

Researchers study refugee and migrant experiences of crossing the Mediterranean

September 21 2015, by Lee Page



Social scientists from the University of Warwick are carrying out an urgent research project on the current migratory situation in Europe, using emergency funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Led by Dr Vicki Squire from the Department of Politics and International Studies, the team are speaking to refugees and migrants in an attempt to understand better the journeys they have made across the

Mediterranean Sea.

The project focuses on three European Union island arrival points in Greece, Italy and Malta.

The research aims to assist EU leaders in improving policy, as well as providing valuable information for charities and other organisations, and thus to help shape the international response to an issue of ongoing importance.

Dr Squire said: "As the situation has intensified across Europe over the past few months, there have been a number of emergency interventions to address the growing number of people trying to cross the Mediterranean.

"This has involved, for example, a shift in the way search and rescue operations are being carried out, changes in the way in which new arrivals are processed, as well as new efforts to dismantle trafficking and smuggling networks.

"But what we don't fully yet understand is the impact that these responses have on migrants and refugees themselves – so we are speaking directly to those affected to build up a detailed picture of their experiences.

"The EU has emphasised the importance of reinforcing internal solidarity between Member States and fostering shared responsibility through cross-regional cooperation. Nevertheless, such concerns reflect a policy agenda that has thus far had limited success in providing effective protection or settlement outcomes for refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean by boat.

"A renewed assessment of policy interventions is therefore pressing."

The University of Warwick project is one of eight projects across the UK being funded under the ESRC's Urgency Grants Mechanism. This is the first time the ESRC has activated this funding mechanism on a strategic basis, in response to a crisis.

Co-funded by the Department for International Development, the Mediterranean Migration Research Programme will provide evidence to inform the development of policy and responses by governments, European agencies, and charities.

Craig Bardsley, Head of International Development Research at ESRC, said: "Given the unprecedented levels of migration across the Mediterranean this spring and summer, and the catastrophic death toll that resulted, there was an urgent need for new research to better understand the dynamics and drivers of the crisis.

"With highly vulnerable people in the midst of a complex international crisis, there is an important role for highly trained, independent [social scientists](#) to gather accurate, reliable data. We hope this research programme will make a critical contribution to the evidence to support an effective policy response."

Provided by University of Warwick

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