MIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Servei Civil
Internacional

MODULE 9.

MIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Learning outcomes

What are the key features of migration in the Mediterranean? What are the main drivers, policies and impacts of such an extended, high-profile and politicized issue in the region? The central aim of this capsule is to provide a holistic overview regarding migration in the Mediterranean that differs from how the issue is usually described by the mainstream media and portrayed by political discourses. We will learn about migration flows and trends and the policies developed to 'fight' and 'manage' them, particularly within the context of the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS). We will also analyse the impact of such policies and encourage a critical reflection on the topic. Lastly, we will pay special attention to the affect of policies on migrants/refugees, their lives and livelihood.

KNOWLEDGE

— Gain an understanding of the basic concepts and data concerning mixed migration dynamics in the Mediterranean.

— Gain an understanding of Mediterranean migration governance and the main policies developed in the region. Learn about EU external migration policies – e.g., the EU-Turkey deal – and some of their effects.

SKILLS

— Analyse and think critically about Mediterranean migration, and about the effectiveness of migration policies and their effects on migrants' and refugee's lives and rights.

— Encourage alternative perspectives and narratives regarding migration in the Mediterranean.

ATTITUDES

— Adopt a critical point of view when analysing migration data
and trends and question current policies and narratives.

— Commit to promoting migrant's and refugees' rights and voices.

Mediterranean migration: a historical phenomenon or a political problem?

The Mediterranean is a region particularly marked by complex migration dynamics. Population movements have been a constant in the region's history, forming a key part of its culture and socio-economic past. In recent decades, however, migration has become an issue of great social and political relevance. From at least the mid 1990s, and mainly due to increased restrictions on legal migration, thousands of people have been crossing the Mediterranean by boat every year from the Southern and Eastern shores to reach Europe without the required documentation. The continuous securitization[1], politicization and criminalization of migration has converted it into a major political 'problem' to be tackled at all costs. Such a transformation became evident during the so-called migration crisis in 2015, when almost one million migrants, seeking shelter in Europe, attempted to cross the Mediterranean without authorization, leading to the collapse of an already fragile European processing system.

Thus, from having been conceived as a long-standing historical and relatively commonplace phenomenon, Mediterranean migration became synonymous with irregular and disorganized mass migration. Expressions such as migratory pressure and waves of immigration became commonplace, spreading fear, distrust and a false idea of invasion. As a result, Mediterranean states (especially, but not exclusively, those to the north of the region which form part of the European Union) have taken to dedicating enormous amounts of financial and human resources to 'managing' and 'solving' this 'problem', generally through the implementation of more restrictive and counterproductive migration policies.

In order to unpack the current reality of Mediterranean migration and better understand it, it is important to take a look at key concepts and data, with the aim of answering the following questions: what is a migrant? Who is migrating across the Mediterranean, and why? What are the main policies implemented by the European Union and its Member States to manage migration in the region, and what are their main effects?

[1] Many authors agree that the transformation of migration (and in particular the migrant person) into a security threat is the consequence of a process of securitization (Bigo, 2000; Boswell, 2003; Gabrielli, 2011; Ferrer-Gallardo and Van Houtum, 2014). According to Bigo (2000), securitization is the capacity to manage insecurity. In this sense, it is the capacity, mainly through the articulation of discourses, to transform an issue into a threat. For a more complete explanation of the securitization process, see Buzan (1991).

KEY CONCEPTS AND DATA

[There is no common, internationally-accepted **legal definition of migrant**. According to the IOM, the term migrant reflects "the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" (IOM). In other words, most experts agree that the definition covers someone who changes his or her country of residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status.]

In general, within the Mediterranean as in other parts of the world, the question of who a migrant is or what type of person migrates is largely difficult to answer. When talking about Mediterranean migration, the term migrant may refer to different types of people on the move: internally displaced persons (IDPs), returning IDPs, international inward and outward migrants, and returning migrants. Such an umbrella term may also make reference to refugees and asylum seekers who, although they fall into a different and internationally-recognized category, can also end up being counted as migrants as a result of the difficulties in separating these categories (see explanation regarding mixed flows below).
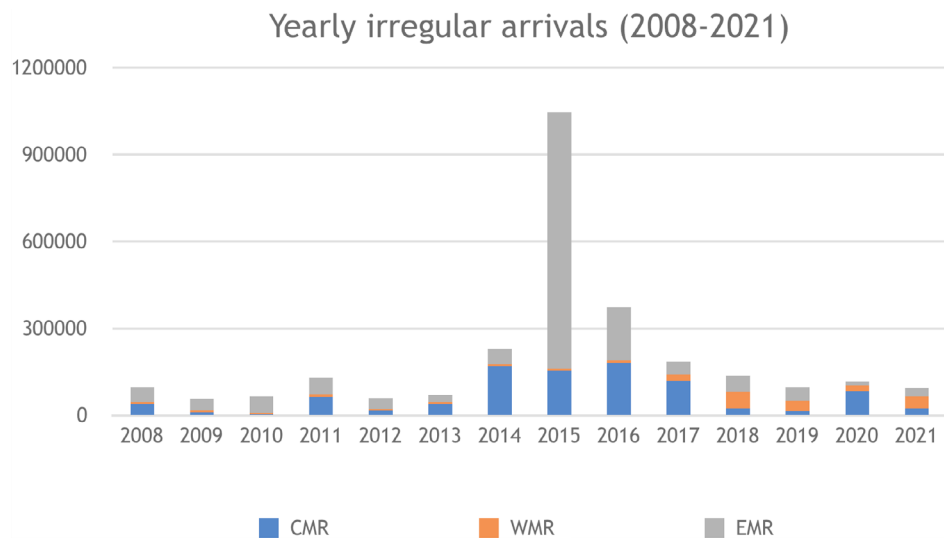
[According to the 1951 Refugee Convention a **refugee** is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it". In contrast to the term 'migrant', the status of 'refugee' is internationally-recognized, at least by the countries that have signed the convention. An **asylum-seeker** is someone who seeks international protection, but has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee; that is, someone who has claimed such a status, but regarding whose status a final decision has not been taken].

TRENDS, FLOWS AND ROUTES

Accurate data on Mediterranean migration – potentially pivotal for more-informed policymaking - is often complex and difficult to track and collect. In addition, the majority of available data concerns irregular South-North migration. Due to the efficient system of data collection developed by European countries interested in managing

(and curbing) this type of movement, it is possible to establish a relatively clear idea of the size and nature of irregular migratory movements to Europe, as well as the routes used by migrants to cross the Mediterranean sea. In contrast, most Southern countries do not have the resources and capacity to collect data on other types of movements, something that would be crucial for better informing policy decisions. Although irregular movements across the Mediterranean do not tell the entire story of migration in the region (nor even that of irregular migration), they are, by far, the most visible face of it.

Figure 1
Yearly irregular arrivals (2015-2021). Source: authors' representation of data from European Union and Frontex. Data available to September 2021. Central Mediterranean Route (CMR), Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR).

Yearly irregular arrivals (2008-2021)

Even if press and political discourses might lead us to think otherwise, irregular migration trends across the Mediterranean have been relatively constant in the last thirteen years or so, more of a fact of life than an emergency or crisis. With the exception of events during the years of the so-called migration crisis (2014-2016) when almost 1 million migrants tried to reach European shores, total figures have remained relatively steady (which can be seen clearly by comparing 2008 with 2021). This does not, of course, mean that trends are non-volatile, since flows and routes may change quickly in response to political or social events, including new migration policies put in place by countries.

Three principal routes of undocumented migration stand out across the Mediterranean: (a) the "Western Mediterranean Route", which covers routes from North Africa, mainly Morocco and Algeria, to Spain; (b) the "Central Mediterranean Route" (CMR), from North Africa - mainly from Libya, and to a much lesser extent Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt - to Italy and Malta (smaller scale), and the (c) Eastern Mediterranean Route linking, primarily, Turkey to Greece.

Both the Western and Central routes connect some of the poorest and wealthiest regions of the world, and are known to be particularly crowded, despite the attendant risks (Fargues and Rango, 2020). The Eastern route dominated the "migration crisis" in 2015, however the entry into force of the EU-Turkey deal (see box 1 below) caused numbers to return to pre-'crisis' levels.

Changes in the volume and routes of irregular migration are sudden and usually occur as a reaction to the various risks, obstacles (arrest, detention and deportation) and opportunities (weather conditions and possibility of rescue) that may be encountered. Likewise, migrants continue to adapt routes to the policies put in place by Southern and Eastern Mediterranean EU countries.

The nationalities of those migrating along each route also vary considerably. In 2021, the three most common nationalities were the following:
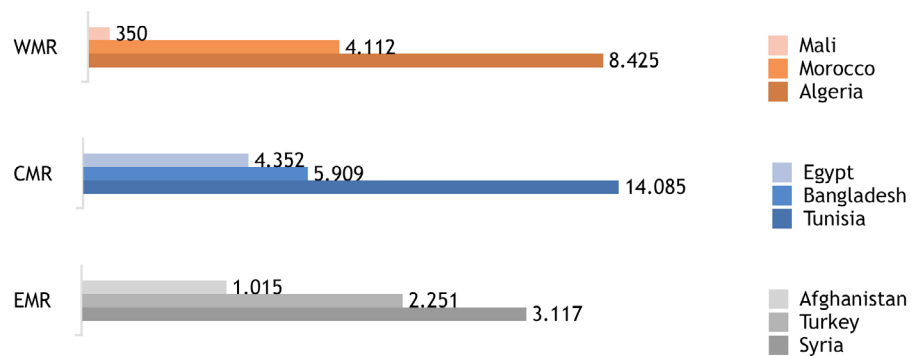
Top nationalities per route

Figure 2
Most common nationalities by route.
Source: Frontex, 2021

Such numbers should not mislead us into thinking that all Mediterranean countries experience similar levels of movement, nor that these are the most significant, at least in terms of raw numbers. While Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia can be considered principally as countries of origin, Libya remains a major destination, despite political chaos and internal displacement. Movements also originate elsewhere in the African continent and the Middle East. Indeed, although the focus often falls on the three main migration corridors mentioned above, migration routes tend to be much longer and complex (see figure 3).

Most importantly, and contrary to what is portrayed in the media and as part of political discourse, most migrants and refugees do not leave their region (Middle East or Africa). In the case of African migration,

around 75% of movements are thought to be intracontinental, whereas only 25% are thought to end in America, Asia or Europe (Puig, 2021). Finally, it should be stressed that those that use the Mediterranean sea to cross to Europe are also a minority, since the majority of migrants still reach Europe by plane and enter the continent via airports with a valid visa. Likewise, even though polls suggest that a high number of people in Africa aspire to migrate to Europe, only a minority of those planning to do so will manage to fulfil this wish.

MIGRATION DRIVERS AND MIXED FLOWS

Another important question concerns the reasons behind the movement of peoples across the Mediterranean. Why do people migrate? What are the main drivers of migration (also known as push factors) in the region?

According to recent studies, the main reasons behind Mediterranean migration are work, family and study-related. However, when it comes to irregular migration to Europe, particularly crossing the Mediterranean by boat, the main motives seem to be fleeing conflict, political insecurity and persecution. To this end, it seems that most of those attempting to reach European soil irregularly believe that their lives in their countries of origin and/or transit are in danger, which means that a great proportion of them are either refugees or potential asylum seekers. Moreover, whereas economic structural factors in countries of origin might explain mid- and long-term migration trends in the region, sudden changes (in both the number and composition of migratory groups), such as those seen in 2015-16, are usually related to political events and contexts, e.g. the conflict in Syria.

Overall, one of the main features of Mediterranean migration is the prevalence of mixed migration flows. Due to the high interdependence of drivers, it can be difficult to disentangle the reasons why people migrate, and particularly to determine whether their case is one of forced or economic migration (something that state authorities are very eager to do). However, motives that push people towards a migratory route often overlap, and migratory journeys tend to be complex. Moreover, drivers can overlap from the beginning or change along the journey due to the violence or abuse faced in transit, in countries such as Libya or Turkey.

In other words, even if a migrant may, in the beginning, migrate to Europe in search of work, after being exposed to situations of forced labour, violence and all manner of human rights violations during their journey, they may end up seeking asylum in Europe (Economic and Social Research Centre, 2017). This situation is driven by an overarching lack of humanitarian visas and means of processing an asylum claim outside of Europe. Temporary visas or other kinds of working visas are likewise also scarce and, as a result, migrants – no matter their motivation – are left with no option than crossing the Mediterranean by boat and attempting to enter Europe without proper documentation, at great risk to their well being and survival.
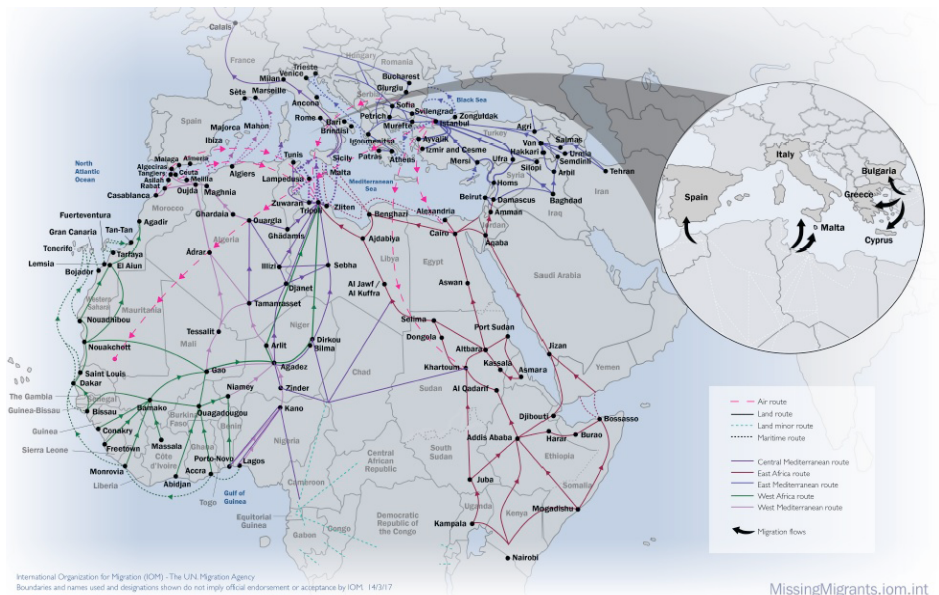

Figure 3
Mixed migration to Europe.
Source: IOM

Mediterranean migration governance: the externalization of EU migration policies and its impacts

Mediterranean migration remains a highly contested concept, involving a multiplicity of actors in its governance – including countries of origin/ destination, civil society organisations, migrants and international organisations – with different narratives, stances and interests. The European Union (EU), alongside its Member States (MS), have been the main actors interested in 'managing' and 'controlling' migration in the Mediterranean (Aragall, 2018). During the 1990s in particular, in a context marked by the rise of anti-immigrant discourses and the continuous securitization of the migration phenomenon (Boswell, 2013), the EU and its Member States began a process of *externalization* of migration policy. In recent decades, the development and implementation of EU external migration policies have become the main mechanism through which the EU deals with migration flows coming from and through the region, transforming and conditioning the governance of migration in this geographical space.

In short, the main goal behind these policies is to impede prospective migrants (especially irregular and 'undesired' migrants from the Global South) from leaving their home countries and reaching European soil (Guiraudon, 2001), from where it would be much more difficult to expel them. The main objective, therefore, is to manage migration flows not through the control of borders, but through moving the border away from EU territory. The modus operandi is simple: "before coming and letting them enter, it is better not to let them leave" (Zapata-Barrero, 2013).

Thus, the process of externalization entails delegating part of the jurisdiction and powers of MS to other actors who play different roles in border and migratory control. On the one hand, it consists of the 'Europeanization' of migration policies, which are now being developed in the EU policy arena. On the other hand, and more importantly, it implies outsourcing the control of migration to Mediterranean countries of origin and transit of migrants. Indeed, the externalization process may presuppose a project of "collaboration" and

"shared responsibility" between the EU and third countries in the region (Boswell, 2003). However, critics underline that the EU is more likely to be shifting the burden than sharing it with Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (Yildiz, 2016, p.81). In this sense, the cost and risks would appear to be much higher for third countries than for EU Member States.

Within the process of externalization, **two main approaches** can be distinguished when it comes to the operative logic and goals, policies and practices involved, as well as the attendant challenges and concerns:

Box 1.
The EU-Turkey deal
[The EU-Turkey deal, introduced on the 18th of March 2016, is a particularly illustrative example of how the externalization process works. Following the peak of arrivals through the Eastern Mediterranean route in 2015, the agreement aimed at closing sea and land routes to Europe from Turkey and thus put an end to the so-called migration crisis. In exchange for an aid package totalling six billion euros and a promise of negotiating visa liberalization for its citizens, as well as reopening the question of EU membership, the Turkish government committed to taking back every new migrant and asylum seeker that reached Greek shores irregularly. Moreover, at least on paper, for every Syrian returned to Turkey, another would be resettled in the EU from Turkey (Pace, 2016). In practice, however, the Turkish government has essentially committed to controlling the EU's borders externally, following the basic logic of externalization that it is better to prevent arrivals than removals. At the time, several NGOs and academics denounced the agreement as a plan that allowed the EU to reject refugees from outside and externalize its obligations to Turkey (Migreurop, 2016). Most importantly, they also underlined that the success of the agreement in reducing arrivals was not related to the externalization of control, but to the internalization of spaces of exception within the EU, specifically, the Greek islands that have been converted in open-air detention centres (Garcés-Mascareñas 2020).]

	Remote control	Root causes
Operative logic and goals	Security-based, short-term, and reactive approach, which aims mainly at curbing and controlling migratory flows through 'externalizing traditional tools of control' (Gabrielli, 2011; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2006). The main mechanisms for enforcing these policies involve direct control (physically preventing people from pursuing their migratory journey) and deterrence (persuading them against starting the journey in the first place).	Preventive and long-term strategy that aims to shape people's decision to move as well as their destination through improving the living conditions in the countries of origin (Boswell, 2003; Brochmann, 2004). The principal outlook behind this approach is that emigration has both political and economic structural causes, and therefore the process of democratization and development of the countries of origin is key to putting an end to the causes of unwanted and irregular immigration.
Policies, practices and tools	The control and reduction of migratory flows is carried out mainly through the extension of police control methods, including border control (e.g., joint patrol with Frontex), construction of detention centres, offshore processing systems, visa checks prior to departure, readmission agreements, safe third country rules. Great emphasis is put on the fight against human trafficking and human smuggling. Support in the form of material and economic resources as well as capacity building is provided to countries of origin and transit in the Mediterranean.	Policies and practices within this approach aim to address the drivers of migration: development aid, policies promoting stability and democratization, refugee protection and conflict prevention (Stock et al, 2019). This is mainly carried out through financial aid, economic cooperation, and direct investment in countries of origin. However, it also involves policies that aim at maximizing the development benefits of migration through return and remittance policies.
Challenges and concerns	This approach is not only considered ineffective, in the sense that it does not reduce flows or contain migrants as expected, but produces a series of "collateral" effects. Of particular concern is the inclusion of a humanitarian role in migration control in the Mediterranean, that is, the fact that migration control is being justified on account of its potential for saving human lives (thus serving as a way of legitimizing securitized policies).	The main concern here is that more development does not necessarily mean less migration; on the contrary, it might even lead to more migration in the short term (migration hump). The same may occur with democratization, insofar as it may lead to greater instability in the short term, and thus to more migration (refugee hump). In addition, it is particularly concerning that development aid is conditional, and depends on collaboration in migration control (migratory conditionality). This can lead to a change in priorities and prevent aid from reaching those who really need it.

At present, the external element of EU migration policy is well-embedded, and it is likely that it will remain the principal framework for dealing with migration flows in the Mediterranean region in the near future. This could be considered problematic for several reasons.

First, both experts and NGOs stress that the EU has prioritized a securitized remote-control approach, instead of applying a so-called *comprehensive approach*[2] - an indication that migration policies are a reflection of EU's internal and external security priorities. This is clear from analysis of the budget allocated to Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency responsible for numerous operations in the Mediterranean, and for 'managing' migration in the region), which increased from 6 million euros in 2005 to more than 450 million in 2020.

[2] See Tampere Council Conclusions 1999

Second, and apart from not being applied as promised, the 'root-causes' approach does not change the migration management paradigm. In both approaches, the underlying idea is that people should remain in their countries of origin (or at least the poor and unskilled population). Without changing this mindset, it is highly unlikely that the EU will regularize migration and allow for the creation of safe routes. As such, even though two approaches exist, the ultimate goal of both is to impediment the movement of peoples. Furthermore, and even more concerning, is the fact that, despite being a restrictive policy, the root-causes approach may ultimately serve as a mere discursive tool to legitimize greater levels of control.
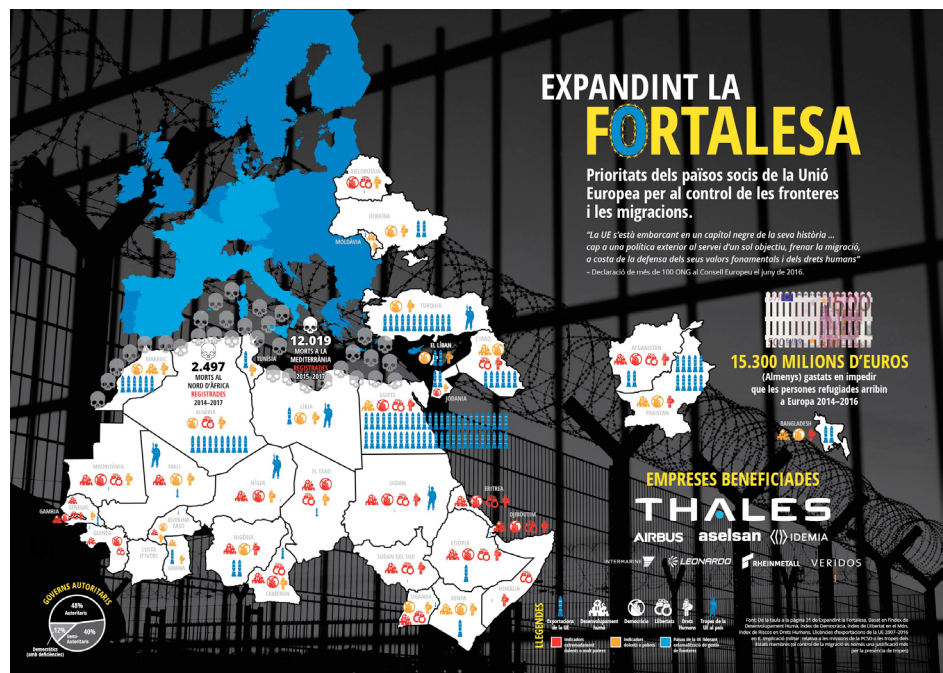
Third, insofar as irregular migration has come to be seen as a security issue in Europe, it has also become so across the Mediterranean. Countries in the region are converging around a vision of irregular migration as a crime, and as something that should be fought through arrest, detention, deportation, and an array of control tactics. In addition, countries in the region are increasingly applying stricter migration policies in order to comply with EU demands. In North Africa, for example, visa restrictiveness has increased considerably since the 1970s, increasing from 69% in 1973 to 83% in 2013 (Flahaux and de Haas, 2014).

Finally, externalized migration policies are being promoted and expanded even following evidence showing that, aside from not curbing the overall volume of irregular migration (one of the main goals behind externalization), they produce negative outcomes in terms of freedom of movement and migrants' and refugees' rights and livelihoods. This is explained in more detail below.

Moreover, these policies are also believed to be counterproductive and self-perpetuating. Most prominently, the imposition of a stricter migration regime with visa policy at its core, is seen as being behind the increase in irregular flows, with all the consequences this implies. Dinghy crossings, for example, were first identified after EU visa policies began to be applied in Morocco. In other words, with the intensified use of visa regulation and removal agreements, combined with the increased enforcement of borders and closing of routes in countries of origin and transit, migrants face insurmountable difficulties in crossing borders in an independent, regular and safe way. As such, it may be argued that, if migrants lack the legal means to enter the EU, they will end up choosing to do so irregularly, something which may ultimately be used to justify further tightening of migration control.

Another and perhaps less evident consequence of externalization is that, by cooperating with countries in the Mediterranean in combatting migration, the EU is likely to be fuelling authoritarianism and conflict in the region, and enhancing the drivers of migration that it aims to tackle in the first place. Most countries in the region are either authoritarian or hybrid regimes – 48% are authoritarian, 12% democratic with flaws, and 40% semi-authoritarian (Akkerman, 2018) – with low levels of rule of law and compliance to human rights (see Figure 4). The fact that the EU relies largely on their cooperation to control migration flows provides these regimes with both material and symbolic resources to increase their power and undermine democratic forces of change that exist in these countries.

Figure 4
EU priority countries for border and migration control.
Source: Akkerman, 2018.

Given the above, externalization of EU migration policies could, on the whole, be considered a vicious circle that is more likely to perpetuate the phenomenon of irregular migration than eradicate it.

THE HUMAN COST OF EXTERNALIZATION

What are the impacts of EU external migration policies, and where can its adverse effects be observed?

Criminalization of migration/migrants and rise of professional smugglers. As mentioned above, with increased control, there are too many difficulties facing migrants looking to cross borders legally. As a consequence, they are increasingly turning to other solutions. Two principal outcomes of this trend can be observed: on the one hand, the criminalization of migration, and an emerging professional market of smugglers who increasingly benefit from such restrictive policy on the other. It is important to underline that not only is South-North migration being criminalized as part of this process; so too is regional South-South migration. Beyond affecting flows towards Europe, these policies have been found to be particularly detrimental in terms of intra-African mobility (Gabrielli, 2011). Even though greater attention has been given to South-North migration, regional mobility is a particularly complex phenomenon, and intra-African mobility is more significant in quantitative terms than movement towards the EU (Flahaux and de Haas, 2014). In this sense, circulation within the continent may come under threat when many migratory routes are indiscriminately closed, being "rendered just as paths to Europe" (Casas-Cortes et al., 2014, p.15).

Increase in migrant death toll. Even though it may be difficult to trace a causal link between the growing number of deaths and EU policies, researchers argue that migration policies implemented by the EU are behind the increased risk of death faced by migrants crossing the Mediterranean (Fargues and Di Bartolomeu, 2015). This is largely due to migrants (and smugglers) taking longer and more dangerous routes to overcome obstacles, avoid checks and reach their destinations, as a consequence of increased control and border enforcement. Indeed, the Mediterranean sea is currently the deadliest route for migration in the world, representing more than half of all worldwide deaths recorded by the Missing Migrants Project from 2014 to 2018 (17,919 women, men, and children) (IOM, 2020). In the first eight months of 2021 alone, 1,353 deaths were recorded in the region, with the West Mediterranean route being the deadliest (Missing Migrants Project, 2021). Moreover, the

current lack of search and rescue capacity is contributing to the highest death rate ever recorded. However, it should be noted that, despite these numbers already being high, lack of access to reliable data, and the fact that most bodies are not recovered from the sea, mean that estimates of deaths at sea may even be under-reported.

Jeopardization of refugees' and migrants' rights. The externalization of migration policy results in many human rights violations and has a negative impact on refugee protection and well being as a whole. First and foremost, these policies represent a violation of the right to leave any country, including one's own, established by Article 13(2) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Second, externalization has a negative impact on refugee protection in different ways. The interception of immigrant-carrying vessels by Frontex, for instance, is a violation of the principle of non-refoulement and a means of circumventing the refugee protection regime established by European Community legislation (Trauner, 2011).

Several NGOs and human rights activists have denounced the forced return of migrants rescued at sea to unsafe places like Libya, where they face horrific levels of violence (kidnapping, torture, forced labour, sexual assault, etc.) and arbitrary detention, in breach of international maritime, refugee and humanitarian law (MSF, 2021). Finally, through EU readmission agreements (EURAs)[3], the protection of asylum seekers is being outsourced to countries that are less liberal, and in which their rights might be endangered (Lavenex, 2006). EURAs are particularly problematic, inasmuch as their use could lead to mass deportation and regional *refoulement*[4] (Trauner and Demiel, 2013). All of this being considered, it seems that, in order to 'get rid' of migrants and asylum seekers, Europe is turning a blind eye towards a range of human rights violations.

Criminalization and persecution of humanitarian aid. Recently, solidarity efforts focusing on migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean (mainly provided by search and rescue NGOs) have been overtly persecuted and criminalized by the EU, particularly by Southern Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Malta, Italy and Greece, jeopardizing civil society organizations' ability to carry on their work of defending migrants' rights and well being in the region. After the cancellation of the Mare Nostrum operation by the Italian government in 2014 and its replacement by Frontex operations, responsibility for saving lives at sea is primarily being taken up by maritime rescue NGOs such as Open Arms, Sea Watch and Médecins Sans Frontières, as well as individual activists like Helena Maleno (Novact, 2019). Their

[3] For more information and a list of countries EU that have established a Readmission Agreement

[4] This occurs, for example, when Morocco readmits citizens that are not nationals and returns them to another African country, such as Mauritania, which further returns migrants to Mali, which is not necessarily the country of nationality of the individual being returned.

systematic persecution by state forces is of particular concern given that they guarantee the protection of migrants' and refugees' rights and lives. Equally concerning is EU cooperation with armed groups such as the Libyan Coast Guard, which have been accused of crimes against humanity (MSF, 2021). Despite these circumstances, civil society organizations (and individuals) continue to engage in their work and raise awareness about the situation of migration in the Mediterranean, aiming not only to save migrants' lives and defend their well being, but also to promote new and alternative perspectives that shift the focus from security and control towards solidarity and human rights.

A NEW PARADIGM FOR MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Overall, the externalization of EU migration policy can be considered a harsh and ineffective migration management regime, one which – without mentioning its many directly negative effects – neither prevents (irregular) migration flows to Europe nor improves migrants' safety or well being in their countries of origin. Indeed, the current approach falls far short of providing definitive or sustainable solutions to the demands and challenges related to the movement of peoples in the Mediterranean in all its complexity. Moreover, the spread of hate speech and anti-immigrant discourses by far-right parties, the media and even state institutions provides continuing legitimacy for these policies, and downplays their adverse effects. As a result, many voices – especially from civil society and migrants themselves – stress the need to move beyond such a state-centric and restrictive model, considering it insufficient for tackling the issue of Mediterranean migration in all its complexity, towards a truly regional and bottom-up model that puts the necessities of migrants and refugees and their well being at the centre. In addition, NGOs are demanding respect for international law concerning refugees, and the provision of safe and legal routes for migration in the region.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the map below, created by Frontex (Frontex Risk Analysis for 2021), concerning Mediterranean migration routes and flows. Next, go to Google (or any other search engine of your preference). In the search bar, type "Mediterranean migration", and choose the image option. Carefully study the images that appear – what do they have in common? With these images and maps to hand, reflect on what you have seen, taking what you learned in this capsule into consideration.

a) What do these images show, and what do they hide?
b) Why is it problematic to represent migration and migrants like this?
c) How could this impact and mould public opinion and policy-making?
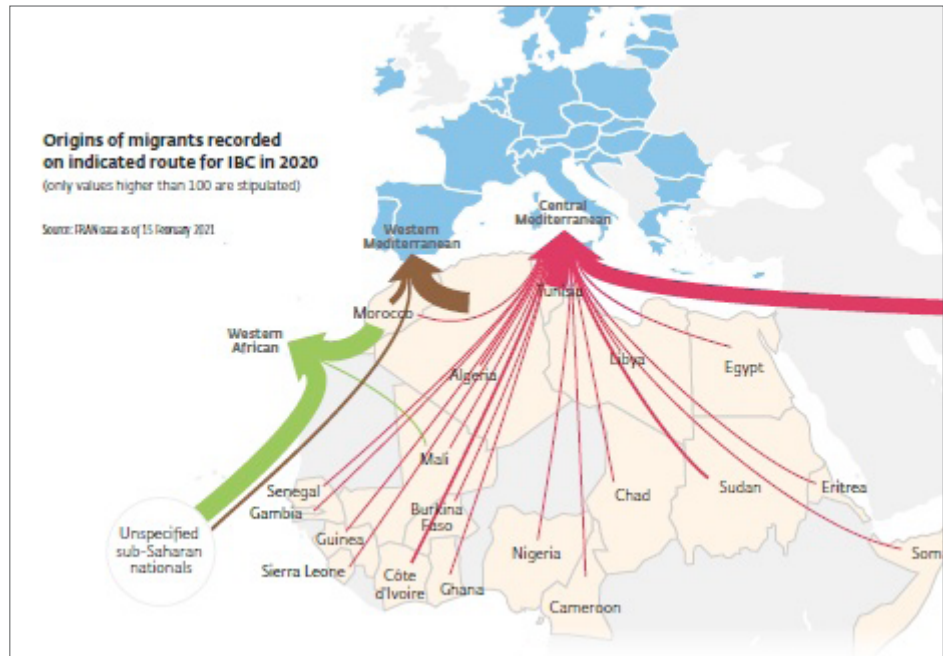d) Who benefits from this kind of representation?

Figure 5.
Routes to Europe.
Source: Frontex.

2. We now invite you to reflect on how this scenario could be different.

a) What do you think could be done to change this sort of (mis) representation?
b) What kind of information, public policies and tools could be useful for providing a more accurate image of migration in the Mediterranean?
c) Which stakeholders should be targeted in order to change the current narrative on migration – the media, policymakers, and/or the public?

3. Go to the website lamamigrant.org and choose one or two migration stories that go against your preconceived ideas about Mediterranean migration (or against the perception that people around you and/or the general public hold regarding the issue). Then describe which elements of the stories differ from your/others' ideas, and what can be learned from them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

— **Acknowledge migration as a right and not as a crime**. Accept migration as something inherent to humanity, both in general and in the Mediterranean in particular. Empathize and get to know migrants in your city and neighbourhood. Ask them about what made them leave their countries of origin and what saw them end up in their country of destination (which might be different from their intended destination). Take an interest in their aspirations and stories (the website Iamamigrant.org has hundreds of migration stories). Migration stories are often unique and much more complex than what simplified maps of migration flows tend to portrait. Get to know the migration history of people from your own cities and countries, such the forced migration of Catalan citizens between 1939 and 1975, and the more recent emigration of Spanish youth due to recent financial crises.

— **Inform yourself and increase your knowledge about migration, and share this knowledge with people around you.** Think and write about migration in your own terms. Contribute to changing points of view and narratives that condition how you and others see Mediterranean migration. Nowadays, you can resort to all kinds of data and information in order to develop an understanding of and talk about the phenomena of migration. Statistical data and empirical evidence are particularly important in discussing an issue marked by controversy and, often, prejudice. Look for courses and activities, such as those organized by the Red Cross on the topic of Human Rights, or those which form part of the Global Justice Agenda from Lafede.cat. Join seminars and participate in spaces that promote critical reflection on the topic, such as the IEMed "Aula Mediterranea" and the Festival Cine Migrante. Participate in workshops like those offered by Entreterres (SCI). Most importantly, get to know migrants and their spaces in your city, and take part in the activities they promote, such as those at the Espacio del Inmigrante in Barcelona.

— **Fight fake news and misconceptions about migration, as well as stereotyping of migrants' promoted by the media, political parties, and society as a whole.**

Negative narratives and misconceptions about migration are abundant and prevalent. By inciting fear and hatred, such narratives promote racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia among the public, phenomena which, far from being 'innocent words', have a direct impact on the lives of migrants, refugees, and their families.

Follow the work of Maldita Migración to get information and deconstruct the latest (fake) news about migration. Besides providing detailed information about why certain news is fake, such organizations endeavour to provide alternative and verified data about the issue. They also provide a space where the public can send their own doubts about migration and have them factchecked.

Encourage the media not to reproduce stereotypes and fake news about migration in their articles and headlines. The work done by the Observatorio Islamophobia is particularly important in this regard. They have even dedicating a specific space in their website to calling out Islamophobic news.

Sometimes misconceptions can also come from surveys and other sorts of data that are wrongly extrapolated or misinterpreted. This can be the case with polls which appear to suggest that most adults in Africa want to migrate to Europe, despite statistics showing that only a small number of individuals end up migrating, even less of whom make Europe their ultimate destination (Fargues and Rango, 2020). Nevertheless, polling taken in isolation can generate fear of mass migration.

Finally, fight the stereotypes within your own communities, families, and peer groups. Don't be silent in the face of racist, xenophobic or Islamophobic attitudes! The Xarxa Antirumors de Barcelona provide numerous activities and thematic manuals that can be used to fight and deconstruct rumours and stereotypes regarding cultural diversity in the city of Barcelona.

— **Support refugees and asylum seekers in your cities.** You can play your part by both sharing information about refugee and migrants' rights and/or by helping and giving them support in dealing with bureaucracy and in their social life. At Barcelona Ciutat Refugi and Asil.cat, you can find information about refugees' rights and how to help refugees in this city. Similarly, you can volunteer through the Catalan Federation of Social Volunteers, which has provided this form for those interested in joining. There are also several resources and awareness-raising materials available via the Espai Ciutadà, the website of Barcelona Ciutat Refugi, and the Commisió Catalana d'Ajuda al Refugiat (CCAR) concerning refugee and asylum rights.

— **Join international campaigns and demand political change.** Join and add your voice to international campaigns such as Defund FRONTEX (Defund Frontex – Build a European Search and Rescue programme), supported and driven by several search and rescue organizations operating in the Mediterranean, such as Sea Watch and Open Arms.

Participate in organizations and platforms that are fighting European migration policies which fail to respect human rights, threaten migrants' lives and well being, and go against the international agreements signed by Member States. Join campaigns and actions such as those promoted by the organization Stop Mare Mortum and Statewatch.

Demand that local, national, and European authorities provide legal and safe routes to migrate, write to your parliamentary/governmental representatives, and pay attention to political parties' discourses and positions on the issue before voting.

Demand policies which are informed by evidence and accurate migration data. Since data on migration trends in the Mediterranean is still limited, demand and support efforts from public and civil society bodies to improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination, especially those that take the perspectives of migrants and countries of origin and transit seriously. Likewise, support and demand greater efforts to monitor migration policies and their impacts on migrants and their home communities.

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🔆 OTHER RESOURCES OF INTEREST

The Migration data portal

International Organization of Migration (Spain)

NGO Stop Mare Mortum

Comisión Española de Ayuda a los Refugiados (CEAR)

Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau

Report «Expanding the fortress: The policies, the profiteers and the people shaped by EU's border externalisation programme»

Maldita Migración

To follow research results

For information on migrants' deaths and rights abuses in the Mediterranean:

Missing migrants project

Flows monitoring

NGO Caminando Fronteras. Twitter: @walkingborders

NGO Alarmphone. Twitter: @alarm_phone

NGO Euromed Rights. Twitter: @EuroMedRights

Twitter account of the activist and human rights defender @HelenaMaleno