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| <b>Committee:</b> | Special Conference on the Consequences of Brexit |
| <b>Topic:</b>     | The question of immigration into Europe          |
| <b>Chair:</b>     | Aaron Bigord                                     |
| <b>School:</b>    | Royal Russell School                             |

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## Summary

It is important for delegates to distinguish between refugees and migrants, this has often proven to be a point of disagreement with many news outlets reporting on the 'Mediterranean migrant crisis' with a Change.org petition signed by over 72,000 calling for the British Broadcasting Centre (BBC) to refer to it as the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis instead. The differentiation comes in that migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat or persecution but mainly to improve their lives in the way of finding work, seeking better education and/or reuniting with family. Unlike refugees, who cannot safely return home, migrants may return home if they wish. This distinction is important for governments, since countries handle migrants under their own immigration laws and processes.

Western European countries have arguably never been comfortable with the idea of mass immigration, unlike other countries such as the United States of America. Several European countries have in fact experienced waves of intra-European settlement even in the last ten decades. Despite the post-1945 protestations of anti-racism, no Western European society has happily come to terms with large inflows of foreign individuals and in such Europe has struggled greatly and has been losing its war on illegal immigration. According to various European Union estimations, approximately half a million illegal immigrants enter the European Union annually, even after measures that have included increased policing, detention and repatriation. To achieve widespread, lasting and significant change, as delegates you must consider the reasons why many illegal immigrants leave their homes for what they perceive as a better life in Europe.

Recent studies of attitudes towards immigration emphasize concerns about labour-market competition, which has proven to be a potent source of anti-immigrant sentiment, in particular among less-educated or less-skilled citizens who fear greatly the prospect of having to compete for jobs with low-skilled immigrants willing to work for significantly lower wages. However, extensive economic research has found there to be very small implications of immigration on income and employment. It is important for delegates to remember that expressing concern over illegal immigration or immigration does not make an individual racist, it is that some individuals are concerned about the increased value of cultural

diversity for some, whereas for those individuals it is less of a priority. Many express concerns that immigrants take jobs away from local workers, take from the government more than they give back in taxes and create ethnic enclaves by refusing to integrate into the wider country they have immigrated to.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Migration** – Is characterised as referring to the movement of people from one country to another with the intentions of settling permanently or temporarily at the new location

**Immigration** – Is characterised as referring to person who moves to a foreign country with the intention of living there permanently

**Refugee** – Is characterised a displaced person who has been forced to cross national borders as a result and cannot return home safely

**Asylum seeker** – Is characterised as a person who has left their home country and travels to another looking for the right to international protection in this other country

**Racism** – Is characterised as prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person on the basis of their membership to a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or is marginalized

**Labour-market** – Is characterised as the availability of employment and labour in terms of supply and demand

**Welfare benefits** – Is characterised as financial assistance provided when conditions are met, they are provided and funded mainly by the government

**NGO** – Non-governmental organisation

**Populism** – Is characterised as political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups

**Immigration detention centre** – Is characterised as the policy of holding individuals suspected of visa violations, illegal entry or unauthorized arrival, and those subject to deportation and removal in detention until a decision is made by immigration authorities

**Iron Curtain** – Is characterised as specifically referring to the imaginary line dividing Europe between Soviet influence and Western influence, and symbolizes efforts by the Soviet Union to block itself and its satellite states from open contact with the West and non-Soviet-controlled areas

## Background Information

Ever since the breach of the Iron Curtain in the autumn of 1989, the affluent member-states of the European Community (EC) have had to live with the prospect of a sudden deluge of destitute humanity arriving from the East and further afar. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, an average of 100,000 Eastern Europeans left the region a year. In 1989, the figure was thirteen times that number (1.3 million). The 1985 Schengen Agreement arguably marked one of the most important treaties to have ever crossed the globe, with it creating the 'European Schengen Area' which largely eradicated internal border checks.

More recently, in 2018, there were 634,700 applications for international protection in the EU plus Norway and Switzerland. This compares with 728,470 applications in 2017 and almost 1.3 million in 2016. Also, in 2018, European Union countries granted protection to almost 333,400 asylum seekers, down by almost 40% on 2017. Almost one in three (29%) of these were from Syria while Afghanistan (16%) and Iraq (7%) rounded up the top three. Of the 96,100 Syrian citizens granted international protection in the EU, almost 70% received it in Germany.

In 2015 and 2016, more than 2.3 million illegal crossings were detected. In 2018, the total number of illegal border-crossings into the EU dropped to 150,114, its lowest level in five years and 92% below the peak of the migratory crisis in 2015. A Eurobarometer survey from June 2019 shows that immigration was the fifth biggest issue that influenced the voting decisions of Europeans in the May European election. 34% of Europeans voted with immigration in mind. According to the results of an additional poll in 2018, 72% of Europeans want the European Union to do more when it comes to immigration.

Many measures have been taken in order to try and stem mass illegal migration, with the European Union funding the Libyan coastguard to migrate back to Libya, where they will be detained in the Khums Detention Centre (where the United Nations have confirmed people had gone missing and the organization expressed concerns for their wellbeing). It is alleged that migrants are sold back to trafficking gangs and maimed on camera with images/videos distributed on social media, with families being torn between paying extortionate ransom payments (with no guarantee of return). Some refer to Khums Detention Centre as the 'Abu Ghraib of Libya'.

In the past NGO ships, such as the *Mare Jonio*, would rescue drowning migrants and transport them to Europe where they would be welcomed with open arms. This was the case until the political climate changed, now many member states are fighting off populist challenges, with this, has seen the rise of migrants becoming a human commodity and arguably a political bargaining chip.

Key routes for migrants to travel to Europe has been stemmed by member states such as Niger, where migrants travel from the West African Peninsula, to Niger, on to Libya and then to Europe. Europe agreed to disperse €1 billion in development aid over 4 years if they agreed to patrol deserts. In four years, Europe has cut down its illegal migration flow by almost 90 percent from its peak in 2015, and it has countries like Niger to thank for the dramatic drop. Some argue, that through Europe fortifying areas such as Niger through providing aid, it is in effect a bid to see Europe extending their borders; as the goal is to primarily secure the outer borders of Europe.

Many feel that there is great difficulty in trying to live together in a reasonable, tolerable and conflict-free way, without the tendency for communities who wish to not integrate with the host country but seal themselves off. The aforementioned can arguably only be achieved through identifying who is truly a refugee and who is persecuted, this often acts as a divide, between those who want to remain generous and egalitarian and open to foreign individuals and those who vigorously oppose immigration and multiculturalism. Member states have seen the dynamic of the population change, with Sweden now having nearly ¼ of the population coming from a foreign background.

Often, consent for migration depends upon the control of it. If people begin to get the sense that there is no checking, there is no control, and that undermines the faith citizens have in democracy. With the rising presence of the internet, those from abroad can see what countries are alike even before arriving, subsequent old-fashioned solutions are being used to modern problems. Some misconceptions have arisen with regard to refugees that they have to seek refuge in the first safe country they come to. This is incorrect, the UN Refugee Convention does not make this requirement of refugees, and UK case law supports this interpretation. Refugees can legitimately make a claim for asylum in the UK after passing through other “safe” countries.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **United Nations Network on Migration**

The United Nations established the Network on Migration to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to member states. In carrying out its mandate, the Network prioritizes the rights and wellbeing of migrants and their communities of destination, origin, and transit. It places emphasis upon the issues where a common UN system approach would add value and from which results and impact can be readily gauged.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a United Nations programme with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and has assisted in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement within Europe.

### Italy

In 2008, Berlusconi's government in Italy and Gaddafi's government in Libya signed a treaty including cooperation between the two countries in order to stop irregular migration from Libya to Italy. This led to a policy of forcibly returning to Libya boat migrants intercepted by the Italian coast guard at sea.

### European Union

The European Commission's agenda on migration sets out a European response, combining internal and external policies, making best use of EU agencies and tools, and involving all actors: EU countries and institutions, international organisations, civil society, local authorities and national partners outside the EU.

### Greece

The Greek government has announced emergency measures to deal with what it calls "huge waves" of asylum seekers arriving from Turkey amid mounting fears of the 2015 migrant crisis being replayed on the country's shores.

### Libya

The largest flow of modern African migration funnels through a single country, Libya. Coming from the south, migrants flee the vestiges of wars that have left entire nations in ruin. From the east, they escape a life of indefinite military servitude and violent conflict. From the west, they evade destitution and governments that arbitrarily jail whomever they please.

## Timeline of Events

| Date | Description  |
|------|--|
| 2004 | The Libyan and Italian governments reached a secret agreement that obliged Libya to accept African immigrants deported from Italian territories. This resulted in the mass repatriation of many people from Lampedusa to Libya between 2004 and 2005, a move criticized by the European Parliament |

- 2006** In Karaburun, there is a Turkish migrant boat disaster in which at least six people drowned.
- 2007** A migrant boat with 53 people on board went missing some 150 km south of Malta.
- Feb 2015** At least 300 migrants are believed to have drowned after four inflatable boats sank off the coast of Libya
- Jan 2016** New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Germany. During the 2016 New Year's Eve celebrations, hundreds of sexual assaults, numerous thefts, and at least five rapes were reported in several German cities, mostly in the Cologne city centre. The Chief Prosecutor stated that "the overwhelming majority" of suspects were asylum seekers and illegal immigrants who had recently arrived from North Africa and the Middle East
- April 2018** The right-wing populist Fidesz party led by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán won a two-thirds supermajority in parliament, in a victory due almost entirely to a campaign against immigration and EU refugee quotas
- July 2018** Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini declared that his country would also reject foreign navy as well as Frontex ships that have boarded refugees at sea. He urged Europe's rescue missions to take refugees away from Italy's ports
- Jan 2019** The European Union records the lowest number of migrant arrivals in five years. About 150,000 have taken the Mediterranean route; 57,000 of them were brought to Spanish ports, making the Western Mediterranean the most active migratory route in 2018

## **Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

**Resolution 72/179 on the Protection of Migrants**

**Resolution 55/88 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**

**Resolution 59/166 on Trafficking in women and girls**

**1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (Geneva Convention)**

**Convention on the Rights of the Child**

## Article 33 of The Refugee Convention

### Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The current response to the refugee crisis has been called 'fragmented' by the Refugee Agency Chief. Although there has been attempts at resolving the issues at hand, it is clear that collaborative efforts are few and far between. Great disgruntlement has been expressed within the Security Council at the numbers of refugees some member states are taking in, in comparison to others.

The source of this issue is greatly intertwined to what has arguably been attempts to resolve it, Western interference in internal affairs in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

There have been attempts to temporarily relocate migrants through a heavily controversial and legally challenged quota system, this struggled to take off primarily due to member states not properly implementing the scheme. The European Union have also sought to deport economic migrants who are arriving, as they were not eligible for refugee status.

### Possible Solutions

#### Consider the crisis an opportunity to revitalize the EU

A high influx of refugees had already kept parts of Europe in suspense for a few years. Then, last summer, the situation became critical. The search for a European solution has proven to be laborious, as social and political differences between member countries became more pronounced.

#### No country can shoulder the refugee crisis alone

Despite what some EU governments may claim, the refugee crisis is not a primarily German problem, but a European one. Conflict will inevitably ensue when young, poor neighbouring states come to compare themselves to the old, prosperous Europe. Europe now have to take responsibility for that fact.

Towards that end, there are three major options that could be explored:

1. Member states could secure Europe's external borders, an effort that includes significantly strengthening Frontex's manda
2. Member states could secure external borders can guarantee our freedom within the Schengen area. 2. They could increase support to the EU's neighbouring countries in order to erase their citizens' need to migrate for economic reasons.
3. Member states could establish international asylum laws with clearly defined rules and comparable levels of assistance to support those who temporarily need of help.

No country can shoulder the burden of the refugee crisis alone. Member states need to come to terms with their mistakes — and learn from them. If they do, the refugee crisis could be a chance to revitalise the world as we know it.

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