

The European Migration Crisis: What's Next?

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10:30-11:50am Room 206 Olson

12-1:30, Room 2102 SSH (ARE Conference Room)

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The European Union's 28 member nations received over 1.2 million applications for asylum in 2015, including a million in Germany and 200,000 in Sweden. The US, by comparison, had about 25,000 asylum applicants in FY13. Refugees are persons outside their country of citizenship unable to return because of persecution, while asylum seekers travel to the country in which they seek refuge and ask for temporary or permanent immigrant status to start anew.

About 40 percent of EU asylum seekers were from Syria, followed by applicants from Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq, and Albania. There are about four million Syrians outside Syria, including half in Turkey, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel's announcement in September 2015 that Syrians could apply for asylum in Germany even if they passed through safe countries en route, disregarding the Dublin Regulation that asylum seekers must apply for refuge in the first safe country they reach. Many Syrians responded by using small boats to travel from Turkey to nearby Greek islands, and from there by ferry to Athens and then via the Balkans and Austria and Hungary to Germany. On September 12, 2015, over 10,000 migrants arrived in Munich.

As the number of migrants rose, German states and cities scrambled to register, house and feed, and integrate migrants, who can normally work three months after applying for asylum. Germany, Sweden, and other governments changed their policies to slow the influx, saying that asylum seekers will receive only temporary protected status and that they will not be able to unify their families.

EU leaders struggled for more durable solutions, including the development of a larger Frontex Border Patrol to intervene in "hot spots" to discourage migrant smuggling and adopting plans to redistribute 160,000 migrants arriving in front-line states such as Greece and Italy to other EU member states. The EU promised money to African countries and Turkey to improve care for migrants there so they do not feel compelled to migrate to the EU, and to prosecute the smugglers who move many migrants into the EU.

The EU's migration crisis raises many issues, including:

1. How successful are EU institutions known by the name of the cities in which agreements were forged such as Dublin and Schengen when confronted with mass migration?
2. Europe is the continent of migration, with 10 percent of the world's people but a third of the world's international migrants. Many European countries have shrinking populations and labor forces. Should Europe welcome migrants to prevent populations from shrinking? If yes, should European countries select migrants or should migrants select destinations?
3. What happens next? The EU confronted several tough challenges in 2015, including dealing with Russian intervention in Ukraine and the Greek debt crisis. Is the answer ever-closer-union, meaning that EU nation states give up more power to Brussels, or more subsidiarity, meaning that nation states are the key actors making decisions?