

**Committee/Council: Security Council**

**Issue: Refugee Crisis in the Mediterranean area**

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## Introduction



Over the past few months a lot of tension has built up concerning the migrants that flee from their homelands to reach countries of the European Union. The truth is, however, that the EU has been the desirable destination for decades. What is the main passage? The Mediterranean. Only during the first six months of 2015 around 137,000 migrants have been counted trying to pass through the Mediterranean, while in the January-June period of 2014 the same rate was around 75,000. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 2,600 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean waters on their way to reach the EU, mainly from Greece and Italy. Although this route is proven to be the world's deadliest migration route, an increasing number of people are taking this highly dangerous journey trying to improve their standards of life.

*“You have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.”*

-Warsan Shire, Somali-British poet

War, persecution, natural disasters. All these are factors that have been forcing

millions of people to flee from their homes to seek a better future. Once they leave, they become an extremely important issue for the international community, due to the lack of absorption capacities from the host regions. This document will provide you with the basic information concerning the ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean area.

## **Definition of Key-Terms**

### Refugee

A refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.", according to the 1951 Refugee Convention by The UN Refugee Agency. It shall not be confused with an immigrant.

### Economic Immigrant

Economic Immigrant is the most common differentiation of immigrants. It is someone who changes his/her location for economic reasons. He doesn't feel satisfied with the opportunities provided by his own country and tries to find a better standard of living elsewhere.

### Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

An IDP is someone who has been forced to leave their own house, but, in comparison to a refugee, he stays within the borders of his country.

### Migrant

A migrant is basically a person who has left his own country and lives –either temporally or permanently- in a different one.

## **Background Information**

### Causes of the crisis

The number of migrants and asylum seekers has significantly increased over the years due to the situation in the countries of origin, the geopolitical conditions, the EU

policy and the countries of transit. More specifically:

### Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a wave of anti-government revolutions, demonstrations, riots and armed conflicts that took place in the Arab world, starting around January 2011. This movement aimed at ending the government's corruption and oppression and moving towards democracy and freedom. The aftermath of the Arab Spring, however, was not that positive.



The consequences of the Arab Spring were much greater than the little change it brought in. Civil wars, political and economic instability were the main results, despite the high hopes by the instigators.

As a result millions of refugees have fled the regions affected, like Syria, Afghanistan and Libya.

### The access to Europe

The migration rates were extremely high for the capabilities of Macedonia. Consequently, its government passed a law that allows asylum seekers 72 hours to pass through the country by legal means (public transportation etc.). Turkey is more easily accessible for the eastern countries, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Additionally the route from Turkey to Greece is far shorter and safer, than the one from Libya to Italy. However, up until that time, the route through the Balkans was very complicated. After these measures by Macedonia, the route

practically opened up, making the way to Europe easier.



### The reduction of the price

As mentioned before, the sea route from Turkey to Greece is much shorter and therefore less expensive. According to people planning to migrate, following this crossing, the price has been reduced by ca. \$3,000.

### The weather

It has been proven historically, that in the second half of the year and especially over the summer months, the rates of crossings remarkably increase. During that time the sea routes are safer, due to the mild climate of the area. Many people, who

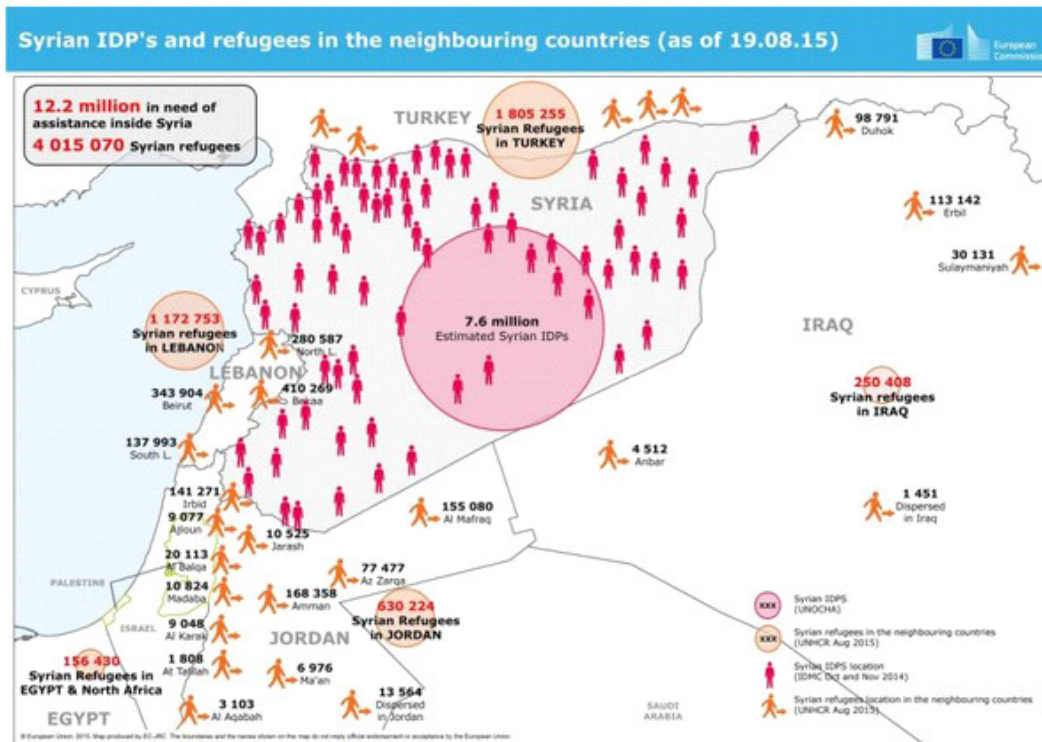
want to get to Europe, are trying to complete the journey, before the cold weather sets in.

### The European Union's policy

Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, the EU is trying to build its own Common European Asylum System

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Syria



The civil war in Syria has caused an estimated 9 million people being displaced, since 2011, according to the UN refugee agency. “This is the biggest refugee population from a single conflict in a generation,” António Guterres, says the UN's high commissioner for refugees. Camps in the neighboring countries, such as Turkey, or Jordan are not in the position to absorb this amount of asylum seekers. Therefore, an ever-growing number of refugees are heading towards Europe and especially Germany.

## Greece

Since this January, Greece has faced a dramatic increase of the arrival of asylum seekers. Until August almost 124,000 refugees have crossed into Greece, according to the UNHCR. Most of them are coming from Syria and, secondly, from Afghanistan. Due to its financial situation, Greece is not the final destination of the refugees. However it remains the passage to their new life. The migrants are usually entering the EU through the eastern Greek Aegean islands, and in particular Lesbos, Kos and Chios. Up to 1000 refugees per day arrive in Lesbos, causing problems for the local economy.

## Turkey

More than 1 million Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey since 2011. The country can no longer accommodate the rates of migrants coming. The government-run camps are already full with people mainly from Syria. Therefore, the seekers continue their journey, most of the times, heading to Europe. Apart from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea hold a significant percentage of the nationalities arriving in Europe by sea.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



## Frontex

After the incorporation of the Schengen cooperation<sup>1</sup> in 1999, the European Council worked towards the strengthening of the EU's cooperation concerning the following issues: "Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events" migration, asylum and security. That led to the foundation of the External Border Practitioners Common Unit, which coordinated seven

Ad-Hoc Centres on Border Control. These were:

- Risk Analysis Centre (Helsinki, Finland)
- Centre for Land Borders (Berlin, Germany)
- Air Borders Centre (Rome, Italy)
- Western Sea Borders Centre (Madrid, Spain)
- Ad-hoc Training Centre for Training (Traiskirchen, Austria)
- Centre of Excellence (Dover, United Kingdom)
- Eastern Sea Borders Centre (Piraeus, Greece)

Two years later the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) was established, aiming at the improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Common Unit.

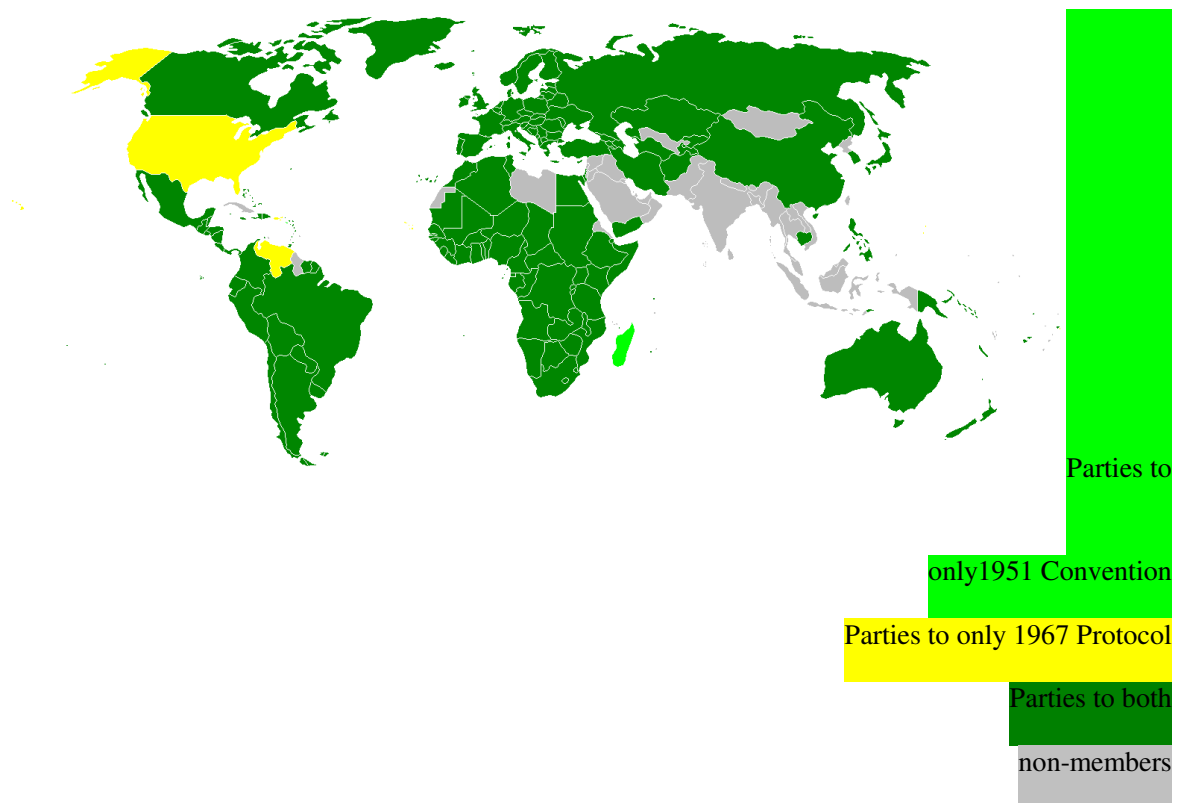
### Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
January 2011- October 2013	Arab Spring
3. September 2015	Aylan Kurdi, aged three, found dead on a Turkish beach

### Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

## The 1951 Refugee Convention

The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as “The 1951 Refugee Convention”, is a document that defines the term “refugee”, the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of the states. The Convention restricted the application of the Convention to cases caused by events occurring in Europe before January 1st, 1951. These geographical and time limits were however removed by the 1967 Protocol. Up until today this Convention and its Protocol are considered the only international framework covering the most considerable aspects of the refugees' life.



(See the complete text here: <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html> )

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Emergency Funds by Germany

## Possible Solutions



It is extremely hard for us to deal with different cases of people suffering. We surely feel anger and repulse seeing images of little children being washed up by the sea, like in the case of Aylan Kurdi. However, we have to realize that unfortunately we are not dealing only with Aylan, but with an enormous, constantly growing number of people trying- or being forced- to move to a foreign country. The following are suggestions that could be implemented:

- One common European law for migrant asylum should be created, so that the conditions for an asylum status are the same for all member states.
- The European Refugee Fund should be used to create an efficient infrastructure in all the states equally, so that the legal immigrants and refugees can be fairly distributed throughout Europe.
- Also, a common system of management of the borders should be created. The security measures, that of course must respect the international law and the Human Rights Declaration, should be predefined for all countries. Due to the urgency of the events, you should by no means restrict your research only to this document!



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