

SHIFTING HUMAN SMUGGLING ROUTES ALONG TURKEY'S BORDERS

Despite externalized migration policies within Europe in order to secure borders and an enormous concern for human smuggling in the media and political debates, people continue to cross borders under desperate circumstances regardless of the dangers. Paradoxically, rather than achieving its proclaimed aim of "preventing unwanted entries," externalized migration policies and increased border controls generated displacement towards more dangerous routes and perilous journeys. Diverted migration to other crossing points and enhanced controls on EU borders have made migrants more dependent on smuggling, despite the increase of both costs and risks. In this article, the author explores the displacement effect along the route of Eastern Mediterranean, by presenting changing human smuggling networks as well as shifting trends between Turkey's borders with Greece and Bulgaria.

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Although the media often portrays human smuggling as a new phenomenon, boat migration across the Mediterranean actually started when Spain and Italy introduced Schengen visas for North Africans in 1991.¹ Prior to this, Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians could travel freely between the two continents, essentially fostering circular migration in the region. Following the implementation of a visa requirement, North Africans who had no access to visas began to cross the Mediterranean illegally in small fishing boats, known as *pateras*, between Spain and Morocco (the Western Mediterranean route). In response, the EU set up sophisticated military border control systems in the Strait of Gibraltar, which prompted migrants to explore new crossing points into Europe, such as the Canary Islands (the Atlantic route). The displacement of the Western Mediterranean route triggered tighter maritime patrols off the coast of Senegal through an operation called Hera in 2006 and 2007, which was led by Frontex, the European border and coastguard agency. And yet, rather than stopping illegal entries, these policies and patrols simply redirected the route once again from the Canary Islands back to the Western Mediterranean and Central Mediterranean route (from Libya to Italy). Unfortunately, not only have the number of illegal immigrations gradually increased, but also the number of missing persons and deaths. In combination with geographic shifts on these diversified routes, the smuggling network became much more systemized.²

To control the “unwanted” irregular entries, the EU began to externalize its migration and border policies through extraterritorial state actions, ranging from bilateral/multilateral engagement to migration management practices in and by third countries. Along this line, in order to foster the remote control of irregular entries, international security cooperation and surveillance – both across and within nation-states – were greatly increased on the borders of neighboring facilitated through agencies such as Frontex. Deportation and detention facilities were launched in safe third countries to ensure remote protection and readmission agreements are operational. In line with these policies, migrant smugglers undoubtedly turned into criminals, bringing “unwanted” irregular migrants into Europe.³

The Arab Spring and its aftermath led to the arrival of thousands of Tunisians on the Italian island Lampedusa. Unrest in the post-Qaddafi era triggered many sub-Saharan Africans – who had previously migrated to Libya – to travel to Europe mostly

¹ Ilse van Liempt, “A Critical Insight into Europe’s Criminalisation of Human Smuggling,” *European Policy Analysis* Issues 2016: 3, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2016_3_epa_%20eng.pdf

² Hein de Haas, “Don’t blame the smugglers: the real migration industry,” Hein de Haas Blog, 23 September 2015, <http://heindehaas.blogspot.com.tr/2015/09/dont-blame-smugglers-real-migration.html#comment-form>

³ van Liempt (2016).

on smugglers' boats. By 2008, Italy had signed an economic agreement with Libya. Economic cooperation was conditioned upon the latter allowing Italy to return all migrant vessels without screening for asylum seekers, and the harsh containment of migrants and refugees in detention centers.⁴

Due to increasing migration pressure post-Arab Spring and frequent shipwrecks off the Sicilian coast in 2013, "Operation Mare Nostrum," one of the biggest search and rescue operations to date, was launched by the Italian government. However, many EU member states accused the operation of encouraging irregular migrant crossings, since the migrants would be brought to EU

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territory when saved by the Italian navy.⁵ So, just one year later, "Mare Nostrum" was undertaken by "Operation Triton," led by Frontex. Triton was active on the territorial waters of the EU, but migrant boats continued to capsize on international waters. Throughout 2015, many tragic incidents were recorded on the Central Mediterranean Sea, one of which occurred off the Libyan coast: on 19 April over 800 migrants lost their lives.

The disastrous incidents on this hazardous sea route focused public as well policy makers' attention on the migrant crisis. In April 2015, the EU Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council approved a 10-point action plan with direct and substantial measures on the Mediterranean Sea: Joint operations in the Mediterranean (Triton and Poseidon) were reinforced with additional funding as well as an extended operational area. Other operations included Frontex-led Rapid Return and EU military-led operation EUNAVFOR Med which is now called EU NavFor/Sophia were launched.⁶ These substantial measures were fortified by the May 2015 Common Action Plan against migrant smuggling, which laid down a wide-ranging strategy for fighting against illegal migration and smuggling.

All in all, not only border surveillance and control policies, but also increased instability and tragic events in the region caused a decrease in the use of the Central Mediterranean route in 2015. Syrian refugees largely abandoned migrating from

⁴ Matio Toaldo, "Libya's Migrant Smuggling Highway: Lessons for Europe," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 10 November 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/libyas_migrant_smuggling_highway_lessons_for_europe5002

⁵ Toaldo (2015).

⁶ After Sophia who was a baby born on board, operating under the EUNAVFOR MED Task Force, the name of the operation was renamed EU NavFor/Sophia.

Libya to take the Eastern Mediterranean route instead, while sub-Saharan Africans (particularly Nigerians, Somalis, and Sudanese) have replaced them.⁷ As a result, the Eastern Mediterranean turned into the primary maritime route for irregular crossings into Europe where only the smaller Frontex (Poseidon) was operating – which has a smaller search-and-rescue capacity than Triton.

Eastern Mediterranean Route before the Syrian Civil War

“The exponentially increasing number of refugees and migrants arriving in the EU encouraged smugglers to adopt new strategies/routes.”

Displacing the Central Mediterranean route, the Eastern Mediterranean route has two exit points which migrants and refugees usually cross on their way to Europe: the Turkish-Greek (land and sea) borders or the Turkish-Bulgarian border. The shorter and relatively safer crossing from Turkey to Greece has allowed a much larger number of migrant and refugees – mostly Syrians – to reach the European external borders via

the services of smugglers. Irregular crossings via this route are not new, but it has seen a considerable increase and attention in recent years, triggering a change in response – institutionalized surveillance operations on external borders backed up with securitized and externalized migration policies. This change in modus operandi has, in turn, prompted new practices among smugglers, making irregular crossings more common and frequent, albeit not less risky, via new tracks displaced along this route.

Irregular Sea Crossings: From the Aegean Coast to Europe

As the longest sea border of Turkey (2,800 kilometers), the Aegean coastline – which harbors more than 3,000 Greek islands in close proximity to the Turkish land – stands as the most attractive clandestine route to reach the EU. Despite a spike in recent attention, the Aegean Sea has served as one of the main routes for the passage from Turkey to the EU for the last few decades. The many political, social, and economic developments since the 1980s, such as conflicts in the Middle East, collapse of the Soviet Union, and increasing economic problems in Asia and Africa, contributed to the increase of immigration to Turkey.⁸ In part due to its geographical location and growing – both formal and informal – economy, most migrants

⁷ Toaldo (2015).

⁸ Ahmet İçduygu and Kemal Kirişçi (ed.), *Land of Diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009).

enter Turkey irregularly with the help of human smugglers. Due to its unsystematic migration and asylum policies and lack of safe and legal ways to reach “fortress Europe,” they attempt to leave in a similar way. The majority of irregular migrants in the 1990s came from neighboring countries, such as Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.⁹

Between 1998 and 2002, almost two-thirds of all incidents associated with human smuggling occurred on the way from Turkey to Greece.¹⁰ Holding certain continuity in the region, smugglers were not always embedded in vast criminal networks, but could easily be found in migrant social networks and local communities.¹¹ In other words, rather than well-organized criminal, mafia-type formations, a number of smaller, fluid, flexible, and opportunist groups seemed to be active in this business. Independent individuals or groups specialized in particular aspects of the operation combined and coordinated their efforts at various stages along the smuggling process.¹²

“Only 3,651 people were registered on the Greek islands in 2012, while one year later, 23,299 refugees and migrants had arrived.”

In response to both pressure from the EU and the continuous arrival of irregular migrants towards the end of the 1990s, Greece and Turkey began to implement a combination of policies on their sea borders. In Turkey, the perceived temporality of the unexpected foreigners was met first with reactionary and interim policies, but this was revised largely after Turkey’s accession process to the EU. In accordance with the EU Accession Partnership Document, Turkey prepared its National Program and Action Plans which identified tasks and a timetable for the alignment of its asylum and migration strategy with the *acquis*.¹³ However, the policies on which the EU commonly agreed to were mainly security-driven measures that needed to be taken which focus on border control, return and readmission of irregular migrants, and a fight against human smuggling. In conjunction with its ongoing reform process that aligns with externalized European policies on migration and asylum, regarding the Turkish-Greek border, Turkey has increased the number of military personnel; supported an enhanced cooperation between each countries’ coast guards; and signed

⁹ Ahmet İcduygu and Şule Toktaş, “How do smuggling and trafficking operate via irregular border crossings in the Middle East? Evidence from fieldwork in Turkey,” *International Migration*, Vol. 40, No. 6 (2002), pp. 25–52.

¹⁰ İcduygu and Toktaş (2002).

¹¹ İcduygu and Toktaş (2002).

¹² İcduygu and Toktaş (2002).

¹³ Ayşem Biriz Karaçay, “Introduction: Critical Reflections in Turkish Immigration and Asylum Policies” in *Waves of Diversity: Socio-Political Implications of International Migration in Turkey*, edited by Ayşem Biriz Karaçay, Deniz Şenol Sert, and Zeynep Gülru Göker (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2015), pp. 11-25.

the readmission protocol with Greece in 2009. These initiatives were reinforced by the first deployment of Frontex Rapid Border Intervention Team (RABIT) at the request of the Greek authorities in the Evros River in 2010.

“The European Agenda on Migration, which was adopted in 2015, identified the fight against migrant smuggling as a priority.”

As a result of both sides’ actively pursued policies, irregular crossings across the Aegean Sea diverted to the Turkish-Greek land border.¹⁴ 47,088 irregular border crossings were registered in 2010 – a sharp increase compared to 8,077 in 2009 at the Turkish-Greek land border.¹⁵ All in all, this shifting trend revealed the displacement of the route from sea to land, while triggering further border control policies to stem human smuggling on the region.

Irregular Land Crossings: From Edirne, Turkey to Europe

The land borderline between Turkey, and Greece is 203 kilometers long and lies along the border cities of Edirne in Turkey and Orestiada and Alexandroupoli in Greece on the Thrace region. On the Turkish-Bulgarian land borderline (269 kilometers), lies the Turkish province of Edirne and the Bulgarian province of Svilengrad. The Turkish-Bulgarian land border is another passage for migrants, but compared to the Turkish-Greek border, it is less common. The irregular crossing from the land border to Europe takes place either through Evros River, through the official border crossing points, or through the green border areas.

While in essence, irregular crossings via the Turkish-Greek land border were limited in the 2000s, restricted border control policies on the sea route turned the border into one of the main irregular crossing points into the EU in 2010. Migrants primarily from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran increasingly used this route, followed often by people from Africa. Most Africans detected at the Greek land border with Turkey had first taken a plane to Istanbul, (benefiting from low fares and Turkey’s visa liberalization program) and then moved to land border region.

This rapid increase of movement triggered the initiation of two actively cooperated Frontex operations, Poseidon Land and Poseidon Sea, after the Joint Operation (JO) RABIT which lasted for four months (November 2010 to March 2011). JO Poseidon

¹⁴ Anna Triandafyllidou and Angeliki Dimitriadi, “Migration Management at the Outposts of the European Union: The Case of Italy’s and Greece’s Borders,” *Griffith Law Review*, Vol. 22 (2014), pp. 598-618.

¹⁵ Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi (2014).

Sea pursued to combat irregular migration flows on the sea border between Greece and Turkey, and the operation was extended in 2012 to also cover the west coast of Greece to intercept irregular migrants trying to reach Italy. JO Poseidon Land, on the other hand, aimed to stop irregular crossings via land and to prevent displacement towards Bulgaria. Parallel to these, Greece initiated two national operations, Aspida (Shield) and Xenios Zeus, which included the deployment of approximately 1,800 border police officers and the construction of a 10.5 kilometer-long fence on the border with Turkey in 2012.

The fenced and blocked border, efforts to seal crossings via the Evros river, increasing informal push-backs, and the inhumane conditions in detention facilities on both sides of the border (as reported by several NGOs), have led migrants to reconsider crossing the Aegean Sea in small rubber dinghies.¹⁶ Yet again, another shifting trend was observed on the routes of smuggling activity from the land border to the maritime border. In due course, apprehensions on the Turkish-Greek border reduced from

almost 55,000 in 2011, to less than 31,000 in 2012. On the sea border however, it quadrupled from 1,030 to nearly 4,000 in the same years.¹⁷ This re-routing has met the migratory flows that reached unseen heights after the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war. The exponentially increasing number of refugees and migrants arriving in the EU brought new security-driven policy measures and have, in return, encouraged smugglers to adopt new strategies/routes, while placing migrants and refugees even more at risk along the Eastern Mediterranean route.

Eastern Mediterranean Route after the Syrian Civil War

After the onset of the civil war in Syria in late 2011, Syrian refugees – among other nationalities, such as Iraqis and Afghans – started making the irregular journey across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece. Consequentially, the shift from the Turkish-Greek land border to the maritime border continued to grow in 2012. Only 3,651 people were registered on the Greek islands in 2012, while one year later, 23,299 refugees and migrants had arrived. Essentially, following the sharp increase of Syrian arrivals in Turkey, the use of smuggling services along this route grew

“Longer and more dangerous routes means more people get injured or die while crossing borders, which then leads to public outrage and calls for even more stringent border controls.”

¹⁶ Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi (2014).

¹⁷ Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi (2014).

significantly and new smuggling routes emerged. Prior to addressing these novel routes, however, it is worth noting that the organization of the human smuggling business has not altered much after Syrian civil war.

New Trends in the Smuggling Business

Evidence suggests that the organization of the human smuggling business in this region is based on a network model.¹⁸ In other words, human smugglers and facilitators are organized in loose networks, stretched along the migratory routes. These small and flexible smuggling networks can adapt themselves to changes in national and international initiatives designed to mitigate their activities.¹⁹

Syrians have access to information via informal social networks and by family members and friends who had embarked on the journey to Europe.²⁰ For them, social media has developed into the main means of communication, with individuals frequently communicating on Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, and Viber. Smugglers themselves have also made an interesting shift in their communication strategy by advertising their services via social media outlets.²¹ New smugglers and ad hoc smuggling networks without any experience have emerged just to earn more from this highly profitable smuggling business. As a result, this clandestine business has become an easily accessible sector, especially since 2015.²²

New Routes along the Eastern Mediterranean

The actual structures and strategies applied in the migrant smuggling business, however, do not support the notion of the predominance of easily identifiable routes.²³ Routes may change rather quickly based on a number of factors, as seen in the case of the Eastern Mediterranean Route. Firstly, along the Turkish-Bulgarian area – which is a rarely used route – data revealed an enormous increase of apprehended

¹⁸ Europol, “Migrant Smuggling in the EU,” February 2016, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/migrant-smuggling-in-eu>; “Understanding the dynamics of migration to Greece and the EU: drivers, decisions and destinations,” *MEDMIG* Research Brief, No. 2, September 2016, <http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-02-understanding-the-dynamics-of-migration-to-greece-and-the-eu/>; Oguzhan Omer Demir, Murat Sever, and Yavuz Kahya, “The Social Organisation of Migrant Smugglers in Turkey: Roles and Functions,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2016); Ahmet İçduygu and Sebnem Koser Akcapar, “Turkey” in *Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A Global Review of the Emerging Evidence Base*, *International Organization of Migration*, 2 November 2016, pp: 137-160, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/smuggling_report.pdf

¹⁹ Demir, Sever, and Kahya (2016).

²⁰ William Huddelston, Ayşem Biriz Karaçay, and Maria Nikolova, “Study on smuggling of migrants, characteristics, responses and cooperation with third countries: Case Study 4: Nigeria – Turkey – Bulgaria,” Unpublished Report for EC (2015).

²¹ Demir, Sever, and Kahya (2016); Elif Çarmıklı and Umay Kader, *Migrant Smuggling in Turkey: The Other Side of the Refugee Crisis*, USAK Report, No. 45 (Ankara: Karınca Yayıncılık, 2016).

²² Demir, Sever and Kahya (2016); Çarmıklı and Kader (2016)

²³ Huddelston, Karaçay, and Nikolova (2015).

irregular migrants in between 2012 and 2013. On the green border region, i.e., forested areas along the border, data on apprehended irregular migrants increased from 200 in 2012 to 11,524 in 2013.²⁴ As a response, the Bulgarian government initiated the construction of a 30 kilometer-long fence on its Turkish border, along with enhanced operational measures, including an Integrated Border Surveillance System (IBSS) and a special border police patrol in 2014. These rapid arrangements resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of apprehensions on the green border areas.

As an indirect consequence, these measures caused a partial shift of the route from green areas to official border crossing points on the Turkish-Bulgarian border. For instance, in 2014, the level of apprehensions on the green areas decreased to 6,023, compared to 11,524 in 2013. The number of migrants apprehended for clandestine entry at official border crossing points, however, increased from 366 in 2013 to 1,995 one year later. Even in the very rarely used Black Sea route, an increase was observed in the incidents of irregular sea crossings in 2012 (0) and in 2013 (214). These isolated cases might still be considered as unique instances that possibly resulted from out by migrants' and smugglers' search for novel yet unsafe strategies, as a response to the increased surveillance on the Eastern Mediterranean route.

Another novel smuggling pattern developed in the Mediterranean region of Turkey. For this sea route, smugglers – in cooperation with cargo carriers – organize the departure of refugees and migrants from coastal towns on the Mediterranean region, such as Mersin, Adana, and Hatay. Wooden boats would depart from these points along the Southeastern Turkish coast to reach cargo vessels waiting offshore. The vessels used were steel cargo ships ranging between 50 and 100 meters in length, transporting between 250 to 800 refugees and migrants. In these operations, smugglers mainly focused on Italy rather than the Greek islands as the country of destination, especially in 2014 and 2015. The Turkish Coast Guard initiated two operations called “Operation Safe Med” in the Mediterranean Sea and “Operation Aegean Hope” in the Aegean Sea in response to this shifting smuggling pattern towards Italy. With these enhanced initiatives and diplomatic cooperation between Italian and Turkish authorities, the use of “ghost ships” (decommissioned cargo vessels) considerably declined in the region.

New Enhanced Policies: A Solution or Not?

Despite declining trends observed on the aforementioned novel sea and land smuggling routes, the unprecedented volume of irregular arrivals via the nearby Aegean coast to the Greek islands continued extensively in 2014 and 2015. This rising trend made the Aegean Sea the most preferred clandestine route, with more than 850,000

²⁴ Huddelston, Karaçay, and Nikolova (2015).

refugees and migrants reaching the Greek islands (mostly, Lesbos, Samos, and Chios) in 2015. In order to deal with these intense flows that directly challenged European migration management both in size and capacity, the EU Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council approved a 10-point action plan which activated and reinforced new Frontex operations on the Mediterranean Sea.

These direct and substantial measures were followed by the European Agenda on Migration, which was adopted in 2015. It identified the fight against migrant smuggling as a priority, to prevent the exploitation of migrants by criminal networks, and to reduce incentives of irregular migration. Accordingly, “hotspots” were set up in Greece and Italy to ensure screening, identification, and fingerprinting of refugees and migrants arriving irregularly. In addition, the resettlement of 20,000 people from outside the EU and the relocation of 160,000 people within the EU to other EU Member States such as Greece, Italy, and Hungary was proposed as an emergency response mechanism. Also, Frontex strengthened its operations on Greece’s most affected islands in the Eastern Aegean Sea, bringing additional vessels and aircrafts to help in patrolling and search and rescue operations, and launched Poseidon Rapid Intervention, after the Greek authorities requested additional assistance at its land borders. In line with these policies and measures, on February 2016, NATO ordered warships to move immediately to the Aegean Sea to facilitate intelligence-sharing between Greece and Turkey.

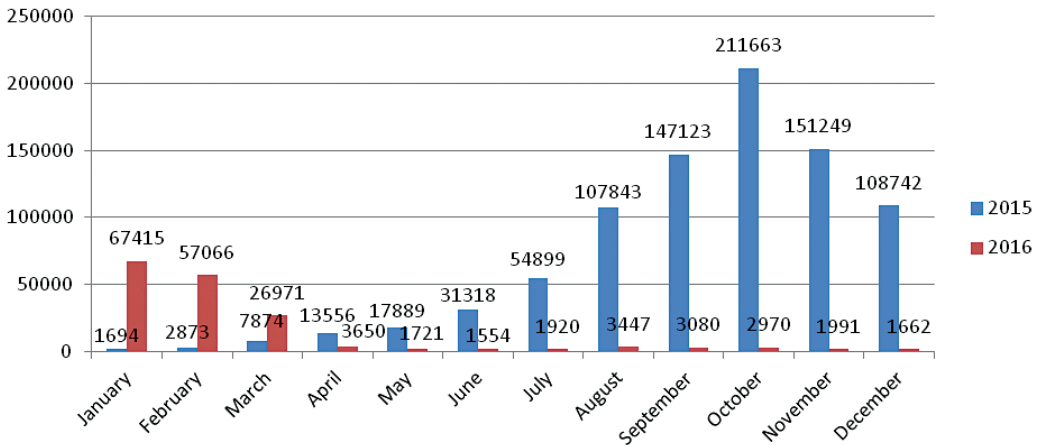
These efforts were reinforced by the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, signed on 18 March 2016. Accordingly, the EU and Turkey agreed to the following: all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey; for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU; and measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU will be implemented.

The return of irregular migrants from Greece, as well as resettlements from Turkey started on 4 April 2016. According to the fourth EC Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, a total of 748 persons who entered irregularly after 20 March and had not applied for asylum after the designated date were returned from Greece back to Turkey, while 2,761 Syrians from Turkey were resettled in the EU and Norway under the framework of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan.²⁵ In line with this action plan, regular operational contacts and daily reporting were improved with the exchanged information and continuous patrols by the

²⁵ “Fourth Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement,” *European Commission*, 8 December 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20161208-4th_report_on_the_progress_made_in_the_implementation_of_the_eu-turkey_statement_en_0.pdf

Turkish and Greek authorities, as well as liaison officers deployed in each country.²⁶

Table 1: Apprehended Irregular Migrants on the Turkish-Greek Maritime Border (2015-2016)



Source: UN Refugee Agency (2017)

Consequently, the closure of the border between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 8 March 2016, the enforcement of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on 20 March 2016, as well as the increased patrolling in the Aegean Sea resulted in a substantial drop in irregular crossings from Turkey to Greece, via the Aegean Sea. As seen in Table 1, the average daily/monthly arrivals on Greek islands have dropped sharply, particularly after the implementation of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan. Only 173,447 refugees and migrants crossed the sea to Greece in 2016, while the number stood at almost 851,000 in 2015.

Concluding Remarks: Re-routing Again!

According to the fourth EC Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, efforts to control the flows in the Aegean Sea have so far not resulted in a major development of alternative routes from Turkey.²⁷ Nevertheless, a significant flow of people arriving in EU member states, such as Austria and Germany, raises the possibility that people will continue to find a way

²⁶ For more information about Turkey's Syrian foreign policy: N. Ela Gökalp Aras and Zeynep Şahin Mencutek, "The international migration and foreign policy nexus: the case of Syrian refugee crisis and Turkey," *Migration Letters*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2015), pp. 193-208. For more information about Turkish border spaces: Martin Lemberg-Petersen, "Between Asylum and Security: Reconfigurations in the EU/Turkish borderspaces," in Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott, & Gianluca Bocchi (eds.), *Border Imaginations, Imaginaries and Images: From Bordering to Border-scapes* (Routledge, 2015), pp. 141-150.

²⁷ *European Commission*, 8 December 2016.

out of Turkey. Instead of short but treacherous journeys from the Turkish coast to the Greek islands, it seems that some boats have already preferred to make longer journeys from other coastal provinces of Turkey to other EU member States. For instance, during the reporting period (20 April 2016 to 18 June 2016) of the second EC Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, a number of refugees had already arrived in Crete from Antalya in Southern Turkey, after smugglers had promised to take them to Italy.²⁸ In June 2016, a boat was intercepted off the Crete coast, carrying 65 migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.²⁹ One week later, more than 340 migrants were rescued in another incident off the coast of Crete. The fourth EC Report stated that in total 18 boats, holding a total of 1,500 migrants, arrived in Italy from Turkey during the reporting period (28 September 2016 to 8 December 2016). These incidents are likely to deepen concerns about a new smuggling route, one that could bring more tragedies at sea.

In sum, despite strict border controls and action plans, the smuggling routes – as seen in recent practices – might re-shift, while their structure and organization may also alter. In other words, the EU, with its externalized migration and border policies, has been caught up in a vicious cycle in which increasing numbers of border deaths lead to calls to “combat” smuggling and increase border patrolling, which forces refugees and other migrants to use more dangerous routes using smugglers’ services.³⁰ Longer and more dangerous routes means more people get injured or die while crossing borders, which then leads to public outrage and calls for even more stringent border controls.³¹ At Europe’s frontiers, an industry of border controls has emerged, involving European defense contractors, member state security forces and third countries, as well as a range of non-security actors. Whenever another “border crisis” occurs, this industry will grow again, feeding on its own apparent “failures.”³²

²⁸ “Second Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement,” *European Commission*, 15 July 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160615/2nd_commission_report_on_progress_made_in_the_implementation_of_the_eu-turkey_agreement_en.pdf

²⁹ “Migrant crisis: Hundreds rescued from boat off Crete,” *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36443326>

³⁰ De Haas 2015; Robin Anderson, “Europe’s failed ‘fight’ against irregular migration: ethnographic notes on a counterproductive industry,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 7 (2016), pp. 1055–1075.

³¹ De Haas (2015).

³² Anderson (2016).