

“The current refugee crisis: lessons from the past and ways or policies to confront them, according to the European Union framework”

by **Konstantina Aikaterini Papageorgaki**

A Thesis submitted to:

The Department of Balkan, Slavic & Oriental Studies &

The Department of International & European Studies

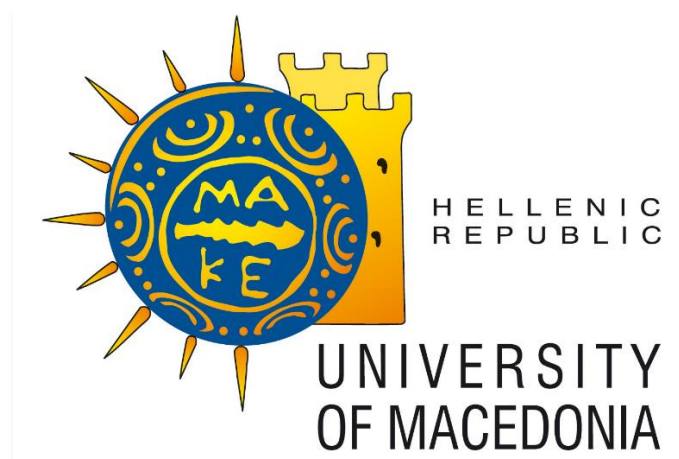
University of Macedonia

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in Human Rights and Migration Studies

Supervisor: Christos Nikas, Associate Professor

Examiner: Apostolos Kiohos, Associate Professor



Thessaloniki, September 2022

“I hereby declare that all the data used in this thesis, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above-mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work”.

Konstantina Aikaterini Papageorgaki

Handwritten signature of Konstantina Aikaterini Papageorgaki, consisting of stylized initials 'KA' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Acknowledgments

Working on this thesis on the matters of refugee crises and human rights helped me understand how privileged I am, when at the same time people suffer all around the world and fight even for their existence. Therefore, I feel deeply grateful for the help and the support of my supervisor professor Mr. Christos Nikas. His continuous guidance and advice, in combination with his enlightening instructions helped me, complete this fruitful dissertation. Thanks to the patience and accurate remarks of my professor, this thesis developed into an interesting research. My attendance at the MA in *Human Rights and Migration Studies* has helped me to develop as a person, has broadened my horizons, has completely changed my way of thinking, and has inspired me to focus on my target to help as many people who are in need as possible, throughout my life. My dedication to this life goal to help all kind of vulnerable people has always been supported by my family and especially my parents, who have been motivated me throughout this journey. They have encouraged me and provided psychological support, during this challenging work, as they always do, in every aspect of my life. Thank you all.

Abstract

There have been many flows during the last centuries and humanity has reacted in various ways. The refugee crisis which characterizes the 21st century is the exodus of Syrians, due to their civil war. In this thesis the main research objective is the study of the recent and phenomenal refugee crisis in Europe since 2015, its complexity and its main characteristics, the causes that led to this crisis and the consequences to the financial and social status of Europe. The comprehension of an exodus is analyzed in the following study, after long research of other movements in the past, where people migrated for diverse reasons. Although, in many cases the causes are common, the main reason is survival. It is important to understand by a sociological perspective that in any civilization and era, people react to oppression and support each other, in order to survive. Therefore, this dissertation renders some other flows to be critically examined and viewed in order to understand the complexity of migration and the consequences of each exodus to humans and society. Nonetheless, people will always try to improve their living conditions or secure their lives when in need and in these cases, migration will always be the solution. However, humanity will always respond to such refugee massive flows, even if it is not always prepared to manage such unexpected crises.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Abstract.....	4
List of Acronyms-Abbreviations	7
Introduction.....	8
1. Historic background: 3 main migratory flows during the second half of the 20 th century	10
1.1 The Cuban migration: The Mariel Exodus 1980	10
1.1.1 The financial and political status in Cuba.....	11
1.1.2 The Mariel boatlift	12
1.1.3 Marielitos	14
1.1.4 Haitian “boat people”	15
1.1.5 Cuban communities in USA (Florida).....	16
1.2 The mass exodus from Albania: Vlora Ship 1991	17
1.2.1 The financial and political status in Albania.....	17
1.2.2 Vlora ship.....	18
1.2.3 Italian reaction to Albanian exodus	20
1.2.4 European reaction to Albanian exodus	21
1.2.5 The pyramid scheme crisis: 1996-1997.....	22
1.3 Kosovo refugee crisis 1999	22
1.3.1 The financial and political status in Kosovo	23
1.3.2 The Exodus of Kosovars	24
1.3.3 UNHCR’s and IOM’s response.....	26
1.3.4 The conditions inside the camps	27
2. The refugee crisis of 2015	28
2.1 Definitions and clarifications.....	28
2.2 Syrian Civil War	30
2.3 The “Hotspot approach”	31
2.3.1 The policy framework.....	31
2.3.2 The EU-Turkey Statement implementation affects “hotspots”.....	32
2.3.3 The case of Greece	33
2.3.4 Vulnerable people.....	34
2.3.5 Varying timelines for asylum seekers.....	35
2.3.6 Detention in Hotspots	36

2.3.7 The “danger” of rejection.....	36
2.3.8 Conditions inside the Greek Hotspots	37
2.3.9 Females’ dangers inside the camps	39
2.3.10 Education for minor asylum seekers.....	40
2.3.11 Criticizing the laws	41
3. Actions, results, and consequences of 2015 crisis	42
3.1 Statistics and reasons of 2015 refugee crisis	42
3.2 The EU-Turkey Statement.....	43
3.2.1 What is the EU-Turkey Statement about	44
3.2.2 EU-Turkey Statement practical implications and results	45
3.2.3 Criticizing the EU-Turkey Statement	47
3.2.4 Possible solutions and improvements of the Statement.....	48
3.3 Non-Governmental Organizations	49
3.3.1 NGOs and their contribution.....	50
3.3.2 NGOs and UNHCR on Lesbos.....	51
Conclusion	56
Bibliography	59

List of Acronyms-Abbreviations

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme
EU	European Union
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
FSA	Free Syrian Army
HEP	Humanitarian Evacuation Programme
HR360	HumanRights360
HTP	Humanitarian Transfers Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	International Protection Act
ISIS	Islamic State
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
WWBT	When We Band Together

Introduction

This dissertation is on the diachronic movements of people as refugees in the beginning and emigrants eventually. The study will start by presenting some major migratory flows, since 1980. The historic background and the reasons of the flows in Cuba, Albania, Kosovo, and the Mediterranean refugee crises are the main objectives, which are entirely examined, as well as the results and the outcome of each exodus.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine some main historic migration flows both in America and Europe, which influenced the world, socially, politically, and culturally in the 20th and 21st century. In particular, this study examines the reasons and the results of refugee crises, the attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers by modern society, their legal status, the political handling of the situation and their living conditions during and after these emergency situations. To better understand the exodus of 2015, it is advisable to examine past major migratory flows and their unique characteristics that are presented in this work and estimate the conclusions that occurred from the historical facts.

In the first subchapter, the Cuban exodus will be presented and analyzed. The historical background, the political and financial situation will be discussed, in order to comprehend the reasons that led Cubans to the Mariel boatlift in 1980. The Marielitos and Haitians sought freedom and security in the USA and created the modern Cuban communities in Florida. Their movement characterized the era after the second World War and had a great influence on the American society. In the second subchapter, the subject is the Albanian mass exodus, which happened 1991, because of the political and financial status in the country and the following pyramid scheme crisis, which are presented on a great scale, in order to help the reader, understand the facts that led the Albanians into a mass flow by Vlora ship. The hope of the Albanians died after the treatment they received by the Italians and the European Union in general. The third major flow occurred after the Kosovo War, which led to the refugee crisis in 1999 and the great exodus of Kosovars. This movement was characterized by the targeting of the Ethnic Albanians and the attempt for their genocide by Serbian Army. The consequences of this war had great influence globally and consisted the major flow in the beginning of the millennium.

In the second chapter the civil war in Syria will be examined, therefore, a presentation of the previous historical and political conditions will also be analyzed. Syria is a country where the unemployment, the suppression of the regime, in combination with the great drought led Syrians to migrate after the destructive civil war broke out. Thousands of people tried to find a safe place in Europe mostly via Turkey, when unfortunately, smugglers took advantage of them leading them by thousands to the Aegean islands. In many cases the route was not safe, and the boats were in bad condition that ended in shipwrecks and many people lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea. The people who reached the Greek islands were initially hosted in “hotspots” but after the EU-Turkey Statement when the conditions changed, they became “trapped” in the camps. One basic part of this chapter will be the “hotspot approach”, which was one of the main policies that the European Union followed, in order to control the refugee crisis, which occurred in Greece. The conditions inside these centers will also be analyzed and their functioning according to the asylum Law 4686/2020, its amendment and Law 4375/2016, and the criticism of these laws. The dissertation is also about the living conditions and the detention they face in the camps, in combination with the rejection they might receive, instead of an asylum. The place of women, unaccompanied minors, and the danger they deal with, will also be presented and some testimonies are included to justify the challenges. A spotlight will be set on matters of education for refugee children at the end of the chapter. Parts of the study about hotspots have been based on my unpublished academic essay, which is titled *“Discuss the 4636/2019 Asylum Law and Law 4486/2020 in Greece and whether it is in conformity with the EU policy for hotspots”*, from the course *EU Migration, Asylum and Refugee Policies*.

In the third and last chapter, the consequences of the crisis of 2015, the actions and the results will be the main topics of discussion. Especially, the EU-Turkey Statement, its implementation, and the results of its use are analyzed. A short criticism on the Statement will also be provided and some possible solutions or improvements of it are also a major part of this chapter. Last but not least, Non-Governmental Organizations have a great contribution which will be presented and especially on Lesbos Island. UNHCR and volunteers’ help is crucial until today for the survival of vulnerable groups. However, there is a conclusion which criticizes both their humanitarian aspect and the attitude towards refugees who are still “fighting” for their survival.

1. Historic background: 3 main migratory flows during the second half of the 20th century

Since the beginning of human civilization there have always been refugee flows all over the globe. During the last century, there have been several migratory waves for reasons of religion, national, racial, and political matters. War, sexual-orientation or gender, hunger, and climate change have also been the other major reasons for human movement. The most important flows that are examined in this chapter, are these of the Cuban, Albanian and Kosovar flees. The examined countries had common characteristics of political, social, and financial conditions, which led to suppression and forced these nations to flee to other countries. Their struggle for survival has been subject to huge admiration, since most of these people were able to survive under awful conditions and in some cases, they even achieved to repatriate. The refugees of these three major waves, which characterized the second half of the 20th century, were also supported by organizations for the human rights and other countries, which tried to save as many human lives as possible. Marielitos and Haitians, the Vlora people and Kosovars were severely tested, in order to preserve their lives under suppression, violence and war. All these people, who managed to flow to other countries, were unwelcome, and they were treated as unwanted in the hosting countries, which made their survival even worst, due to stereotypes and social stigma. The only exception were the Kosovars who arrived in Canada, where Canadians and volunteers hugged them and helped them to recover and then repatriate. Unfortunately, not all the cases were successful, and many people lost their lives during these flows. Migration is a matter that troubles humanity in our days as well, but there are hopes that in the future there will not be such problems for the human race.

1.1 The Cuban migration: The Mariel Exodus 1980

The Mariel Boatlift, which was a mass migration flow for 125,000 Cubans, occurred in 1980, due to the oppression by Fidel Castro's regime. The suppression and bad

financial conditions made the working class seek for better life and opportunities to immigrate in order to escape from this hostile environment (Glass, 2018). Some Cubans invaded to the Peruvian Embassy in a bus, so as to seek asylum in Havana. The situation which occurred was unpredictable for Castro's government and although he attempted to sabotage the incident, it turned out as an opportunity for the asylum seekers. Fidel Castro had no option but to allow them to emigrate to the United States of America and dispose of the people who were against his regime (Clark, 1991; History.com Editors, 2009). He also exploited the opportunity to dispose of those who were characterized as marginal and "dangerous" for the society, such as inmates, ex-prisoners, homosexuals, sex workers, among them he also forced mental ill people, whom he forced to board on the vessels, although they had no connections or relatives to the States (Florida Memory, 2017). This exodus also gave the chance to 25,000 Haitians to claim the same rights as the Cubans, who also suffered by Jean-Claude Duvalier's dictatorship (Stephens, 2021). Therefore, this was one of the most important migration waves which happened during the second half of the 20th century and became the largest Cuban' exodus towards the United States (Clark, 1991).

1.1.1 The financial and political status in Cuba

Fidel Castro overthrew the America supported Dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959 after the Cuban Revolution and established a new communist regime. This led to an American trade embargo in 1962 and the pressure from the American trade slowly dissolved the commercial support of the Soviet Union. The financial crisis which occurred by this situation caused the first migration flows (Carrillo, 2020). In 1961 thousands of Cubans connected to Batista, migrated to the United States in fear of being aimed by Castro. President John. F. Kennedy supported the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program, to allow access to health, education, and occupation to Cuban migrants (Florida Memory, 2017). By 1978 over 700,000 Cuban refugees were characterized as political asylum seekers and according to the conferences known as "dialogues" between the American and Cuban governments, some 100,000 were enabled to visit Cuba in the late 1970s, which raised pleas of even more Cubans to leave the country (Florida Memory, 2017). In 1980 President Carter signed the Refugee Act, which set

the guidelines for the relocation of migrants and refugees in the USA and set a limit of 50,000 people to enter the country by giving the authority to the president to raise the number for “humanitarian reasons” (Florida Memory, 2017).

This political and financial situation led a small group of dissidents to invade on a bus to the Peruvian Embassy in Havana via the main gate on 28th March 1980 (Clark, 1991). Some officers opened fire to the bus and one bullet ricocheted of the vehicle and killed police officer Pedro Ortiz Cabrera (Carrillo, 2020). The Cuban government asked for the extradition of the invaders in order to put them on trial for Cabrera’s death, but the Embassy refused and granted them political asylum (Clark, 1991). This trope infuriated Castro, who suspected that more dissidents would seek asylum and decided to withdraw the military forces from the Embassy. His intention was to overcrowd the place, creating chaos and several problems to the Embassy in matters of supplies and living conditions (Clark, 1991). During the following day 11,000 Cubans took the advantage to request asylum causing an embarrassing situation for the government and its total exposure to the rest of the world about the political and financial situation which characterized the country (Carrillo, 2020). This exposure caused Castro’s anger and his decision to allow their departure with his characterization as “social scum”. Most of these people belonged to the working-class and their removal to other Latin American countries would make obvious that they were the people who the Cuban Revolution should have supported, since they were both educated and of middle-class status (Clark, 1991). Castro realized that would cause an even worst situation for him and decided to give the opportunity to Cuban Americans to pick up their relatives in order to disorient the world’s attention. The port that was defined for the exodus was a small port near Havana called Mariel (History.com Editors, 2009).

1.1.2 The Mariel boatlift

Mariel is a small port 25 miles west of Havana and it is the place where the Exodus started, thus it is called the Mariel boatlift and the people who took part in the exodus were called Marielitos (Glass, 2018). After a few hours of Castro’s rescript, the first American Cubans made arrangements in order to buy or charter means of transport from native boat owners, such as shrimp and fishing vessels to transport their relatives

(Carrillo, 2020). On 21st April the first vessel transferred 48 Marielitos to Key West from Mariel and the Cuban migration started. On 25th April almost 300 boats docked Mariel port and, in a few months, almost 1,700 transfers had been completed (Florida Memory, 2017). Although the Cuban migration was immediate there was not any coordination between the American and Cuban Governments. Since there was not approval of the American governments for this migration, the refugees could be regarded as “illegal aliens” into America and could be prosecuted. They were people who had not been interviewed or been granted any visa or have any legal document to enter USA (Clark, 1991). Therefore, the procedures that should have been completed could not be conducted until refugees arrived in America and then they should be examined in order to receive permission to enter the United States (Clark, 1991). Castro took the advantage of the situation to get rid of all the “unwanted people” by forcing non-relatives to get boarded on the ships, these people were characterized as antisocial or “social burdens” for his government and the American Cuban relatives have no option but to accept this blackmail and transport them, so as to save their relatives. Most of the vessels were overloaded with people of various social status and the overloading of the vessels led to the death of seventeen immigrants on 27th May, when fourteen of them died when one of the vessels capsized (Duany, 2017; History.com Editors, 2009).

During the Mariel Exodus between April and October 1980, almost 124.799 Cubans migrated to the USA. According to the statistics of the State there was a flow of 7,655 in April, 86,488 in May , 20,800 in June , 2,629 in July, 3,939 in August, 3,258 in September and 10 in October (Clark, 1991). One percent of Cuban nation fled to the United States which made up the largest Cuban immigration to the USA. Since there was no previous immigration status such as interviews, visas, or any other type of documents from the USA, the Mariels were considered as aliens and were subject to deportation. The American government decided not to characterize them as refugees because they should provide financial assistance and political asylum to them. This was a threat to the federal government of the United States in fear of other countries large migration flows that might occurred (Clark, 1991). Therefore, the United States provided the parole status to the Cuban immigrants in order to conduct the appropriate interviews and registering until their classification as parolees or refugees (Clark, 1991). However, in 1984 according to the amendment of the *Cuban Adjustment Act* of 1966 Marielitos received “*permanent legal status*” (Florida Memory, 2017). Among

the immigrants the federals noted that one to four percent of the total number of Cubans, were characterized as criminals and dangerous for the American State. Upon 1990 the number of Marielitos who were imprisoned reached 5,000 and they were separated to four prison facilities as “unwanted” due to their mental illness, criminal record, or sexual preference (Clark, 1991). In October 1980 an agreement between the United States and Cuba was achieved to end the Exodus (History.com Editors, 2009).

1.1.3 Marielitos

The Mariel Exodus was the desperate movement of groups of Cubans who had relatives in the United States, and they were given the opportunity to flee in order to seek better living conditions (Perez, 2020). Florida was the main destination, since the first Cuban refugees had settled and had received the privileges by the USA government (Clark, 1991). People who took part in the Mariel Exodus, the so called Marielitos, were young, single workers, with some education. Almost twenty percent were black or “*mulatto*”, biracial, which was another reason to face racial discrimination. The major number were members of the working class, who had little training and little knowledge of the language (Duany, 2017; Florida Memory, 2017). Only people who had relatives in America, due to the previous migration flows, had the chance to be transferred to the States. Among these immigrants, who needed an economic opportunity and sought a political asylum in America, Castro forced other unrelated people to board on the ships. He called the homosexual people as “*scums*” or *peligrosidad* and considered them dangerous for the society (Duany, 2017). Because of this characterization and the stigma of homosexuality of the 80s, these Cubans faced discrimination and social challenges by the American society. Therefore, Marielitos were considered a “dangerous” minority and an invisible “enemy” which “threatened” Americans (Carrillo, 2020). There were other Cubans who were taken from prisons or psychiatric hospitals and some others were identified as sex workers (Duany, 2017; Carrillo, 2020). Although the media presented Cubans as dangerous, only two percent of the Marielitos were in fact criminals (Duany, 2017). Some of them who were imprisoned and called as *escoria* by Castro (Carrillo, 2020), were in fact political prisoners. They were considered antisocial and dissidents of the regime and “burdens”

of society who were serving in prison for civil or illegal terms. Some people suffered from mental illness and even some others were lepers (Clark, 1991; Carrillo, 2020). In comparison to the previous migration Cuban flows, Marielitos were low-waged migrants, in contrast to the previous ones who were primarily white, middle-aged, rich, and educated Cubans who had faced financial, social, or religious limitations and wanted to improve their income (Florida Memory, 2017; Duany, 2017).

Due to their incompetency and lack of high education, at first, they were unable to find well-paid jobs, thus they consisted the working class of Miami and they found occupation in low paid jobs (Duany, 2017). According to George Borjas who published a research on the influence that Marielitos had on low wages in comparison to native Miamians, of the same low education, labor workers in 1980, had a negative effect on the income (Nowrasteh, 2017). There was severe criticism on Borjas calculations since he did not include women, the right age groups, or the correct data sets. Therefore, other economists have proved that the wages experienced even increases for the native low-skilled Miamians, since the Marielitos arrived (Nowrasteh, 2017; Clemens, 2017). According to Clemens' research there was no change in the wages or the rates of unemployment, although there was an influx of labor force of newly arrived Cubans by 20% (Clemens, 2017). On the contrary, this Cuban wave had to tolerate with long periods of unemployment, low salaries and only the welfare compensations which remained their only income. Therefore, many of these people turned to crime in Miami and destroyed the reputation of Cuban Americans, which raised racism towards them by native Americans (Duany, 2017).

1.1.4 Haitian “boat people”

During the Marielitos flow into the United States, almost 25,000 Haitians tried to immigrate to America (Center for a free Cuba, 2020). There had been a previous attempt in 1970, when educated and middle-class Haitians migrated to the States by plane. When Castro ordered the Mariel Exodus, thousands of poor black Haitians sought asylum in order to set free from Jean-Claude Duvalier's regime. (Florida Memory, 2017) Since they were uneducated and of low-income working people, who used boats to enter the United States they were called Haitian “boat people”. President

Carter announced on 6th May that the area in Florida, which was mainly affected by the exodus, would accept those who needed asylum from “communist dictatorships” (Florida Memory, 2017). On 20th June the Cuban-Haitian entrant program was found in order to provide rights to them as refugees, to both Cuban and Haitian groups. The law Amendment in 1984 characterized the people from Haiti as economic and not as political refugees, therefore they could not remain in the country as refugees and were at risk to be deported. Another disadvantage was that those who were unemployed and uneducated, were also patients with HIV and had difficulty in finding jobs or being “socially accepted”. Most of them who lived in Florida were without employment and faced racial discrimination (Florida Memory, 2017). In contrast to the Marielitos, the “boat people” had a great difficulty to adjust to the American culture and community, because of their illiteracy and incompetence of learning the English language (Florida Memory, 2017; Glass, 2018).

1.1.5 Cuban communities in USA (Florida)

The Mariel Exodus was not the first attempt of immigration by Cubans to the USA. There had been some previous flows to the United States and the biggest was between December 1965 to April 1973, where 260,600 Cubans had moved to America (Duany, 2017). They were businessmen, officers, officials, and landowners who wanted to migrate for religious or political reasons, in fear of prosecution by the Batista’s regime. Since they were characterized as refugees by the American State, they received welfares and support by the government. They were well-educated, and of pale complexion, which helped them to be “accepted” by the society and they easily found jobs and created a Cuban community in Miami (Duany, 2017). When the Mariel Exodus occurred, they were the people who responded immediately in order to transfer their relatives in Florida. The Cuban American community volunteered and helped the local government agencies to place the first 2,000 refugees to be placed in America (Clark, 1991). Marielitos had no such characteristics as the previous Cubans, therefore, they were not characterized as refugees and did not receive the same benefits as the previous flows (Florida Memory, 2017). They were the reason for which the Cuban American community lost its identity and being stigmatized as criminals for the following years.

Although the early years were harsh for Marielitos during the next six years, they managed to improve their income, find better jobs and gradually to adjust in American way of life (Florida Memory, 2017).

1.2 The mass exodus from Albania: Vlora Ship 1991

The Albanian exodus in 1991, by Vlora ship, was one of the many flows of Albanians who tried to migrate to Italy. The living conditions in Albania back in the 90's were so miserable, after the fall of the communist regime. The economy had collapsed, and people suffered from starvation, therefore their only way out of this situation was the ideal chance to flow to Italy (Kabashi, 2021). The neighbor country seemed to be the perfect chance for a new life in Europe. Unfortunately, the forty years of closure by the regime made them believe what they watched on television, ignoring that the images were beyond reality. Italy was in no case prepared to accept thousands of refugees and the most characteristic flow of the era, which was the one by a cargo ship and was dealt with cruelty and repatriation for the majority of immigrants (Rowan, 2017). Italy supported Albania financially and with the help of the EU, with many other aids, in order to redeem itself for forcing them leave the country (Böhm, 1992).

1.2.1 The financial and political status in Albania

Albanian primary free elections took place in 1991, after the forty-five years of communist regime by Enver Hoxha (Mr. Mario I. Blejer, 1992). His communist dictatorship felt in 1990s and revealed the catastrophic financial and political conditions, which existed in Albania (Rare Historical Photos, 2021). The collapse of the Albania's pyramid scheme resulted in the distraction of the total situation in the country, which led to anarchy and almost a civil war (Jarvis, 2000). It caused the feeling of hopelessness and despair to people who looked for a way out of the country, abroad, since the opening of the borders (Rowan, 2017). During the year 1991, three coalition governments came to power and in December the democratic party members were in charge for the economic positions and policies. They introduced legislation on

economic reforms and tried to revive the financial status (Mr. Mario I. Blejer, 1992). Unfortunately, this policy was not successful and a declining by 24% in agriculture and 37% in industry brought domestic food shortages and the breakdown of the state. Therefore, an Albanian flow to Italy was inevitable, since a major food aid and commodity by the group of Twenty-Four was assisted, after the disbursement of the main sum by Italy (Mr. Mario I. Blejer, 1992).

Albania faced a long period of isolation and suppression, which in combination with the financial disaster and the political situation which had created a false hope to the citizens, who had viewed an ideal image of Italy, based on what they visualized on Italian television (Rowan, 2017; Frenzen, 2011). They believed that their migration to Italy would be a great chance for improvement in their lives abroad. Italy was the closest country, less than one hundred miles from the Albanian port, across the Strait of Otranto (Rowan, 2017). Another close destination was Greece and the at -the- time Yugoslavia (Exit Staff, 2020). Since people suffered from the great sock which was caused by the communist regime, hatred against the dictatorship, poverty and unemployment and great crime rates, the mass exodus in 1991 was one-way road for their salvation (Goxha, 2016). A great number of refugees flew to Italy in massive departures with the most desperate one, the case of Vlora, a cargo ship which became the symbol of the exodus (Goxha, 2016).

1.2.2 Vlora ship

On 7th August 1991, a cargo ship named “Vlora”, docked in the port of Durres from Cuba to repair its main engine. It was loaded with sugar. The motor was busted, and the vessel had to be unloaded and repaired. Thousands of desperate Albanians had reached the port of Durres, in order to find ways to migrate to Italy, to improve their living conditions (Rowan, 2017; Rare Historical Photos, 2021). When they saw the docked ship, they started boarding on Vlora, by climbing on the ropes, filling the ship at its maximum and some others were even hanging from the ladders. Almost 20,000 people were on board on Vlora and started their journey with only the auxiliary engines, with no radar and severely overloaded (Rowan, 2017). Some of these people were even armed and forced the captain of the ship Halim Milaqi to transport them to Italy (Rare

Historical Photos, 2021). He was also afraid of what might happen if he resisted, and the inexperienced crowd took over the ship. There was an incident with a father holding his four-month-old baby in the one hand and a knife on the other hand, who threatened the captain's life, when all of the sudden the engine stopped, due to the breakdown of the cooling system (Millefoglie, 2020). Because of the hot weather, the awful travelling conditions, and the cramped situation, some stowaways cut the cooling tubes of the vessel to drink water and the captain was forced to use sea water to avoid the melting of the engine (Rowan, 2017). Such incidents during the journey were in fact repeated, because of severe breakdowns and every single time this threatening behavior was performed by the refugees, from fear that the ship might return to Albania (Millefoglie, 2020).

They reached the port of Brindisi at 4 a.m., on 8th August and the police did not allow them to dock there. They changed their route and sailed to Bari, which was fifty-five miles away and because of the excess weight, it took them seven more hours to reach their destination (Exit Staff, 2020). After thirty-six long hours without any nutrition or water, they reached Bari and the Italian government refused to give them the permission to dock in the port. (Rowan, 2017). Apart from their physical suffering, there were also injured people on board, because of the despicable conditions. Captain Milaqi refused to turn back to its original destination. He also insisted that the damage of the engine would never allow them to return to Albania. Thus, Italy gave permission for the Vlora to dock at a pier, where people usually unloaded coal (Rowan, 2017).



Source: Rare Historical Photos: Albanian refugees arriving in Italy, 1991

Retrieved from: <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/albanian-refugees-italy-1991>

1.2.3 Italian reaction to Albanian exodus

The Italian government had to act quickly, since many refugees jumped into the sea, the moment they saw the shore. So, the Italian officers made it clear that all the people on Vlora, should remain on the ship and being transferred back to Albania, as soon as possible. However, some Albanians suffered from dehydration, sunstroke and some women who were pregnant, had to receive medical care in a hospital (Exit Staff, 2020). There were also old people and young children on board, therefore after such exhaustion they desperately needed any type of care (Millefoglie, 2020). Since some people were transferred to hospitals and others had escaped into the city, the rest of them were transferred to the stadium of “*Stadio della Vittoria*”, till their repatriation to Albania (Rare Historical Photos, 2021). The Italian officers tried to put them in lines, especially young children, and women to share them food and water, but some people reacted angrily after all this exhaustion and violent incidents followed between the refugees and the police officers (Smith, 2015; Rowan, 2017).

The situation turned into chaos and the police decided to lock the doors and drop the food by helicopter (Millefoglie, 2020). At night, the immigrants realized that the plan of the government was to send them back to Albania and some caused a riot, which led to collision with the police forces, in order to escape (Rare Historical Photos, 2021). Some Albanian refugees were equipped with weapons and the police also used force and guns, causing severe injuries to some of them. The next day almost 3,000 refugees attempted to escape and 200 succeeded to break free (Exit Staff, 2020). The police took the rest of them back to the port because things worsened in the stadium and on 9th August, they started sending them back to their country of origin. The Italian authorities lied that the refugees would be transferred to other cities, where in fact they were exiled. They gave them new clothes and 50,000 lire, which is in exchange 40 American dollars if they accepted to go back to Albania. Some of them decided to return home on their will, disappointed by the hostile environment in the receiving country. It was not a very tempting offer and the immigrants refused it. Therefore, the government forced them

to leave Italy (Böhm, 1992; Exit Staff, 2020). Italy sent financial and emergency assistance to Albania in the following days, after the immigrants' repatriation, which reached 9 million euros. Migration did not stop, and some outlaw gangs continued to help people enter Italy and the government put all the ports under military supervision, in order to control the illegal flows in the country (Exit Staff, 2020). All in all, the Italian government came to an agreement with the Albanian government to cooperate and stop any possible attempt for illegal immigration. Italian policy was based on direct exile for immigrants, rapid supervision of the coast, instant help, and any form of aid to Albania and the necessary implication of Europe to find a solution for the Albanian exodus (Goxha, 2016).

1.2.4 European reaction to Albanian exodus

Since Albania had been excluded from the rest of the world for more than forty years, Europe had ignored this country and had also accepted its isolation. When the exodus took place, it was more than clear that Albanians wish to unite with Europe and take part in European lifestyle (Böhm, 1992). Italian authorities who faced the problem of the Albanian flee, had every legal right to send the immigrants, back as soon as possible. The way this repatriation happened, was severely criticized by the European media and European Union. Therefore, an immediate assistance of European organizations took place to support Italy in order to control this crisis. IOM and UNHCR cooperated with the Italian Red Cross, in order to organize voluntary repatriation (Böhm, 1992; Frenzen, 2011). Almost 1,130 Albanian refugees returned to their country via a scheme which was financially supported by Italy. Some programs that were established by EU, for instance "*Emergency aid to Albania and Demosthenes programme*" (Böhm, 1992), had the aim not only to help the Albanians, but also to reform legislation, help people being educated and organize local communities, which was in fact the necessary help from Europe (Böhm, 1992).

1.2.5 The pyramid scheme crisis: 1996-1997

After the collapse of communism in Albania, a new form of government was in charge, which allowed a new financial scheme to appear in the country. The Ponzi or Pyramid scheme is the case where investors are promised to receive remarkable returns of their investments (Thanasi and Riotto, 2017). This business model would provide great earnings in short time and especially when an investor, who had the right to enter a franchise scheme or recruit others in this promising growth (Culture Trip Editors, 2017). The funds were actually divided with investors of higher levels in this pyramid. Many people sold their houses, whereas others sold their livestock in order to have the chance to multiply their capitals (Jarvis, 2000). After a few years, this capitalist dream led to a financial catastrophe with many of these companies claiming bankruptcy and leaving citizens with no money. Although in 1996 the IMF and the World Bank had warned the Albanian government, Sali Berisha and his party neglected the warning, which helped them in the forthcoming elections and gave him the majority of votes (Culture Trip Editors, 2017). In 1997 the dream turned into a nightmare and led to protests, collisions with military and police forces, violence, and anarchy. Eventually the whole situation led to a civil war, with even more people flowing to other countries (Jarvis, 2000; Culture Trip Editors, 2017).

1.3 Kosovo refugee crisis 1999

The greatest exodus of the second half of the 20th century, which stigmatized Europe happened in Kosovo, an area in Serbia which was part of FRY. The ethnic Albanians who lived in Kosovo declared their independence from Serbia, after the death of Josip Broz Tito (Kushner, 1999). Tito had provided increased autonomy to the Kosovo and de facto veto power towards Yugoslav federation (Haxhiaj and Milica, 2020). In 1998, they formed the KLA and then conflicts, and violent clashes started with the army and the police. The Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic did not recognize their autonomy and faced the crisis with brutal attacks and NATO bombarded the area, in order to bring peace again and put an end to the ethnic cleansing of Kosovars (Kushner, 1999; United Nations, n.d). This war led to the largest exodus in history of Europe after the World

War II, with more than 1 million refugees and the death of more than 13,000 people (Agence France-Presse, 2017). Ethnic Albanians fled, with the help of UNHCR and IOM, to the countries around Kosovo, many of them were transported overseas and some others became internally displaced. The repatriation started after the end of war in June 1999 (United Nations, n.d). On 17th February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia and since then ninety-six countries have recognized its autonomy, however Greece is still not included in these countries (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2021).

1.3.1 The financial and political status in Kosovo

In the early 90s' the SFRY, which consisted of Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, collapsed. There were also two autonomous regions, Kosovo, and Vojvodina in Serbia where ethnic groups inhabited. These groups were characterized by diversity and especially religions, such as Christian Orthodox, Catholics and Muslim (United Nations, n.d). The majority of Muslims lived in Kosovo which is a sacred place for the orthodox Serbs. This opposition between the religions led to conflicts and tensions in the area, which was attempted to be controlled by the KLA, which attacked to Serbian police forces or politicians in 1996 (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2021). The ethnic Albanians wanted to have “*constitutional autonomy*” of the area, which was not accepted by the Serbian Republic (United Nations, n.d; Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2021). The attacks by KLA and their coalitions with Serbian police force, did not bring peace to the area, therefore, Yugoslav army tried to take over Kosovo. Unfortunately, the crimes committed by these forces caused the flow of the inhabitants and the problem was widely known on the media (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2021).

Kosovo used to be an area which was inhabited by many ethnic groups, who lived in harmony. There was relative autonomy given to the area, during 1970 by Josip Broz Tito. This autonomy allowed the various ethnic groups to live without conflicts. When the President of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic supported this ethnic cleansing by attacking the area, he promoted that there was ethnic hatred among the people, which was a false excuse (Kushner, 1999). The years before the war were not as peaceful as they seemed

on behalf of the government's attitude towards the ethnic group, since there had been political and financial oppression, interventions in Albanian culture and education. There were also other violent flees and violence performed by the police, which were daily life (Kushner, 1999). The Serbian forces tried to control the area by violent means, towards innocent civilians, bombarding the establishments and houses and making ethnic Albanians to leave Kosovo (United Nations, n.d). This situation caused the implication of NATO, which shelled the area and specific targets, for humanitarian reasons, in order to prevent the cleansing of the ethnic Albanians (Migration News Editors, 1999). The NATO strikes began on 24th March 1999 and were carried out for seventy-eight days. This action by NATO forced the president Milosevic to pull back his army and the police from the area and forced millions of people to flee out the country (United Nations, n.d; Agence France-Presse, 2017). On 11th June 1999 the president Milosevic came to an agreement and withdraw all state forces from Kosovo, according to the Resolution 1244, and that was the end of the war (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022).

1.3.2 The Exodus of Kosovars

In late April 1999 a big part of the total Kosovar population had fled to other areas in Kosovo and countries, in order to be safe from air strikes and the ethnic cleansing in their country. Almost 1 million Kosovars had migrated. 400,000 people were internally displaced in Kosovo and the rest 600,000 fled the country (Migration News Editors, 1999). Albania accepted 375,000 refugees, North Macedonia accepted 150,000 and many more moved to Bosnia and Montenegro (Migration News Editors, 1999). According to UNHCR's estimations 1.4 million refugees had fled to other countries, bringing the numbers to a total sum of 67,600 in Montenegro, 250,000 in North Macedonia and 442,000 in Albania, by the end of May 1999 (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999). During the flow, Serbian army and officers withheld official papers, passports, and other important documents from the Kosovars, in order to make it difficult for them to repatriate one day and claim their properties and identities back (Migration News Editors, 1999). On 4th April 100,000 refugees would be transferred by plane according to HEP, some 20,000 to Turkey and USA, 6,000 to Norway, 10,000 to Germany, 5,000 to Austria, 5,000 to Canada and 5,000 to Greece.

France, Italy, and Great Britain did not accept their share of such a quota in their countries (Migration News Editors, 1999; Medecins Sans Frontieres, 1999). Refugees were asked of their preference of relocation in the camps and most of them chose Germany. According to Emma Bonino, the Commissioner of humanitarian affairs in the EU, refugees should not be placed far from their country, in order to help them be repatriated one day. However, a great number chose the distant Germany and for reasons of distance Sweden rejected them and especially extended families, for fear that they might not accept repatriation if all the relatives had been relocated (Migration News Editors, 1999). At the same time many smugglers took the advantage of the situation in North Macedonia and Albania, charging \$5,000 for each person's transfer to the country of their choice (Migration News Editors, 1999). The smuggling fee was paid by their relatives and some North Macedonians have been caught entering the refugee camps, in order to be registered as refugees and be transferred to Europe (Migration News Editors, 1999).

On the other side of the Atlantic, USA applied a program to host approximately 20,000 Kosovars via the "*Operation Provide Refugee*". The president of the USA Al Gore announced that the plan was originally designed to be held at Guantánamo or Guam, where refugees would be hosted in the naval base, but they would not be able to ask for citizenship, since it was not in fact American territory (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999). Therefore, they decided to accept 20,000 refugees in America with "temporary status" at first. The United States would provide permanent residence to the refugees after one year or the chance for citizenship after five years of living in the country. However, the majority who would stay in America, should be prepared to return immediately "*on short notice*" to Kosovo (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999). According to Al Gore's announcement, America's intention was to preserve the stability of the Balkans and to prevent the ethnical cleanse by Milosevic, which would cause a wider war to Europe (Goodwin-Gill, 2012). Canada also responded immediately to the call for help by UNHCR and IOM. Although the first estimation of Kosovar refugees was 5,000 people, Canada accepted more than 7,000. Canadian officers reached the camps in Albania and North Macedonia, in order to organize charter flights with families, who would be transferred overseas (Raska, 2020). The "*Operation Parasol*" organized 21 flights and made sure that whole families were transferred to Canada, without being lost or separated. Refugees would

be temporarily hosted in camps, where clothing, food and health care were provided to them, immediately after their arrival (Raska, 2020). Although refugees in Canada were welcomed and the conditions were humane in the camps, yet many Kosovars refused to travel so far from their country and preferred to stay in Albanian and North Macedonian camps (Raska, 2020).

1.3.3 UNHCR's and IOM's response

UNHCR and IOM were the two main organizations who responded immediately to this major crisis. Unfortunately, apart from UNHCR and IOM, almost 240 NGOs also got involved in the crisis causing implications in the coordination of the actors. The EU supported the humanitarian assistance based on six major contributors, who granted 279 million dollars, but UNHCR only received the 3.5% which was 9.8 million dollars (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). UNHCR shared almost 73 million dollars in Albania and almost 50 million dollars in North Macedonia. The agencies organized and operated two major programmes: HEP and HTP. The HEP was a “*burden-sharing programme*”, which operated in order to distribute the great number of refugees in these extreme conditions, especially in Kosovo where people were trapped on the borders with North Macedonia (International Organization for Migration, 1999; UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). The government of North Macedonia refused to allow a massive influx of refugees, since it had to handle their minority of ethnic Albanians, therefore they asked for an evacuation towards third countries (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). In reality, some of this ethnic minority of Albanians in North Macedonia participated in the HEP in order to leave the country and their involvement, caused further problems in the operation of the programme. In the HEP, forty countries took part in the flee of refugees, who entered North Macedonia and reassured the safe transportation of these hosting countries for 90,000 evacuees (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999; International Organization for Migration, 1999). All of them were examined by IOM's doctors, who ensured that they were able to flight or travel to other countries. Most of the refugees evacuated the area via charter flights and some others by bus (International Organization for Migration, 1999). The HTP was not as successful as the HEP because of its voluntary character. Although UNHCR was the leader and some major donors supported this programme, it was not as effective as

estimated because many refugees did not wish to be transferred far away from their home country (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). UNHCR's conditions for this programme were not very clear on matters of consent, however there is a gap in international law on this topic, which also discouraged the refugees of taking part in it. Therefore, the HTP cannot be characterized as the most successful programme of the exodus (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000).

First of all, the emergency case of the exodus and the size of the flow, took aback UNHCR, since there was not enough time or available staff to fully organize the necessary assistance to control the emergency evacuation. The staff were not trained or not experienced to handle this crisis, and this caused a major problem to the coordination role of UNHCR. At the same time the rest NGOs also criticized severely this inefficiency of the operation in the area (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). The agency had to register every single person or family in little time, but with the mobility and the disperse in host families, their work was made even more complicated. Some of the donors demanded UNHCR to be entirely responsible for the safety of refugees and the whole functioning of the camps (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000). This was irrational, since the camps were placed closely to the war zone and the borders, to keep refugees safe. Human rights organizations also criticized the agency on not pressing the government of North Macedonia to open its borders, whereas at the same time some donors criticized UNHCR for not be sensitive enough to stabilize the conditions for Kosovars in North Macedonia (UNHCR Standing Committee, 2000).

1.3.4 The conditions inside the camps

When the war broke out and the refugees fled from Kosovo to other areas, an emergency situation occurred, since all these people were transferred to camps, in order to find accommodation. In the camps, refugees were provided with tent camps and then some of them were transferred in collective centers or host families (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999). In the cases of camps in Albania and North Macedonia, doctors reported high rates of tuberculosis due to the difficult conditions, whereas people who were hosted by families in Tirana and Durrës, lived under better conditions (US Agency for International Development, 1999). Each family who hosted

refugees received \$112, whereas in camps it was expected to cost almost \$2,500 per person (US Agency for International Development, 1999). They were provided with medical assistance, food, and accommodation. Those who were transferred to Canada received immediate medical care upon their arrival. Canadians welcomed them and tried to make their living easier. Thus, they formed escort teams who helped in distributing clothes, shoes, meals and identification documents to the refugees (Raska, 2020). The refugees in Canada were settled in old army bases, whereas those in North Macedonia and Albania were accommodated in camps with tents. Whoever wished to be transferred to Canada or overseas, attended UNHCR's tent to fill in the appropriate refugee documents and then the whole family could be registered and transferred to Canada. Although, living conditions in Canada were better for refugees, not many Kosovars attended this evacuation programme, since they preferred to stay closer to their home country (Raska, 2020). However, when the war ended in June 1999, the repatriation process gradually began (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999).

2. The refugee crisis of 2015

2.1 Definitions and clarifications

Throughout this thesis the use of term refugee is essential to be clarified, since it is the main theme of this research. Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugee is defined according to the Chapter 1, Article 2 of the Geneva Convention as *“a person 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 before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it”* (European Database of Asylum Law, 2004).

Another term that is used in this work, is the term asylum-seeker which *“is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious*

human rights violations in another country, but who has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum” (Amnesty International Editors, n.d).

An essential definition that should also be clarified is a “*person eligible for subsidiary protection, which means a third country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Article 15, and to whom Article 17(1) and (2) do not apply, and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country”* (European Database of Asylum Law, 2004).

According to UNHCR’s definition the term unaccompanied minor is defined as “*the person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, legal age is attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so”* (Council of Europe and European Union, n.d).

The definition according to EU between “minor” and “unaccompanied minor” is given in the directive 2011/95/EU: “*where minor means a third-country national or stateless person below the age of 18 years; unaccompanied minor means a minor who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him or her whether by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned, and for as long as he or she is not effectively taken into the care of such a person; it includes a minor who is left unaccompanied after he or she has entered the territory of the Member States”* (Council of Europe and European Union, n.d).

2.2 Syrian Civil War

Hafiz al-Assad became the president of Syria from 1971 to 2000, when his offspring became the following president of the country. In 2002 Bashar al-Assad became the 19th president of Syria, after the death of his father. Syrian people expected Bashar al-Assad to be a more modern and effective ruler, since the country faced social, political, and financial problems (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2020). He failed to reform the country, deal with the unemployment, corruption, and suppression of his regime (BBC Editors, 2022). Since the drought of 2006, which lasted for four years and led rural people to poverty, thousands of Syrian farmers migrated massively to slums. This led to the first protests and coalitions with the authorities, in March 2011, when Assad responded with great violence (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2020). The inspiration of the protesting incidents was called “Arab Spring” and also occurred in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria, which was the expectation of the ending to the oppression of the regimes (Sherlock and Neuman and Homsy, 2021). Ever since then, the dissatisfaction of political opponents and suspected dissidents of the regime, led to many violent and deadly clashes between the security forces and dissatisfied residents. Later on, militia forces and rebel groups crushed with Assad’s army, which led to the civil war (BBC Editors, 2022).

This civil war has been supported by foreign allies, which take sides and send money, army, and weapons, and maintain this civil war until today. The major allies of Assad regime were mainly Russia, Iran, and China. Russia supported the dictator Assad, since military bases existed in Syria and the two countries were allies before the war broke out (BBC Editors, 2022). The shelling by Russia helped Assad to turn the war on his favor. Although, the target were claimed to be the rebels, activists have documented that both rebels and civilians were killed (BBC Editors, 2022). Iran supported the war financially and by sending army. Shia Muslim army, which was trained and funded by Hezbollah which is the Lebanese military group, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Iran supported and took part in the war against the rebels (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2020; BBC Editors, 2022). The UK, France and the USA assisted the rebels at first, but when Jihadists took over, they only provided not fatal aid. The American air forces allied with the SDF, in order to stop the Jihadists to reform. Turkey supported the rebel groups, so as to stop the Kurdish YPG militia at the northern

border Idlib. Syria's Kurds claimed their independence for Turkistan, since 1984, therefore conflicts have occurred repeatedly, especially in the Syrian region which is known as Rojava. Saudi Arabia and Qatar provided financial and military help to the rebels since the beginning of the civil war. Israel also supported the Hezbollah (BBC Editors, 2022; Piscitelli, 2019).

During the civil war, many militias have been involved and have divided Syria in four zones. ISIS, Al-Qaeda, YPG and Shia Muslims, Hezbollah, Ahrar Al-Sham, and FSA are some of groups, fighting for their own interests, leading to the government's controlling the biggest cities all over the country (BBC Editors, 2022). Jihadists and rebels controlling wider parts of the country in the north. Northeast is controlled by Turkish troops and Syrian rebels and another part is dominated by Kurdish forces (BBC Editors, 2022). After ten years of civil war, half of the population has fled to other countries, whereas many civilians have been internally displaced. The two thirds of the population that have moved are children and women (Sherlock and Neuman and Homs, 2021). Almost 6.9 million have fled inside the country, more than 2 million live in camps under poor conditions and 6.8 million have sought asylum abroad (BBC Editors, 2022). Syrian civil war is one of the most catastrophic wars in the history of humanity with more than 350,000 victims, both soldiers and civilians during these eleven years (Sherlock and Neuman and Homs, 2021). Unfortunately, this war has not come to an end, for the time being truce has been agreed among the sides that are implicated to this civil war. There have been many attempts in order to reach peace in the area, which are known as the Geneva 2 Process, but all the attempts have failed to bring this war to an end (BBC Editors, 2022).

2.3 The “Hotspot approach”

2.3.1 The policy framework

Under the circumstances and the situation of this refugee crisis, the European politicians had to react immediately, in order to handle this vital situation. Therefore, the “hotspot approach” was the immediate reaction to the increasing number of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants entering into Europe (ECRE and AIDA, 2021). The problem of the accommodation of these people found solution in the form

of “hotspots”. Hotspots are the camps that were immediately organized, in order to provide shelter to these vulnerable groups. In April 2015, the European Commission in the European Agenda on migration firstly introduced the “Hotspot Approach”, also called EU Hotspot System, which was initially “*presented as a solidarity measure*”, in order to respond to this crisis (ETIAS Editors, 2021; Luyten and Orav, 2020). The hotspots were initially created as reception, registration, identification and fingerprinting of asylum seekers and migrants, arriving in the EU by sea. These initial reception facilities are currently only located in two EU member states, which are Greece and Italy. Besides that, the “hotspot approach” also concentrates on conducting the interviews of asylum seekers and return operations (ETIAS Editors, 2021). In order to achieve this, EU Agencies, namely the EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust, they work in corporation with Greece and Italy, to make it function (Luyten and Orav, 2020).

2.3.2 The EU-Turkey Statement implementation affects “hotspots”

On 20th March 2016 the EU-Turkey Statement implemented, in order to control the irregular flows of migrants from Turkish territory to Europe. Therefore, people who attempted to cross the borders and lacked the criteria of asylum seekers, were sent back to Turkey. As a result, many people who had already been placed into hotspots and newly arrived migrants, were under detention, until their cases were examined and then decided if they would be returned to Turkey (ECRE and AIDA, 2021). Severe criticism occurred by many organizations, about the capacity in these closed facilities, with the great number of migrants who had been restricted geographically, since they were obliged to remain on the islands and inhabit only in the hotspot facilities (ECRE and AIDA, 2021).

Due to the implementation of the Statement, the procedures became long-lasting and although the number of migrants was declining, the people who were readmitted suffered for a long period before their final transition (Luyten and Orav, 2020). Comparing the years before the implementation more people were sent back to Turkey. For instance, in 2016 801, in 2017 683, in 2018 322, in 2019 195 and in 2020 139 irregular migrants returned to Turkey (ECRE and AIDA, 2021; Luyten and Orav, 2020). Almost 3.5 million asylum seekers from Syria are hosted in Turkey, however most of them leave without permission of residency due to the “temporary protection

status” (Silverman, 2018). When Turkey manages to detain refugees and averts them from violating the borders of EU, then in return fundings are offered to the country (Silverman, 2018). Since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, there has been a pause in the deportation procedures, although, the measures for the pandemic have been lifted and no requests of mission-returns have been answered by the Greek authorities (ECRE and AIDA, 2021).

2.3.3 The case of Greece

The first country where the EU hotspot system was implemented, was Greece. The Aegean islands and the mainland were flooded with refugees who travelled via Turkey. Therefore, the need for accommodation for these people, was created and led to the establishments of five “hotspots” on Greek islands, of Samos, Lesbos, Kos, Chios and Leros, which were planned to host 7,450 people (ECRE and AIDA, 2021; Luyten and Orav, 2020). The continuous influx of refugees, according to official data led to a significantly increase to 13,338 places, until the end of 2020. The main reason for this, was the devastation of settlement in Moria of the fires in 2020, which led to the construction of new facilities in Kara Tepe/Mavrovrouni (ECRE and AIDA, 2021). The real facts and estimations indicate a much greater number of people living in these facilities, which reached 23,269 individuals, meaning that the rate of occupancy was almost four times higher, leading to serious overcrowding (Luyten and Orav, 2020). According to the estimations of UNHCR the asylum seekers who arrived through the Aegean islands and are subject to the EU-Turkey Statement, reach 27,200 in total, and were “trapped” in these areas (Luyten and Orav, 2020).

According to the official data, all the camps on the Greek islands still remained overpopulated by the end of 2020, living under humiliating conditions, since all centers have never been improved and refugees and asylum seekers are still living under “inhumane” facilities. There is great lack in medical services, there are plenty of security issues, waste management and pressure in the infrastructures. Even though Greece has made efforts to improve the accommodation facilities inside the camps, with the support of the European Commission, unfortunately the situation has not improved (Luyten and Orav, 2020). These five hotspots function under Law 4686/2020, which is the amendment of Law 4636/2019 (IPA) and Law 4375/2016, but the 2019 and 2020

laws have been severely criticized by human rights advocates and other organizations (Luyten and Orav, 2020). There is a hope that according to the law 4636/2019 that there are plans to construct supplementary close centers in these cities which will lead to better standards of living for the asylum seekers (Guérin, 2021). There are some other types of accommodation on each island, that hosts a limited number of people, and it operates under UNHCR or NGOs, as short-term accommodation for unaccompanied minors and vulnerable people, this scheme is called ESTIA (Luyten and Orav, 2020). European Commission has funded continuously Greece and all the involved agencies. For the period of 2015 and 2020, Greece has been given 2.64 billion euros, to invest on the improvement of migration facilities and the management of its borders (Luyten and Orav, 2020).

2.3.4 Vulnerable people

“One major impact of the IPA and the Amendment can be traced on the most vulnerable people, who are not only geographical restricted and forced to stay on the Greek islands, but they are also “captured” into the hotspots (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). Usually, the people who reach a new country seeking for asylum, are in a hazardous legal situation, who are of an unclear status and with no documentation that is accepted by local authorities or have the right to use social support (Kafkoutso and Oikonomou, 2020). This is the basic reason why, regardless of their migration reasons for leaving their homes, all asylum seekers are classified “as vulnerable and underprivileged population and they are in need of appropriate protection”, in the reception country in which they are found (Kafkoutso and Oikonomou, 2020). In most situations asylum seekers need further support, especially unaccompanied children, tortured people, survivors of sexual violence and people living with mental health disorders. Although the IPA and the Amendment should provide medical treatment, to asylum seekers after their identification, however, it is impossible to be provided to them due to shortage of medical staff, to identify and help these people (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). The amendment does not prioritize or exempts this category of asylum seekers; thus, they remain exposed to threats of sexual harassment or rape, and domestic and other kinds of violence inside the camps (Kafkoutso and Oikonomou, 2020).

One specific category of vulnerable people are unaccompanied minors who, due to lack of accommodation for children, remain in detention and they are forced to live in hotspots for long periods. The Greek legislation has made a very important progress during 2020 and on December 11th law 4760/2020 got into force and terminated the possibility of keeping these children in protective police custody, since they have no residence, in their attempt to improve living conditions for these minors in Greece (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). Another category of vulnerable people is that of people who have been geographical restricted, since the Amendment of the IPA in 2020, according to which the process of their applications is not prioritized, and they are not excused from the short timelines and reduced safeguards of fast-track border procedures. As a result, they might spend months or even years without the support that they need (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). Another major problem is that the doctors are forced to their administrative duties, especially because of the further restriction due to the COVID-19 pandemics and as a result they neglect the real need of asylum-seekers and refugees (AIDA and ECRE, 2021)” (Papageorgaki, 2021).

2.3.5 Varying timelines for asylum seekers

“Asylum seekers, who have arrived in Greece in 2020 and on, are prioritized, registered and their applications are to be examined, according to the IPA. The Greek government had prepared the ground for the acceptance and implementation of refugee before the IPA become law. Some Ministers had depicted refugees as “fake asylum-seekers”, thus they demanded their rapid return to Turkey or to their home country (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). As a result, the procedures on their arrival last for a few days, leading to the denial of asylum, since they are not suitably prepared or sometimes, they do not even understand this complicated process (Guérin, 2021). Another problem is that people who have risked their lives and money, have only a few days since their arrival, to be prepared, to speak about the harassment, the prosecution and the difficulties that have undergone or do not feel safe to express their suffering, risking being rejected (ECRE and AIDA, 2021). Unfortunately, asylum seekers, who arrived before January 2020, when the IPA was implemented, have been withheld for long periods in hotspots on the islands, since their interviews have been delayed and in many cases without information about the postponing and some of them have re-

arranged interviews from 2019, transferred to October 2021 (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020)” (Papageorgaki, 2021).

2.3.6 Detention in Hotspots

“A great problem that has occurred on managing the mixed migration flows, found an answer via the IPA and the May amendment. Since the detention is used as a controlling method, there have been major problems because there is not respect for the refugees’ rights, and they cannot be informed about the reasons they are in detention, whereas in many cases they do not understand the language. Refugees usually are in detention, without being informed about the cause or the duration, without a chance of an appeal (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). Although children are considered vulnerable category, unfortunately the May Amendment did not include special measures to protect their rights and did not prevent them from being in detention. In mid-June, 229 unaccompanied minors remain in detention throughout the country. The facilities are overcrowded, understaffed, without the appropriate medical staff to treat them or cover their needs, even in emergency cases (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). The living conditions are poor and the combination with the lack of information and gaps in access to the procedures and legal remedies, are the reason for tensions inside the hotspots (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). Apart from that, there are incidents of domestic violence and assaults for sexual harassment and rapes of women and children in detention. Thus, their lives become “a living hell” in “open-air prisons” (Luyten and Orav, 2020)” (Papageorgaki, 2021).

2.3.7 The “danger” of rejection

“The IPA has changed its strategy towards asylum seekers; therefore, it is inevitable to face rejection in every corner. Refugees are obliged to attend an interview or renew a registration on time, although they are unfamiliar with the language, thus their applications are rejected as “unfounded” (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). In some other cases, their interviews are withdrawn. The obstacles that they usually have to overcome are the systemic challenges, their ability, or the lack of it; to comply with the

standards and the errors made by the authorities (Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, 2020). If an application has been “implicitly withdrawn”, the refugees do not have the right to ask for a second chance to explain why they migrated and why it is dangerous for them to return to their home country or to Turkey (ECRE and AIDA, 2021)” (Papageorgaki, 2021).

2.3.8 Conditions inside the Greek Hotspots

According to the Human Rights Watch and the interviews that were conducted in the Greek hotspots, the conditions are described by the refugees, who are hosted in these camps, as horrible and unhygienic. The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement caused a blockage to the movement of the refugees and asylum seekers to the mainland; therefore, the hotspots became overcrowded and continue accepting people who reach the islands on a daily basis (Refugee Support Aegean, 2018). First and foremost, the number of people who live in the hotspots is greater than the number of bed-facilities. For instance, in Vathi in 2016, the bed facilities were 250 and the people were 945 (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016). People live in tents, empty containers, and prefabricated houses, in some cases, but they sleep on blankets on the ground, there is limited hot water and there is no electricity (Refugee Support Aegean, 2018; HuffPost Editors, 2017). There are dirty toilets and showers with no curtains, which are in long distance from the women’s section. These facilities lack privacy and sanitary conditions. In Lesbos, Chios, and Samos, which the Human Rights Watch visited, there was no separation or any type of division among women, children, and adult men, who were not related, causing the overcrowding in the hotspots and these “vulnerable groups” were exposed to any kind of violence and danger. There was a deteriorated number of accommodations for women and children in Moria, but there was not a divided section to host families, women with children, unaccompanied minors, and single women in other hotspots (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016). Both men and women have reported sexual harassment, rapes, psychological assaults, and any kind of abuse, which the police did not stop or tried to prevent. All these violent incidents are “daily routine” for the refugees, who are afraid even to sleep, due to the dangers caused by groups of other refugees, who attack during the night. The mixed

facilities also face the same difficulties, since unknown people who are under the condition of detention, are forced to live together (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016).

Even the most basic need, the nutrition is a real “challenge” in these hotspots, since people queue for long hours, in order to receive food, which is of low quality and taste. There are many times when there is lack of food or small portions or even lack of milk for young children. When fights begin between different nationalities, which is very common, they do not receive any food, because the police locks down the distribution of the meals, for fear of the police officers’ safety, who then remain inside their containers, and they even mock at the refugees. (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016). In these cases, the police remains uninvolved, and they sometimes get pleased while watching people fighting. When harsher incidents of violence and abuse occur, the police officers stay locked up in their facilities, in order to be safe, and do nothing to face these incidents. The number of police officers supervising the camps is very small in proportion to are people who are hosted, and they are usually afraid for their own safety (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016).

There is a testimony of a woman from Afghanistan, who is 27 years old and lives in VIAL hotspot, on Chios, with her husband and two little children, who describes the dangerous conditions of living, through her own eyes: *“To tell you the truth, with the war going on between Afghans and Syrians (in the camp) I don’t feel safe at all. From the moment we arrived here I haven’t slept well even one night. I am mostly worried about my children. They (the men) fight, they throw stones, windows are breaking, and glass is falling down, and they might get hurt. When we were in Afghanistan, after the threats to my husband, I was always begging him that we leave. But now that we came here, I am really worried about our security”* (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016).

Another statement on the conditions of settlement for the refugees, comes from a Syrian couple who live on the floor of the VIAL old factory, with their children, reported: *“No one showed us where to stay. They just gave us blankets and we found a space on the floor. We built this tent with blankets, pieces of fence, and cardboard. They told us to wait, that it would take time for the containers to be empty. It is very cold at night for the six of us sleeping in this space”* (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2016)



Source: Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts

Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

2.3.9 Females’ dangers inside the camps

The facilities’ capacity was about to host less than 3,000 people in Moria and by December 2019 16,800 lived there. Since the hotspot was so overpopulated, new shelters were placed outside the boundaries of the camp, in a nearby olive grove. In this area there were no fences, water, electricity, or sanitation facilities (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2019). Unaccompanied minors, unrelated people, single women, and mothers were forced to live in tents, without any security measures. The toilets are placed in long distance from the accommodation area, they lack in water and the showers have no curtains or locks on the doors which are broken, therefore women cannot use the bathrooms without feeling insecure or threatened by unknown men. Most women are afraid of sexual harassment, which is very common in the camps, and

violence based on their gender, therefore, they feel unsafe during their stay in the hotspots. Females of any age cannot use the toilets or cannot bath, due to the poor facilities and the fear of been sexually assaulted. Because they are afraid of been attacked during the night, women have to wait until the morning to use the bathroom. These conditions are extremely dire for pregnant women and new mothers, who have to walk long distance, no matter how difficult it is (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2019).

The frequent shortages in water and the poor conditions inside the hotspots usually cause allergies, microbial skin diseases and scabies. The PHILOS project and KEELPNO are responsible for medical support of refugees in the camps. Unfortunately, there are not enough doctors or cultural mediators in order to provide medical assistance to the patients. There is also a very small number of psychiatrists in order to give the proper treatment and psychological support to vulnerable people who are in need (Refugee Support Aegean, 2018). Most of the adult women-mothers suffer from anxiety or depression, even before arriving on the Greek islands and these pre-existing mental health issues have to be dealt with special medication. Since there is lack in psychologists and medicine, their mental health keeps worsening, causing great insecurity to the children, since their mothers are unable to protect them. Due to these delays sometimes people receive medical care after their asylum interview (Refugee Support Aegean, 2018; Human Rights Watch Editors, 2019). Under the circumstances girls are deprived one of their main human rights, the right to education, due to the fear of their parents of their daughters been sexually abused, so they do not allow their girls to attend school. In many cases they report to the police the dangers and the problems they face on a daily basis, but unfortunately the police forces are not enough, or they are indifferent for the safety of female refugees (Human Rights Watch Editors, 2019; Refugee Support Aegean, 2018).

2.3.10 Education for minor asylum seekers

“The IPA Article 51 requires all minor asylum seekers to attend primary and secondary school under the Greek public educational system, as Greek native minors (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). The IPA specifically mentions that education is not just a right, but an obligation. In cases of incomplete documentation since there is no removal

decision against children or their guardians, they are still provided with facilitation (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). When a child has reached “the age of maturity”, they still have the chance to attend secondary education and age is not a reason to prevent a child from going to school. The minors should be registered within three months from the identification of the underaged refugee, therefore applicants who do not comply or are unwilling to join the educational system, are subject to “reductions of material reception conditions” (AIDA and ECRE, 2021) and the obligation of administrative sanctions as for Greek citizens to the guardians of the minor. The decision issued by the Ministry has established “a program of afternoon preparatory classes (Δομές Υποδοχής και Εκπαίδευσης Προσφύγων, DYEP) for all school-aged minors aged 4 to 15”, who are able to attend public schools in near hotspots or places of residence (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). Six- to fifteen-year-old children who live in urban areas can attend schools near their residence and morning classes with Greek children at approved by the Ministry schools. The aim for refugee minors is to learn Greek as a second language. In 2019 the number of refugees students attending school was estimated as only one third (AIDA and ECRE, 2021).

Unfortunately, in 2020 another challenge had occurred which led to the exclusion of refugee and asylum seeker children from the Greek education system. The lockdowns caused great problems due to the lack of technical equipment and Wi-Fi access to videoconference classes leading to deficient education. Another impact of COVID-19 is the discrimination against refugee children who were not allowed to leave the camps because of restriction policies by the Greek authorities (AIDA and ECRE, 2021)” (Papageorgaki, 2021).

2.3.11 Criticizing the laws

“The law 4636/2019 and 4686/2020 have been severely criticized because of their inability to help asylum seekers find a secure environment (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). Although the legislation should care for their human rights, appropriate well-being, safe environment, accommodation, and basic needs support, in my opinion the amendments fail to cover most of their basic human needs and made refugees’ lives even worse. The laws have been severely criticized by international human rights bodies, including the

Greek Ombudsmen, and the Greek National commission for human rights and other organizations (Luyten and Orav, 2020). UNHCR expressed the worry about the limitation of time in hotspots from 6 months to 30 days, due to this many refugees may lose the assistance that they received from the State, even before they have the time and opportunity to be employed or receive social welfare provided from Greece (Luyten and Orav, 2020). The increased returns, the unfair rejections and the difficulties of a negative decision has led to more vulnerabilities, such as exploitation and sexual abuse. The Amnesty International has denounced the new law which approves the creation of closed controlled centers on the Greek islands, in order to restore the existing hotspots (AIDA and ECRE, 2021). The Amnesty International questions the ability of maintenance of liberty in these closed facilities because of the limitations and restrictions of movement of asylum seekers (Luyten and Orav, 2020). The European Council of Refugees and Exiles also states that the appropriate operation of the hotspots should not make use of violence and that there must be “total respect of dignity and physical integrity of the asylum seekers” (Luyten and Orav, 2020)” (Papageorgaki, 2021)”.

3. Actions, results, and consequences of 2015 crisis

3.1 Statistics and reasons of 2015 refugee crisis

During the crisis in 2015, more than 1 million migrants and refugees tried to find safety in Europe. Most of these people travelled via Turkey and Albania or travelled by sea. The majority came from Syria, due to the destructive civil war, but at the same time people from other countries asked for asylum, even if they were not later recognized as refugees. The rest of the population that influx Europe, came from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Kosovo, Albania, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, and a small proportion came from Ukraine (BBC Editors, 2016). The rest of the migration flow, apart from the civil war in Syria, that happened because of the extreme violence which ruled Afghanistan and Iraq, the poverty in Kosovo and the abuses towards people from Eritrea. All these people believed that Greece would be an entry for all of them to Europe. Unfortunately, in reality almost 50,000 of them who are in Greece cannot travel into Europe and they are “trapped” on the Greek islands (International Rescue Committee Editors, n.d). Their

integration would reassure their safety and a better new life; however, Greece is in a difficult financial crisis and cannot offer what refugees had imagined.

Germany was the country which received most asylum applications, almost 476,000, in 2015. It counted nearly a million applications via they “EASY” system and Hungary was the second country to receive 177,130 asylum applications until December, in 2015. The main nationalities that were granted asylum, were Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Eritrea. The total number of applications which were approved in 2015, in the whole of Europe was 292,540 (BBC Editors, 2016).

In the year of 2015, it was the peak of the flow reaching almost 860,000 of people, who travelled both by sea and land. This number declined significantly in 2016 to nearly 178,000. In 2017, after the EU-Turkey Statement there was a downfall in the number of refugees to 35,000. In 2018, there was an increase to the arrivals by land reaching almost 50,000. In 2019, the number was 74,000, in 2020 migrants were 15,600 and in 2021 the number is deteriorated to 9,000. Last but not least, in 2022, the total arrivals are 5,567 the smallest number of arrivals during the last years (Operational Data Portal, 2022).

3.2 The EU-Turkey Statement

2015 was the year of the greatest flow from people who tried to migrate from Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Almost 1 million asylum seekers and smuggled incomers reached Europe, more than 885,000 of them reached Greece, where the reception system was unable to register or provide accommodation to them (Roberts, 2018). This flow was channelled to central Europe without being registered. The consequence of this uncontrollable migration caused many problems to a number of Member States, who tried to control their borders and especially Greece, which is part of the Schengen area, where a lot of the asylum seekers lived stranded in the country. This flow from Turkey to Greece could not be easily controlled, therefore, a new “deal” should set the limits between Europe and Turkey, in order to create the conditions for safe and legal migration to Europe (Roberts, 2018).

On 18th March 2016, the European Council and Turkish government redefined the relationships between the countries, in order to control the irregular migration via Turkish territory to European countries. Several meetings have been held beforehand and schemes, in order to cooperate in the control of the crisis (Perchoc, 2022). On 29th November 2015 the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan was activated to strengthen the relations between the countries, a voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme was proposed on 15th December 2015 by the Commission for the Syrian crisis in Turkey, but the final and more binding policy was the EU-Turkey Statement, in 2016 (European Council, 2016).

3.2.1 What is the EU-Turkey Statement about

The mass irregular migration and the numerous drawings in the Aegean Sea, in 2015, drew the attention of European Union. The countries which consisted the main target of migration were Germany, Poland, France, Hungary, Austria, and other northern European countries, where far-right parties were raising, caused a great threat to Europe. At the same time a great number of people kept losing their lives on a daily basis, in their attempt to cross Greek borders via Turkey to reach their final destination for a better and safer life in Europe. These problems had to be dealt immediately by the EU, thus the EU-Turkey Statement occurred (Choose Love Editors, 2018).

According to the EU-Turkey Statement the countries agreed that every new irregular migrant, who crossed via Turkish territory to the Greek islands should be return to Turkey. Whenever a Syrian migrant would be return to Turkey from the Aegean islands, another would be resettled to a European Union County. Turkey should prevent by all necessary means any type of irregular migration from its territory to Europe. When a successful control of the irregular crossing occurred, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme would be activated in order to support its cause. In cases that the visa roadmap would be liberated, the visa requirements for Turkish people would be lifted by the end of June 2016 (European Council, 2016). The cooperation between the countries was sealed with an initial sum of 3 billion euros for the Facility of Refugees, an additional of 3 more billion euros was funded for the Facility in Turkey, by the end of 2018. The Customs Union was also upgraded (Perchoc, 2022). The Dutch Presidency

of the Council of the EU opened Chapter 33, in order to start the process of enrollments and opened other Chapters to make the procedures faster. The European Union Member States agreed on cooperating with Turkey to improve the state of living for people in Syria and especially in specific areas close to the Turkish border, which would secure a safer life for Syrians (European Council, 2016).

These actions were taken in order to limit or even stop the business stereotype of smuggling and to save as much individuals as possible, who tried to reach an Aegean island via Turkey and lost their lives in shipwrecks (Roberts, 2018). Therefore, Turkey accepted the direct return of all people who tried to cross from Turkey to Greece and received more measures against smugglers and welcomed the NATO establishment activities on the Aegean islands. This Statement was severely questioned by political and legal parties (Roberts, 2018; Perchoc, 2022). Emergency Social Safety Net was €348 million, since October 2016, from which more than 1 million would cover vulnerable people's basic human necessities, especially mothers and children, orphans, and minorities of various religions with the view to protect them from abuse on their way to migrate via Turkey. The term of non-refoulement was guarded and practiced by the European Commission, so as to make sure that the Statement would be rightfully respected (Perchoc, 2022).

3.2.2 EU-Turkey Statement practical implications and results

In March 2020, the European Commission published a report, with the practical results of the Statement after four years of implementation. According to this report irregular arrivals are almost 94% less than the era prior to the Statement and people who were drowned in the sea during their attempt to cross the borders and lose their lives are less than ever before. For instance, in only a single day, 10,000 migrants attempted to flow into Europe, in October 2015, ever since the attempts of crossing have been 105 immigrants per day. The number of drownings in the Aegean Sea has also declined from 1,175, one and a half year ahead the Statement, to 439 after its implementation (European Commission, 2020). Turkey was hosting almost 3 million people with the majority being from Syria 2.7 million and there was also a great number

of Afghans and Iraqis. Unfortunately, the Government could not provide the necessary care to the migrants since the State lacked in resources (Choose Love Editors, 2018).

The EU-Turkey Statement provided 3 billion euros fund at first and then an additional 3 billion euros amount, by the European Commission, in order to support refugee children to attend school 685,000, 35,000 minors attended catch-up classes and 108,000 youngsters received support to back-up them. 180 schools were being constructed, more than 9 million healthcare actions were provided, whereas 650,000 refugee babies were vaccinated. 1,700,000 refugees were supported financially to deal with their daily necessities. All these needs were covered by the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which tried to fulfill all the basic needs of refugees and reassure better quality of life and living conditions to them. This fund projects by EU Facility for Refugees will be running up to mid-2025 (European Commission, 2020). The Statement deteriorated the returns to Turkey from the Aegean islands, mainly for Syrians, thus 2,735 people returned after the “deal”. It is absolutely necessary for the returns to be escalated. Since June 2016, 4,030 migrants returned on their own will, by the AVR. Since the dawn of the Statement in 2016 until late January 2020, 18,711 migrants returned from Greek mainland or the Aegean islands back to their homeland (European Commission, 2020). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the situation worsened, and Turkey refused to accept refugees from the Greek islands, since March 2020. Although six years have passed since the implementation, the number of returns to Turkey have been too few. Almost 32,472 Syrians have been transferred to some Member States after the Statement (International Rescue Committee, 2022).

A very important consequence of the Statement was also the trap that refugees and asylum seekers found themselves in limbo, causing great problems to their mental and physical health. In June 2021 a decision by the Greek Joint Ministerial considered Turkey as a safe country for people from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Bangladesh. Based on this decision the applications of people from these countries were no longer examined by the dangers they faced in their homelands, and they were rejected and returned in Turkey, without examining whether they were in fact safe or not (International Rescue Committee, 2022). The number of rejections of applications of asylum-seekers has increased on 2020 by 126% and in 2021 reaching the number of 6,424 rejections, under the characterization “inadmissible”. Since these people have been rejected and characterized as “inadmissible” they cannot receive shelter, any kind

of identification documents of their legal status, financial support, work, or any type of care in the hotspots (International Rescue Committee, 2022).

3.2.3 Criticizing the EU-Turkey Statement

The EU-Turkey Statement of 2016, notes by its name that it is not an agreement between the countries, but it is in fact a statement which does not bear any signatures, and it is characterized as the most controversial policy between some European States and Turkey, in order to deal with this urgent crisis. Therefore, its format points out that it is not as binding as an international agreement (Roberts, 2018). This “questioned” Statement functioned as a plain political commitment among the political actors. Another evidence about the Statement is the fact that although there are required criteria and content of an international agreement, the terminology used, for instance “agreed” and “decided”, show the binding and proper character, it is not actually an international agreement, and it cannot be examined in the European courts (Roberts, 2018). Specifically, three cases occurred by asylum-seekers, two Pakistani and an Afghan, (Cases T-192/16, T-193/16 and T-257/16 NF, NG, and NM v European Council), who faced the risk to return to Turkey and sought justice in the General Court. They questioned the legality of the Statement after they brought actions to the General Court of the European Union, since their asylum applications were rejected, and they were afraid of being persecuted on return to their homeland. Their claim was that the Statement violates refugees’ rights since there is no reference to the Convention related to the status of refugees or the obligations of the European Union towards them, underneath the international law (General Court of the European Union, 2017).

Their applications were rejected by the General Court, since the deal was not a statute of an EU institution, but it was in fact an act of some Member States and the cases plead to the Court of Justice of the EU. The European Council defended its position by raising “*plea pursuant to Article 130*” according to “*the Rules of Procedure of the General Court*”, where it was claimed that the Court was not competent to reach a jurisdiction, in order to question the Actions of the Statement (Roberts, 2018; General Court of the European Union, 2017). The Court of Justice of the EU has not appealed these three Court orders yet and the decisions are still pending for the three asylum-

seekers (Roberts, 2018). The final framework and text of the Statement was formed in offices in Strasbourg, the Hague and Berlin, long before the period when the participants “bargained” about it. The immediate states that were affected directly by this implementation, where Greece and Turkey, who discussed about the amount of money and sum political gains, whereas, the bureaucrats and technicians who really wrote the implementation of the Statement, created an ambiguous surrounding related to the consequences of it (Ineli-Ciger, 2020).

The European Union denies the authorship of the implementation of the Statement and at the same time the European Courts affirm the denial. As a consequence, the Statement is out of balance and inspection, according to the European law and the EU cannot be accused as responsible for the violations of human rights by the international law and the implementation of the Statement (Ineli-Ciger, 2020).

3.2.4 Possible solutions and improvements of the Statement

Since all these refugees and asylum-seekers have been in limbo in Greece and specifically on the Greek islands, living under inhumane conditions, a radical policy should be implemented in order to help them survive. There should be a better sustainable and humane resettlement system which would function for the arrivals and the communities who are hosted. Another category that was trapped in this unsafe situation, was the vulnerable group of children who found themselves in limbo by thousands (International Rescue Committee, 2022). The current policies are dangerous, a threat to values of dignity and respect, and at the same time underlines the racism between people from these countries and the immediate response towards Ukrainian refugees after the recent war. This Statement has also caused another issue, the illegal routes that people follow, in order to avoid detention in hotspots during their immigration (International Rescue Committee, 2022).

Asylum-seekers who have been “trapped” in hotspots should not be geographically restricted, due to the Statement, but they should have the legal right to work, live, being educated and enjoy their freedom in the country, where they seek asylum. They should also have access to legal documentation, asylum, accommodation, financial support, food, and basic medical care, in their temporary housing (International Rescue

Committee, 2022). The European Union should reconsider its policy towards some frontline countries, like Greece and Italy. These countries were forced to control the sudden refugee crisis of 2015, because there was not a “burden sharing” and they were not able to function under this urgent pressure. Therefore, a new system of relocation which would secure a safe environment for repatriated migrants should be formed and some other responsibilities could be shared towards the Member States. The already “problematic” countries, such as Libya and Turkey are not a safe environment, thus, migrants should be led to safety away from the territories where they left, because they were already in danger (International Rescue Committee, 2022).

According to the European attitude towards the values of dignity and human rights, the policy of repatriation for migrants is dangerous and the response to people from Syria in comparison to people from Ukraine, shows the great difference towards human beings, since Ukrainian refugees have been treated with respect and they have received the compassion and support from the whole of Europe. Another remark is that Europe can host and welcome people who are in need of asylum, due to its capacity, but this can only happen when there is coordination, humanity, and willingness to help (International Rescue Committee, 2022). The European Union could take the advantage of this faulty Statement, since the weaknesses are noted, and should have created safe routes via legal procedures to make the lives of refugees easier, instead of leading them to hazardous journeys and “detention camps”. An opportunity for the EU to correct the policies, that it has followed during the last 7 years, could be improved with the EU Pact of Migration and Asylum. Unfortunately, this proposal was not taken into consideration, therefore, the EU-Turkey Statement kept its flawed framework and continued dealing with the crisis with same inhumane procedures, lacking protection and respect for the refugees (International Rescue Committee, 2022).

3.3 Non-Governmental Organizations

Although the European Union tried to deal with the emergent situation, following various policies and support programs, the NGOs also contributed to a great degree, in order to handle this crisis and improve the living conditions for refugees. A very important part in the organization and operation of the hotspots is attributed to the Non-

Governmental Organizations, which helped since the beginning of the refugee crisis. Most of the refugees crossed the Aegean Sea and ended on the Greek islands via following a risky route, after they had paid great sums to traffickers. When they reached the Aegean islands, they had no money or any kind of financial support, they were also exhausted and faced psychological fatigue. The NGOs supported the refugees by providing them for their basic needs, medical care, accommodation, psychosocial support and helped them integrate (Bouronikos, 2021).

3.3.1 NGOs and their contribution

Some of the most important NGOs which organized and contributed to the better living conditions for the refugees, were METAdrasi, HumanRights360 and Faros. METAdrasi is one of the oldest non-profit local organizations and operates since 2010 and it was founded by Lora Pappa. It organizes various programs in order to educate refugees, train them and help them to become independent. Nonetheless, they expect the refugees to be active members of the local community. The motto of the organization is “*No children in detention*” and their target is a continuous innovation, since they continue working with minors and especially unaccompanied or separated children (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021). METAdrasi believes that these children are the future of our world, and they deserve the right to be educated, being cared both physically and psychologically. It also provides support to minors in legal matters, in order to live decently, with relatives or family who live in the EU. METAdrasi created the first dormitory for homeless minors in Athens and received the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize in 2019 (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021). This NGO protects especially children and vulnerable groups, offers educational opportunities, it also certifies victims of torture who need legal aid and supports independent living via foster care or guardianship for teenagers 16-18 years old (Family for every child, n.d).

HumanRights360 was co-founded by Epaminondas Farmakis, Eleni Takou and Rania Papadopoulou, in 2017. It acts on legal matters, provides information about migration. It also gives funds to other NGOs, in order to provide their services and works as a “fiscal sponsor”. HR360 cooperates with the government and its projects to

help refugees, for instance in 2020, it helped migrants receive a temporary Social Security card to be vaccinated against COVID-19 (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021). It also cooperated with METAdrasi's services of interpretation, so as to inform migrants how to use masks and follow sanitary conditions, according to protocols for the pandemic (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021).

Patricia Kirk and her husband Dan Biswas were the founders of Faros, an NGO in Athens which helps unaccompanied children get off the streets and help them to create a new life. Faros started as a dormitory for vulnerable people and developed to a shelter, where minors can find care, support and "life skills education". This NGO tries to protect and heal children who have been victims of sexual harassment and runs programs, in order to create a more "typical" and safer environment, where they can feel like children again (Talitha and Ashton, n.d). Therefore, it created a soccer academy to give them the chance be children again. Faros also works hard to reunite unaccompanied children with their relatives in other Member States, since almost 40% have families living in other European countries, apart from Greece (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021).

METAdrasi, Faros and HumanRights360 collaborate to help vulnerable groups and unaccompanied minors, reunite families, cooperate with organizations and philanthropists from around the world. For instance, Faros has established a school in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology D-Lab, which provides soft and technical skills for young refugees on how to understand and solve problems. METAdrasi also works with UNHCR, and its programs are also used by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, to help refugees and migrants all over Europe (King Baudouin Foundation United States, 2021).

3.3.2 NGOs and UNHCR on Lesbos

On the island of Lesbos, the need for humanitarian help was great, therefore, the NGOs who attended for help and operated on the island had the greatest number than in any other case. The Starfish Foundation helps both local people and refugees via its programs, seminars, workshops and continue educational classes. It operates the program NeedsHub which is a platform on the internet that assists to distribute aid to

the refugees, especially of Lesbos. This NGO is in cooperation with volunteers, who cover their own living expenses, in order to take care of as many refugees as possible (Peace Corps Community for Refugees, n.d). The Starfish Foundation was established in 2015 and ever since then, it has built a library of more than 3,000 books for refugees, it has helped in the registration of migrants on behalf of the Greek authorities. It has built the largest transit camp named OXY. It has provided food and aid to unaccompanied minors. It provides more than 100 hours of English and Greek language lessons to the refugees, and it has also shared activities and courses both to the refugees and local people (Asterias-Starfish Foundation Editors, n.d).

HIAS was founded in Greece in 2016 and it is located in Athens, and it operates on the island of Lesbos. HIAS protect refugees and asylum-seekers and makes them feel safe and have access to essential needs. The programs operated by this NGO, are mainly to build new perspectives of living and reunite family members. It offers legal information and represents refugees in court and especially children and victims of violence. It is very important that HIAS helps refugees to secure their legal status, which is the most important step to organize and build their lives again (HIAS Editors, n.d). It also instructs migrants with disabilities, assists them gain access to financial and social rights, represents them in any type of international institutions and courts. HIAS works hard against xenophobia and follows legal strategies to prevent them. Any kind of hate crimes, racist incidents or discrimination are reported to the to the Racist Violence Recording Network to receive any legal measure (HIAS Editors, n.d). This NGO runs special programs of mental health towards trained community members, who are responsible to trace when a child suffers from emotional distress or an adult suffers due to the crisis, and they treat them with respect and empathy (HIAS Editors, n.d).

A Drop in the Ocean is an international NGO with experienced volunteers and coordinators who assist any person in need on the island of Lesbos. This NGO organizes activities at their Drop Learning Center and the Drop Center in Moria, especially for unaccompanied minors. It offers English lessons for adults and children. It also organizes a laundry service which is very challenging, since the limited water access, and they wash the refugees' clothes on a daily basis, in order to prevent people from get infected by lice and scabies. It supports the distribution of medical supplies, clothes,

and non-food items for refugees (Drapen i Havet Editors, n.d; Peace Corps Community for Refugees, n.d).

Refugee for Refugees was founded by Omar Alshakal after his injury by ISIS in 2014. This NGO helps refugees who enter Europe via sea routes and supports them on their arrival. It provides clothes and supplies, and at the same time offers safe accommodation at the community center. The organization focuses on tracing illegal boat landings, holds cleanings on the beach and gives swimming classes (Peace Corps Community for Refugees, n.d). It also distributes clothes via the Refugee4Refugees Free Shop. It builds bridges and ramps to help people with mobility issues. This non-profit organization has provided four chemical toilets for people with disabilities. There also wood-curving workshops in order to help refugees gain new skills and construct new accommodation facilities (Refugee for Refugees Editors, n.d).

One Happy Family operates in a community center, and it helps people who wait for asylum, and they remain on the island for more than one year on Lesbos. There are many volunteers who work for the community center and offer a barber, a tailor, a shisha lounge, a café and a shop or boutique. Visitors are given a free meal and they can attend a movie, a garden, a library, an educational center, a medical center, a gym with martial arts classes and yoga and a playground (Peace Corps Community for Refugees, n.d). It has established the Online Free-Shop which is in a container near the new camp on Lesbos, although the community center activities has been transferred to after, since 2022. The Online Free-Shop provides salt, rice, pasta, oil and other dry food, soap, washing powder, deodorant, shampoo, toilet paper, underwear, and wet wipes. This Online Free-Shop it was a very successful idea because it offer necessary hygiene products for refugees, who would have no access otherwise (One Happy Family Editors, n.d).

Lesvos Solidarity is a Non-Governmental Organization also known as PIKPA, which was officially became an NGO in April 2016. It hosted almost 600 refugees everyday and it distributed more than 3,000 meals per day. It was located at an old children's summer camp, near the airport and it belonged to the Greek State. Although its capacity was 150 people in 2014, 600 vulnerable people were hosted in the camp. It was a special place for families who had lost their relatives in shipwrecks. They also helped with the identification, which was a necessary process, and with the funeral

arrangements (Lesvos Solidarity Editors, n.d). This non-profit organization distributed food, hygiene products, clothing, tents and sleeping bags. The food distribution was better in this camp, since there were small wooden houses, equipped with kitchens and heating. Medical care and psychological care were provided, whereas refugees could attend Greek and English courses. Unfortunately, the PIPKA camp was evicted in October 2020 (Lesvos Solidarity Editors, n.d).

The Light Without Borders was founded by Luz Carmona, when she travelled in Tibet in 2013, when she noticed that the Tibetan nomads needed glasses because of the ultraviolet sunlight. The story continued in Lesvos in 2015 when Luz decided to work as an independent volunteer, offering 800 pairs of glasses to the refugees. Ever since then she created a clinic for refugees with ophthalmic and optometry services (Light Without Borders Editors, n.d). Since many refugees lost their glasses on the route to the Greek islands or suffered from injuries in the eyes, the professional eye care is given by the “Light to Your Eyes” project. Otherwise, they should wait for an examination in the local hospital for six months. The project provides glasses to the patients for free (Light Without Borders Editors, n.d).

Becky’s Bathhouse was initially a safe place for women and children on Lesvos, providing shower facilities. Every woman could find hot and safe shower and a beauty station or a play area for young children. It is a place where a team of women help female refugees to take care of their appearance and support them psychologically. Every person receives hygiene products such as shampoos, soaps, pads, diapers, body washes, lotions, and creams. Every child who attends the Bathhouse receives a small educational toy (Becky's Bathhouse Editors, n.d). In our days it has transformed into a sanctuary for minors and females. Beth’s Bathhouse has renamed to When We Band Together and it has changed its location to help even more people. WWBT also provides English, music and art lessons, field sports, dancing, fitness, and private therapies. Their motto is “*by refugees, for refugees*”, which means that the teachers and the instructors are also refugees (When We Bound Together Editors, n.d).

Last but not least, UNHCR reached immediately Lesvos, where it organized the improvement of the reception conditions and raised the reception capacity on the Aegean islands. UNHCR provided housing units, tents, sleeping mats, blankets, and energy bars to the asylum seekers. The UN Refugee Agency tried to reunite families

and especially separated or unaccompanied minors with their relatives (Spindler, 2015). It provided psychosocial support and legal assistance to people from shipwrecks. UNHCR supports the authorities on the Greek islands in the registration and the reception on these areas and has granted almost US\$96 million, which were planned to be spent in Greece and other countries to face winter (Spindler, 2015). The Agency on Lesbos has organized sports clubs in the local communities and in collaboration with METAdrasi and PRAKSIS they bring refugee minors in contact with other children living in hotspots in order to exchange experiences on their cultures and their home countries, celebrations, local food, and dances (UNHCR Editors, 2022). After the riot which broke out in 2020, the Moria hotspot was totally destroyed since the fire was uncontrollable and all the facilities were burnt down (BBC Editors, 2020). UNHCR immediately responded by moving the refugees to another emergency facility in Kara Tepe, which accommodates 5,000 people and there is vacancy for 3,000 more refugees. The new facility with the support of UNHCR offered sanitation, shelter, food, water, and medical care as a short-term solution (UNHCR Editors, 2020). All in all, NGOs and Organizations helped to organize and construct facilities for refugees, and they operated immediately in cases of emergencies, instead of local authorities. Volunteers offer not only their time to other human beings, but also their devotion to humanity.

Conclusion

The historical background of all kinds of migration flows in different eras, has common characteristics and similar reasons. War, hunger, poverty, and suppression by regimes are the main reasons for migration, which is usually the only way out of the problem. While studying these migration crises it is very important to understand the reasons for these massive flows and to comprehend the way the several governments, European Union and the human rights organizations reacted. This is the reason that these three refugee currents have been studied in this thesis, in order to compare the causes and the results of these cases and especially the refugee crisis of 2015, which is the main subject of this study. Every migration wave has its own special characteristics, although many similarities are noticed throughout the essay, and especially in the way the migrants were treated by the receiving countries. The most important part is that the human reaction in such emergency cases, is always accurate, in order to help other people and especially those in need. Although politics and governments do not react with the same sensitivity, volunteers always bridge the gap.

All the accepting countries were not ready to welcome these people or to protect them from racism, violence, and suffering. Since all kinds of migrants and refugees leave their home countries, due to oppression from the regime, poverty, or war, they expected a more humane treatment by these countries they chose to migrate to. Instead of receiving acceptance and an opportunity for a better life, in all cases migrants found themselves in danger of their lives on their route to the migration destinations. They were deprived of their freedom, especially in camps and hotspots and they were exposed to many dangers and violence, even when they “settled” in these countries. The victims of violence and rape were of all ages and gender, and they were traumatized for life. Unfortunately, no one prevented such incidents but, in some cases, there was some psychological support after a long period of suffering after incidents. In the hotspots rapes, harassment and any kind of violence were “daily routine” and there was no supporting system by neither the governments, nor by the European Union and the responsible organizations.

In all migrations waves that were studied, people were stigmatized either for political or social reasons and these characterizations followed them after their migration, since

they were “unwanted” by the receiving countries. Any type of migration is faced as a “disturbance” by these countries, in any case, and in conclusion people are rarely willing to help individuals who come from different ethnicity, religions and financial status. This conclusion comes from the comparison between the already mentioned waves and the recent crises in Ukraine where people were hosted, welcomed, and accepted by the EU countries, more easily. That was the reason why the European Union reaction was ineffective towards the refugee crisis of 2015.

Europe tried to deal with 2015 refugee crisis, but many mistakes were made, and some funds were not used accurately and turned a blind eye on the situation in the hotspots, whereas a few years later the reaction to the Ukrainian flow was immediate and more effective. Some people might consider this direct handling of the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the support, which was provided to an Eastern European country, as a racist attitude towards people from Middle East and Africa. Some others may reach the conclusion that EU has been trained and is somehow knowledgeable enough, after the crisis of 2015, to control such a phenomenal and urgent situation.

After all those migration flows that have happened during the last fifty years, governments should be more prepared in the future. Emergency flows will probably happen for any reason; therefore, well-organized emergency facilities must be available from any country. The humanitarian organizations must be ready to control their funds and use them in the most efficient way. The hotspots must be spacious and provide the best hygiene conditions and security for those in need. New organizations should be established, and their members should be people trained appropriately and well-educated in matters of humanitarian crises, in order to be able to provide support and treatment to refugees and migrants. The most noticeable fact is that there was no burden sharing during the Mediterranean crisis of 2015 and the only European countries that hosted the camps were Italy and Greece. This proved to be a great “burden” for the two countries, whereas more European countries could have been involved and make life easier for refugees, by establishing hotspots with the appropriate living conditions and with the view to help refugees to be accepted and integrated into their countries.

All in all, emergencies, wars, poverty, and migration will always be problems that humanity will face in the future, as well, and it depends solely on governments and their interests, in order to give the best solutions to such crises and protects people’s lives.

However, it is reasonable when in such a sudden and multidimensional crisis a constitution cannot respond the way it is expected, although it might have the power to do so.

Bibliography

- Agence France-Presse. (2017, November 22). *The 1990s Balkan Wars in Key Dates*. Retrieved from Voice of America English News: <https://www.voanews.com/a/timeline-of-balkan-wars/4129662.html>
- AIDA and ECRE. (2021). Access to Education: Greece. Retrieved from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-education/>
- AIDA and ECRE. (2021). Overview of the main changes since the previous report update: Greece. Retrieved from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>
- AIDA and ECRE. (2021). Short Overview of the Asylum Procedure: Greece. Retrieved June 2021, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure/>
- Amnesty International Editors. (n.d). *Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants*. Retrieved from Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
- Asterias-Starfish Foundation Editors. (n.d). *Abou Us*. Retrieved from Asterias-Starfish Foundation: <https://www.asterias-starfish.org/about-us>
- BBC Editors. (2016, March 4). *Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts*. Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>
- BBC Editors. (2020, September 9). *Moria migrants: Fire destroys Greek camp leaving 13,000 without shelter*. Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54082201>
- BBC Editors. (2022, March 15). *Why has the Syrian war lasted 11 years?* Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>
- Becky's Bathhouse Editors. (n.d). *What we do*. Retrieved from Becky's Bathhouse: <https://beckysbathhouse.org/what-we-do/>
- Böhm, W. (1992, January 27). *Exodus of Albanian nationals*. Retrieved from Parliamentary Assembly: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=6888&lang=EN>
- Bouronikos, V. (2021, April 28). *Refugee Organizations in Greece*. Retrieved from Institute of Entrepreneurship Development: <https://ied.eu/blog/refugee-organizations-in-greece/>

- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. (2020, July 17). *Syrian Civil War*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War>: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War>
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. (2021, November 30). *Kosovo conflict*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict>
- Carrillo, K. J. (2020, September 22). *The Mariel Boatlift: How Cold War Politics Drove Thousands of Cubans to Florida in 1980*. Retrieved from History: <https://www.history.com/news/mariel-boatlift-castro-carter-cold-war>
- Center for a free Cuba. (2020, April 16). *Cubabrief: The Mariel Exodus 40 years later*. Retrieved from Center for a free Cuba: <https://www.cubacenter.org/archives/2020/4/16/cubabrief-the-mariel-exodus-40-years-later>
- Choose Love Editors. (2018, April 5). *The EU-Turkey Deal: Explained*. Retrieved from Choose Love: <https://chooselove.org/news/eu-turkey-deal-explained/>
- Clark, D. D. (1991). The Mariel Cuban Problem. In D. D. Clark, & R. a. New York (State). Department of Correctional Services. Division of Program Planning, *State or province government publication*. Albany, N.Y. : State of New York, Dept. of Correctional Services, Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation. Retrieved from Department of Correctional Services. Division of Program Planning, Research, and Evaluation: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/142919NCJRS.pdf>
- Clemens, M. (2017, May 22). *What the Mariel Boatlift of Cuban Refugees Can Teach Us about the Economics of Immigration: An Explainer and a Revelation*. Retrieved March 2022, from Center for Global Development: <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/what-mariel-boatlift-cuban-refugees-can-teach-us-about-economics-immigration>
- Collett, E. (2016, March). *Migration Policy Institution: The Paradox of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal*. Retrieved February 2021, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/paradox-eu-turkey-refugee-deal>
- Council of Europe and European Union. (n.d). *Good Practice Database: Unaccompanied minor / child*. Retrieved from Council of Europe and European Union: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/good-practice1/-/asset_publisher/As99zoEMwjxA/content/unaccompanied-minor-child?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fpjp-eu.coe.int%2Fweb%2Fyouth-partnership%2Fgood-practice1%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_
- Culture Trip Editors. (2017, February 9). *The Pyramid Crisis in Albania Examined*. Retrieved from Culture Trip: <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/albania/articles/the-pyramid-crisis-in-albania/>

- Drapen i Havet Editors. (n.d). *Our Work: Lesvos*. Retrieved from Drapen i Havet: <https://www.drapenihavet.no/en/our-work/lesvos/>
- Duany, J. (2017, July 6). *Cuban Migration: A Postrevolution Exodus Ebbs and Flows*. Retrieved from Migration Policy Institute: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows?fbclid=IwAR3sbpQQpEQj3JV8k6Im6RPn3lkcpZ_CFxH2yC7mj9KEJYGV130o4XXI-E
- ECRE and AIDA. (2021). Reception and identification procedure: Greece. Retrieved June 2021, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-identification-procedure/>
- ETIAS Editors. (2021, June 01). *Hotspot System: How Does It Work in EU's External Borders?* Retrieved from ETIAS: <https://www.etiasvisa.com/etias-news/eu-hotspot-system>
- European Commission. (2020, March). *EU-Turkey Statement: Four years on*. Retrieved February 2021, from European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20200318_managing-migration-eu-turkey-statement-4-years-on_en.pdf
- European Council. (2016, March 18). *EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016*. Retrieved February 2021, from European Council: Council of the European Union: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>
- European Database of Asylum Law. (2004, April 29). *Qualification Directive, Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004*. Retrieved from European Database of Asylum Law: <https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/en-qualification-directive-directive-200483ec-29-april-2004#Art%201%20QD>
- Eurostat. (2022, March 22). *Glossary: Unaccompanied minor*. Retrieved from Eurostat Statistics Explained: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Unaccompanied_minor
- Exit Staff. (2020, August 8). *29 Years Since Albanians Stormed Ship in Vlora, Bound for Bari*. Retrieved from Exit News: <https://exit.al/en/2020/08/08/132737/>
- Family for every child. (n.d). *METAdrasi*. Retrieved from Family for Every Child: <https://familyforeverychild.org/alliance-members/metadrasi/>
- Florida Memory. (2017, October 10). *The Mariel Boatlift of 1980*. Retrieved February 2022, from Floridiana: https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/332816?fbclid=IwAR29kF0qDn_KwrY21UpAO_ZRKV2znnMwHJFV7H-B3qep1zB1sJ3kK5hJg

- Frenzen, N. (2011, July 29). *20th Anniversary of the Arrival at Bari, Italy of 15,000 Albanian Boat People*. Retrieved March 2022, from Migrants At Sea: <https://migrantsatsea.org/tag/vlora/>
- General Court of the European Union. (2017, February 28). *Press Release No 19/17: Orders of the General Court in Cases T-192/16, T-193/16 and T-257/16*. Retrieved February 2021, from General Court of the European Union: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-02/cp170019en.pdf>
- Glass, A. (2018, April 20). *Castro launches Mariel boatlift, April 20, 1980*. Retrieved from Politico: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/20/castro-launches-mariel-boatlift-april-20-1980-528819?fbclid=IwAR09rMCcoAZlB-9JpMSTFDuGuvAy3lZQ1DZdk-nwFgG9RWK-ms4MWdZ3oaI>
- Goodwin-Gill, G. S. (2012, December). *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: An Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response*. Retrieved from Humanitarian Practice Network: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/the-kosovo-refugee-crisis-an-independent-evaluation-of-unhcr%C2%92s-emergency-preparedness-and-response/?fbclid=IwAR1CjaXiLXuGljYSNU0OY-HB3JKO6xVtfYf08NsOTABhgflrYMJAgMpqZ0k>
- Goxha, J. (2016, April 27). Migration In The Early '90s: Italy Coping With Albanian Illegal Emigration. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*(12), p. 11. Retrieved March 2022, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n11p254>
- Guérin, A. (2021, April 2). *The European Approach to Hotspots in Greek Islands*. Retrieved May 2022, from University of Oxford: https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2021/04/european-approach?fbclid=IwAR1DSVaJEWcWk_ZXzbUFX7_pOPqHgA4LSErHHQcBeH7Twjxf5MTQIdVXO88
- Haxhiaj and Milica, S. S. (2020, March 23). *Autonomy Abolished: How Milosevic Launched Kosovo's Descent into War*. Retrieved from Balkan Transnational Justice: <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/23/autonomy-abolished-how-milosevic-launched-kosovos-descent-into-war/>
- HIAS Editors. (n.d). *HIAS in Greece*. Retrieved from HIAS Official Website: <https://www.hias.org/where/greece>
- History.com Editors. (2009, November 24). *Fidel Castro announces Mariel Boatlift, allowing Cubans to emigrate to U.S*. Retrieved from HISTORY: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/castro-announces-mariel-boatlift>
- HuffPost Editors. (2017, February 8). *Διεθνής Αμνηστία: Κακές συνθήκες διαβίωσης στη Μόρια, «ακατάλληλα για μακρόχρονη διαμονή» κέντρα στην ενδοχώρα*. Retrieved from HuffPost Greece: <https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/2017/02/08/eidhseis-metanasteytiko-koinwnia->

die8nhs-amnhstia-tromeres-syn8hkes-moria-akatalhlka-kentra_n_14636980.html

- Human Rights Watch Editors. (2016, May 19). *Greece: Refugee “Hotspots” Unsafe, Unsanitary*. Retrieved from Human Rights Watch:
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/19/greece-refugee-hotspots-unsafe-unsanitary>
- Human Rights Watch Editors. (2019, December 4). *Greece: Camp Conditions Endanger Women, Girls: Asylum Seekers Lack Safe Access to Food, Water, Health Care*. Retrieved from Human Rights Watch:
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/04/greece-camp-conditions-endanger-women-girls>
- Immigration History. (2019). *Mariel Boatlift of 1980*. Retrieved from Immigration History: https://immigrationhistory.org/item/mariel-boatlift/?fbclid=IwAR0Lj26SfvkDT9e-QxUCH_VHmz25suh1E6WI9CSuKxDy0xmAwbOTupDupdE
- Ineli-Ciger, M. (2020, October 7). *Why the EU-Turkey Statement should never serve as a blueprint*. Retrieved from ASILE: Global Asylum Governance and the European Union's Role: <https://www.asileproject.eu/why-the-eu-turkey-statement-should-never-serve-as-a-blueprint/>
- International Organization for Migration. (1999, July 1). *Providing shelter abroad: The IOM/UNHCR Humanitarian Evacuation Programme from FYR of Macedonia*. Retrieved from ReliefWeb:
<https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/providing-shelter-abroad-iomunhcr-humanitarian-evacuation-programme-fyr-macedonia>
- International Rescue Committee. (2022, March 18). *What is the EU-Turkey deal?* Retrieved from International Rescue Committee:
<https://eu.rescue.org/article/what-eu-turkey-deal>
- International Rescue Committee Editors. (n.d). *Refugees in limbo: Greece*. Retrieved from International Rescue Committee:
<https://www.rescue.org/country/greece#what-caused-the-crisis-in-greece>
- Jarvis, C. (2000, March). *The Rise and Fall of Albania's Pyramid Schemes*. Retrieved from International Monetary Fund:
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2000/03/jarvis.htm>
- Kabashi, G. (2021, August 12). *‘They are Humans’: Albania Memorializes Dramatic Exodus to Italy*. Retrieved from Balkan Insight:
<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/08/12/they-are-humans-albania-memorializes-dramatic-exodus-to-italy/>
- Kafkoutsou and Oikonomou, N. R. (2020, July 2). *Diminished, derogated, denied: how the right to asylum in Greece is undermined by the lack of EU responsibility sharing*. Retrieved June 2021, from Greek Council for refugees and Oxfam Briefing:

<https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621011/bp-diminished-derogated-denied-greece-refugees-020720-en.pdf>

- King Baudouin Foundation United States. (2021, September). *Protecting the Vulnerable: Greek NGOs Care for New Migrants*. Retrieved from King Baudouin Foundation United States: <https://kbfus.org/protecting-the-vulnerable-greek-ngos-care-for-new-migrants/>
- Kushner, A. (1999). Kosovo and the Refugee Crisis, 1999: The Search for Patterns amidst the Prejudice, Patterns of Prejudice. *Patterns of Prejudice*, pp. 73-86. Retrieved April 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132299128810641>
- Lesvos Solidarity Editors. (n.d). *Our History*. Retrieved from Lesvos Solidary: <https://www.lesvossolidarity.org/en/who-we-are/history>
- Light Without Borders Editors. (n.d). *About Us*. Retrieved from Light Without Borders: <http://lightwithoutborders.org.es/>
- Luyten and Orav, K. A. (2020, September). *Hotspots at EU external borders, state of play*. Retrieved 2022, from European Parliamentary Research Service: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652090/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)652090_EN.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3OBf5HScSP1YyvSYqgX-uLEWFgs0Gvhl5ssMo6IdgpdGxMoGdKZpLzxc](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652090/EPRS_BRI(2020)652090_EN.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3OBf5HScSP1YyvSYqgX-uLEWFgs0Gvhl5ssMo6IdgpdGxMoGdKZpLzxc)
- Medicins Sans Frontieres. (1999, April 19). *Kosovo refugees statistics*. Retrieved from Medicins Sans Frontieres: <https://www.msf.org/kosovo-refugees-statistics>
- Migration News Editors. (1999, May). *Kosovar Refugees*. Retrieved from Migration News: <https://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=1801>
- Millefoglie, V. (2020, June 5). *An Italian Summer: A postcard from August 1991*. Retrieved March 2022, from Archivio: <https://www.archivio.com/en/think/an-italian-summer>
- Mr. Mario I. Blejer, M. M. (1992). Political and Economic Developments in 1991. In M. P. Mr. R. B. Johnston, *Albania: From Isolation Towrad Reform* (p. 91). International Monetary Fund. Retrieved March 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781557752666.084>
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (2022, January 6). *NATO's role in Kosovo*. Retrieved from North Atlantic Treaty Organization: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm
- Nowrasteh, A. (2017, January 2). *The Mariel Boatlift Raised the Wages of Low-Skilled Miamians*. Retrieved from CATO Institute: <https://www.cato.org/blog/mariel-boatlift-raised-wages-low-skilled-miamians>
- One Happy Family Editors. (n.d). *Project and Activities*. Retrieved from One Happy Family: <https://ohf-lesvos.org/en/projects-activities/>

- Operational Data Portal. (2022). *Mediterranean Situation*. Retrieved from Operational Data Portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>
- Peace Corps Community for Refugees. (n.d). *NGOs on Lesvos*. Retrieved from Peace Corps Community for Refugees: <https://www.pcc4refugees.org/cpages/ngoslistmap>
- Perchoc, P. (2022, May 20). *EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan*. Retrieved from European Parliament: Legislative Train Schedule: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan?sid=5901>
- Perez, A. M. (2020, April 22). *40 years later, Cuban Americans reflect on the Mariel Boatlift*. Retrieved from University of Miami: <https://news.miami.edu/stories/2020/04/40-years-later-cuban-americans-reflect-on-the-mariel-boatlift.html>
- Piscitelli, G. (2019, November 14). *Turkey's war against the Syrian Kurds*. Retrieved from UCLA: <https://www.international.ucla.edu/cnes/article/210496>
- Rare Historical Photos. (2021, November 27). *Albanian refugees arriving in Italy, 1991*. Retrieved from Rare Historical Photos: <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/albanian-refugees-italy-1991/>
- Raska, J. (2020, July 13). *1999: Canada's Resettlement and Repatriation of Kosovar Refugees*. Retrieved from Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21: <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadas-resettlement-and-repatriation-of-kosovar-refugees?fbclid=IwAR1ahiB8wv1VGQoVDGG57cChQhz8k74BnR53z2cR3axYbDcIyU9sNbmMrct>
- Refugee for Refugees Editors. (n.d). *Lesvos Projects*. Retrieved from Refugee4Refugees: <https://refugee4refugees.gr/lesvos-island/>
- Refugee Support Aegean. (2018, October 9). *The "hotspots" experiment: removing human rights from the equation*. Retrieved from Refugee Support Aegean: <https://rsaegean.org/en/the-hotspots-experiment/>
- Roberts, J. (2018, 5 15). *The EU-Turkey Statement – Questions on Legality and Efficiency*. Retrieved February 2021, from Denver Journal of International Law and Policy: <http://djilp.org/the-eu-turkey-statement-questions-on-legality-and-efficiency/>
- Rowan, L. (2017, January 9). *Photos of Albanian Refugees Arriving in Bari, Italy, 1991*. Retrieved March 2022, from History Daily: <https://historydaily.org/albanian-refugees-arriving-in-bari-italy>
- Sherlock and Neuman and Homsy, R. S. (2021, March 15). *Syria's Civil War Started A Decade Ago. Here's Where It Stands*. Retrieved from NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/15/976352794/syrias-civil-war-started-a-decade-ago-heres-where-it-stands?t=1650217033920&t=1650267227336>

- Silverman, S. J. (2018, April 17). *The EU's Hotspot Approach: Questionable Motivations and Unreachable Goals*. Retrieved from E-International Relations: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/04/17/the-eus-hotspot-approach-questionable-motivations-and-unreachable-goals/>
- Smith, R. (2015, December 1). *The real story behind this incredible photo*. Retrieved from News.com.au: <https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/true-stories/pictures-of-albanians-fleeing-for-italian-coast-remind-us-that-seeking-refuge-is-nothing-new/news-story/fd1467dfbb7fb96d36876bf9ea8c7cf3>
- Spindler, W. (2015, November 6). *UNHCR aids refugees on the Greek Islands*. Retrieved from UNHCR: https://www.unhcr.org/563ccbb86.html#_ga=2.210097943.385607545.1657029676-1538603941.1603294272
- Stephens, A. M. (2021, December 14). *“Making Migrants “Criminal”: The Mariel Boatlift, Miami, and U.S. Immigration Policy in the 1980s”*. Retrieved March 2022, from Anthurium: <http://doi.org/10.33596/anth.439>
- Talitha and Ashton, B. B. (n.d). *An Advocate for Unaccompanied Minors*. Retrieved from Brother's Keeper International: <https://www.brotherskeeperintl.com/an-advocate-for-unaccompanied-minors>
- Thanasi and Riotto, E. J. (2017, January). *The Spectacular Rise and Disastrous Collapse of a Financial Scheme: The Case of Albania*. Retrieved from Scientific Research: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=73801>
- UNHCR Editors. (2020, September 18). *Greece: update on Lesbos situation after Moria fires*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/9/5f64713a4/greece-update-lesvos-situation-moria-fires.html>
- UNHCR Editors. (2022, June 27). *Lesvos: World Refugee Day 2022*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/27239-lesvos-world-refugee-day-2022.html>
- UNHCR Standing Committee. (2000). *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: An Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/3ae68d19c/kosovo-refugee-crisis-independent-evaluation-unhcrs-emergency-preparedness.html>
- United Nations. (n.d). *The Conflicts*. Retrieved from United Nations: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>
- US Agency for International Development. (1999, May 27). *Kosovo Crisis Fact Sheet #60*. Retrieved from ReliefWeb: <https://reliefweb.int/report/albania/kosovo-crisis-fact-sheet-60>

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. (1999, May 31). *Here come the Kosovars (May 1999)*. Retrieved from Reliefweb:
<https://reliefweb.int/report/albania/here-come-kosovars-may-1999>

When We Bound Together Editors. (n.d). *Wellness Center*. Retrieved from When We Bound Together: <https://www.wwbt.org/>