cooperation among member states and the Commission to revisit immigration policies have catalyzed discussions on immigration reforms. Nevertheless, the European Council continued to profess similar, yet more progressive views at the Valletta Summit in December of 2015—around the time in which the EU had received over 1.3 million asylum applications. The leaders at the summit appeared to be in solidarity agreeing to:

> "address the root causes of irregular migration . . . enhance cooperation on legal migration and mobility . . . reinforce the protections of migrants and asylum seekers . . . and work more closely to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration" (European Council, 2015b).

Although the decisions reached at the 2015 summit reflect a continuous consensus among the heads of member states, their reluctance is repeatedly conveyed through their contradicting efforts back in their home countries—via public denouncements of migration quotas or reinstatements of border controls.

In March of 2016, the Council met with Turkish heads of state, for a third time since November 2015, to further discuss the European immigration crisis. And similar Council conclusions can also be noted in their October 2016 convening. At this summit, the Council appeared to take on a more external approach in solving the migration crisis. The Commission released a reporting stating that the Council has collectively decided to enhance protection along external borders, tackle migratory flows—along the Mediterranean route—and "further intensify their efforts to accelerate relocation" (European Commission Press Release Database, 2017).

In March 2017 the Council met in Brussels and, President Tusk notes that "the effective application of the principles of responsibility and solidarity remains a shared objective. The European Council calls for further efforts to rapidly deliver on all aspects of the comprehensive migration policy resilient to future crises" (European Council, 2017). The former response by President Tusk also reflects a call-for-action, as well as his yearning to aid the Commission's efforts in alleviating the crisis. With these conclusions, one can begin to see an increasing trend to deepen the dialogue of the ongoing crisis within the Council and alongside the Commission. However, as previously mentioned, many countries continue to remain reluctant to execute or aid in the crisis relief efforts.

5. EU-Turkey Dialogue

In an effort to halt the immigration flows into the EU via Turkey, the Commission continued to assert its power by striking up a deal with Turkey in November of 2015. According to the Commission, The EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan entails that 1) Turkey will accept the return of immigrants arriving on Greek shores (if they have failed to follow the necessary asylum procedures); 2) for every Syrian returned to Turkey the EU will resettle a Syrian; 3) the two entities will increase humanitarian relief in Syria; and 4) Turkey will increase their efforts to prevent immigrants from arriving via land or sea (European Commission Press Release Database, 2016). Pinar Gedikkaya Bal writes that in November 2015, the measure made its way to the Council—later gaining their endorsement. In other words, this deal was an effort to mend member states' relations with Turkey and decrease the amount of immigrants trying to enter the EU (Gedikkaya Bal, 2016: 26). Greece, on the other hand, remains hesitant to send immigrants back to Turkey because they fear for their humanitarian rights back in Turkey. Nonetheless, the plan has proved to be a success in regards to lowering the amount of immigrants coming from Turkey to Greece. In sum, the Commission also adds that prior to the signing of the EU-Turkey deal it was estimated that 1,740 immigrants were crossing into Greece via the Aegean Sea every day, however after the implementation of the deal, that number lowered to 47 (European Commission on Representation in Ireland, 2017). This plan highlights a major shift in power to the Commission in trying to better tackle the immigration crisis. This program not only conveys a general consensus and concern among the 28 heads of state for the immigration crisis, it also reflects their willingness to solve the problem by solving the immigration imbalances along EU-Mediterranean borders.

6. Conclusion

The work of the Commission in controlling immigration has proved successful and abundant despite the constant gridlock and reluctance by some member states. The Commission's push towards a more supranational agenda has allowed it to reform and harmonize immigration policies, and it also reflects their acquisition of a more central role in addressing the crisis. Moreover, the response of the EU executive branch to intervene and establish specialized agencies, directives, and funds to address the immigration crisis reflects some level of solidarity with member states, as well as a yearning to re-establish a more stable union. If the EU wishes to embody a united and democratic front, then the Commission needs to continue to listen to and work diligently with member states. On the other hand, member states must also act more cooperatively with the Commission, by increasing their monetary assistance and accepting immigrant quotas.

The European immigration crisis continues to threaten the unity and stability of the European Union—the Schengen area, the single market, and member states' relations with one another. The crisis has also yielded much animosity and disagreement by nationalist parties. However, the work of the Commission has become increasingly evident due to their efforts to support countries receiving a high volume of immigrants—both directly and indirectly—monetarily and administratively. The evidence shows that although member states say that they want to help as many immigrants as possible, their reluctant and

polar efforts have proved otherwise. And although the rhetoric at the European Council embodies a progressive and unifying tone, its words are short-lived. Nonetheless, the efforts of all parties have still saved a plethora of immigrants, tested the strength of asylum and immigration policies, and led to many needed reforms of immigration and asylum policies. This migration crisis continues to test the EU's solidarity and policy effectiveness, as it raises questions of universal ethics, rights, and responsibilities.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Bibliography

Baczynska, G., 2017. Hungary, Slovakia challenges quotas on asylum-seekers at top EU court,
    Reuters,
    Web. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-slovakia-
    hungary-idUSKBN186222>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Branford, B. & Nowak, M., 2017. France elections: What makes Marine Le Pen far right?*,
    BBC*,
    Web. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38321401>
    [Accessed: February, 2017]

Chiriac, M., 2015. Romania Changes Heart on EU Refugee Quota, *Balkan Insight*, (BIRN)
    Web. Available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/romania-supports-now-eu-
    refugee-decision-09-23-2015>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Çifçi, A., Borocz, E., Calçada, M., Heine, T. & Ahmadov, T., 2011. The EU Humanitarian Aid
    Policies in the Context of The Libyan Crisis, (Syracuse University: Maxwell School of
    Citizenship and Public Affairs)
    Web. Available at: <http://classes.maxwell.syr.edu/PSC783/2011_Fall/WP3EU.pdf.>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Crisafia, A., Elliot, L. & Treanor, J., 2016. French PM Manuel Valls Says Refugee Crisis is
    Destabilising Europe, *The Guardian*,
    Web. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/22/french-pm-manuel-
    valls-says-refugee-crisis-is-destabilising-europe
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Dragostinova, T., 2016. 'Refugees or Immigrants? The Migration Crisis in Europe in Historical
    Perspective', *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, (Ohio State University &
    Miami University)
    Web. Available at: <http://origins.osu.edu/article/refugees-or-immigrants-migration-
    crisis-europe-historical-perspective>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Dearden, L., 2017. Refugee crisis: more than 200 migrants drown and freeze to death as first
    fortnight of 2017 sets new record, *The Independent*,
    Web. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-
    latest-drowning-freezing-snow-mediterranean-hypothermia-greece-bulgaria-deaths-toll-
    a7532091.html>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Dunai, M., 2017. Hungary builds new high-tech border fence - with few migrants in sight,
    Reuters,
    Web. Available at:
    <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-hungary-fence-idUSKBN1692MH>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

Ekelund, H., 2014. 'The Establishment of FRONTEX: A New Institutionalist Approach',
    Journal of European Integration, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 99-116.
    Available at: DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2013.809345

EUR-Lex, 2008. Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the of the Council of
    16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning
    illegally staying third-country nationals, (European Union)
    Web. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-
    content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32008L0115>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2017.
    Syrian Crisis Echo Fact Sheet,
    Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, 2016.
    EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis,
    Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-
    enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/madad_en>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2015. A European Agenda on
    Migration,
    Web. Available at:
    <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-
    agenda-migration/background-
    information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016a. European Solidarity: A Refugee
    Relocation System,
    Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-
    do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-
    information/docs/2_eu_solidarity_a_refugee_relocation_system_en.pdf>
    [Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016b. Annex 1: Relocations from
    Greece by 8 November 2016,

Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161109/annex_1_relocations_from_greece_08_11_2016_en.pdf>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016c. Annex 2: Relocations from Italy by 8 November 2016,
Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161109/annex_2_relocations_from_italy_08_11_2016_en.pdf>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2016d. Eighth report on relocation and resettlement,
Web. Available at:
<https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161208/eighth_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017a. Common European Asylum System,
Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017b. Refugee Fund,
Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/refugee-fund_en>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Migration and Home Affairs, 2017c. Relocation and Resettlement - State of Play,
Web. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170516_update_of_the_factsheet_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission on Representation in Ireland, 2017. Migration,
Web. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/key-eu-policy-areas/migration_en>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission Press Release Database, 2013. A Common European Asylum System,
Web. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-532_en.htm>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission Press Release Database, 2015. Refugee Crisis: European Commission

takes decisive action - Questions and answers,

Web. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5597_en.htm>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission Press Release Database, 2016. EU-Turkey Statement: Questions and Answers,

Web. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_en.htm>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Commission Press Release Database, 2017. Relocation and Resettlement: Member States need to build on encouraging results,

Web. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-218_en.htm>

[Accessed: February, 2017]

European Council, 2014. Council conclusions on migration in EU development cooperation,

Web. Available at:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/146182.pdf.

[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Council, 2015a. Council conclusions on Syria,

Web. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/10/12-fac-conclusions-syria>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Council, 2015b. Valletta Summit on migration, 11-12/11/2015,

Web. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/11-12/>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

European Council, 2017. Conclusions by the President of the European Council, 9 March 2017,

Web. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/09-conclusion-pec/>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Eurostat, 2015. Asylum applicants by citizenship till 2007 Annual data (rounded),

Web. Available at:

<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyctz&lang=en>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Eurostat, 2017a. Asylum and first time applicants by citizenship, age, and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded),

Web. Available at:

<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en>

[26 April 2017]

Eurostat, 2017b. 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2016,

Web. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7921609/3-16032017-BP-EN.pdf/e5fa98bb-5d9d-4297-9168-d07c67d1c9e1>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Eurostat, 2017c. EU Member States granted protection to more than 700,000 asylum seekers in 2016,

Web. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8001715/3-26042017-AP-EN.pdf/05e315db-1fe3-49d1-94ff-06f7e995580e>

[Accessed: April, 2017]

Fandrich, P. & Fargues, P., 2014. 'The European Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis What Next?', *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies*, (European University Institute)

Web. Available at: http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/24836/MPC_RR2012-14.pdf?sequence=1&is

Allowed=y

[Accessed: May, 2017]

FRONTEX, 2015. Annual Risk Analysis 2015, (European Union)

Available from DOI 10.2819/95629.

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Geddes, A. & Scholten P., 2016. The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe, *Sage Politics Texts*, (SAGE)

Web. Available at:

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=tRB4DAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=negative+effects+of+european+immigrant+integration&ots=TYY8XlWc8m&sig=z8465jxeyc7ODYKv_b_BpZdRpec#v=snippet&q&f=false>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Gedikkaya Bal, P., 2016. 'The Effects of the Refugee Crisis on the EU-Turkey Relations: The Readmission Agreement and Beyond', *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 12, no. 8, pp. 14-35.

Available at: DOI: 10.19044/esj.2016.v12n8p14.

[Accessed: May, 2017]

International Organization for Migration, 2016. Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 300, 450; Deaths at Sea: 3,501,

Web. Available at: <www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-300450-deaths-sea-350>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Kozak, C., 2015. Middle East Security Report 26: "An Army in All Corners" Assad's Campaign Strategy in Syria, *Institute for the Study of War*

Web. Available at:

<http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/An%20Army%20in%20All%20Corners%20by%20Chris%20Kozak%201.pdf>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Keith, F., 2015. Europe - Germany and the Migrant Crisis
Web. Available at:
<books.google.com/books?id=HxQeDQAAQBAJ&pg=PT10&lpg=PT10&dq=unfeasible,+unrealisable+and+nonsense%E2%80%9D,+Hungary%27s+foreign+minister&source=bl&ots=-AcDyhzNXm&sig=EbWKQAmf5QvNwqHmwlTXADwr72o&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwic3-D62uHRAhUnrVQKHa1qDkYQ6AEIPjAG#v=onepage&q&f=falSe>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Koopmans, R., 2010. 'Trade Offs between Equality and Difference: Immigrant Integration, Multiculturalism, and the Welfare State in Cross-National Perspective', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 1-26,
Available at: DOI: 10.1080/13691830903250881
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Maxwell, R., 2010. 'Evaluating Migrant Integration: Political Attitudes Across Generations in Europe', *International Migration Review*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 25-52,
Available at: DOI: 10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00797.x.
[Accessed: May, 2017]

McCormick, J. & Olsen, J., 2014. The European Union: Politics and Policies, *Westview*,
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Mulvey, G., 2015. 'European Futures: Britain's Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Mediterranean', *University of Edinburgh*,
Web. Available at: <http://www.europeanfutures.ed.ac.uk/article-2449>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Open Society Foundation, 2016. Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union,
Available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylu-european-union>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Papademetriou, T., 2016. Refugee Law and Policy: European Union, *Library of Congress*,
Web. Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/europeanunion.php>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Poushter, J., 2016. European opinions of the refugee crisis in 5 charts, *Pew Research Center*,
Web. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts/>
[Accessed: May, 2017]

Strickland, P., 2016. Refugee crisis: Hungary sends more troops to border, *Al-Jazeera*,

Web. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/refugee-crisis-hungary-sends-troops-border-160309134453267.html>

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Unattributed, 2015. Juncker on Development: No Change in Commission's Migration Agenda, *euBulletin,*

Web. Available at:

http://www.eubulletin.com/4589-juncker-on-development-no-change-in-commissions-migration-agenda.html.

[Accessed: May, 2017]

Unattributed, 2016. The Latest: Slovak prime minister says integrating migrants is 'impossible.', *U.S. News & World Report,*

Web. Available at: https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-01-07/the-latest-norway-received-31-

000-asylum-seekers-in-2015.

[Accessed: May, 2017]

UN Refugee Agency, 2016. Survivors report massive loss of life in latest Mediterranean Sea tragedy,

Web. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/57177c199.html>

[Accessed: May, 2017]