

Call for changes in EU policy to address migrant crisis

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A series of proposed changes to EU policy on refugees and migrants has been released by researchers at the University of Warwick.

The policy suggestions are the result of an on-going three year project, Crossing the Mediterranean sea by boat: Mapping and documenting migratory journeys and experiences, which is in its first year and is part of the wider £1 million Mediterranean Migration Research Programme, launched by the Economic and Social Research Council in September.

Over 3,700 people were believed to have drowned in the Mediterranean during 2015. Alongside these tragic developments, increasing levels of migration along the Balkan route have been met by border closures within the EU, with growing tensions exacerbating humanitarian challenges across the wider region. EU Member States have struggled to adopt a unified approach to handling the issue.

The University of Warwick project involves conducting a total of 225 in-depth qualitative interviews with migrants and refugees. Currently in its first phase, the findings draw on a series of interviews conducted since September 2015 across three Mediterranean island arrival points: Kos, Malta and Sicily.

The team has been led by Dr Vicki Squire, associate professor of international security from the Department of Politics and International Studies (PAIS) University of Warwick. It is hoped the findings will provide the basis for discussion with EU policy makers and non-

governmental organisations regarding recent policy developments and used as steps to improve policy responses over the coming months.

The four suggestions are:

1. Replace deterrent border control policies with interventions that address the diverse causes of irregular migration: Findings from the project suggests that measures such as detention centres, deportation, and anti-smuggling are not effective deterrents of irregular migration, and affirm the need to address diverse migratory causes across source, neighbouring, and transit regions. The researchers propose that deterrent policies are replaced by interventions that improve livelihoods and educational opportunities across source, neighbouring, and transit regions.

2. Revise migration and protection categories to reflect the multiple reasons that people are on the move: The research indicates that there is a strong need to have a better understanding of why people become migrants. Current protection mechanisms do not reflect (i) the diverse forms of violence and conflict that people seek to escape, (ii) the multiplicity of sites that people flee and (iii) the fragmented and fluid journeys involved. The academics propose that the categories of 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration are rejected in favour of diversified categories that are based on a deeper appreciation of international refugee and human rights law, and are more reflective of reality.

3. Open safe and legal routes for migration, and improve reception conditions and facilities: The team's findings demonstrate that current Search and Rescue mechanisms do not address the vulnerabilities of those migrating across the central and eastern Mediterranean, and that the relationships between those migrating and those facilitating migration are diverse and often ambiguous. They support calls to open safe and legal routes to the EU and to improve reception conditions and

facilities at all arrival points across the EU, to ensure that human rights and international protection obligations are met in full.

4. Improve rights-oriented information campaigns across neighbouring, transit and arrival regions: Dr Squire and her team concluded that migrants should be provided with better information. They found that new arrivals have little understanding and information on procedural processes and reception conditions either before or after entering the EU. They propose the development of rights-oriented information campaigns that mobilise social networks in order to offer clear and accurate information on admission and asylum processes across neighbouring, transit and arrival regions.

This briefing paper, which was presented at the University of Warwick Brussels Office provides an overview of research findings across each of the three sites - Kos, Malta and Sicily in Phase 1 - and proposes policy suggestions on the basis of the analysis to date. The research findings provide insights into migratory journeys and experiences across the three sites, and shed light on policy effects by addressing the knowledge and expectations informing migrant/refugee decision-making.

Dr Squire said: "Current policy interventions urgently need assessing in light of unprecedented levels of migration and a catastrophic increase in deaths across the Mediterranean.

"EU Member States have struggled to adopt a unified approach to handling the issue. It is in this context that the European Agenda on Migration, proposed in 2015, needs to be reviewed. Our research produces a timely and robust evidence base as grounds for informing policy interventions."

The academics' analysis will be developed in Phase 2 of the project to capture changing migratory dynamics and to deepen the understanding

of policy effects. This briefing will be supplemented by further papers and organised events in November 2016 and again in the spring/summer of 2017.

More information: The briefing paper can be viewed here [www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pai ... t/evidence_paper.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pai...t/evidence_paper.pdf)

Provided by University of Warwick

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