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Destination Europe?

Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015

Heaven Crawley, Franck Düvell, Katharine Jones,
Simon McMahon and Nando Sigona

Unravelling the Mediterranean Migration Crisis (MEDMIG)

Final Report November 2016

Coventry University
Centre for Trust, Peace & Social Relations
University of Birmingham
University of Oxford
E·S·R·C Economic & Social Research Council
ΕΛΙΑΜΕΠ ELIAMEP
FIERI Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione
The People for Change Foundation
Yaşar University

Destination Europe?
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Acknowledgments

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Further information about the research including all of our publications and events can be found on our project website www.medmig.info

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Executive Summary

Europe's response to the so-called 'migration crisis' has been driven almost exclusively by a border control agenda. This has significantly reduced the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece, for the time being at least, but has done nothing to address the drivers or causes of migration to Europe, including the movement of people from Libya which continues unabated, or the protection and integration needs of those who are already here.

Several years into the 'crisis', there is still no sign of a coherent long-term response. Both the reception infrastructure and the asylum system in Greece have failed to adapt to the needs of the refugees and migrants. This is partly a Greek failure but it is also a failure of the EU. Meanwhile escalating conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iraq continue to displace hundreds of thousands of people from their homes every day. The assault on Mosul (Iraq) which began in mid-October 2016 is expected to displace 1.5 million people, many of whom are likely to cross the border into Eastern Turkey just a few hours away. Understanding the dynamics of migration to Europe and why some of these people might decide to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean remains a pressing concern.

The context

In 2015 an estimated 1,011,712 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean to Europe in search of safety and a better life. Nearly 4,000 people are estimated to have died trying to make this journey. Migration across the Mediterranean dominated European political debate and media coverage during 2015. The focus was on the drama of the perilous journeys across the Mediterranean, the smugglers facilitating irregular crossings and the hardships endured by refugees and migrants during the journey and on arrival.

Taken together, these events were widely perceived as constituting a 'crisis': of uncontrolled and unregulated movement into Europe, of the political failure of States to respond collectively and of the international community to address the pressing humanitarian needs of those arriving on Europe's shores.

Politicians and policymakers across Europe have largely talked about the arrival of refugees and migrants in 2015 as an unprecedented 'event', a single coherent flow of people that came 'from nowhere', suddenly and unexpectedly pressing against the continent's southern border. This has been reflected in the tendency of the media and policymakers to focus almost exclusively on the beginning and the end of peoples' journeys to the neglect of everything in-between. There has been little or no interest in the 'back stories' of those arriving; instead the gap between someone leaving their home country and his or her or arrival in Europe has been filled with generalisations and assumptions.

Our research

Since September 2015 a team of researchers led by the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR) at Coventry University, working in collaboration with University of Birmingham's Institute for Research into Superdiversity and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at Oxford University in the UK and partners in Greece (ELIAMEP), Italy (FIERI), Turkey (Yasar University) and Malta (People for Change Foundation), has been undertaking research into the dynamics of migration at the borders of southern Europe.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Department for International Development (DfID) in the UK, the MEDMIG project aims to fill this

gap by providing the first large-scale, systematic and comparative study of the backgrounds, experiences, routes and aspirations of refugees and migrants in three EU Member States – Italy, Greece and Malta – and Turkey.

The research aims to:

- Shed light on the dynamics (determinants, drivers and infrastructures) underpinning the recent unprecedented levels of migration across, and loss of life in, the Mediterranean;
- Provide insights into the interaction of refugees and migrants with a multitude of non-State actors (for example smugglers, facilitators, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and State actors (for example, the navy / coastguard) in order to better understand their decision making processes; and
- Explore how the decisions made by refugees and migrants on their journeys interact with dramatically changing global economic, security and political contexts.

The fieldwork on which the analysis in this report is based took place between September 2015 and January 2016 when arrivals of women, men and children into the EU via southern Europe reached their peak. During this time we interviewed 500 refugees and migrants travelling via the Central (Libya to Italy and Malta) and the Eastern (Turkey to Greece) Mediterranean routes and more than 100 stakeholders.

The report unpacks the journeys and routes to Europe of the people who took part in this research and provides a framework for understanding the diverse array of strategies that individuals pursue in an attempt to secure safety and a livelihood for themselves and their families. It examines the factors that shaped the decision of our respondents to leave their home countries and, in the case of those who spent extended periods of time in a number of other countries, continue their journeys onwards towards Europe. And it explores the relationship between respondents and the smugglers who facilitated their journeys.

Unpacking migration to Europe

The representation of the movement of refugees and migrants as linear, singular uninterrupted journeys or flows of people heading toward Europe is grossly misleading. The focus on the points of departure and the sea crossings is equally misleading. These simplifications distract from what were often multiple separate movements which converged in Libya and Turkey helping to explain the arrival of refugees and migrants in Italy and Greece respectively.

The average duration of migration for those arriving in Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route was considerably shorter than for those arriving via the Central Mediterranean route to Italy or Malta. The time between leaving the country of origin and arriving in Europe was shortest for Syrians and Iraqis and longest for Afghans and Eritreans.

Our findings challenge the idea that all those arriving in Europe have crossed all the borders on their journey irregularly (without authorisation and/or the necessary documentation). There are significant differences between groups depending on their access to documents and other resources which results in a mixture of regular and irregular crossings.

Many respondents witnessed death and/or experienced violence during their migration. Experiences of violence and death were not limited to the sea crossing but could

be found along the entire route. More than three quarters (76%) of respondents who were interviewed in Italy and Malta said that they had directly experienced physical violence and nearly a third (29%) had witnessed fellow travellers dying. The majority of these episodes occurred in Algeria, Niger and Libya.

The decision to leave – and move on

Conflict in the countries neighbouring Europe was a major factor contributing to the significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in 2015, both as a cause of primary and secondary movement. More than three quarters (77%) of respondents explicitly mentioned factors that could be described as 'forced migration'. The figure was even higher at 91% for those interviewed in Greece reflecting the significant proportion of Syrians in our sample.

Although the situation is more complicated for the Central Mediterranean route, nearly two thirds (66%) of those who were interviewed in Italy and Malta made reference to factors associated with 'forced migration' when describing the reasons they decided to leave their home country. Many more had experienced conflict, persecution and human rights abuses in the countries to which they subsequently moved, most notably Libya.

More than a quarter (28%) of respondents interviewed in Greece told us that the activities of Islamic State (IS) had been an important factor in the decision to leave, particularly in Syria but also in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Respondents from Syria and Iraq described kidnapping by State and non-State agencies (including a range of militia groups) as a significant factor in their decision to leave their countries of origin. Those who had spent time in Libya also described the risk of kidnapping as a significant factor in the decision to move on.

For Eritreans, Syrians and Afghans living in Iran, the risk / fear of forced indefinite conscription into the government army, militia or rebel force was a major factor underlying the decision to leave.

There is often a complex and overlapping relationship between 'forced' and 'economic' drivers of migration to Europe. Many of those who left their home countries primarily due to economic reasons effectively became refugees and were forced to move due to the situation in Libya and elsewhere.

Others who decided to leave their homes due to conflict subsequently decided to move on again because they were unable to make a living or access healthcare and education. A third of respondents interviewed in Greece had moved on for what might typically be understood as economic reasons.

There were significant differences between those interviewed in Greece and Italy as to whether they intended to stay in the first European country in which they had arrived. Virtually none of those who were interviewed in Greece intended to stay compared to more than two thirds (68%) of those interviewed in Italy.

The role of smugglers

All of our respondents engaged the services of a smuggler for at least one leg of their journey to Greece

or Italy. This was primarily because they were unable to access a safe and legal route to safety and/or protection. One in ten of our interviewees who entered Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route had tried but failed to identify an alternative way to migrate legally, for example by applying for a visa for work or study, a UN resettlement programme or family reunification.

Smugglers performed two main functions for our respondents: they helped them to escape danger, conflict or persecution at home or en route and they enabled them to bypass controlled borders where these were a barrier to reaching safety, protection and/or livelihoods.

Contrary to the dominant representation of smugglers by politicians and the media as being part of vast criminal networks, our research found that smugglers were embedded in migrant social networks and local communities en route and were easy to find. By far the majority of interviewees across both the Central and the Eastern routes found their smugglers through friends, family members and extended social networks, either at home or along the way. According to our respondents, State officials, the military, law enforcement and border guards were also involved in smuggling.

Many of our respondents experienced violence and threats from smugglers (along both routes), but it is important to acknowledge that violence also came from other actors (e.g. State officials, militias, military and the police). We also found some examples of human trafficking along the Central Mediterranean route, in particular concerning women from Nigeria and many examples of forced labour intermingled with smugglers. Respondents were often not clear however of the boundaries between the various actors and their different roles.

Implications for EU migration policy

The humanitarian crisis that unfolded on the borders of the European Union – and is now increasingly unfolding inside – was not the result of a natural or unforeseen disaster. The arrival of large numbers of refugees and migrants was neither new nor unexpected. Rather the 'crisis' was, in large part, policy driven and sustained by the failure of the EU to put in place adequate and humane responses to deal with this unprecedented but also foreseeable movement of people.

The failure of EU policies to respond effectively to the increased movement of people across the Mediterranean in 2015 was partly a reflection of political differences and tensions within and between EU Member States but also reflected flawed assumptions about the reasons why people move, the factors that shape their longer-term migration trajectories and their journeys to Europe. These assumptions became deeply politicised over the course of 2015.

Due to the enormous diversity of geographies, people, drivers and motives a broad brush approach to migration across the Mediterranean will be insufficient. There is a need for nuanced, tailored and targeted policy responses which reflect the diverse, stratified and increasingly protracted and fragmented movements of people. Our report concludes with a discussion of five key challenges for policymakers.

Executive Summary

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Policy makers need to address both the primary and secondary drivers of migration to Europe. Although there is growing awareness within the EU of the need to pay attention to the drivers of forced migration, including the need for co-ordination in the fields of foreign policy, development and trade, the focus at the EU level has instead been on tackling irregular migration through improved co-ordination of border controls in order to contain the movement of people within countries and regions of origin. The focus needs to shift towards improving access to rights and socio-economic security in the countries hosting significantly larger number of refugees and migrants than Europe.

There is a complex relationship between forced and economic drivers of migration to Europe. EU governments are legally obligated to treat all of those who arrive in accordance with international law, including with regard to the right to seek asylum. In practice this means providing access to protection for refugees and migrants arriving in Europe through irregular channels. It also means recognising that people's reasons for leaving their counties of origin and travelling to Europe are complex and cannot be determined by nationality alone.

EU politicians and policy makers have repeatedly declared they are 'at war' with the smugglers and that they intend to 'break the smugglers business model'. **The evidence from our research suggests that smuggling is driven, rather than broken, by EU policy.** The closure of borders seems likely to have significantly increased the demand for, and use of, smugglers who have become the only option for those unable to leave their countries or enter countries in which protection might potentially be available to them.

At the same time the number of people drowning in their attempt to cross the Mediterranean has increased

significantly. At the time of writing, the total number of people recorded as dead or missing is higher than the total for 2015. Since the beginning of 2016 the number of people dying has increased to 1 in 46 people among those crossing via the Central Mediterranean route and to 1 death in every 407 arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean route. In other words the death rate for the short distance from Turkey to Greece has more than doubled.

There is an urgent need to significantly expand safe and legal routes for protection. This includes significantly expanding current resettlement programmes, increasing humanitarian visas or establishing temporary international protection for those with a prima facie case for refugee status and increasing the scale of family reunification.

The EU has focused almost exclusively on policies designed to contain refugees and migrants in countries and regions of origin at the expense of addressing the reception and protection needs of those arriving from situations of conflict, persecution and human rights abuse. There has also been a **failure at the national and EU levels to address the longer-term integration needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe.**

During the course of 2015 the EU has intensified pressure on other countries to stem the flow and assume responsibility for refugee and migrants from neighbouring countries so they do not travel onward to Europe. There is a risk that efforts to stem the flow of migration to the EU exacerbate the conflict, violence and human rights abuse that leads people to leave in the first place.

Policymakers need to engage with the issue of development as an important policy objective in its own right rather than primarily as a mechanism for preventing migration to Europe. And they need to be aware that the politics of containment – reflected in interdiction, interception and off-shore processing – have 'ripple effects' with developed countries taking a lead from the example of Europe and, in turn, reducing the protection they provide. As a result the European response to the so-called 'migration crisis' not only undermines access to protection for those arriving at Europe's shores but threatens the principle of international protection at a global level.

The view from Europe

"We don't know who is to blame for what is happening in Syria but the Syrian people pay the price. We had our jobs, we had our businesses. Then one day we lost everything. We can find no peace in Syria. I was afraid that the regime will force my sons to join the army."
(Syrian woman aged 47 travelling with her 21 year old son)

In 2015 an estimated 1,011,712 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean[1] to Europe in search of safety and a better life. Nearly 4,000 are thought to have died trying to make this journey[2]. Migration across the Mediterranean dominated European political debate and media coverage during 2015. The focus was largely on the drama of the perilous journeys across the Mediterranean, the smugglers facilitating irregular crossings, the hardships endured by refugees and migrants during the journey and on arrival, and the political, economic, social and cultural implications of increased migration for EU Member States. Taken together, these events were widely perceived as constituting a 'crisis': of uncontrolled and unregulated movement into Europe, of the political failure of States to respond collectively and of the international community to address the pressing humanitarian needs of those arriving on Europe's shores.

But the view from Europe tells us only a small part of a much bigger story.

The number of international migrants – those living in a country other than the one they were born in – reached 244 million in 2015[3]. According to the UN, this number has increased 41% since 2000. Although many of these people have chosen to move for work, to study or to be with their families, conflict, persecution and human rights abuse has also forced more people to leave their homes than ever before. By the end of 2015 more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, a quarter of whom (21.3 million) were refugees living outside their countries of origin[4]. Importantly, given the focus of this report, the scale of displacement accelerated during the course of 2015 with an estimated 12.4 million people newly displaced due to conflict or persecution during the course of the year. Whilst the majority (8.6 million) stayed within the borders of their own countries, the remainder left in search of protection and an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Some countries have been particularly affected by forced migration. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) began in March 2011 but escalated during the course of 2014 and 2015. By early 2016, there were reports of 470,000 deaths as a result of the conflict. More than 11% of the country's population has been killed or injured[5]. Nearly half of the country's population of around 23 million people has been displaced[6]. Although the conflict in Syria has been the focus of political and public attention because of the large refugee flows and humanitarian needs with which it

[1] We use the term 'refugees and migrants' throughout this report to reflect the nature of 'mixed flows' across the Mediterranean.
[2] See IOM (2016) *Mixed Migration: Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond: Compilation of Available Data and Information 2015* available at https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/Mixed-Flows-Mediterranean-and-Beyond-Compilation-Overview-2015.pdf and data collected by IOM's Missing Migrants Project available at missingmigrants.iom.int
[3] UN (2015) 'Trends in international migration', *Population Facts* 2015/4, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/populationfacts/docs/MigrationPopFacts20154.pdf
[4] UNHCR (2016) *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*, Geneva: UNHCR, http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html
[5] This figure is from a report published by the Syrian Centre for Policy Research www.scpr-syria.org which was widely reported by the international press, see for example http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/a-staggering-new-death-toll-for-syrias-war-470000/
[6] In 2011, the Syrian population was estimated at roughly 23 million permanent inhabitants, including people with refugee status from Palestine and Iraq and the indigenous Levantine people. Today the population is estimated to be around 12 million people.

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has come to be associated, many other conflicts also contributed to the increase in forced migration during 2015. These included new or reignited conflicts in Burundi, Iraq, Libya, Niger, and Nigeria, together with older or unresolved crises in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen and ongoing political persecution in countries such as Eritrea and Gambia[7].

It is important to acknowledge that the number of refugees and migrants who arrive in Europe is a tiny fraction of those on the move globally. Far larger movements of people occur in regions other than Europe. For instance, in 2015, almost 9 in 10 international migrants living in Africa originated from another country in the same region, and over 8 in 10 in Asia[8]. And the vast majority of the world's refugees, a massive 86%, live in low- and middle-income countries. These countries include Turkey, which for the second year running hosted the largest number of refugees (an estimated 2.5 million), Pakistan (1.6m), Lebanon (1.1m), Iran (979,400), Ethiopia (736,100) and Jordan (664,100)[9]. In the particular case of the nearly 5 million Syrians of concern to UNHCR, most have fled to – and remain in – the neighbouring countries of Jordan (0.75m), Lebanon (1.1m), and Turkey (2.7m)[10].

[7] UNHCR (2016) fn.4
[8] UN (2015) fn.3
[9] UNHCR (2016) fn.4
[10] See http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php About 2.8 million refugees are registered in Turkey (2.7 million from Syria), between a quarter and a third of whom crossed the Mediterranean in 2015. Figures available at Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management (2016) *Statistics.* Ankara: DGMM, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik/migration-statistics_915_1024 It should be noted however that many Syrians are not registered and neither are registered Syrians deregistered once they have left. As a result these figures are widely considered unreliable. Moreover as seen from the information presented here, there are differences in the number of Syrians and other refugees reported to be registered Turkey even within the various documents produced by UNHCR.

Unravelling the Mediterranean 'migration crisis'

Politicians and policymakers across Europe have largely talked about the arrival of refugees and migrants in 2015 as an unprecedented 'event', a single coherent flow of people that came 'from nowhere', suddenly and unexpectedly pressing against the continent's southern border. Media coverage of the 'crisis' gave the impression of a linear, uninterrupted flow of people heading towards Europe, most commonly represented by straight arrows on a map linking two distinct areas[11]. This was reflected in the tendency to focus almost exclusively on the beginning and the end of peoples' journeys to the neglect of everything in-between. There has been little or no interest in the 'back stories' of those arriving: instead the gap between someone leaving their home country and his or her or arrival in Europe has been filled with generalisations and assumptions.

Whilst the large scale movement of refugees and migrants in Europe is relatively unprecedented since the end of World War Two[12], it is not entirely unknown. In the early 1990s more than 2.3 million people fled from towns and villages in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) after it began to disintegrate in 1991[13]. Germany received almost as many asylum applications from people fleeing conflict in the FRY in 1991/2 as it did during 2015. And while Greece's role in playing host to significant numbers of refugees and migrants is relatively new in recent times, that of Italy is not.

In reality, increasing numbers of refugees and migrants have been arriving across the Mediterranean since 2011[14]. This increase has been associated primarily with the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy and Malta (Figure 1). Between 1997 and 2010 an average of 23,000 refugees and migrants were intercepted travelling to Italy by boat per year: in 2011 this rose to 63,000 and in 2014 reached 170,000[15]. The number of people arriving by boat to Italy actually decreased in 2015 to just over 153,800 and, at the time of writing, is roughly in line with last year. In Malta average arrivals of just under 1,600 have been recorded over the past decade, peaking in 2008 (2,775) and 2013 (2,008) although recently arrivals have declined sharply to 568 in 2014 and 104 in 2015. As was explained in our earlier Research Brief, the dynamics behind these increased arrivals are closely intertwined with the medium to long-term evolution of international migration patterns to and from the Maghreb, particularly Libya, and associated with increased political instability in the region from 2011 onwards and the descent into chaos and conflict from 2014[16].

[11] This point is also made by Mainwaring, C. and Brigden, N. (2016) 'Beyond the border: clandestine migration journeys', *Geopolitics* 21(2), 243-262. See, for example, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35486655 in the UK and http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/world/europe/a-mass-migration-crisis-and-it-may-yet-get-worse.html?_r=0 in the US. Many more examples can be found through a simple google search of 'migration to Europe'.

[12] The end of World War Two brought in its wake the largest population movements in European history. Millions of Germans fled or were expelled from Eastern Europe. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, survivors of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, sought secure homes beyond their native lands. And other refugees from every country in Eastern Europe rushed to escape from the newly installed Communist regimes. See Douglas, R.M. (2015) 'Europe's refugee crisis: the last time around it was much, much worse', *The Conversation* https://theconversation.com/europes-refugee-crisis-the-last-time-round-it-was-much-much-worse-47621

[13] See http://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/24/world/yugoslav-refugee-crisis-europe-s-worst-since-40-s.html

[14] UNHCR (2015) *The Sea Route to Europe: The Mediterranean Passage in the Age of Refugees,* Geneva: UNHCR, http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/uploads/tx_news/2015-JUL-The-Sea-Route-to-Europe.pdf

[15] Although this increase happened in a significantly different context in terms of sea bordering practices and search and rescue at sea, with a much enhanced presence and control of the routes.

[16] See McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016) *Boat Migration Across the Central Mediterranean: Drivers, Experiences and Responses,* MEDMIG Research Brief 3, http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-03-boat-migration-across-the-central-mediterranean/

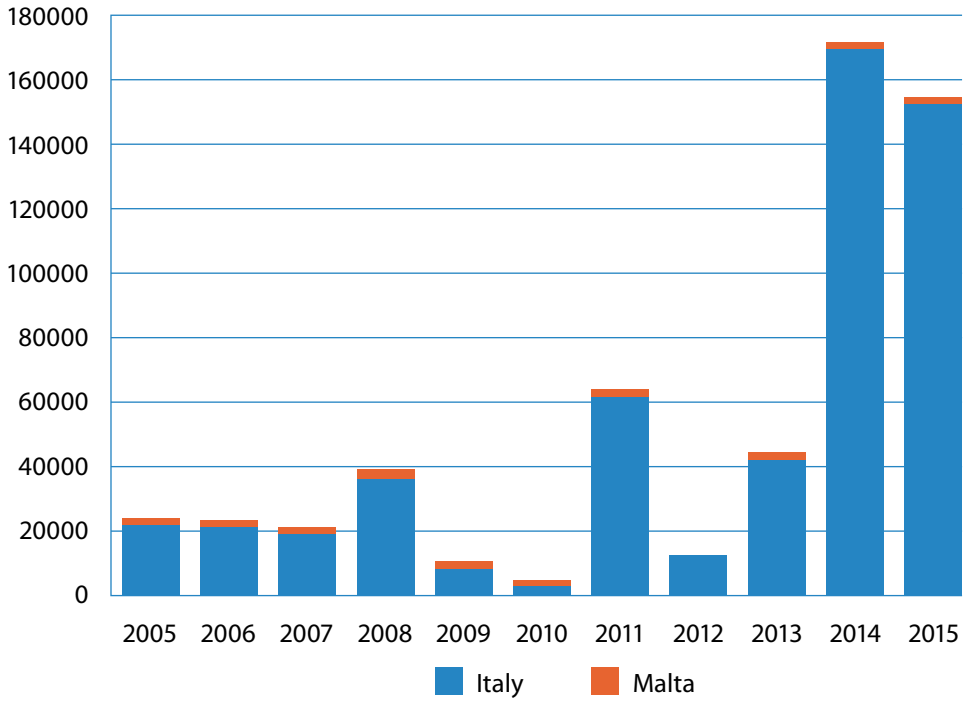

Figure 1: Arrivals across the Central Mediterranean route to Italy and Malta, 2005-2015 (Source: Data from UNHCR, Italian Interior Ministry and Maltese Immigration Police[17])

The significant change that took place in 2015 was in relation to the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece. Whilst most people crossed to Europe via the Central Mediterranean from Libya to Italy in 2014, the vast majority (84%) of those arriving by boat in 2015 crossed the Aegean from departure points dotted along the Turkish coast[18]. In the last five months of 2015 the story of Europe's 'migration crisis' – which had been dominated by the stories of hundreds of people drowning in the Mediterranean between Libya and Italy earlier in the year – came to be dominated instead by images of thousands of people arriving every day on the beaches of the Greek islands[19]. In August 2015 more than 100,000 people arrived in Greece, a significant increase on the 54,000 that had arrived the previous month. In the month of October, that figure doubled again to more than 200,000 people[20]. The majority of people arrived on the small island of Lesvos (population = 86,000), with smaller numbers of people arriving on Kos, Chios and Samos (Figure 2).

[17] Italian data is available at http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean. Maltese data is available at http://www.unhcr.org.mt/charts/category/12
[18] IOM (2016) fn.2
[19] Human Rights Watch (2016) *European Union: Events of* 2015, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/european-union-0
[20] UNHCR (2016) *Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean, composition of monthly Mediterranean Sea arrivals to Greece,* http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83

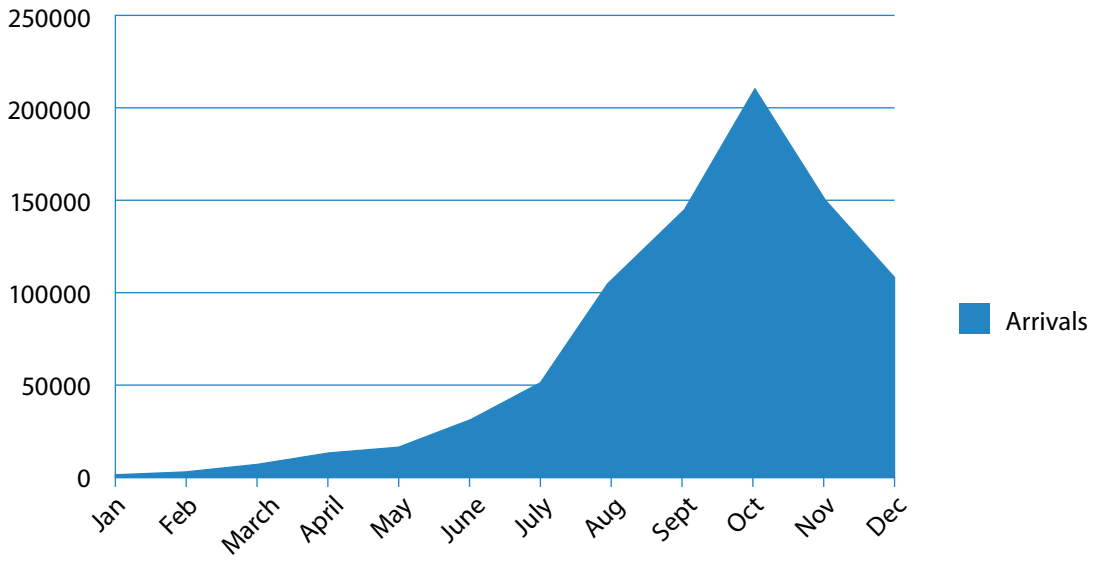

Figure 2: Arrivals to Greece across the Eastern Mediterranean Route, Jan-Dec 2015
(Source: Data from IOM and UNHCR, 2016)

It is clear from the data on the countries of origin of those arriving in Europe during 2015 that the increase in people crossing the Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece can be explained, in large part, by reference to the conflicts in Syria and elsewhere. Of those arriving in Greece in 2015, 90% came from just three countries: over half (56.1%) were of Syrian nationality (or of Palestinian origin living in Syria), followed by Afghans travelling either from Afghanistan or Iran (24.3%), and Iraqis (10.3%). The remainder was composed of relatively small numbers coming from a significant number of countries (74 in total).

By contrast the refugees and migrants arriving in Italy were not dominated by any one single group: around a quarter of all arrivals were Eritrean (25.5%), followed by Nigerians (14.5%), Somalis (8.1%), Sudanese (5.8%), Gambians (5.8%), Syrians (3.8%), Malians (3.8%) and Bangladeshis (3.3%) with the remainder originating from 51 different countries[21]. But the story is more complicated than can be explained by numbers alone. Indeed the almost exclusive focus on the scale of migration, which dominated political and policy debate the course of 2015, has been at the expense of a more nuanced

[21] IOM (2016), fn. 2
[22] For example, the EU's refugee relocation scheme is only open to asylum applicants for which the average recognition rate of international protection at the EU level is above 75%. Currently just three nationalities have such high recognition rates: Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis. See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_eu_solidarity_a_refugee_relocation_system_en.pdf

understanding of the, sometimes vast, differences in the journeys of refugees and migrants, many of which were both fragmented and protracted. The description of some countries as 'refugee producing', and by implication others not, conceals the complex lived experiences of people from different backgrounds (nationality, religion, gender, class, age) living in the same country. During the course of 2015 it became increasingly apparent that policy and practice towards refugees and migrants arriving in Europe was being shaped by nationality rather than an assessment of individual circumstances as required under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This was reflected in the introduction of policies that gave preferential treatment for those from some countries, most notably Syria, but negatively affected those arriving in Italy who were perceived by politicians and policy makers as coming from countries unaffected by conflict[22]. The focus on numbers also glosses over the experiences and decisions of people in the different places that they live in or pass through on their journey to Europe as well as the relationships between people and places and how these change over time and space. Social networks, access to digital technologies and different ways of exchanging information influence the decisions that refugees and migrants make along the way. Understanding the role of these factors is critical to developing a more nuanced appreciation of dynamics of increased migration to Europe.

Our contribution to the evidence base

There have been a large number of reports published over the past year by international organisations and NGOs seeking to document developments in the Mediterranean region, both in terms of the experiences of those arriving and in relation to the policy response[23]. There has also been a growing number of first-hand accounts of the 'crisis' from journalists and others, many of whom have followed the journeys of refugees and migrants as they cross into Europe. While these accounts make an important contribution to the evidence base they are often based on existing statistical and other research evidence or on first-hand accounts involving a relatively small number of people[24].

Existing academic research on migration dynamics in the Mediterranean region is also uneven in quality and scope and rarely based on systematic comparative data across countries of origin or arrival or between types of migration or migrant groups. Whilst the history, root causes, political and socio-economic determinants in specific origin and transit countries are relatively well studied, there remain significant gaps in understanding, most notably in terms of socio-economic profile and differences in the motivations, aspirations and journeys of refugees and migrants. As with the political and policy debate, much

[23] See, for example, Amnesty International (2016) *Trapped in Greece: An Avoidable Refuge Crisis,* https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/3778/2016/en/; Human Rights Watch (2015) *The Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Why People Flee, What Europe Should Do;* https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do; MSF (2015) *Obstacle Course to Europe: A Policy-Made Humanitarian Crisis at EU Borders,* http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/msf_obstacle_course_to_europe_0.pdf; Migration Policy Institute (2015) *Before the Boat: Understanding the Migrant Journey* http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/boat-understanding-migrant-journey; UNHCR (2015) *The Sea Route to Europe: The Mediterranean Passage in the Age of Refugees* http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/uploads/tx_news/2015-JUL-The-Sea-Route-to-Europe.pdf; ODI (2016) *Europe's Refugees and Migrants: Hidden Flows, Tightened Borders and Spiralling Costs,* https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10870.pdf

[24] See, for example, Bauer, W. (2016) *Crossing the Sea: With Syrians on the Exodus to Europe,* High Wycombe: And Other Stories; Kingsley, P. (2016) *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis,* London: Guardian Books; McDonald-Gibson, C. (2016) *Cast Away: Stories of Survival from Europe's Refugee Crisis,* London: Portabello Books.

of the academic literature on migration to Europe has focused on the drivers of migration or on what happens to refugees and migrants when they reach countries of destination[25]. Notable exceptions include a growing literature on migrant journeys[26] and on the experiences of refugees and migrants in so-called 'transit' countries[27].

Meanwhile the categories that frame and shape both academic and policy research can serve to limit, rather than illuminate, our understanding of these complex and increasingly dynamic migratory processes. Research on 'the migrant experience' is all too frequently driven by, and tied to, abstract migrant categories created by law and policy to contain, and make sense, of migration flows. These categories impose significant limitations on our theoretical and conceptual understanding of the dynamics of migration and of the complex and multifaceted backgrounds, lives and identities of those who move, most notably by limiting studies to particular groups of migrants ('irregular migrants', 'economic migrants', 'refugees') or those arriving from specific countries or with particular socially constructed identities ('women', 'children', 'victims of trafficking'). This approach is problematic given what we know about the increasingly complex and shifting dynamics of migration in the Mediterranean region.

In this context the MEDMIG project provides the first large-scale, systematic and comparative study of the backgrounds, experiences, routes and aspirations of refugees and migrants in three EU Member States – Italy, Greece and Malta – and Turkey. The research aims to:

- Shed light on the dynamics (determinants, drivers and infrastructures) underpinning the recent unprecedented levels of migration across, and loss of life in, the Mediterranean;
- Provide insights into the interaction of refugees and migrants with a multitude of non-State actors (for example smugglers, facilitators, NGOs) and State actors (for example navy / coastguard) in order to better understand decision making processes; and
- Explore how the decisions made by refugees and migrants on their journeys interact with dramatically changing global economic, security and political contexts.

The fieldwork on which the analysis in this report is based took place between September 2015 and January 2016 when arrivals of women, men and children into the EU via southern Europe reached their peak. During this time we interviewed 500 refugees and migrants travelling via the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes: 205 in Italy (Sicily, Apulia, Rome, Piedmont, Bologna) and 20 in Malta (Central Mediterranean route); 215 in Greece (Athens, Lesvos) and 60 in Turkey (Izmir, Istanbul) (Eastern Mediterranean route) (Annex 1). Within these countries the researchers employed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure that the backgrounds and demographic characteristics of respondents were broadly reflective of wider trends (Annex 2). We also interviewed more than 100 stakeholders, including politicians, policy makers, naval officers and coastguards, representatives of international and national NGOs, as well as volunteers to gain broader insights into the experiences and journeys of the refugees and migrants

[25] See, for example, Thorburn, J. (1996) 'Root cause approaches to forced migration: part of a comprehensive strategy? A European perspective', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9 (2), 119-35; Castles, S., Loughna, S. and Crawley, H. (2003) *States of Conflict: The Causes of Forced Migration to the EU,* London: IPPR; Neumayer, E. (2006) 'Bogus refugees? The determinants of asylum migration to Europe', *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (3), 389-410

[26] See, for example, Collyer, M. (2010) 'Stranded migrants and the fragmented journey', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(3), 273-93, http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/3/273.full; Mainwaring, C. and Brigden, N. (2016) 'Beyond the border: clandestine migration journeys', *Geopolitics* 21(2), 243-262

[27] See, for example, Collyer, M., Düvell, F. and de Haas, H. (2012) 'Critical approaches to transit migration', *Population, Space and Place* 18(4), 407-14

with whom they come into contact. And we observed 'the crisis' as it unfolded, including political and policy responses at the local, national and international levels. This report draws upon these interviews together with our observations from the field and a desk-based review of the existing literature. During the lifetime of the project members of the research team were also engaged in numerous national and international events (academic and practitioner seminars, public events, policy discussions, parliamentary inquiries and media debates) which provided an opportunity to 'test out' some of our findings and ideas and to better understand the broader context within which our research was situated[28].

Structure of the report

In **Section 2** we unpack the journeys and routes to Europe of the 500 people who took part in this research and provide a framework for understanding the diverse array of strategies that individuals pursue in an attempt to secure safety and a livelihood for themselves and their families. This evidence suggests that migration to Europe is more complex and fragmented than is typically assumed and includes not only the journey to Europe itself but also much longer-term trajectories and serial migration decisions involving stops and stays of varying duration. These are frequently punctuated by experiences of violence and death.

In **Section 3** we turn our attention to the factors that shaped the decision of our respondents to leave their home countries and, in the case of those who spent extended periods of time in a number of other countries, to continue their journeys onwards towards Europe. This is important in part to give voice to the diverse stories of individuals and families who ended up risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean but also because EU policy has been underpinned by a number of assumptions about the drivers and motivations of those on the move.

In **Section 4** we explore our respondents' use of, and relationship with, the smugglers who facilitated their journeys. Although smugglers are generally regarded as criminals who exploit the vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants, they have become an essential part of the story due to visa policies and other restrictions which make it virtually impossible for people to access safe and legal routes in order to secure protection. Like most other aspects of the story of Europe's 'migration crisis' the relationship between smugglers and those on the move is more complex than typically presented.

We conclude this report in **Section 5** with an assessment of the EU policy response. This response has, to date, been largely ineffective and has contributed, in turn, to the perception of migration in Europe as a 'crisis'. Understanding the dynamics of migration across the Mediterranean and the fears, needs and aspirations of those who move provides new insights which can inform the development of more effective policy responses. This section outlines the implications for policy of the empirical evidence presented in the report. Our intended audiences include: policymakers and officials from EU governments, policymakers and officials from the European Commission and Council of Europe, officials from UN bodies, in particular UNHCR, and international organisations and NGOs working with refugees and migrants.

[28] Details of these events can be found on our project website www.medmig.info

Section 2

Not one movement but many: unpacking migration to Europe

Key points

The representation of the movements of refugees and migrants as linear, singular uninterrupted journeys or flows of people heading toward Europe is grossly misleading. The focus on the points of departure and the sea crossings is equally misleading. These simplifications distract from what were often multiple separate movements which converged in Libya and Turkey and help to explain the arrival of refugees and migrants in Italy and Greece respectively.

The **average duration of migration for those arriving in Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route was considerably shorter** than for those arriving via the Central Mediterranean route to Italy or Malta. The time between leaving the country of origin and arriving in Europe was shortest for Syrians and Iraqis and longest for Afghans and Eritreans.

Our findings challenge the idea that all those arriving in Europe have crossed all the borders on their journey irregularly (without authorisation and/or the necessary documentation). There are significant differences between groups depending on their access to documents and other resources which results in a **mixture of regular and irregular crossings.**

Many respondents witnessed death and/or experienced violence during their migration. Experiences of violence and death are not limited to the sea crossing but can be found along the entire route. More than three quarters (76%) of respondents who were interviewed in Italy and Malta said that they had directly experienced physical violence and nearly a third (29%) had witnessed fellow travellers dying. The majority of these episodes occurred in Algeria, Niger and Libya.

As noted in the introduction to this report, political and media coverage of the 'migration crisis' in 2015 gave the impression of a linear, uninterrupted flow of people heading towards Europe. The findings of our research suggest that rather than constituting linear routes and homogeneous flows, migration to Europe via the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes should be seen primarily as a product of the merging of multiple flows which converged in certain locations, particularly Libya and Turkey. Each of these flows was, in turn, composed of people with different characteristics for whom the migratory experience took a distinct form.

In this section we describe the routes taken by the men and women that we interviewed prior to their arrival in Europe. We begin by outlining the diversity of routes, before unpacking the different types of movement that we found. These include not only the journey to Europe itself but longer term trajectories and serial migration decisions which involved stops and stays of varying duration. We conclude by looking at the experiences of refugees and migrants as they navigated these routes, focusing in particular on the negotiation of borders and experiences of violence, exploitation and death along the way.

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Regions and routes

Migration flows across the Mediterranean are often broadly categorised into two key routes. One traverses the Eastern Mediterranean, from Turkey to Greece; the other crosses the Central Mediterranean from North Africa to Italy and Malta. Our research highlights significant differences, as well as some remarkable similarities, between these two routes. In this section we will describe the geography and duration of migration on each, before analysing the ways in which the journeys of our respondents developed.

It should be noted before we begin that there was huge diversity in the journeys made by the men and women we interviewed for this research, the countries they travelled through and the time spent there, as well as the mix of regular and irregular movement in each. Refugees and migrants who had crossed the Mediterranean had travelled along multiple and varying routes prior to their arrival in Europe, mostly making use of the same infrastructure (dirt tracks, roads, buses, ferries, planes) available to other travellers. They had travelled through a wide range of countries prior to their arrival in Europe, stretching across diverse areas of the world and, in some extreme cases, taking in countries in Southern Africa, the Americas and East Asia. Although there were two main countries from which refugees and migrants departed towards Europe, namely Turkey and Libya, the 'back story' to this migration was actually composed of an intricate network of varied routes crossing the different regions from which refugees and migrants had originated. This network can be clearly in relation to the journeys of 122 of our respondents in Figure 3.

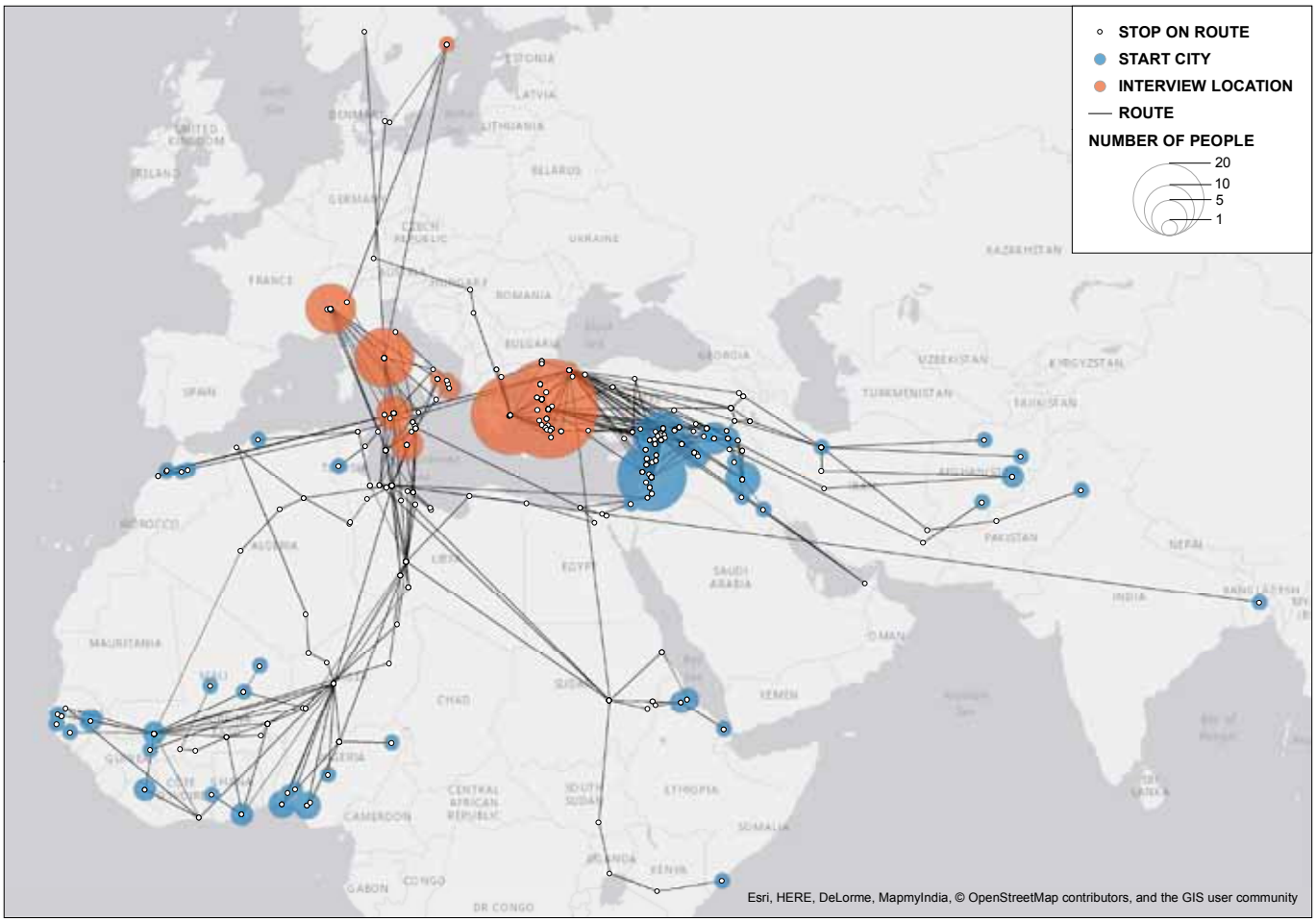

Figure 3: Refugee and migrant routes to Europe (n=122)

Overall, the refugees and migrants that we interviewed had passed through a total of 57 different countries. On the Eastern Mediterranean route, they had travelled through a total of 21 different countries prior to reaching Greece, comprising a total of 26 geographical routes. On the Central Mediterranean route there was even greater variation, with refugees and migrants having crossed 36 different countries before reaching Italy or Malta and describing a total of 68 different routes through them. Furthermore, the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes were not entirely separate and distinct: 20 respondents who were interviewed in Italy and Malta arrived into Europe via Turkey and Greece but then decided to travel onwards.

Altogether, our respondents had made more than 3,000 stops, equating to an average of six stops per person between their country of origin and the location of our interview with them in Italy, Malta or Greece. Among the locations of these stops, we identified a number of 'hubs' in which access to goods and services, including those needed for settlement or onward travel, were accessed by respondents. These included Tehran and Urmia (Iran), Van, Istanbul, Izmir (Turkey), Lesbos and Athens (Greece), Kassala and Khartoum (Sudan), Bamako (Mali), Niamey and Agadez (Niger), Sabha, Tripoli, Zuwarah (Libya), and Rome (Italy). Others had also stopped elsewhere within Europe, either during periods of previous settlement in places such as

France or Germany or when travelling through Greece, Italy or the Balkans to reach other destinations.

And yet, despite the extremely diverse patterns and routes traversed by our respondents, their migration ultimately converged at the Mediterranean to form more or less discernible flows to Europe via the Eastern and Central routes. In order to understand the scale of these movements, let us take a closer look at this convergence on the way towards the Mediterranean and southern Europe.

The Eastern Mediterranean route

All of the refugees and migrants that we interviewed in Greece had travelled through, and thus departed from, Turkey. However, prior to the Mediterranean crossing distinct routes to Turkey were found, each composed of various legs. People coming from countries which bordered Turkey (Syria, Iraq and Iran) generally undertook journeys which were in the main straightforward: women, men and family groups crossed land borders into Turkey, often from Syria to towns such as Kilis and Gaziantep. These borders remained open at the time of our research. From Iran, people mostly travelled clandestinely towards the border, crossed the more dangerous mountain border on foot to arrive in the Van region of Turkey. From Kilis, Gaziantep and Van they would travel onwards to the coast via Ankara, Istanbul and Antakya. In contrast, journeys from further afield in the Middle East or Africa could involve air, land or ferry travel according to the resources and opportunities available to the person making the journey.

In summary, we were able to identify three principal routes which converged in Turkey and thus contributed to the significant increase in arrivals to Greece during the course of 2015:

- **A neighbourhood route,** from Syria and Iraq into Turkey and then from the southern border region via Istanbul, Ankara, or Mersin and Adana towards Izmir and from there to the Greek islands.
- **A Middle Eastern[29] regional route,** from Afghanistan and sometimes Pakistan and through Iran into Eastern Turkey (Van) or from Lebanon overland or by ferry to Southern Turkey (Antakya, Mersin) and via Ankara and/or Istanbul to the Aegean coast.
- **A Middle Eastern and North African (mostly MENA) route** from Sudan, Egypt, Somalia, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia or the Gulf countries (UAE, Oman) into Turkey, continuing on as above.

The Central Mediterranean route

The vast majority (96%) of our interviewees in Italy who had crossed to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route took a boat from Libya. However, their journeys to reach Libya originated in a wide range of different locations and were extremely varied. Respondents originating in the countries of West Africa[30], often set out originally to local and regional destinations in buses, cars and lorries on journeys organised at short notice by travel agencies, friends or family members. As noted in our previous Research Brief, in many cases this could enable people to quickly get away from situations of violence or personal danger. In East Africa[31], initial migration also often involved moving to a local destination such as the refugee camps in Sudan or the city of Khartoum. In the case of Eritrea, where snipers are reportedly ordered to shoot those seeking to leave the country, this could involve crossing dangerous borders on foot. Subsequent onward migration would see people move on to Libya, or to a lesser degree, Egypt or Algeria.

[29] We use the term 'Middle East' here in the broadest sense to delineate the social geographies created by the people on the move.
[30] Respondents on this route came from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
[31] Respondents on this route came from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.

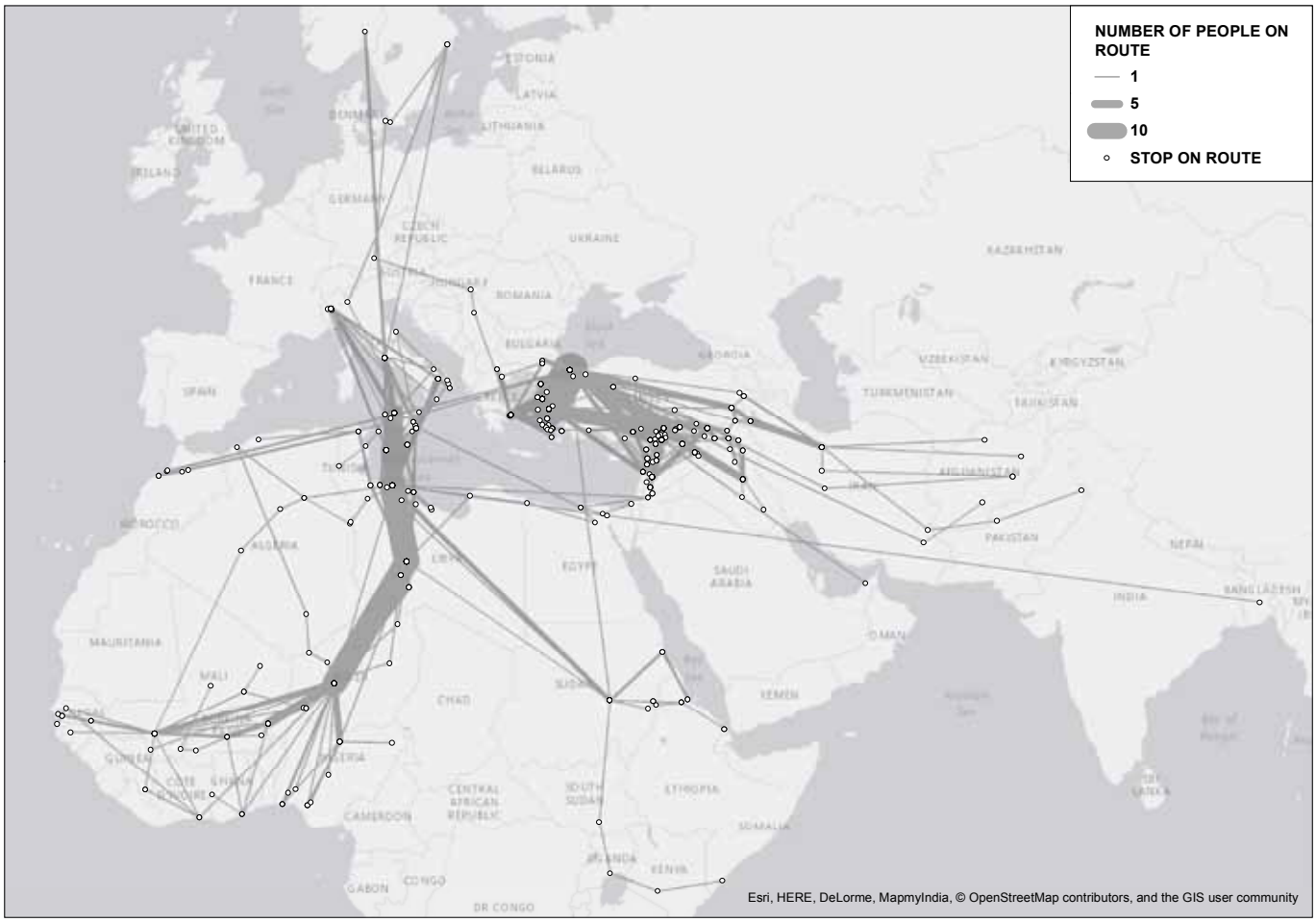

Figure 4: Convergence of routes through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean (n=122)

In total we identified four principal routes which converged in Libya and fed into the Central Mediterranean crossing:

- **A North African route** originating in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya or Egypt.
- **A West African route** originating in countries of West and Central Africa, made up of highly fragmented and often lengthy trajectories with multiple stops along the way, converging in Burkina Faso, Mali and then Niger on the way to Libya;
- **An East African route** originating in the Horn of Africa, made up of fragmented and long trajectories with various stops, often first in towns or refugee camps in Ethiopia or Sudan, and then for most on to the Sudanese capital Khartoum. From there, if they were unable to travel by air to Turkey or other global locations, people would set out to cross Libya or Egypt overland;
- **Routes from the rest of the world** show patterns of migration that did not easily fit into the types outlined above, originating in countries beyond Africa such as Syria (air travel to Egypt, overland to Libya), Pakistan and Bangladesh (air travel to Libya). These routes also converged with the others in Libya.

The convergence of these different routes to form the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes into Europe via Turkey and Libya can be clearly see in Figure 4.

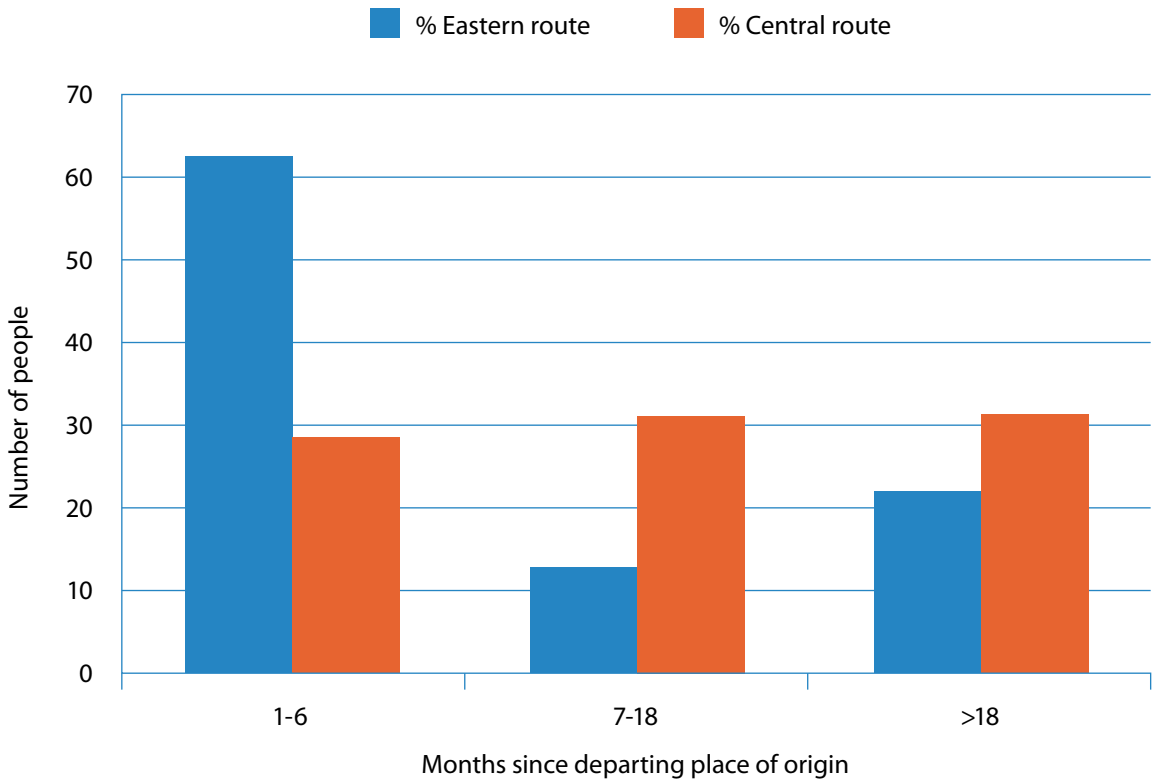

Figure 5: Duration of migration by country of arrival through the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece and Central Mediterranean route to Italy and Malta (in months)

Duration of migration

We also found variation in the duration of migration from the point at which people left their home country or the country in which they were living to the point at which they arrived in Europe. Whereas some reached Europe in a matter of days, others had departed from their country of origin years before arriving at the place of our interview. We identified three overall patterns.

First, the average duration of migration for those arriving in Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route was considerably shorter than that found for those arriving via the Central Mediterranean route to Italy or Malta (Figure 5). Indeed, nearly two thirds (62%) of those who were interviewed in Greece arrived within six months of departure from their country of origin, compared with only 29% of those who were interviewed in Italy and Malta. And whilst 39% arrived in Greece within one month, only 1% did so in Italy and Malta. These rapid journeys were most common among respondents from Iraq, 86% of whom arrived in less than one month, and Syria, 45% of whom arrived in Greece less than one month after leaving their country (Figure 6).

Second, for those arriving via the Central Mediterranean route it was more likely for several months to have passed since they departed from their place of origin than for those travelling across the Eastern route.

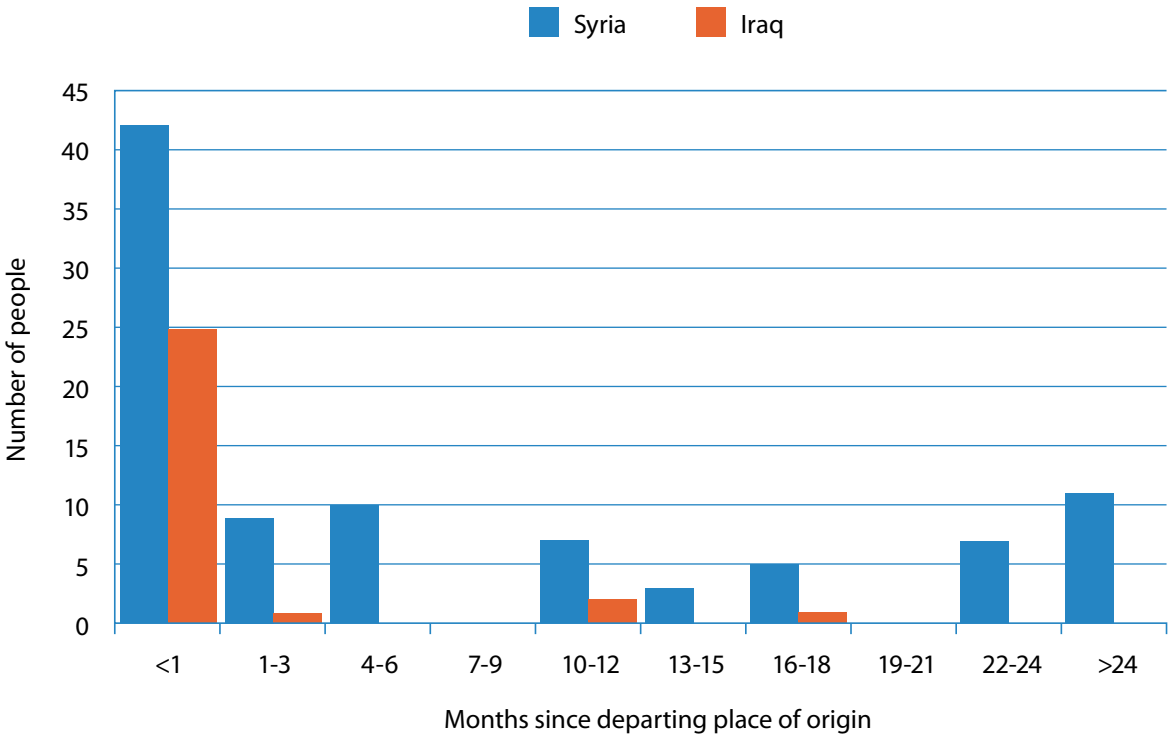

Figure 6: Duration of migration for Syrian and Iraqi nationals to Greece (in months)

Only 13% of those arriving in Greece had been travelling for 7-18 months compared with one third (31%) of those arriving in Italy. In fact, among respondents travelling through the Central Mediterranean route, only those from the Maghreb countries were able to travel quickly. For most respondents, migration to Europe was the culmination of a much lengthier process involving both short and/or long stops in various locations. This was particularly the case for people originating in West African countries, who had often stopped in countries within the region and in Libya prior to moving onward across the sea (Figure 7). People passing through Libya spent, on average, seven months there.

Third, many of those travelling along both routes had left their country of origin years before arriving in Europe. Over one fifth (22%) of those interviewed in Greece and nearly one third (31%) of those interviewed in Italy had left their countries of origin more than 18 months previously[32]. This pattern featured particularly strongly among Afghans who arrived in Greece, often after residing in Iran where the average length of a stay was

[32] These numbers do not add to 100%. This is due to a lack of complete information on duration of journeys for some of our interviewees.

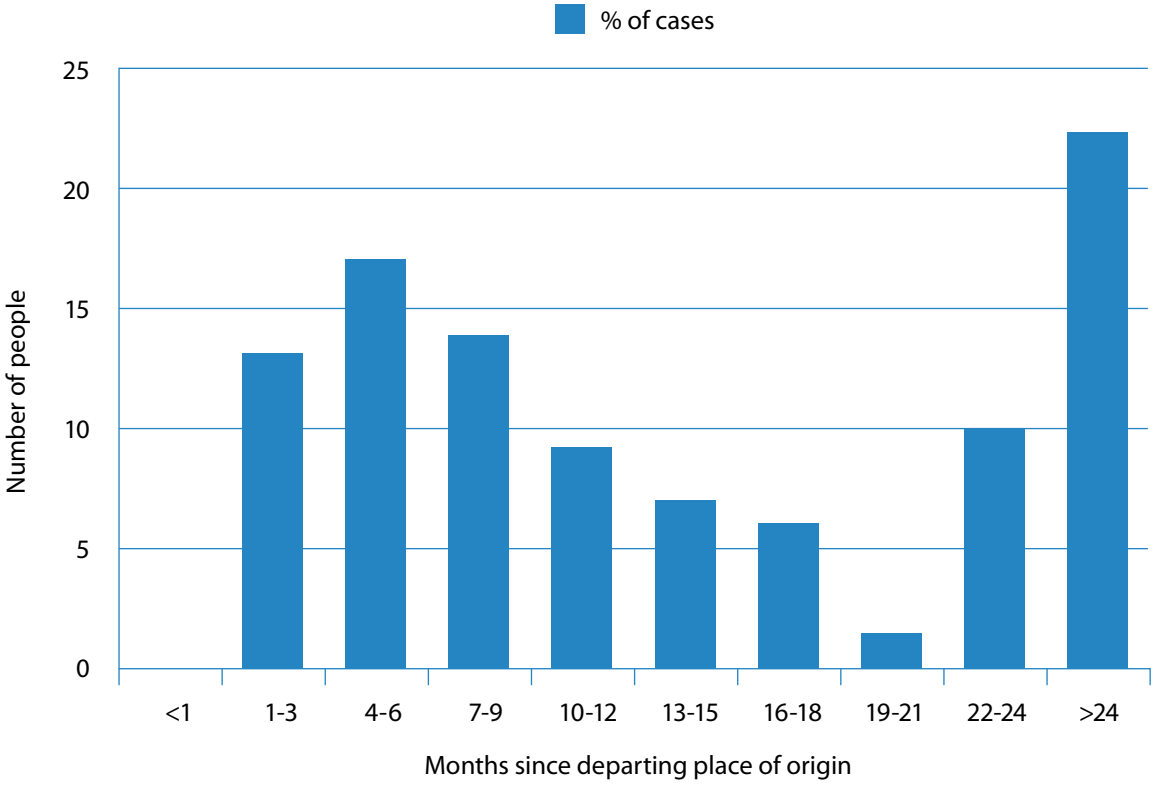

Figure 7: Duration of migration for nationals from West, East and Central African countries (in months)

three and a half years. For Eritreans similarly, the time between departure from the home country and arrival in Europe was particularly lengthy as some had stayed for extended periods in Sudan, Egypt or Israel (Figure 8).

This overview shows the diverse geography of routes and timescales for migration of those arriving in Europe in 2015. At the same time it also highlights patterns of convergence of migration patterns into more or less discernible routes that led towards southern Europe. The question, however, is how and why these diverse migration flows came together to form the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes. To explain that, we need to take a closer look at how these movements evolved and developed.

Unpacking migration patterns

The previous section set out the geography of the journeys that made up the different routes to and across the Mediterranean. In this section we will look at these varied movements in more detail, with particular focus on when and why

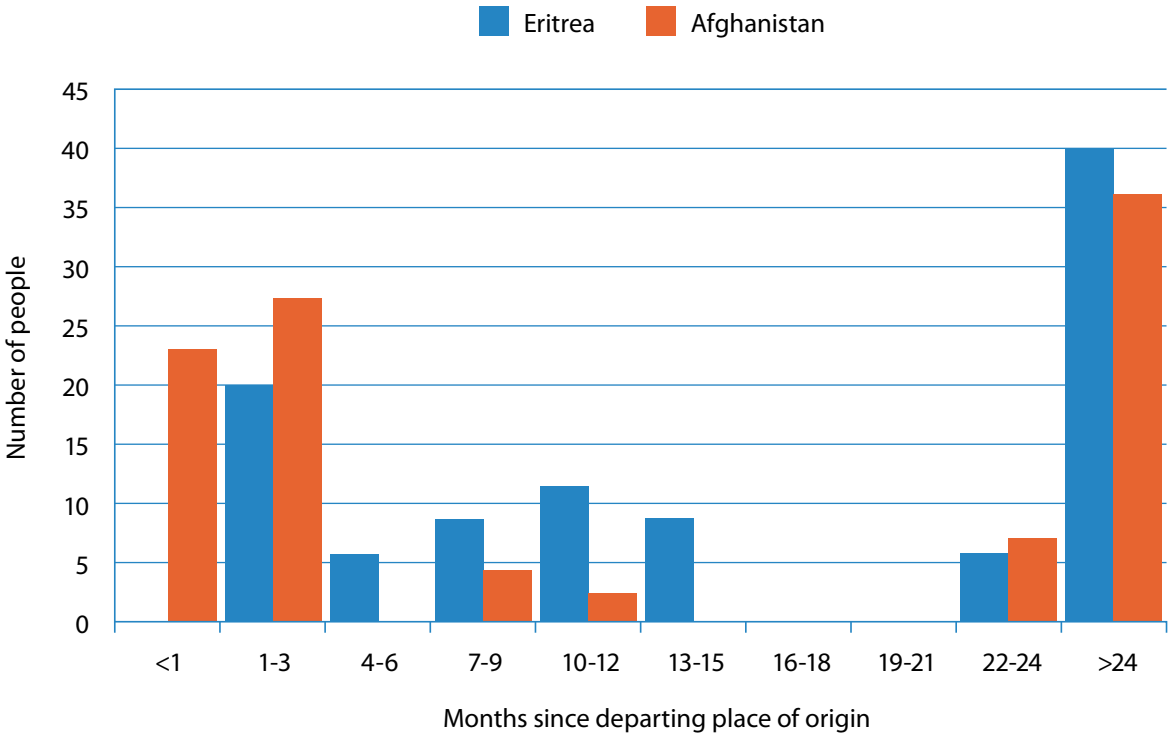

Figure 8: Duration of migration for Eritrean and Afghan nationals to Greece and Italy combined (in months)

people stopped or had their journeys interrupted, and when and why they then moved on.

The way that these journeys and stops fit together is central to our understanding of the nature of the migration patterns to and across the Mediterranean. Drawing on our data we can identify three distinct types of migration characterised by varying patterns of migration and stops:

- One-off migration between two places, usually through relatively direct and fast journeys, which may be interspersed only by short stops;
- Longer migration trajectories of separate journeys linked together, interrupted by longer stops in one or more countries;
- Serial migration of consecutive movements, separated by periods spent in one or more different locations, from which onward movement can be considered a separate migration experience driven by its own motivations, decision-making, planning and aspirations.

It is important to note that these three types of migration are not always easily differentiated. For example, many individuals did not consider themselves to be on a 'migration trajectory' at the outset but made decisions to move on in response to the particular situation in which they had found themselves (see Section 3).

Others may have intended to move quickly between two places but found that it was impossible to do so or chose to stay in a particular place due to their own shifting personal or family circumstances. Nonetheless, understanding these different types of movement is important and necessary in order to better understand the dynamics of migration in the Mediterranean region and, in particular, to unpack the ways in which these dynamics fed into the arrival of people to Europe via the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes.

The nature of stops and stays

Focusing on the nature of stops and stays helps us to highlight the difference between more or less unified and direct journeys to Europe and longer-term, often fragmented trajectories and serial migration decisions. Whilst people often made multiple stops in different countries before arriving in Europe the number of stops made in different countries varied significantly (Figure 9). Respondents made, on average, three or four stops within Turkey whilst in Libya the average was only two, for example.

In most cases, the initial journeys from countries of origin were directed towards nearby locations: many Syrians often made a first stop within Syria, becoming internally displaced before subsequently moving across an international border.

> **"I was living in Raqqa. We went by car to another area in Raqqa which was controlled by the regime … [then] we went to Palmyra, and from there to Damascus [then] we went by coach to the border with Lebanon."**
> *(Syrian man travelling with his wife and four children aged 11, 7 and 4 years old and baby aged 8 months)*

It was also common for West and East Africans to initially move to nearby towns or cities to find safety, such as the case of Gambians stopping in Casamance on the border with Senegal, or Eritreans making their first stop in a refugee camp near the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia or Sudan.

> **"I spent one year and two months in the Adi-Harush refugee camp, it was organised by UNHCR. There was multiple people, many many people there … life was bad, there was a shortage of food, no communication and I had no communication with my family or the world outside. So I left the camp to go to Sudan."**
> *(Eritrean man, 36 years old awaiting relocation within the EU)*

It is clear from our research that stops and stays are of a qualitatively different nature and that they can have various potential functions for those on the move. They can be intended or unintended, voluntary or forced. Some of those we spoke to described decisions to stop in a town or city in order to rest, settle, work, obtain resources or connect with onward transport. Others were forced to stop or stay due to violence and conflict, experiences of crime, a lack of money, kidnappings, detention or poor health.

Some stops were short in duration providing sufficient time to rest, gather resources, arrange transportation and move onwards. Indeed, certain countries were more clearly places where people had only ever intended to stop for a short time. Involuntary stops were also widely reported as a result of violence, arrest or kidnappings, such as on the borders of

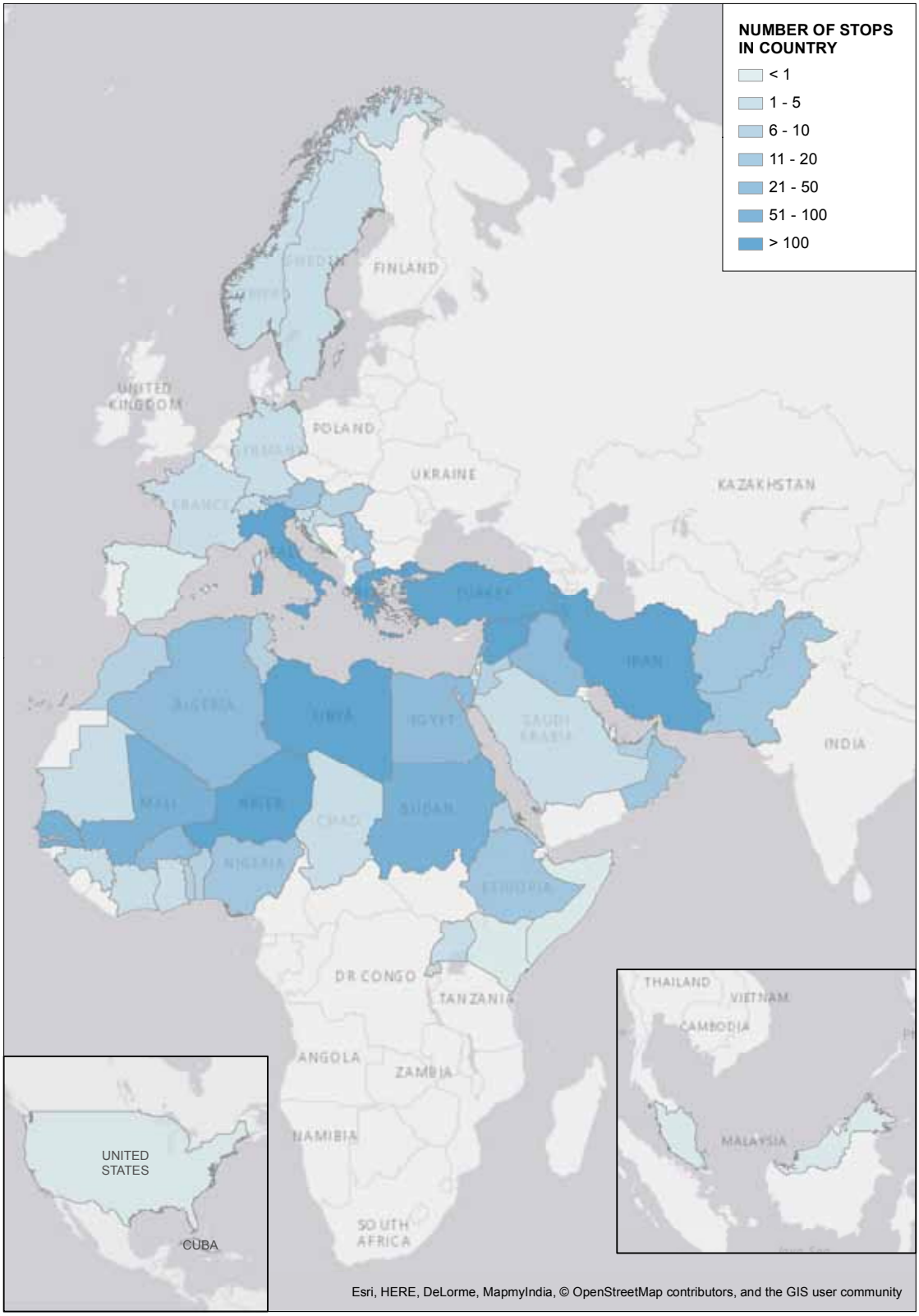

Figure 9: Number of stops and stays by country made by all of our interviewees (n = 500)

Chad and Sudan as well as in Libya that would see migrants and refugees kept in prisons until a ransom had been paid to release them. These short stops can be qualified as either a voluntary or involuntary interruption a relatively unified journey. Others, by contrast, were of medium or extended duration and reflected an intention on the part of an individual to stay and reside in that particular location. They can thus be characterised as a 'stay' rather than just a 'stop'. Those who had decided to stay usually had no initial intention of moving on whereas those who had stopped temporarily viewed this as punctuating a broader migration trajectory which had a distinct location as its intended destination. The decision to stay or move on is discussed in more detail in Section 3 of the report.

Serial migration and longer-term trajectories

Whilst some migration experiences were, as we have noted, relatively short and direct, this was certainly not the case for everyone. For around a quarter of all of our respondents it is clear that the countries to which they had originally travelled – including Iran, Sudan, Libya – were initially perceived as destination countries where they intended to settle and live. This conclusion is supported by the fact that over 2.5 million refugees continue to live in Turkey and over 980,000 in Iran, for example. For another group of respondents, around half, these countries were viewed as places of at least temporary residence to which people had travelled before moving on elsewhere.

Often, during these longer periods of stay people worked, ran a business, rented accommodation or even applied for immigration status (from the authorities or on the black market). People experienced some degree of integration into local social systems. In many cases they did not intend to move on until there was a particular change in their circumstances. As a result, their onward migration can be considered a separate migration experience driven by its own motivations, decision-making, planning and aspirations.

Eritreans were involved in perhaps the most complex migration processes and journeys, often including stays of over a year to try to settle in places as diverse as Sudan (five interviewees) or Egypt (two interviewees), as well as two men who lived for over five years in Israel and one who lived in Uganda for two years. The decision to move on came only when economic opportunities appeared to have run out, when corruption was seen as too much of an obstacle or when new situations of insecurity arose. Similarly, many respondents from West African countries and from Bangladesh had intended to stay in Libya for work, but no longer felt safe there. We also interviewed Syrians who had intended to stay permanently in Egypt until the government of Abdeh Fattah el-Sisi brought in increasing restrictions and repression in everyday life, and Palestinian refugees who had resided for many years, or been born, in Syria before being displaced by the conflict.

"I'm originally from Daraa. I left in December 2012. We decided to … go to Egypt. We took a plane from Amman to Alexandria. President Morsi was still there and Syrians could enter by plane. They were welcome in Egypt. I lived there about a year and a half. …I worked as a transporter of goods by truck. …When the Morsi Government fell and el-Sisi arrived things for Syrians changed. Strong discrimination. Even renewing a residence permit was difficult. So I went to Libya. …Libya is terrible. …I set aside money to leave and I took the boat to Italy."
(Syrian man aged 23, interviewed in Italy)

The longest average time spent in any given country prior to arrival in Europe was Iran (3.5 years). Indeed, a quarter (27%) of those who had been living in Iran had stayed there for between 10 to 40 years. These were all Afghans who had left Afghanistan due to conflict. For these refugees and migrants, the decision to travel to Europe should be understood as part of a broader pattern of serial migration and multiple, sometimes entirely unrelated, decisions to migrate.

Regular and irregular border crossings

Both the media and politicians often give the impression that all those arriving in Europe have crossed all the borders on their journey irregularly (without passports or other documents). Our findings challenge this assumption. Whilst it is true that all respondents who arrived in Greece and Italy did so irregularly due, primarily, to a lack of safe and legal routes, this was not necessarily the case for journeys through other countries prior to reaching Europe. Indeed, there were significant differences between diverse countries and across groups of refugees and migrants, depending on their access to documents and other resources. Among the Syrian respondents, some people had entered Turkey regularly and others crossed the border irregularly. None of the Afghans had visas to enter Turkey: all entered irregularly. More than two thirds of Iraqi nationals entered Turkey legally using a passport and either flew to Istanbul, Ankara or Izmir or took the coach.

It is also important to note a number of important policy developments which seem likely to have influenced migration dynamics to Turkey. During 2014 and 2015, the MENA states (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) followed by Jordan and Lebanon imposed harsher visa restrictions on Syrian nationals, and increasingly policed their informal border crossings. By the spring of 2015, this restriction on possible exits out of Syria left Turkey as the main route to escape. Although the Turkish government closed the border in March 2015, except for those granted medical exceptions, Syrians continued to cross informally with the help of smugglers.

In contrast, those travelling in West Africa were able to move relatively freely and regularly within the area of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), aside from occasionally having to pass security checkpoints. The situation changed for many of those we interviewed when they went to Libya: the irregular sea journey across the Central Mediterranean was considered to be the only way to leave what was rapidly becoming an increasingly dangerous and unsustainable situation. Irregular border crossings were not only associated with entering another country: respondents from Eritrea and Afghans living in Iran, for example, commented

on the restrictions faced in leaving these countries and the need for them to leave using irregular means. Respondents from both Iraq and Syria similarly told us that travel restrictions imposed by Islamic State (IS) meant that irregular crossings were necessary to reach safety. In this context the use of smugglers became an integral part of the migratory process. We explore this issue further in Section 4.

Experiences of violence and death

As was noted in the introduction to our report, the dramas and hardships of the journey across the Mediterranean formed an important element of the 'crisis' constructed by politicians and the media. Experiences of violence and death are not limited to the sea crossing, rather they can be found along much of the journey to Europe, although our research has identified significant differences between the experiences of those who arrived via the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes. Table 1 shows the extent to which people from different countries of origin experienced violence or witnessed death during their migration to Europe.

In general terms, refugees and migrants who enter Europe via the Central Mediterranean route were more likely to report experiences of physical violence, exploitation or death (having seen someone killed or die) on the journey to Europe than those crossing via the Eastern Mediterranean route. More than three quarters (76%) of respondents who were interviewed in Italy and Malta said that they had directly experienced physical violence and nearly a third (29%) had witnessed the death of fellow travellers. Yet we also found variations in experiences according to the nationality and gender of respondents. For example, 95% of the Gambians and Nigerians we met told us they had experienced violence on the journey, and over 80% of Nigerian women described experiences of exploitation including having to engage in transactional sex to pay for their journeys, as well as sex trafficking. The majority of these experiences occurred in Algeria, Niger and, above all, Libya.

Those who were interviewed in Italy and Malta described a number of situations that were considered particularly dangerous, such as border crossings in Eritrea manned by snipers or journeys through Niger squeezed onto pick-ups and driven through the desert, with a high risk of dying from drought, starvation or falling from the vehicle. On the journey through Chad or Sudan our interviewees frequently experienced forced stops at military checkpoints and traps set by militia or 'bandits'. Kidnappings were common, although it was often unclear whether the perpetrators were 'bandits', militia organisations or even the military of that particular country.

The vast majority of the experiences of violence, exploitation and death of people occurred in Libya where racism and racial discrimination against Black African migrants has been documented for many years. Experiences of being kidnapped, arbitrarily arrested, held up at gunpoint or not paid for a day's work were described by almost all of our interviewees. Over a quarter had witnessed death: someone shot, die from hunger or drown. Women spoke of being unable to leave their places of residence and being subject to sexual as well as physical violence. Such experiences appear to be more or less indiscriminate.

Whilst a significant proportion of those crossing to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route had experienced violence and death in their countries of

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origin (see Section 3) a smaller – but not insignificant – proportion of respondents experienced violence (40%) or death (8.5%) compared with those travelling through various African countries and arriving via the Central Mediterranean route. Among refugees and migrants from the three largest nationality groups arriving in Greece (Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis), violence was widespread but there was variation in the circumstances under which this violence occurred. Around a quarter of Iraqis (27%) and over a third of Syrians (37%) told us that they had experienced violence after leaving their country of origin. This figure was much higher at 65% for Afghan respondents, many of whom were of the Hazara ethnic group and had been subject to racism and discrimination whilst living in Iran (see Section 3).

As with respondents who were interviewed in Italy and Malta, some routes and locations were perceived by respondents as being more dangerous than others.

Around half (51%) of those who had travelled through Iran, experienced violence, most notably at the hands of state agents (police, border guards and the military). A fifth (19%) reported death occurring to someone they knew or saw along the way. Many respondents in Greece and Turkey told us that the route through Iran into Turkey was the most dangerous due to threats of death and violence from smugglers, because of the geography of the mountains but particularly due to the Iranian army who are known to shoot at those who attempted to cross the border. Of those respondents who travelled through Sudan, 14% experienced violence. Overall, the route through Turkey and Greece was generally considered less dangerous than travelling through Libya. This may have contributed to increased arrivals into Greece relative to Italy: several Eritrean respondents described making a deliberate decision to travel to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route because the journey through Libya was considered too dangerous.

Nationality	% death	% exploitation	% violence
Gambia	51.1	55.6	95.6
Nigeria	28.6	59.5	95.2
Ghana	66.7	38.1	81.0
Senegal	20.0	40.0	80.0
Ivory Coast	21.4	28.6	78.6
Afghanistan	20.5	9.1	77.3
Mali	28.6	71.4	71.4
Pakistan	17.6	29.4	52.9
Syria	6.5	20.4	37.0
Eritrea	8.3	27.8	36.1
Iraq	0.0	6.9	31.0
Yemen	0.0	10.0	20.0

Table 1: % of respondents reporting experiences of violence, exploitation or witnessing death since leaving their country of origin (includes only origin countries with 10 or more respondents)

Gender	% death	% exploitation	% violence
Nigerian Male	34.48	62.07	100.00
Nigerian Female	7.69	61.54	84.62
Syrian Male	7.37	17.89	33.68
Syrian Female	0.00	38.46	61.54

Table 2: % of respondents reporting experiences of violence, exploitation or witnessing death since leaving Nigeria and Syria, by gender

The decision to leave – and move on

Key points

Conflict in the countries neighbouring Europe was a major factor contributing to the significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in 2015 both as a cause of primary and secondary movement.

More than three quarters (77%) of respondents explicitly mentioned factors that could be described as 'forced migration'. The figure was even higher at 91% for those interviewed in Greece reflecting the significant proportion of Syrians in our sample.

There is often a **complex and overlapping relationship between 'forced' and 'economic' drivers of migration to Europe.** Many of those who left their home countries primarily due to economic reasons found themselves in situations of conflict and violence in Libya and elsewhere.

Others, even if they had decided to leave home due to conflict, subsequently had to move on again because they were unable to make a living or access healthcare and education. A third of respondents interviewed in Greece had moved on for what might typically be understood as economic reasons.

There were **significant differences between those interviewed in Greece and Italy as to whether they intended to stay in the first European country in which they had arrived.** Virtually none of those who were interviewed in Greece intended to stay compared to more than two thirds (68%) of those interviewed in Italy.

One of the main objectives of our research has been to better understand the drivers of migration across the Mediterranean including the underlying factors shaping migration from countries of origin. Whilst some of our findings are consistent with those of other studies[35], others are rather more surprising and reflect the complex 'back stories' described in the previous section. In particular, many respondents had not travelled directly to Europe but had rather travelled through a wide range of countries before eventually deciding to cross the Mediterranean. For many of these people Europe had never been an intended destination, whilst for others, particularly those with family members already living in European countries, it was the obvious choice[36].

Having unpacked the routes taken by our research respondents, we turn our attention in this section to the factors that shaped the decision to leave their home countries and, in the case of those who spent extended periods of time in a number of other countries, the

[35] See fn. 25

[36] Preferred destination countries are not a focus of this report but have been explored in detail with reference to respondents travelling to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route in an earlier MEDMIG Research Brief, see Crawley, H., Duvell, F., Jones, K. and Skleparis, D. (2016) Understanding the dynamics of migration to Greece and the EU: drivers, decisions and destinations, MEDMIG Research Brief No.2 http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-02-Understanding-the-dynamics-of-migration-to-Greece-and-the-EU.pdf

decision to continue onwards towards Europe. This is important, in part to give voice to the diverse stories of individuals and families who ended up risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean, but also because EU policy has been underpinned by a number of assumptions about the drivers and motivations of those on the move. In January 2016 for example, the Dutch Commissioner Frans Timmermans claimed, incorrectly, that "More than half of the people now coming to Europe come from countries where you can assume they have no reason whatsoever to ask for refugee status …more than half, 60%"[37].

These assumptions about the legitimacy or otherwise of the asylum claims of those seeking international protection took different forms in relation to the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes. In the case of the former, there was generally an acknowledgement that the majority of those who arrived in Greece during the course of 2015 came from countries in which there was well-documented conflict and human rights abuse (most notably Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq). But there was also an implicit, and sometimes explicit, assumption that having escaped the violence these people should remain in neighbouring countries, most notably Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. At the recent UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants held in New York in September 2016, for example, EU Commissioner Avramopolous said that "we need to make their journey to a safe place shorter and easier… those seeking protection should find a safe place as close as possible to their country of origin – even in a safe part of their country"[38]. The decision to move to Greece and onwards into northern Europe was perceived by politicians and policy makers, and in turn the public, to be motivated primarily by a desire to access work and welfare support.

In the case of Italy, there was a perception among politicians, policy makers and the public that, because many of those travelling through the Central Mediterranean route originated from countries that were not affected by conflict – or at least not conflicts that were widely publicised or understood – they were mostly 'economic migrants' seeking employment and a better life. As a result, those arriving in Italy were perceived as being 'less deserving' than those travelling through the Eastern Mediterranean route, particularly those from Syria whose claims for asylum were effectively fast-tracked. This is reflected in the fact that refugee recognition rates decreased for those arriving in Italy over the course of 2015[40]. As with those travelling through the Eastern Mediterranean route, there was a perception that arrivals in Italy were largely a consequence of 'pull factors' in Europe which encouraged refugees and migrants to make their dangerous journeys. This increasingly outdated but still popular 'push-pull' model of migration underpins a raft of policy decisions, including the downscaled and then reinstated search and rescue (SAR) operations which were believed to encourage others to risk the crossing[41].

This section is divided into two main parts. We begin by examining the reasons why people decided to leave their home countries. We then examine the reasons why, having reached another country in which they had lived for months or even years, people decided to move on.

[37] http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/most-fleeing-to-europe-are-not-refugees-eu-official-says-1.2511133
[38] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-3121_en.htm
[39] See for example, Reuters (2015) Migranti, Alfano: rimpatriare quelli economici, Ue partecipi economicamente a 'hotspot', Reuters Italia, http://it.reuters.com/article/topNews/idITKBN0OX1NI20150617
[40] This issue is explored in more detail in an earlier MEDMIG Research Brief, see McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016) Boat migration across the Central Mediterranean: drivers, experiences and responses, MEDMIG Research Brief No.3 http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-03-Boat-migration-across-the-Central-Mediterranean.pdf
[41] Hagen-Zanker, J. and Mallett, R. (2016) Journeys to Europe: The Role of Policy in Migrant Decision-Making, ODI Insights https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10297.pdf

The decision to leave

According to IOM data, nearly 82% of those arriving in Greece and Italy in 2015 originated from just four countries – Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea – countries experiencing protracted political unrest and conflict and which have a well-documented record of human rights abuse[42]. Whilst the factors driving migration are complex and vary among those travelling to Europe via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, our research confirms that conflict in the countries neighbouring Europe – most notably the war in Syria which started in March 2011 – as well as in the countries to which refugees and migrants subsequently moved, was a major factor contributing to the significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants who arrived in Europe in 2015.

When we asked our respondents to describe the circumstances under which they had decided to leave, more than three quarters (77%) of respondents across the entire sample explicitly mentioned factors that could be described as 'forced migration', including conflict, persecution, violence, death threats and human rights abuse. The figure was even higher at 91% for those interviewed in Greece, reflecting the significant proportion of Syrians who travelled through this route.

> **"I left because of the war. There is no safety in Yemen. You might die any minute… In Yemen, there is no electricity, the schools have closed and it is not safe to be on the streets. War has no mercy."**
> *(Yemeni man aged 20)*

> **"I was living in Damascus. The situation was bad. I was working as a civil servant for 16 years. We were living on rent, expensive rent. The schools closed down. The regime was dropping bombs every day. There was no future there. I decided to leave one year ago from Syria for my children. Everybody leaves Syria for the sake of their children."**
> *(Syrian man aged 35 travelling to Germany to join his wife and four children)*

The situation among those travelling to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route is rather more complicated. Whilst the composition of flows is significantly more diverse in terms of the countries from which refugees and migrants originate, many of those who arrived had spent significant periods of time in Libya and other countries in which there is conflict and in which certain groups, in particular Black Africans, are known to experience significant racism, discrimination and violence. Nearly two thirds (66%) of those who were interviewed in Italy made reference to factors associated with 'forced migration' when describing the reasons they decided to leave their home country. Many more had experienced conflict, persecution and human rights in the countries to which they subsequently moved, most notably Libya.

Notwithstanding these differences in terms of the different countries of origin of those moving through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, our research identifies a number of cross-cutting drivers of migration to Europe.

The first and perhaps most obvious driver of migration across the Mediterranean to Europe is conflict and the daily uncertainty regarding life and future. Many of those we

[42] IOM (2016) fn. 2

spoke to had not been specifically targeted but had decided to leave their countries because the levels of generalised violence had become intolerable and they consequently feared for their personal safety and that of their families. These included a large number of Syrians who were living in areas of conflict in Syria and who were subject to almost daily barrel bombings, sniper fire and other attacks. Homs, Damascus and Aleppo were frequently mentioned as cities in which it had become impossible to live.

This was also a recurrent theme in interviews with respondents from Iraq, where there has been a protracted conflict which began with the 2003 invasion by a US-led coalition and more recently has seen intensified conflict with IS. Towards the end of the fieldwork phase (January 2016) we started to meet a growing number of Yemenis who had moved due to escalating bombing raids on civilian areas by Saudi Arabia. Peoples' sense of uncertainty, fear of death and lack of hope for the future ran through these accounts.

Others had been specifically targeted in the context of political unrest and conflict across the wide range of countries from which our respondents originated. On the Eastern Mediterranean route this included: a member of the opposition Pakistan People's Party in Pakistan; a Syrian man who was arrested and imprisoned because the authorities thought he would participate in a political protest; an MP who opposed the actions of the Assad regime; an Airforce Colonel who was tortured for refusing to drop barrel bombs; and a former solider in Assad's army who left and became a founder of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Respondents who had been journalists, humanitarian and NGO workers and activists were also targeted in Syria and Iraq.

A number of those travelling through the Central Mediterranean route had also decided to leave their homes due to political persecution or localised situations of civil unrest. Respondents from places as diverse as Gambia, Nigeria and Pakistan spoke of violence due to their membership of a political party, the threat of imprisonment and facing corrupt or unfair legal processes. Nearly a third (29%) of Nigerian women who were interviewed told us that the murder of a close, usually male, family member – husband, brother, father – had destabilised both their personal security and their livelihood. This combination of political and economic factors underpinned the decision to leave.

> **"My uncle was an MPP organiser for a political party, I supported him to win an election but the people started fighting him every day. Somebody gave me information to escape because they were planning an attack on me. I ran to a nearby town but people knew that I was there so I had to leave the country."**
> *(Ghanaian man aged 37)*

> **"I was living in Baghdad. You don't know when you are going to die there."**
> *(Iraqi man aged 28 travelling with his wife and four year old son)*

> **"I'm an activist. I had a problem with the government because I speak out, I speak for the people. My husband was murdered and I was in danger."**
> *(Nigerian woman aged 37)*

On the Central Mediterranean route respondents also described having to leave because of escalating tensions between Muslims and Christians in some countries (most notably some areas of Nigeria), intergenerational conflicts related to family and marriage (including familial conflicts arising from an individual's choice of partner), religious obligations which sometimes manifested themselves as violent rituals, together with land disputes and fights among extended families. Tensions around religious and fraternity affiliations leading to physical violence and even the murder of close family members were recurrent themes in our interviews with Nigerian men in particular. Whilst these conflicts may be localised or regional – and therefore not well understood by the international community – they represented a significant threat to the lives of those affected.

Outside of these experiences of generalised conflict and political violence, we identified three themes that cut across the experiences of those who arrived in Greece and Italy and featured in the accounts of a significant proportion of those interviewed, albeit to varying degrees across the two routes: terrorism or armed insurgency, kidnapping and the risk and/or fear of indefinite forced conscription.

"I tried to fight back with the Muslims [Boko Haram] but I had to run away. I had nothing in Nigeria. They burned everything. There was nothing left there. They tried to kill me."
(Nigerian man aged 26)

More than a quarter (28%) of respondents interviewed in Greece said that a significant factor in their decision to leave was the activities of IS, particularly in Syria but also in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. These respondents had been detained, tortured or forced to watch beheadings. They expressed grave concerns for the safety of their families, and particularly women (wives, sisters, daughters) who were perceived to be non-compliant with strict Sharia laws concerning their dress and behaviour. Whilst the activities of IS were not prevalent in the accounts of those travelling through the Central Mediterranean route, respondents whose journeys originated in West Africa described the threat posed by armed groups such as the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance in Senegal, terrorist organisations including Boko Haram and particular confraternities, such as Black Axe in Nigeria. A number of respondents interviewed in both Italy and Greece also described violence at the hands of terrorist groups in East African countries including Al Shabaab in Somalia.

"Most probably, it's the regime which conducts the kidnaps but you can never be sure. In 2013, regime soldiers came in my house and kidnapped me. I spent two months in prison. I was being beaten up every day [Respondent shows the interviewer burn marks from cigarettes on his body]. I spent 25 days in the hospital. I later learned that the regime had written in their report that I was involved with the FSA."
(Syrian man aged 56 travelling with his 27 year old son)

Respondents from Syria and Iraq described kidnapping by State and non-State agencies (including a range of militia groups) as an increasingly common threat to their safety and that of their families. In some cases individuals were targeted because they were perceived to be a threat. More commonly however people were targeted because they had resources and were viewed as being able to pay a significant ransom. Those with resources were therefore most at risk. Kidnapping also featured strongly in the accounts of those interviewed in Italy but was typically associated with life in Libya rather than the home country (discussed below).

> **"I was living in Damascus. I was scared about my daughter's life. We were rich, and whoever is rich is in danger of having their children kidnapped."**
> *(Syrian Palestinian woman aged 43 travelling with her six year old daughter)*

For Eritreans, Syrians and Afghans living in Iran, the risk and/or fear of forced indefinite conscription into the government army, militia or rebel force was a major factor underlying the decision to leave. Eritreans who were interviewed in both Greece and Italy described military conscription as a form of forced or slave labour with poor quality working conditions, low or no salary and no prospects of release[43]. Several Afghans, including one child aged 16, also told us that they had been forcibly conscripted into the Iranian army to support the Assad regime in Syria[44].

> **"I was working as a teacher in Ashmara. I was also working as an artist. I decided to leave because I was imprisoned more than once by the government. I was imprisoned for the first time when I was in college and for the second time, after my graduation… After I graduated and even though I had already started working as a teacher, they wanted to send me to SAWA[45]. I told them I can't go and they sent me to prison again for 4 months. It is an underground prison. I was living with almost 1000 people. That was when I decided to leave this country."**
> *(Eritrean man aged 34)*

> **"I couldn't stand living in Eritrea any longer. I was working for nothing. There are no rights, no constitution and no justice. There is poverty and endless national service."**
> *(Eritrean man aged 41)*

This evidence from across the two routes suggests that there is often a complex and overlapping relationship between 'forced' and 'economic' drivers of migration to Europe. This issue is discussed at length in the existing literature[46]. Whilst there were differences in the composition of those moving through the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by nationality, age, gender and religion, it is inaccurate to characterise them exclusively, or even predominantly, as being made up by either forced or economic migrants.

[43] UN Human Rights Council (2015) *Report of Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea* /HRC/29/42 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/ColEritrea/Pages/ReportColEritrea.aspx

[44] Iran is fighting a proxy war in Syria in support of the Assad regime and Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) has recruited thousands of undocumented Afghans living there to fight in Syria since at least November 2013 See https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/29/iran-sending-thousands-afghans-fight-syria

[45] The SAWA Defence Training Center is a military in the Gash-Barka region of Eritrea. It is where the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) recruits and national service conscripts are sent for basic military training.

[46] See, for example, Richmond, A.H. (1993) 'Reactive migration: sociological perspectives on refugee movements', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6 (1), 7-24; Zetter, R. (2006) 'More labels, fewer refugees: remaking the refugee label in an era of globalisation', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(2), 172-92; Long, K. (2013) 'When refugees stopped being migrants: movement, labour and humanitarian protection', *Migration Studies* 1(1), 4-26; Betts, A. (2014) *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement,* Cornell University Press; Mainwaring, C. and Brigden, N. (2016) 'Beyond the border: clandestine migration journeys', *Geopolitics* 21(2), 243-262.

In many of the countries from which respondents originated, protracted conflict and political unrest not only meant that people were fearful for their safety and that of their families but had undermined the ability to earn a livelihood and feed a family by killing primary breadwinners, destroying businesses and making it impossible to travel to work. In others, local conflicts between families and groups similarly undermined the security and economic wellbeing. Meanwhile many of those who left their home countries primarily due to economic reasons found themselves in situations of conflict and violence in Libya and elsewhere. We return to this issue and the policy challenges which it creates, in the conclusions to our report.

Moving on

One of the key findings of our research, discussed in detail in Section 2 of this report, is that many of those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 had not travelled directly from their countries of origin but rather had left months or even years beforehand. Some had stopped for short periods of time in order to rest, settle, work, obtain resources or connect with onward transport. Others had stayed in different countries outside Europe for longer periods of time in the hope of securing work and rebuilding a life.

As noted previously, the duration of time between departure from the country of origin and arrival in Europe was considerably higher for those who arrived in Italy compared with those arriving in Greece. However among some of those who were interviewed in Greece the length of time between leaving the home country and arriving in Europe was also considerable. Most notable among these respondents were Afghan nationals, many of whom had been living in – and in some cases were born – in Iran[47].

As noted in the previous section, some of those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 had a relatively clear and consistent objective point at which they departed from their home country. Their migration to Europe can therefore be regarded as a single journey, albeit with various stops or interruptions. For others however, there were stays of considerable duration in countries outside Europe and initially there had been no intention to move to Europe at all. These migrations, which are significant in number, cannot be interpreted as one and the same journey, rather they consist of separate or serial migration decisions. Unpacking the stops, stays and onward movement that follow these decisions highlights the complexity of the decision-making process and also ultimately helps us to better understand the dynamics of migration to Europe.

The findings of our research suggest that it is important to differentiate between the primary drivers of migration from countries of origin and secondary drivers which lead to further migration and propel people onwards from the countries to which they subsequently move. In some cases the decision to move on was based on concerns about safety and security: Syrians living in Lebanon who felt too close to the ongoing conflict or that they might be located by Assad government officials and persecuted because of their political activities or affiliations; Eritreans who had left due to indefinite military conscription but were unable to rebuild their lives in Sudan due to civil war, or political activists who feared they would be found and forced to return.

[47] More than three quarters (77%) of Afghan nationals interviewed in Greece had spent a considerable period of time in Iran (years rather than months) and several were born there.

"In Sudan I was not safe. I had the fear of getting arrested and sent back to Eritrea. I stayed in some friends' house. I was hiding... I couldn't risk living in Sudan for long time."
(Eritrean woman aged 32)

For many Afghans in Iran, particularly those from the ethnic Hazara minority, experiences of severe discrimination, the absence of citizenship rights and a lack of education for children combined with anxieties about what would happen to them if they were to return to Afghanistan and information from others that they might be able to secure protection in Europe, were associated with the decision to move on.

"In Iran people were treating us as animals. Refugees in Iran are in big trouble. They live a dark life. We wanted to go back to Afghanistan but we talked to our parents in Afghanistan and they told us that IS has increased its presence there. IS are persecuting Hazaras. They are beheading Hazaras. So we decided to go to Germany."
(Hazara Afghan woman aged 28 travelling with her sister's family)

It is also clear from our research that many of those who left situations of conflict often found themselves in very difficult economic circumstances in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran and elsewhere as a result of limited rights, exploitation by employers and discrimination in the labour market (and beyond). A third (34%) of respondents interviewed in Greece, for example, had moved on for what might typically be understood as economic reasons: they were running out of money, found it impossible to secure employment or were working long hours for very little pay.

"Back then I just wanted to leave Syria. I wasn't thinking of going to Europe. I had an acquaintance there. In two or three days I found a job as a waiter in a restaurant in Istanbul. I worked there for two months but I didn't get paid. I left that job for another one. I was working from seven in the morning until midnight for 1,000 liras, and I was sleeping in the restaurant too... My wife joined me in Istanbul. We rented a house. At some point, our daughter got ill and we couldn't take her to the hospital because we were illegal. This is when we decided to leave Turkey."
(Syrian man aged 29 whose pregnant wife and one year old child were living in Sweden)

With the passage of time, and in the absence of a resolution to the conflicts in their home countries, respondents told us that they had grown increasingly concerned about the impacts on their families, and especially their children, many of whom had been out of schools for many years or had health issues. The arrival of significant numbers of people in Greece in 2015 therefore raises important questions about the long-term situation for refugees and migrants living in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, some of whom decided to cross the Mediterranean in 2015.

Key drivers of onward migration from Turkey[48]

Turkey still maintains a geographic reservation on the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which means that those from outside Europe are excluded from full refugee status (2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection, art. 61). Syrians are dealt with under provisions for temporary protection (LFIP, art. 91) but the definition of 'temporary' is unclear which renders this status rather precarious. Meanwhile, they are excluded from asylum procedures.

All others are dealt with under provisions for asylum seekers and, if approved, granted a conditional refugee status (LFIP, art. 62) and are expected to be resettled or subsidiary protection (LFIP, art. 63). However, according to a report by the Council of Europe (2016), the waiting time for the first interview was seven years in 2015 and has now increased to eight years. This leaves people in periods of prolonged limbo. The demand for resettlement vastly outstrips the supply of places. Legal provisions as well as social services for unaccompanied children are considered insufficient. The risks of being returned to their countries of origin also undermines the security of those living in Turkey.

Syrians and some Iraqis can be accommodated in camps but there are currently only around 290,000 places i.e around 10% of the total number of refugees living in Turkey. All others have to identify and pay for their own accommodation. Usually, this is sub-standard and over-crowded and is in basements, sheds or derelict houses.

Until January 2016, all asylum seekers were excluded from the labour market and although Syrians have been entited to a work permit since that time in practice only around 2,000 have been issued. Therefore, Syrians and other refugees, if they can find employment, normally work in low paid sub-standard jobs. Many report severe exploitation and unpaid wages. Child labour appears to be widespread.

By law Syrians have access to some key social provisions including healthcare and education. However, often this cannot be realised due to lack of resources, staff or interpreters. For instance, 60% of Syrian children do not attend school. Very few benefits are paid. A significant numbers of NGOs, however, provide services and fill some gaps.

In summary, a large proportion of Syrians, Iraqis, and others living in Turkey suffer from a precarious immigration status, severe poverty and lack prospects for improvement. These conditions continue to represent pressures for onward migration.

[48] See Directorate General of Migration Management (2013) *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/eng_minikanun_5_son.pdf, Council of Europe (2016) *Report of the fact-finding mission to Turkey by Ambassador Tomáš Boček, Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees,* 30 May – 4 June 2016 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680699e93

Secondary drivers of migration are also apparent among those travelling through the Central Mediterranean route. Those who had spent time in Libya repeatedly told us about their experiences of discrimination, exploitation and violence that undermined the ability to feel safe and make a living.

"I learnt to be a builder in Libya …it was stable. Everybody is working in Libya … because they destroy a house today and build it again tomorrow! In Libya people are not good, they treat you like slaves and call you 'Africans'… there are guns everywhere but there is money in Libya."
(Nigerian man aged 25)

"In Libya there is work and you can have some money, I saw some friends and people who moved to Libya for work so I went to them… the country is not stable but there is work. I was almost two years in Libya, I did plumbing work, worked with an Arab man [Did he pay you?] He paid, but later he changed … I was staying in Murzuk it is a small village near Sabha, I rented a house. That place is not safe, sometimes there is fighting there, but it is only between the armies, the other sides and only their opponents."
(Gambian man aged 31)

A fifth (20%) of respondents who travelled via the Central Mediterranean route referred to experiences of either being kidnapped or knowing others who had been kidnapped. Among Gambians and Eritreans this figure rose to more than 30%. There were numerous reports of successful and attempted kidnapping, often at gunpoint. Those who were kidnapped described being locked in small rooms with limited food and water and being subjected to beating and torture. In the case of Gambian respondents the purpose of the kidnapping appeared mostly to be to extract forced labour, whilst for Eritreans, who were often taken as part of a group, the purpose was most commonly to extract money from family members in the home country or living elsewhere.

Understanding the experiences of refugees and migrants travelling through the Central Mediterranean route therefore requires an analysis not only of the situation in the countries from which they originate but also their experiences in Libya and other countries in which they have stopped or stayed. These experiences mean that even though the initial decision to migrate may have been motivated primarily by economic factors, many of those arriving in Italy and Malta had decided to leave Libya due to factors that are more typically associated with forced migration.

"One day a man said there's a big project, big work, so I put my things in the car and he drove me off and put me in prison. It was a kidnapping … there were lots of African people, and a few Asians too. I spent nine months in prison, it was too long… we were two, three, four days without food or water, many people lost their life there. [In the prison] you work for them, when somebody dies you have to move the body for them, they take you and tell you to throw the body in the ditch. It is inhuman."
(Gambian man aged 31)

"On the way we were kidnapped by a group of armed people. We paid a ransom and were released. Some days after, while getting closer to Tripoli, they were kidnapped again. This time only 46 people were taken. They paid 500 dollars each, sent by their parents, to be released."
(Eritrean woman aged 19)

Key drivers of onward migration from Libya

Libya occupies a hugely important position in migration patterns towards Europe. Almost all (96%) of our interviewees departed on boats from Libya and the country has been a place of transit for those on their way to Europe for several years. But that does not tell the whole story.

Libya also continues to be a place of destination for refugees and migrants from a wide range of countries and backgrounds, from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. For many of those who we interviewed, Libya had been perceived as a place of plentiful economic opportunities, as it had in fact been for years before. The violent, chaotic reality of everyday life in the country was often unknown or underestimated.

Since 2011, Libya has been in a state of conflict with multiple armed groups controlling different parts of the country. For most of our interviewees, gunfire could be heard daily. And as well as the dangers of military operations, armed street gangs (known as 'Asma Boys') and unscrupulous employers willing to threaten or lock people up rather than pay them provided a frequent threat. This security environment impacted on the length of stops and stays for our respondents in ways that had often not been anticipated. Those who had little intention of staying in Libya often found their journeys interrupted and stays extended as a result of kidnapping and violence. Others who had intended to settle, work and live in Libya came to realise that they would have to move on again to find somewhere safe. In this way, violence and uncertainty play a vital role in curtailing stays and driving onward journeys from the country.

Finally, we found significant differences between those who travelled through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes with regard to whether the first European country in which they arrived – Greece and Italy respectively – was regarded as a place to stop or stay: in other words whether these were places that respondents intended to pass through on their way to another place or somewhere to live and work on a longer-term basis.

The difference between the two routes was striking. Virtually none of those who were interviewed in Greece considered that it was a country in which they would stay. There were exceptions: for example, a young Syrian man told us that his father had been living in Greece for 16 years and that he regarded the country as his second home. But most regarded Greece as a stopping point on their way to other parts of Europe. They were aware of the difficult economic circumstances facing the country and did not believe that it would offer them the opportunity to secure employment and rebuild their lives. For those with families who had been left behind, the ability to work and send money back in the form of remittances was an important factor driving the decision to move on.

> **"I am not going to apply for asylum here. There is economic crisis in Greece. There are no jobs. I have heard that it is tough here."**
> *(Afghan man aged 21)*

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By contrast more than two thirds (68%) of those in Italy who were asked about their preferred destination country said that they wanted to stay in the country. This was particularly clear among Gambians, Nigerians and Ghanaians who had arrived through the Central Mediterranean route from Libya and for Pakistani nationals, most of whom had travelled to Italy from Greece. The majority of those who wanted to stay in Italy had already applied for asylum at the time our interview with them.

The desire to remain in Italy was related in part to the perception that it would be possible to find opportunities for employment particularly in larger towns such as Rome, Milan and Naples. Some indicated that their intention to move away from smaller towns in search of opportunities for work once they had been granted legal status. Others expressed appreciation for the search and rescue operation that had effectively saved their lives and for the assistance that they had received at the hands of ordinary Italians and the local civic society who had welcomed them on arrival and helped them to settle. However for many, and most especially those from West and Central Africa, it was clear that Italy was also the first country they had reached in which they felt safe. This reinforces our finding that the decision to cross the Mediterranean from Libya was a separate migration decision: people had originally intended to remain there but had been unable to do so due to escalating violence. The accounts of these respondents are more typical of those who have been forced to migrate than those of economic migrants.

> **"As far as I am having my peace here, then I want to stay."**
> *(Gambian man aged 18)*

> **"We have nothing here, but at least we have life."**
> *(Nigerian man aged 20)*

Section 4

Getting out, getting in: the role of smugglers

Key points

All of our respondents engaged the services of a smuggler for at least one leg of their journey to Greece or Italy. This was primarily because they were unable to access a safe and legal route to safety/protection.

One in ten of our interviewees who entered Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route had **tried but failed to identify an alternative way to migrate legally,** for example by applying for a visa for work or study, a UN resettlement programme or family reunification.

Smugglers performed two main functions for our respondents: **they helped respondents escape danger,** conflict or persecution at home or en route and they **enabled them to bypass controlled borders** where these were a barrier to reaching safety, protection and/or livelihoods.

Smugglers were embedded in migrant social networks and local communities, and were easy to find. By far the majority of interviewees across both the Central and the Eastern routes found their smugglers through friends, family members and extended social networks, either at home or en route. State officials, the military, law enforcement, and border guards were also involved in smuggling.

Our research found **some manifestations of human trafficking along the Central Mediterranean route,** in particular concerning women from Nigeria who were living in Libya.

Although many of our respondents experienced violence and threats from smugglers (along both routes), **violence also came from other actors** including State officials, militias, military and the police.

The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime defines 'smuggling of migrants' as "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident"[49]. All of those who were interviewed in Greece and Italy engaged the services of a smuggler at some point along their journeys to Europe. Respondents paid smugglers to arrange the logistics of their journeys, including transportation, organising the route, providing false documents, purchasing boats, taking people to embarkation points, providing accommodation and purchasing flights as well as guiding people past dangerous borders.

[49] Available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/2011/04/som-indonesia/convention_smug_eng.pdf

This section sets out our findings in relation to respondents' use of, and relationship with, the smugglers who facilitated their journeys. It does three things: firstly, we outline the reasons why our respondents hired smugglers; secondly, we document the diversity of individuals involved in facilitating and their integration with migrant social networks; and thirdly, we consider whether our respondents' experiences with those who facilitated their migration constituted 'smuggling' or 'trafficking', as well as the experiences of violence with which both can be associated.

Reasons for the use of smugglers

Only a handful of respondents who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 hired a smuggler at the point of departure from their home country to facilitate their movement *all the way* from their place of origin to Europe. Instead, the majority of refugees and migrants in our sample engaged smugglers to facilitate particular *legs* of the journey. This reflects the findings of Sections 2 and 3 that a significant proportion of those arriving in Europe in 2015 did so as a result of multiple migration decisions, rather than by making a single, direct journey. The findings of our research indicate that the point in which respondents engaged a smuggler was contingent on two factors:

- Whether smugglers were required to help people escape conflict, danger, persecution at home or to facilitate the journey en route; and
- Whether individuals could travel legally or without passing border and other controls at which travel documents and IDs were required.

Getting out

As is clear from the findings of our research into the drivers of migration in the previous section, many of those we interviewed were forced to leave their countries of origin and subsequently move as a result of conflict, persecution and human rights abuse. The role of smugglers in facilitating an essential escape route for people in such situations is well documented in the literature[50].

Almost half (43%) of the respondents interviewed in Greece had used a smuggler in order to get out of the country in which they were living. This included all the Afghan and Eritrean interviewees in our sample, a third of those travelling from Syria and a fifth of Iraqi respondents. For Syrian interviewees, a smuggler was required to help escape conflict or armed siege in their home cities of Aleppo, Daraa and Homs for which smugglers offered personal security. For those living in IS-controlled areas (e.g. Deir Al-Zor, Raqqa), a smuggler was also required as being caught attempting to leave without permission could result in detention or even their death according to respondents[51]. Similarly, respondents living in IS-controlled areas of Iraq engaged the assistance of smugglers to escape into Turkey.

Afghan nationals on the other hand engaged smugglers to escape the attention of the Iranian authorities. This was because, in addition to the discrimination, harassment and risk of forced conscription into Assad's militias in Syria (see Section 3), it is illegal for Afghans to travel from city to city under Iranian law, making internal travel within

[50] See, for example, Crepeau, F. (2003) 'The fight against migrant smuggling: migrant containment over refugee protection' in J. Van Selm et al. (eds) *The Convention at 50: A View from Forced Migration Studies,* Lanham: Lexington Books; UNODC (2011) *Issue Paper: Smuggling of Migrants by Sea,* http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Issue-Papers/Issue_Paper_-_Smuggling_of_Migrants_by_Sea.pdf; Gallagher, A. and David, F. (2012) *The International Law of Migrant Smuggling,* New York: Cambridge University Press; Duvell, F., Yildiz, A. and Ozerim, G. (2016 forthcoming) 'Large-scale irregular departures in 2015 from Turkey: how can these be explained?; *Journal for Ethnic and Migration Studies.*

[51] See also https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/21/islamic-state-capital-raqqa-syria-isis

the country highly risky. Those who are caught risk detention or deportation back to Afghanistan[52].

> **"From Tehran we went to Urmia. We went by car. We changed five cars in order to reach Urmia [border with Turkey]. And we had to switch off our mobile phones. We had to follow these steps in order to avoid army detection."**
> *(Afghan Pashtun man, living in Iran for 10 years and travelling with his cousin)*

Similarly, Eritrean respondents engaged the services of smugglers in order to escape the attention of the Eritrean authorities which detain those caught trying to leave the country[53]. One respondent even reported that the authorities have a 'shoot to kill' policy for those caught trying to leave. For a number of our Eritrean respondents who were fleeing military conscription (see Section 3), crossing the border out of Eritrea was especially dangerous.

> **"We chose Sudan, because it is safer for Eritreans to go there, than going to Ethiopia. Crossing the borders though is very dangerous. Soldiers have been told to shoot anyone trying to cross the border. I took a cell phone to contact my friends. I didn't take any clothes except for those I was wearing, because clothes are visible and soldiers could realise that we were about to escape. I also took some food and water."**
> *(Eritrean man aged 34 travelling with his partner)*

Smugglers did not only assist respondents to flee conflict and danger from the State authorities at home, they also helped them to navigate danger en route after leaving home. Thus, Eritreans crossing the border into Sudan also engaged the assistance of smugglers to escape the Rashaida tribe which controls part of the border, and which is feared for its reputation for kidnap, extortion and even murder[54]. Similarly, Afghans engaged smugglers to help them cross the challenging – and notoriously lawless – Nimroz region between Afghanistan and Iran, and the mountains between Iran and Turkey. In both places, interviewees feared the Iranian authorities which were (like the Eritrean authorities) reported to shoot at those who attempt to make the crossing, as well as 'bandits'. As noted in Section 2 of this report, journeys can be extremely dangerous. Crossing the mountains into Turkey was reported by respondents to be especially dangerous and challenging. Commonly, to escape danger these smugglers divided their 'clients' into groups before starting to climb the mountains, perceiving that separating people into smaller groups would attract less attention or that if one group were caught, another would get through[55].

Respondents who had travelled along the Central Mediterranean route also engaged smugglers to act as guides through difficult terrains that could not be traversed safely without expert knowledge and appropriate transportation. The only transport across the difficult terrain of the Sahara Desert was that organised by smugglers, since well before the fall of Gaddafi with

[52] See Human Rights Watch (2013) *Unwelcome Guests: Iran's Violation of Afghan Refugee and Migrant Rights,* https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/11/20/unwelcome-guests/irans-violation-afghan-refugee-and-migrant-rights
[53] See https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/08/human-rights-abuses-eritrea-may-be-crimes-against-humanity-un-report
[54] See http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/sudan-rashaida-kidnappers-demand-5000-ransom-threaten-death-eritrean-captives-1504974
[55] As these smugglers are paid upon safe arrival of their refugees and migrants in Turkey, they arguably have a greater financial incentive to ensure as many people arrive safely as possible.

security checkpoints manned by military and/or militia groups[56]. Travelling the Sahara by foot, without a robust vehicle, and without a driver who knew the way would lead to almost certain death. Whilst the smugglers who guided respondents over the mountains between Iran and Turkey divided people into smaller groups, smugglers in the Sahara organised their groups into convoys.

> **"The journey in the Sahara was difficult and it took us 10 days. There are no roads in the desert so you need to go with a truck."**
> *(Gambian man aged 18-29 years)*

On entering Libya, the journeys – and lives – of our respondents became even more difficult (see Sections 2 and 3). Staying in Libya was dangerous, but so was leaving the country due to due to the risk of kidnap or murder by militias, authorities, police and 'gangs'[57]. Engaging a smuggler to help leave the country via the Mediterranean was seen by many to be the only opportunity to leave this danger behind.

> **"When you enter Libya you cannot come out, they will shoot you at the border. When we passed we saw a border guard pour petrol on a black man and set fire to him. You cannot get out of Libya alive … You have to give your money to someone and hope they will take you. They tell you, you must take the boat."**
> *(Nigerian woman aged 18-29 years)*

Conversely, respondents who left their home countries without engaging the services of a smuggler did so because crossing the border was not in itself dangerous.

Getting in

Section 2 noted that journeys were conducted partly regularly and partly irregularly depending on the availability or otherwise of safe and legal routes and the documentation required to cross the border. There is a significant body of existing research documenting how increased border / immigration controls and the closure of legal migration routes fuels the smuggling business[58]. A publication by one UN agency – the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC) whose mandate is to tackle human trafficking – refers to this as the "great paradox of enhanced immigration controls", that borders do not by themselves stop people making these journeys. Rather that people will resort to hiring smugglers who can help them bypass immigration controls if they are not able to apply for visas or other legal means of entry to a place of safety[59].

The findings of our research confirm this view. Smugglers helped our respondents avoid border controls or police, either through guiding people past them, providing false documents or paying bribes to officials. Respondents told us that where borders were especially heavily guarded, this always led to a greater presence of smugglers offering ways to avoid border controls.

[56] See Lutterbeck, D. (2013) 'Across the desert, across the sea: migrant smuggling into and from Libya' in P. Seeberg and Z. Eyadat (eds) *Migration, Security and Citizenship in the Middle East: New Perspectives,* Palgrave Macmillan
[57] See, for example, https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/02/libya-long-term-arbitrary-detentions
[58] See fn. 50
[59] UNODC (2011, 44) *The Role of Organised Crime in the Smuggling of Migrants from West Africa to the European Union,* https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Report_SOM_West_Africa_EU.pdf

"The smuggler came with a coach [to Istanbul] and took us close to Izmir. And then we walked for two hours. More than 41 people in my group, three coaches in total, more than 10 hours the journey to the coast. We were hiding from the police all the time. They caught other coaches but not ours. It was like a cat and mouse game."
(Syrian man travelling with wife and baby daughter)

"When I left I bought a ticket from Accra [Ghana] to Agadez [Niger] from the Rainbow Company. It cost 300,000 cefa for the ticket to Agadez. From Ghana to Togo took one day, then there was a connection to Benin for one day and another connection in Benin to Niger. The bus to Niger took two days."
(Ghanaian man in his 30s)

Not all of our respondents required the services of a smuggler to cross all national borders all the way along their journeys. As indicated in Section 2, some were able to travel parts of their routes completely legally or through crossing informal borders without checkpoints, or by paying a bribe to guards (by themselves rather than through smugglers). For instance, along the Eastern Mediterranean route, Moroccan and Iraqi respondents most commonly only hired smugglers upon arrival in Turkey. This was because they were able to travel with their own documents into Turkey (often cheaply by coach) or with no documents at all. Just under two thirds of Syrians were able to cross the border of their country into Turkey, or from Lebanon into Turkey either by ferry (to Mersin) or by plane (to Istanbul or Izmir). Similarly, most of those who had travelled along the Central Mediterranean route did so without a smuggler, and had not considered applying for a visa because it was not needed. For those travelling from West Africa for example, it was possible to relatively freely cross borders within the ECOWAS zone by hitchhiking, walking and taking the bus until they reached Libya, Morocco or Algeria.

However, by the time refugees and migrants had reached either Libya or Turkey, regardless of where they came from, they sought out the services of a smuggler to make the sea crossing into Greece or Italy (or Malta). Respondents engaged a smuggler in part because it would be very difficult to make the crossing independently; this would require expert knowledge as to where to depart from without attracting the attention of the Libyan or Turkish coastguard and military, which direction to navigate in, as well as the material logistics of purchasing a boat, GPS and, occasionally, lifejackets. Respondents were aware of the risks, believing that engaging with a smuggler increased the likelihood of arriving at their destination safely, or in the case of Libya being able to leave safely.

It should be reiterated that the absence of opportunities to migrate safely and legally across borders is a significant factor driving the use of smugglers to facilitate the journey. One in ten of our respondents who travelled the Eastern Mediterranean route told us that before leaving home they had tried but failed to identify an alternative way to migrate legally through applying

for a visa, a UN resettlement programme or family reunification. More had considered applying for a visa but decided an attempt would likely be unsuccessful, or would be impossible. At the time the research was conducted there were no functioning embassies or consulates in Syria or Yemen from which these respondents could seek a visa in order to travel legally to a place of safety; respondents would have had to travel to Amman or Beirut, largely impossible due to border closures by the Jordan and Lebanese governments[60].

"I didn't try to apply for visa. There are no embassies in Raqqa, and we were not allowed to go to the areas controlled by the regime. Also, women were not allowed outside their house. And I was avoiding exiting the house because I was scared. In Turkey they told me that it was hard to get a visa from the embassies there."
(Syrian Kurdish man, travelling with his wife, two children aged 6 and 8 and his mother)

"I didn't try to apply for visa. Nobody gets a visa. I wish we could pay the embassy instead of the smuggler in order to come here."
(Syrian man aged 20)

Respondents from other countries – those who entered Europe via the Central as well as the Eastern Mediterranean route – are routinely refused visas by the governments of countries to which they apply, or are unable to apply for a visa due to high costs and/or a lack of social connections.

"We never thought about asking for a visa because it was impossible. We had to have thousands of Euros deposited in a bank. They only give them to children of the rich, rolling in money. Or to someone who was invited to Europe by a family member who guarantees you. If you're nobody's child you don't have a chance. Even an appointment with the agency which in turn can get you an appointment with the consulate costs more than 200 euros, which is 400 dinars, or a good salary."
(Tunisian woman aged 23)

Finding a 'good' smuggler

In addition to challenging assumptions about why refugees and migrants might need to engage the services of a smuggler, the findings of our research also bring into question the idea that all smugglers are part of vast criminal networks. This idea dominates much of current political discussion and policy analysis. Instead our research has found that many smugglers are embedded within migrant social networks and that there are significant differences between them, both in terms of the different types of functions they provide, as well as the degree to which they exploit their 'clients'[61].

By far the majority of people across both the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes located smugglers through friends, family members and extended social

[60] In the UK, for example, the refusal rate for Syrians stood at 58% in 2015 compared with 32% before the conflict began. Home Office figures show that in 2010 the Government received 8,028 visa requests from Syrian passport-holders to come to the UK, of which 5,522 were granted. But last year, despite receiving 7,737 visa requests from Syrians, the number of applications granted dropped to just 3,283 See https://www.freemovement.org.uk/refusal-rate-for-syrian-visa-applications-increases-yet-further/

[61] See for example Kyle, D. and Koslowski, R. (eds) *Global Human Smuggling: Comparative Perspectives* (Second Edition), Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.

networks, either at home or en route[62]. Notably this was the case for more than half of those interviewed in Greece, two of whom even admitted even working for smugglers as intermediaries in order to secure free travel or to earn money in order to pay for their trip across the Mediterranean. Respondents were aware that they were placing their lives – and sometimes those of their children – in the hands of their smuggler and that their survival depended in part on finding a 'good' smuggler, most commonly defined as one who was able to get them to their intended destination safely. Conversely the risks were heightened for those who did not know their smugglers and who were not connected to their communities[63]. Respondents therefore placed particular value on recommendations for smugglers from those within their social networks who had successfully – and safely – reached Europe. With limited available information about smugglers, these recommendations acted as a proxy for trustworthiness. Contrary to suggestions in the media that refugees and migrants predominantly located smugglers via Facebook or WhatsApp, just five of those interviewed in Greece told us that this is how they located a smuggler, and none on the Central Mediterranean route. The trustworthiness of information therefore appears to be as important as its availability.

> **"I already saved the phone numbers of three smugglers in Izmir since I was in Syria. I had found them through friends and relatives who had already done the journey earlier. It's easy to find them from mouth to mouth."**
> *(Syrian man travelling with his wife and two children)*

> **"If you want to travel [across the sea] you call a friend who has been before and they say who to go to. I made the journey with Africans, Mali, Niger. Libyans they organised the camp and the journey."**
> *(Ghanaian man aged 37)*

Those who were not able to find a personal recommendation for a 'trusted' smuggler instead sought them out in the various cities through which they passed (see Section 2). Respondents predominantly engaged with smugglers who came from the same ethnicity and / or nationality. For instance, Syrian Kurds found smugglers in Turkey from within the Syrian or Turkish Kurdish community, Afghans approached other Afghans in the Zeytinburnu neighbourhood of Istanbul, Iraqis found smugglers from amongst the Iraqi community in the Aksaray neighbourhood of Istanbul.

Smugglers were easy to find in these places, in cafes and restaurants, internet cafes, at the airport, public squares, restaurants or even entering hotels or arriving coaches to generate new business. On arrival in a city, and faced with large numbers of smugglers selling journeys, interviewees often asked for advice as to their trustworthiness from acquaintances they knew already or had met en route. For example, all except one of the Eritreans interviewed in Greece organised their journeys through their first smuggler whom they had met in Khartoum, often being met by a collaborator in

[62] Terms used by our respondents to refer to smugglers included 'pushers' or 'connection men', 'dellalo' (Eritreans in Tigrinya), 'Semseherti' (in Arabic), or a 'boga' (in Nigeria). Regardless of the term and the services provided, our respondents, where they referred to the gender of their smuggler(s) overwhelmingly referred to men.
[63] See also Sanchez, G. (2014) *Human Smuggling and Border Crossings.* Oxon: Routledge

Istanbul who arranged the onward journey to Izmir and Greece. On the Central Mediterranean route these people were described as 'connection men'.

> **"I paid 130 cefa for the journey to Sabha and from Sabha to Tripoli was 700 dinars … when I arrived in Agadez I met the connection man at the bus station, then stayed in the bus station … there is always a connection man in the station asking who wants to go to Libya."**
> *(Ghanaian man in his 30s)*

> **"I took a coach right away and went to Izmir, 16 hour journey. I got off the coach. There were smugglers even in front of the coach when we got off. This is where I started meeting smugglers."**
> *(Syrian man aged 19)*

Many others were also involved in facilitating our respondents' journeys. Those who had travelled through Istanbul and Izmir referred to the shops and offices in which they left their fees for smugglers, and to the shops which sold them lifejackets[64]. Even more broadly, transportation companies profited from transporting refugees and migrants from Istanbul to the coast, and hotels and restaurants profited openly from hosting and taking money from those planning to cross the Aegean[65]. Afghans who got lost in the Iranian mountains referred to shepherds who guided them to safety for a fee. Along the Central Mediterranean route, truck owners, employers, home-owners and even sheep farmers in Agadez transported and hosted irregular migrants along the way.

Our respondents also reported paying (or smugglers paying on their behalf) State officials, the military, law enforcement, and border guards in order to facilitate their journeys[66]. This was especially apparent in Libya where, as we have already noted, it was often unclear to our respondents who was precisely involved in organising smuggling, from militia men to the police and members of the Libyan army. Several respondents interviewed in Italy told us that members of the Libyan army imprisoned people and released them to the smugglers for a fee. A few respondents interviewed in Greece told us that the police had taken bribes from the drivers of the coaches which take people from Istanbul to the coast.

> **"I made five failed attempts to cross to Greece. I succeeded in my sixth one. We were arrested at the beach four times. I paid the police four times, 25 dollars each time, in order not to take me to the camp. The fifth time we were arrested on our way to the coast, and we were sent back to Istanbul. I wasn't detained in a camp. My sixth attempt was two days ago. My group left Istanbul by vans, taxis and cars. We headed to Izmir, 10 hour long journey. The police stopped us three times. The driver bribed them all three times."**
> *(Syrian man travelling with 15 year old brother)*

[64] Respondents commonly paid US$50 commission to these small businesses and received a password, which they could call and give on arrival in Greece. This would then release the money to the smugglers.
[65] See Gammeltoft-Hansen, T. and Nyberg-Sorensen, N. (eds) (2013) *The Migration Industry and the Commercialisation of International Migration*, Routledge
[66] For example, in Libya, there had been earlier allegations that Gadaffi had been involved into coercing people into travelling.

Smugglers, violence and trafficking

According to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Supress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and children, 'trafficking in persons' is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion (including abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of the power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits) to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation"[67]. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs. Trafficking therefore differs from smuggling (on paper at least) in terms of the *purpose* of the facilitation: it involves not just the facilitation of the journey but also some kind of servitude or debt bondage. Our research explores this further.

We found that along the Eastern Mediterranean route, far from being coerced into paying their smugglers, respondents who travelled to Greece often knew well in advance how much they would have to pay for the different services offered by smugglers. Several reported bargaining with smugglers over the prices according to the size and type of the boat used to cross the Mediterranean, how many people would be on the boat, whether it would be daytime or night-time at the time of embarkation, and which nationalities would travel. Two Syrians even claimed their money back from smugglers after an unsuccessful attempt at crossing the Aegean. Respondents commonly paid the money upon her/ his safe arrival at the intended destination.

> **"I spent 10 days in Izmir. I was gathering information. I was sleeping in the squares. I couldn't afford a hotel room. At some point I heard that the boat driver travels for free. I knew straight away that this was my chance.**
> **I had heard that the Iraqi smugglers charge US$1,200 – US$1,300 per person and that the Syrians charge US$1,000 – US$1,100 per person. I met a smuggler in Basmane and told him that I know how to drive a boat and we made a deal like that, free of charge."**
> *(Syrian man travelling alone)*

This did not mean that respondents who travelled through Turkey to Greece did not experience violence or abuse perpetrated by the smugglers on their journey, but this violence and abuse does not by, in and of itself, constitute trafficking.

Whilst a small number of respondents took care to mention that their smugglers had been kind to them, interviewees mostly regarded smugglers as a necessity – and sometimes a violent and unpleasant one at that. It is important to also note that smugglers were not always the most frequently referred to perpetrators of violence en route with violence at the hands of State officials and 'bandits' more frequently referred to. Afghans referred to the violence of smugglers whilst crossing the mountains in between Iran and Turkey, and before travelling onto Ankara or Istanbul. Smugglers reportedly beat those who struggled to keep up, or who made noise which

[67] See https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-international-legislation-united-nations/united-nations-protocol-prevent_en

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threatened to bring them to the attention of Iranian solders. Most commonly respondents referred to bad experiences in which they had been, in effect, held prisoner in houses on arrival in Van (Turkey) or surrounding small villages, such as Dogubayazit. This was usually until the money had been released to the smuggler back in Iran and meant that Afghan respondents were often held for several days.

"In Dogubayazit the smugglers were guarding us with guns. They were afraid that we will leave. In this border, smugglers also kidnap Afghans and call their families and ask for ransom."
(Afghan Hazara man travelling with three young cousins)

Respondents also commonly reported violence from the smugglers who took them to the beaches in Turkey. The violence took the form of pushing people onto boats if they were scared or showed unwillingness to board and beating people to inflate boats, or to board, more quickly. Violence is also employed as a strategy by smugglers for managing the chaos of numbers on the beaches.

"The smuggler wanted to put in the boat more than 50 people. I told the smugglers that we are planning to travel like that. They tried to beat me. They had knives. They threatened to kill me. So eventually we agreed for 41 people in the boat plus 12 children."
(Syrian man travelling with wife and child)

Along the Central Mediterranean route, respondents reported similar types of violence being perpetrated by smugglers. This was especially evident among those who engaged smugglers to organise their onward travel from Agadez into Libya, and those who facilitated travel out of Libya to Italy.

> **"One day armed men came to the building and kidnapped him, "they pushed and told us to go with them or they would shoot us … they put me on a boat, I did not want to but they pushed me on the boat."**
> *(Malian man in his 30s, travelling alone)*

It is important to note that whilst we found far more examples of our respondents being smuggled than trafficked (according to the Convention definitions), in Libya in particular the dividing lines between those who are 'smugglers', 'traffickers', State officials, militias, employers and local residents, were not clear to our respondents. Some smugglers provided safe passage; others were exploitative and violent en route[68]. However some of the experiences described by respondents travelling along the Central Mediterranean route fell more clearly into the category of human trafficking. For instance, some of our respondents were forced to work in Libya by their smugglers for no pay or were even sold on to others. The former constitutes trafficking for forced labour, and in this case the individuals involved could be defined as 'traffickers'[69]. This is perhaps unsurprising as forced labour conditions are endemic in Libya, and smuggling is clearly rooted in providing a cheap or even free labour force for employers in the country[70].

> **"I had my aunt send me the money and I paid a Sudanese trafficker. There were 50 of us in a jeep who crossed the desert and we got to Sabha. Then they arrested us and took us to a prison where we spent two weeks. We were sold as slaves to a Libyan man who brought us to work in a marble quarry. I drove a forklift to move the stones. They did not pay us. I worked there two months. We revolted and were beaten."**
> *(Malian man aged 21)*

Along the Central Mediterranean route, there were also fewer incidences of bargaining over fees paid to smugglers than we heard about on the Eastern Mediterranean route. Many of our interviewees all the way along the different routes to Greece, paid their money to smugglers on arrival at their destination (whether in Greece or at stops en route), which provided an incentive to smugglers to get them to their destination, at least alive. Few who travelled to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route had that option. Only Eritreans who departed from Khartoum to Italy paid (partly) on arrival[71]. For those from West Africa, the journey across the desert and the sea was usually paid upfront.

Finally, we identified what were regarded by stakeholders as very clear examples of trafficking involving Nigerian

[68] See also Koser, K. (2008) 'Why migrant smuggling pays', *International Migration* 46(2), 3-26
[69] See International Labour Organisation (ILO) at http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_203832/lang--en/index.htm
[70] See, for example, http://igad.int/attachments/1284_ISSP%20Sahan%20HST%20Report%20%2018ii2016%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf
[71] This meant that there was a pre-agreed price, although this could become more expensive if a ransom was needed to be paid to be freed from prison or a kidnapping situation.

women who had been brought to Italy to work in the sex industry. It is clear that these women had experienced violence and sexual exploitation, but it is less clear whether they had been 'trafficked' or were using sex work as part of their migration 'strategy'. Whilst male refugees and migrants were able to work – even if in terrible conditions – on construction sites, in car-washing and in agriculture in order to earn enough to pay a smuggler to leave Libya, for many women the only possibility was to pay for their journey with their bodies. For instance, one woman living and working in Tripoli had wanted to leave when the conflict worsened and therefore approached someone she believed to be a smuggler. The man kept her in a room for several weeks in order to that she could 'pay' for her journey. In other words, the level of consent was not always clear. Our respondents were clearly deeply affected by their experiences.

Payments to smugglers

Along the Eastern Mediterranean route, the total amounts paid by respondents to smugglers from the country of origin to Greece were highest for Eritreans, with costs potentially as much as US$13,500. Other nationalities reported paying lower but nonetheless substantial amounts with Afghans paying smugglers up to a total of US$4,000 to travel from Afghanistan to Greece. Payments were made at the different legs of the journey. Prices increased according to how much the bribes which needed to be paid to border guards or to militias were. The prices of smuggling services to Greece from Turkey were relatively consistent across all nationalities, with only the Eritreans paying significantly more (a mode of US$1,500 compared with a mode of US$1,000 for the other nationalities). Along the Central Mediterranean route, the prices paid to smugglers varied significantly. In Libya some people said that they did not pay for their journey across the Mediterranean because they had managed to board a boat without paying or claimed that someone else had paid on their behalf, or because they had no money but all of their belongings were taken off them prior to boarding, or because they had been in (forced) labour with someone who then took them to the boat and organised their journey. Overall, the fees paid to smugglers were significantly more than if our respondents had travelled through a regular route with a passport and visa, and had been able to take buses, planes or other form of regular transportation along the way.

Implications for EU migration policy

Key points

The failure of EU policies to respond effectively to the increased movement of people across the Mediterranean in 2015 is due in part to **flawed assumptions about the reasons why people move, the factors that shape their longer-term migration trajectories and their journeys to Europe.** These assumptions became deeply politicised over the course of 2015.

There is a need for **nuanced, tailored and targeted policy responses** which reflect the diverse, stratified and increasingly protracted and fragmented movements of people. We identify five key challenges for policymakers.

ADDRESSING THE DRIVERS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MIGRATION

Although there is growing awareness of the need to pay attention to the **drivers of forced migration,** including the need for co-ordination in the fields of foreign policy, development and trade, the focus at the EU level remains very firmly on border controls and on measures to deter people from moving to Europe.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO PROTECTION

There is a complex relationship between forced and economic drivers of migration to Europe. Everyone has a right to seek asylum. This means **providing access to protection** and recognising that people's reasons for leaving their counties of origin and travelling to Europe are complex. **Protection needs cannot be determined by nationality alone.**

REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR SMUGGLERS

The closure of borders has increased the demand for, and use of, smugglers who have become the only option for those unable to leave their countries or enter countries in which protection might potentially be available to them. It has also led to a **significant increase in deaths as people** attempt to cross the Mediterranean. **The number of people dying on the crossing to Greece has more than doubled in 2016.**

There is an urgent need to significantly expand **safe and legal routes for protection.**

IMPROVING RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

The EU has focused almost exclusively on policies designed to contain refugees and migrants prior to their arrival on European shores, at the expense of addressing the reception and protection needs of those arriving from situations of conflict, persecution and human rights abuse. There has also been a **failure at the national and EU levels to address the longer-term integration needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe.**

MOVING BEYOND THE POLITICS OF CONTAINMENT

During the course of 2015 the EU has intensified pressure on other countries to stem the flow and assume responsibility for refugees and migrants from neighbouring countries so they do not travel onward to Europe. This includes an agreement with Turkey and increasing efforts to reach similar agreements with governments in Libya, Sudan, Niger, Eritrea and others.

Policy makers need to engage with the issue of **development as an important policy objective in its own right rather than primarily as a mechanism for preventing migration to Europe.** And they need to be aware that the politics of containment – reflected in interdiction, interception and off-shore processing – have **'ripple effects'** which undermine the principles of international protection globally.

We began this report by suggesting that the Mediterranean 'migration crisis' of 2015 was presented by politicians, policy makers and the media as a single coherent flow that came from 'from nowhere' and was primarily the result of a sudden and unexpected increase in people pressing against the continent's southern border. But the arrival of large numbers of refugees and migrants was neither new nor unexpected. Arrivals in Italy were actually higher in 2014 than in 2015 and the arrival of nearly 850,000 people in Greece can be attributed in significant part to escalating conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, which have displaced millions of people over the past six years. The humanitarian crisis that unfolded on the borders of the European Union – and is now increasingly unfolding inside it – was not the result of a natural or unforeseen disaster. Rather it was, in large part, a policy driven crisis sustained by the failure of the EU to put in place adequate and humane policies to deal with this unprecedented but also foreseeable movement of people[72].

The failure of EU policies to respond effectively to the increased movement of people across the Mediterranean in 2015 was, in no small part, a problem of political differences and tensions within and between EU Member States[73]. But EU policy failures also reflect flawed assumptions about the reasons why people move, the factors that shape their longer-term migration trajectories and their journeys to Europe. These assumptions became deeply politicised over the course of 2015, employed by a series of different actors to justify, legitimate and reinforce policies which, whilst largely ineffective in addressing the issues that had led to the increased arrival of refugees and migrants, were intended to reassure the public that the situation was 'under control'.

The EU policy context shifted constantly during 2015 whilst this research was being undertaken and has changed dramatically in the months since the fieldwork was completed. Faced with a growing number of people seeking protection in Europe, EU institutions adopted a number of plans and policies. These included a new *European Agenda on Migration,* putting forward immediate responses and longer-term policy changes for the so-called emergency situation' at its borders[74], two implementation packages (May and September 2015) and numerous Ministerial meetings and emergency summits aimed at adopting some of the agenda items on migration and other key measures.

In addition there have been a number of diplomatic initiatives involving EU Member States and other countries. The first was the Valletta Conference on Migration held in November 2015 which aimed was primarily at addressing the 'root causes' of migration in departure countries, tackling the smuggling and trafficking of migrants and increasing cooperation on return and readmission. The second, and perhaps more well-documented initiative, was the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan[75]. In exchange for a European commitment

[72] See also MSF (2016) *Obstacle Course to Europe: A Policy-Made Humanitarian Crisis at EU Borders,* https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/2016_01_msf_obstacle_course_to_europe_-_final_-_low_res.pdf

[73] Crawley, H. (2016) 'Crisis or opportunity? How European countries use refugees for political gain', *The Conversation* http://www.medmig.info/crisis-or-opportunity-how-european-countries-use-refugees-for-political-gain/; Crawley, H. (2016) 'Managing the unmanageable? Understanding Europe's response to the migration 'crisis'', *Human Geography* 9(2), 12-23, https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=hg-252-crawley.pdf&site=2 See also Parkes, R. (2015) 'European Union and the Geopolitics of Migration' *Ulpaper* No.1, Swedish Institute of International Affairs http://www.ui.se/eng/upl/files/111585.pdf for a more detailed historical perspective

[74] See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index_en.htm

[75] See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_en.htm

to a €3 billion fund to address the humanitarian situation in Turkey (which was subsequently increased to €6 billion), the possibility of visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens and the fast-tracking of EU membership status, Turkey agreed to increase its efforts to stem the flow of refugees and migrants across its territory to Europe and cooperate on the re-admission of irregular migrants.

While some new and positive measures have been put forward by the EU and its Member States, the EU's response to date has been largely insufficient and driven by a border-control agenda. This has significantly reduced the number of people arriving in Europe but it has done nothing to address the causes of migration to Europe, or the protection and integration needs of those who are already here and who continue to arrive through the Central Mediterranean route.

With the attention of Greek and EU leaders focused firmly on the implementation of the recently agreed EU-Turkey deal, the plight of more than 60,000 left stranded in Greece in overcrowded and poor conditions, and with little prospect of accessing international protection or family reunification, is in danger of being forgotten[76]. A year into the 'crisis', both the reception infrastructure and the asylum system in Greece continue to fail to adapt to the needs of the refugees and migrants[77]. This is partly a Greek failure but it is also a failure of the EU. The refugee relocation scheme from Greece, explicitly described as an act of European solidarity and responsibility sharing by the European Commission[78], has relocated just 4,814 (7.25%) of the 66,400 people originally agreed[79].

Meanwhile the drivers of migration to Europe are not going away. At the time of writing, Syria remains mired in conflict, with French President Francois Hollande describing Syrian and Russian bombing of rebel-held areas of Aleppo as a war crime[80]. The situation in Yemen, with daily bombs falling from the US-led Saudi Coalition, has been described as 'catastrophic'[81]. The assault on Mosul (Iraq) which began in mid-October 2016 is expected to displace 1.5 million people, many of whom are likely to cross the border into Eastern Turkey just a few hours away[82]. In Afghanistan, Kabul is seeing the emergence of suicide bombers once more. Ethiopia, recently the recipient of a US$200m concessional loan from the European Investment Bank to create jobs for its refugees[83], has just declared a state of emergency[84], Nigerian forces continue to fight Boko Haram, and human rights abuses persist in Eritrea.

And while the numbers may have gone down, for the moment at least, the politics of the 'crisis' have not gone away but arguably have become even more potent. The UK referendum vote to leave the EU, Hungary's referendum decision to refuse to accept refugees under the relocation scheme and ongoing pressures on Merkel to 'close the door' are just a few of the most obvious examples.

Our research provides new empirical insights into the dynamics of migration into Europe. The data was

[76] Amnesty International (2016) *Trapped in Greece: An Avoidable Refugee Crisis,* https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/3778/2016/en/
[77] MSF (2016) fn. 72
[78] See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_eu_solidarity_a_refugee_relocation_system_en.pdf
[79] Figures correct as at 18th October 2016 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf
[80] https://www.theguardian.com/world/francois-hollande
[81] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/15/us-bombed-yemen-middle-east-conflict
[82] https://cruxnow.com/cns/2016/08/04/assault-isis-mosul-expected-displace-1-5-million/
[83] http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2016/2016-212-european-investment-bank-president-pledges-support-for-jobs-compact-in-ethiopia-tackling-migration-and-refugee-challenge.htm
[84] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/21/1500-people-arrested-in-ethiopia-in-two-week-state-of-emergency

collected at a very particular moment in time when the movement of people across the Mediterranean was at its highest but it shines a light on the differences between routes, groups and the experiences of people on the move. In general, our analysis suggests that due to the enormous diversity of geographies, people, drivers and motives any broad brush approach will not be sufficient. There is a need for nuanced, tailored and targeted policy responses which reflect the diverse, stratified and increasingly protracted and fragmented movements of people. We conclude this report with a discussion of five key challenges for policymakers.

1. ADDRESSING THE DRIVERS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MIGRATION

Findings

This report has presented the findings of our research drawn based on the experiences and voices of the 500 women and men we interviewed. The richness of this material provides new insights into the dynamics of migration to Europe and the 'back stories' that led individuals and families to take the decision to cross the Mediterranean.

It is clear from the findings of our research that conflict in the countries neighbouring Europe, and beyond, was a major factor contributing to the significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in 2015. Our research has also identified important differences in the drivers of migration between the initial decision to leave the home country and subsequent decisions to move on from one or more other countries. Some of those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 had a relatively clear and consistent objective in mind from the point at which they departed their home country and their migration to Europe can therefore be regarded as a single journey with various stops or interruptions. This was particularly the case for the Syrians and Iraqis that participated in the research. But our research has also found that many of those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 had not travelled directly from their countries of origin but rather had often left months or even years beforehand. Some had stopped for short periods of time in order to rest, settle, work, obtain resources or connect with onward transport. Others had stayed in different countries outside Europe for longer periods of time in the hope of securing work and rebuilding a life.

It is also clear from our research that many of those who leave situations of conflict find themselves in very difficult economic circumstances in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran and elsewhere as a result of limited rights, exploitation by employers and discrimination in the labour market (and beyond). These circumstances propel them onwards. A third (34%) of respondents on the Eastern Mediterranean route had moved on for what might typically be understood as economic reasons: they were running out of money, found it impossible to secure employment or were working long hours for very little pay. With the passage of time, and in the absence

of a resolution to the conflicts in their home countries, respondents told us that they had grown increasingly concerned about the impacts on their families, and especially their children, many of whom had been out of schools for many years or had health issues. The arrival of significant numbers of people in Greece in 2015 therefore raises important questions about access to rights and the quality of living conditions for refugees and migrants living in countries such as Turkey, a significant proportion of whom decided to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. For those who are living in Libya meanwhile, violence and exploitation were key drivers of onward movement and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Implications

There are two main policy implications arising from the findings of our research.

Firstly, it is clear that the pressures that drive people to leave their homes and, ultimately, their countries are likely to persist. More than 12 million people were displaced around the world in 2015 along and the situation has not improved in 2016. Across the globe, hundreds of thousands of people continue to be displaced from their homes every day. Indeed some conflicts, most notably in Syria, Yemen and now Iraq, have intensified. There has been growing awareness within the EU of the need to pay attention to the drivers of forced migration, including the need for co-ordination in the fields of foreign policy, development and trade, yet the focus at the EU level has been very firmly on border controls and on preventing people from travelling to Europe. Addressing the drivers of migration requires the involvement of a whole range of EU policies concerned with human rights, humanitarian action, foreign affairs, international co-operation, development assistance, trade policy and investment, are involved. Although there has been recognition of this at the level of the European Commission for some time, in practice such an approach to addressing has proved difficult to implement[85].

Secondly, far greater attention need to be paid to conditions in the countries to which refugees and migrants have moved before making a decision to come to Europe. Increased migration to Europe in 2015 was not only a response to increased conflict and human rights abuse but also the lack of sufficient reception conditions in the countries neighbouring the EU (most notably, Turkey and Libya but also further afield in Lebanon, Jordan and Iran). The international community's response to the situation in these countries has been wholly inadequate. Funding for the Syria Regional Refugee Response is only half what is required and high-profile pledges of financial support by key donor countries have only been partially delivered[86]. Emergency programmes supporting refugees in recipient countries have been cut as a result. UNHCR estimates that 86% of Syrian refugees in Jordan and 70% in Lebanon are living below the poverty line[87].

[85] Castles, S., Loughna, S. and Crawley, H. (2003) *States of Conflict: The Causes of Forced Migration to the EU,* London: IPPR
[86] See https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=special-syriancrisis
[87] Metcalfe-Hough, V. (2016) 'The migration crisis? Facts, challenges and possible solutions', *ODI Brief* https://www.odi.org/publications/9993-migration-migrants-eu-europe-syria-refugees-borders-asylum

2. ACCESS TO PROTECTION

Findings

Whilst the vast majority of those arriving in Greece during 2015 came from countries in which there was well-documented conflict, violence and human rights abuse, it is impossible to fully appreciate the drivers of migration during this period without examining the ways in which forced and economic factors come together to shape the experiences of those on the move. This is particularly clear in the context of Syria where protracted conflict has undermined the ability to earn a livelihood and feed a family by killing primary breadwinners, destroying businesses and making it impossible to travel to work. The conflict has also devastated the economic infrastructure of the country, increasing the prices of basic goods and commodities including food and oil. Price increases have been exacerbated by internal displacement and the movement of large numbers of people to some of the safer cities. Many respondents told us that they had taken the decision to move for economic reasons but that it was conflict that had created their economic insecurity.

In addition, some people who did not have specific protection claims on leaving their home country subsequently became in need of protection because of the exploitation, violence and kidnapping they suffered during their journeys. This is most certainly the case in Libya where many of our respondents spent long periods of time, either earning money or waiting for an opportunity to escape the situation in which they had found themselves. As one of our respondents put it, "there is no way back, the desert is one way." For him and others the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean was seen as being safer than the alternatives.

Implications

The international community as a whole has a role to play in addressing global migration challenges and refugee crises, including the crisis currently affecting the EU. However, the EU, its institutions, and its Member States have specific legal obligations to individuals on its territory and at its land and sea borders. EU governments are legally obligated to treat all of those who arrive in accordance with international law, including with regard to the right to seek asylum. This right is enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and given practical effect in various EU laws and regulations. This obligation trumps other responsibilities including those related to the security of external borders.

In this context the policy implications of our research are two-fold.

Firstly, in the most immediate and practical terms, providing access to protection for refugees and migrants arriving in Europe through irregular channels means ensuring that EU search and rescue operations at sea are robust and cover the widest geographic area possible; ensuring that reception facilities are adequate for the volume and diversity of arrivals; and ensuring swift and fair processing of asylum claims and appropriate action once status has been determined.

Secondly, it means recognising that far from being straight forward, people's reasons for leaving their counties of origin and travelling to Europe are often multifaceted and cannot be determined by nationality alone. The complex nature of contemporary global migration patterns and drivers is presenting huge challenges to existing international, regional and national legal and policy frameworks[88]. People's individual stories, their vulnerabilities and possible persecution cannot be understood without a proper assessment of their unique situation[89]. Notwithstanding specific legal protections for refugees, the current use of simplistic categories of 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration creates a two-tiered system of protection and assistance in which the rights and needs of those not qualifying as 'refugees' under the legal definition are effectively disregarded[90].

3. REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR SMUGGLERS

The overall direction of EU policy in relation to smuggling has been through the lens of 'criminal activities' and 'smuggling business models'[91]. In April 2015, the EU Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos announced that Europe was 'at war' with smugglers and signalled the start of a new concerted effort on the part of the EU to 'break the smugglers business model'[92]. This was quickly followed by a renewed focus on tightening border controls through the use of FRONTEX patrols in the Mediterranean, the closure of borders and the construction of fences to prevent the irregular onward migration of those who enter Europe. Almost one year later EU Council President Tusk claimed that sending what he described as 'illegal refugees and migrants' back from Europe would similarly 'break the smugglers business model'[93].

In practice both of these assertions have proven wrong. The evidence from our research suggests that smuggling is driven, rather than broken, by EU policy. Increased border controls may have reduced the number of people arriving by sea, on the Eastern Mediterranean route at least, but they have also resulted in an increase in clandestine efforts to reach Europe, in turn exposing vulnerable migrants to even greater physical and other risks[94]. There are a number of reasons why.

Firstly, the closure of borders seems likely to have significantly increased the demand for, and use of, smugglers who have become the only option for those unable to leave their countries or enter countries in which protection might potentially be available to them. All of our respondents engaged the services of a smuggler for at least one stage of their journey to Greece or Italy. Smugglers performed two main functions for our respondents: they helped respondents escape danger, conflict or persecution at home or en route and they enabled them to bypass controlled borders where these were a barrier to reaching safety, protection and

[88] Zetter, R. (2015) *Protection in Crisis: Forced Migration and Protection in a Global Era.* Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/protection-crisis-forced-migration-and-protection-global-era
[89] MSF (2016), fn.72
[90] Metcalfe-Hough, V. (2016) fn.87
[91] https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/experts-meet-europol-tackle-migrant-smuggling-organised-crime-through-financial-investigatio See also, UNODC 2011; 2016, Europol 2016.
[92] See http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-04-23/local-news/Europe-is-already-at-war-against-smugglers-Commissioner-for-Migration-Dimitris-Avramopoulos-6736134333
[93] See http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/refugee-crisis-donald-tusk-urges-breaking-smugglers-business-model-1547619
[94] Cosgrave, J., Hargrave, H., Foresti, M. and Massa, I (2016) *Europe's Refugees and Migrants: Hidden Flows, Tightened Borders and Spiralling Costs,* ODI Report https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10887.pdf

livelihoods. For everyone we spoke to smugglers were a necessity. One in ten of our respondents who travelled to Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route told us that before leaving home they had tried but failed to identify an alternative way to migrate legally, through applying for a visa, a UN resettlement programme or family reunification.

Secondly, the closure of borders during 2015 meant that became increasingly dangerous to cross the Mediterranean[95]. Smugglers responded to increased controls by looking for alternative routes or sent boats on to the water at night when they were less likely to be detected, and also to be rescued. In a previous Research Brief we reported on the increased death rates seen in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes over the course of 2014 and 2015[96]. Although the vast majority of the arrivals to Europe by sea during 2015 were through the Eastern Mediterranean to Greece, by far the greatest number of deaths was recorded in the Central Mediterranean. Whilst one person crossing to Greece died for every 1,049 people who safely arrived, the corresponding rate on the Central Mediterranean route there was one death for every 53 arrivals. According to IOM, 3,930 people were dead or missing as of 27th October 2016, a figure which is higher than the total for 2015. The rates of death had increased to 1 in 46 people among those crossing via the Central Mediterranean route and arriving safely and to 1 death in every 409 arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean route. In other words the death rate for the short distance from Turkey to Greece has more than doubled[97].

Implications

The main policy implication of our findings is the need to significantly increase access to safe and legal routes for protection. This includes significantly expanding current resettlement programmes, increasing humanitarian visas or establishing temporary international protection for those with a *prima facie* case for refugee status and increasing opportunities for family reunification. This would reduce the need for refugees and migrants to resort to dangerous irregular channels. The way to reduce the use of smugglers is not to close more borders or build more fences but by creating alternative entry routes and addressing the drivers of irregular migration[98].

Many of the EU policies that have been debated during 2015 and 2016 acknowledge the need to open up safe and legal routes for protection but to date have met with limited success[99].

The main policy priority should be in relation to resettlement. UNHCR has estimated that in 2015, globally, 960,000 people were in need of resettlement, including 316,000 in the Middle East and 279,000 in Africa. In July 2015 the EU pledged to provide places for 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection[100]. This pledge is not only insufficient it has not been delivered. As of 13th July 2016 just 8,268 people had been resettled under the scheme, mainly from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. A further 802 Syrian refugees had also been resettled from Turkey under

[95] Jones, R. (2016) *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, London: Verso Books

[96] McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016) 'Boat migration across the Central Mediterranean: drivers, experiences and responses', *MEDMIG Research Brief* No.3 http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-03-Boat-migration-across-the-Central-Mediterranean.pdf

[97] 157,049 had safely crossed via the Central Mediterranean route but 3,435 were recorded as dead or missing. A total of 169,524 had crossed via the Eastern Mediterranean route with 415 dead or missing. Data available from IOM's Missing Migrants Project, http://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean-update-28-october-2016 (figures correct as of 28th October 2016)

[98] OECD (2015) 'Can we put an end to human smuggling?', *Migration Policy Debates* No. 9 (December), www.oecd.org/migration

[99] In May 2015 the European Commission presented a comprehensive European Agenda on Migration which recognised the need to avoid those fleeing conflict and in need of protection having to resort to smugglers. See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-

[100] Figures correct as of 13th July 2016. See European Commission (2016) *Fifth Report on Relocation and Resettlement* available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/fifth_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf

the EU-Turkey agreement[101] and 2,682 had been resettled to the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme[102]. Whilst the European Commission is committed, in principle, to significantly increasing the scale of resettlement through establishing a common EU Resettlement Framework[103], the extent to which this policy objective can be delivered in the current political context is questionable.

In addition to resettlement, the OECD has identified what it describes as a number of 'alternative pathways' for refugees and migrants[104]. 'Alternative pathways' are migration channels not necessarily designed for refugees, but which can be used by refugees, in order to avoid using costly and often dangerous routes through the asylum channels. They can also be used by other migrants. These pathways include labour, international study and family migration, as well as humanitarian visas.

As was noted in our earlier Research Brief on the Eastern Mediterranean route, the presence of family members or other social contacts (friends, acquaintances) was the most important factor for nearly two thirds (59%) of those who mentioned that they had an intended destination in Europe[105]. Whilst there are issues with some of the ways in which cases for family reunification as it currently operates (including, for example, the narrow definition of 'a family' and the fact that an application cannot be made until an asylum seeker is recognised as a refugee), family reunification provides a relatively straightforward mechanism for creating opportunities for families to be reunited without risking the dangerous and costly journey across the Mediterranean.

Humanitarian visas are also an underutilized tool for helping eligible individuals reach the EU without risking their lives or resorting to smugglers. These limited-term visas can be issued in embassies and consulates to individuals seeking to apply for asylum and to other individuals on humanitarian grounds. Issued in conjunction with visas for educational and employment opportunities, they could considerably increase the possibilities for refugees and migrants to enter the EU on a temporary basis at least. The EU needs to think more creatively about how to facilitate migration for the purpose of work through regular channels including through the creation of temporary work permits.

The provision of more safe and legal channels in order that refugees and migrants can reach the EU without having to risk their lives or resort to smugglers could reduce the scale of death in the Mediterranean. The development of such channels need not amount to an open door policy: those arriving can be screened, have their protection needs assessed, and their entitlement to remain in the European Union determined based on their international protection needs and any human rights imperatives. Those found, after a fair procedure, not to have such a basis to remain could be removed[106].

[101] The EU-Turkey Statement of 18th March 2016 provides that for every Syrian being returned from Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. Priority is given to refugees who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly.
[102] 2,682 people were granted humanitarian protection under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the year end June 2016 (2,898 since the scheme began in January 2014). See https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/august2016
[103] See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2434_en.htm
[104] OECD (2016) 'Are there alternative pathways for refugees?', *Migration Policy Debates* No. 12 (September), www.oecd.org/migration
[105] Crawley, H., Duvell, F., Jones, K. and Skleparis, D. (2016) 'Understanding the dynamics of migration to Greece and the EU: drivers, decisions and destinations', *MEDMIG Research Brief* No.2 http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-02-Understanding-the-dynamics-of-migration-to-Greece-and-the-EU.pdf
[106] See also Human Rights Watch (2015) *Europe's Refugee Crisis: An Agenda for Action,* https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/16/europes-refugee-crisis/agenda-action

4. DELIVERING RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

Findings

Despite attempts by the EU at harmonising policies towards the arrival of increasing boat migration across the Mediterranean during the course of 2015, the policies of Italy and Greece were shaped by their respective national contexts and the politics of migration. In Italy, two factors formed a back-drop to the response. Firstly, a technocratic (and unelected) political leadership led by centre-left PM Enrico Letta infused a Catholic ethos ethos had replaced Silvio Berlusconi's long standing right-wing government and its fervent anti-migration rhetoric. Secondly, the election of Pope Francis earlier in 2013 and his strong pro-immigration message which was first officially delivered in a visit to Lampedusa in July 2013[107].

Meanwhile at the same time as the number of refugees and migrants entering Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route started to dramatically increase, Greece experienced the worst and longest economic crisis in its modern history. Austerity measures initiated as a result of the EU's bail out and the stringent terms imposed by the EU troika had unleashed widespread social unrest and political instability[108]. There was a rapid and significant increase in outward migration with over half a million Greek citizens leaving the country since 2008, forming a so-called 3rd emigration wave of Greeks. In the same year more than 100,000 Italians also emigrated in response to economic difficulties.

The very different political and economic contexts in Italy and Greece contributed significantly to the way in which each country dealt with the 'crisis' as it unfolded.

In Italy, the unification of the maritime governance of the Central Mediterranean route which pooled resources and meant that all of the refugees and migrants rescued at sea were taken to Italy for processing, contributed to what can be considered a 'normalisation of the emergency', at least as far as the arrival and primary reception stage was concerned. A more managed approach to disembarkation and the distribution of sea arrivals across Italy (rather than almost exclusively in Lampedusa and Sicily as had previously been the case) moderated the narrative of invasion which had dominated political and media discourse until that point. However, after a year of Mare Nostrum (October 2013 – 2014), the policy objective of stopping migration flows regained primacy in the political debate with the newly appointed PM Matteo Renzi calling for closer involvement of the EU in what he repeatedly depicted as a 'European problem'[109].

From a practical point of view, the normalisation of the emergency meant that a refugee reception system could be expanded. However this system is not without its problems. The current official reception system in Italy is basically two-pronged: there is an 'ordinary' system providing short-term accommodation and legal support followed by longer-term measures for integration for asylum claimants (the SPRAR system), and an 'emergency' one which provides only short-term accommodation and basic

[107] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23224010
[108] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/12/greece-bailout-terms-eurozone-policymaking-powers
[109] Although this was not a new depiction: in 2011 the first large scale arrivals of people on Lampedusa were also described as a problem for Europe. See McMahon, S. (2012) *North African Migration and Europe's Contextual Mediterranean Border in Light of the Lampedusa Migrant Crisis of 2011,* Florence: European University Institute Working Papers

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services. In response to the Emergenza Nord Africa in 2011 and especially following the increase in arrivals in 2014 and 2015, the emergency regime underwent an enormous and rapid expansion. While effective in rapidly increasing Italy's stock of places for refugees and migrants, developments in 2015 led to concerns being raised about the uneven and often sub-standard quality of service provision in the emergency system, as well as cases of outright corruption[110]. Despite the introduction of compulsory distribution on a regional basis, the reception regime overall in Italy continued to suffer from insufficient space to accommodate new arrivals, which was further aggravated by lengthy bureaucratic timescales meaning months could pass before an appointment with an asylum commission would be confirmed. Delays in asylum processing undermined the willingness of some refugees and migrants to remain in Italy.

The managed arrival of refugees and migrants in Italy stood in stark contrast to the situation in Greece, where mass spontaneous arrivals on the Greek islands led to chaotic scenes. Shortly after taking power, the (former) Deputy Minister for Immigration Policy announced that migrants who were previously detained would be accommodated in 'open hospitality centres'. These were to be created in empty public buildings, vacant apartments and former military camps. In March 2015 an official document was leaked which stated that refugees and migrants entering the country irregularly would not be detained at the borders but would instead be provided with a document which instructed them to leave the country in thirty days. This was widely viewed as an unofficial 'travel document' enabling people to transit through Greece. However, as the numbers arriving on the islands increased throughout

[110] MSF (2016) *Fuori Campo* (Medecins Sans Frontieres), http://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/notizie/news/fuori-campo-mappa-dell%E2%80%99accoglienza-che-esclude; LasciateCIEntrare (2016) Accoglienza: La Vera Emergenza (LasciateCIEntrare) http://www.lasciatecientrare.it/j25/italia/news-italia/193-scaricabile-il-rapporto-di-lasciatecientrare-accogliere-la-vera-emergenza

the summer, the lack of preparation and lack of facilities became starkly apparent.

There was already evidence by January 2015 that the newly elected Greek government underestimated the clear signs of a significant increase in movement of people into Europe via Greece. During the summer of 2015 and onwards, provision of reception facilities and other services by international organisations and NGOs in Greece sprung up largely in a void of State-led emergency provision, although the former were also slow to move to establish operations. By the autumn, refugees and migrants arriving on Greek beaches were increasingly met by a mixture of journalists, volunteers, international organisation and NGO representatives who provided them with food, water, information and sometimes transportation to the first reception camp. The relative lack of involvement of the Greek government (national and on the islands) stemmed from the political instability which had been generated by the austerity crisis and challenging negotiations with the EU over 'bail-out'. Arguably, they also reflected the flawed assumption that if they 'did nothing' this would deter people from coming to Greece, or from staying if they did.

Implications

The EU has focused almost exclusively on policies designed to contain refugees and migrants in Turkey and Libya, thereby stemming the flow into other parts of Europe. There has been a failure at the national and EU levels to address the reception and protection needs of those arriving from situations of conflict, persecution and human rights abuse. The Greek government's approach was undermined by political difficulties, a lack of effective planning and economic crisis. There has also been a failure at the national and EU levels to address the longer term integration needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe.

5. MOVING BEYOND THE POLITICS OF CONTAINMENT

Findings

Although there have been some efforts to address the needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, for example through faltering attempts to establish a relocation programme, the focus of many EU governments is very firmly focused on preventing or discouraging people from attempting to reach EU territory in the first place, tackling smuggling networks, and rapidly deporting individuals who do not have a right to remain[111]. The extent to which the policy of containment is successful in reducing the 'migration crisis' will depend, in part, upon the evolving situation in Turkey following the attempted coup on 15th July 2016 and whether the underlying factors driving migration across the Mediterranean (conflict, persecution, human rights abuse) are addressed. But it will also depend on the extent to which the EU's efforts to 'externalise' its borders are successful.

The EU's interest in transferring responsibility for refugees and migrants to other regions is long-standing. For example, in 2003, the UK proposed the creation of processing centres outside the EU where asylum seekers would have to stay for the duration of their application process, and to which they would be

[111] HRW (2016) fn.106

returned if they travelled to the EU. That and other ideas were never implemented, but the EU and its member states have pursued aspects of such 'externalization' strategies via bilateral and EU-wide readmission agreements with countries of transit and origin, under which those countries have agreed to accept the return of their nationals and in some cases third-country nationals who transited through their territory.

During the course of 2015 the EU has intensified pressure on other countries to stem the flow and assume responsibility for refugee and migrants from neighbouring countries so they do not travel onward to the EU. As part of this effort, the EU has pledged to increase humanitarian and other assistance to help improve the well-being of asylum seekers and refugees in those countries. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the EU-Turkey agreement but goes much further. Both the Rabat Process[112], which began in 2006, and the Khartoum Process[113], launched in 2014 are fora for European dialogue and cooperation with African countries which have increasingly linked the issue of development with the migration concerns of EU Member States. In both processes, the EU has placed an emphasis on border management, prevention of irregular migration, and improving regional protection.

Implications

Firstly, there is a real risk that efforts to stem the flow of migration to the EU will fail to address the conflict, violence and human rights abuses that drive both primary and secondary migration into Europe. In fact EU policies may serve to exacerbate the situation further still. The EU should design, implement, and monitor migration cooperation with third countries to ensure the arrangements do not effectively trap people in abusive situations, prevent them from accessing fair asylum procedures, or lead to refoulement to places where they would be at risk of violence and persecution. It should also avoid cooperation with countries which are currently seeing significant outflows of displaced persons given the significant risk that such countries would manipulate the resulting processes to block its own nationals who fear persecution from seeking asylum in other countries. There is a chance, for example, that in the Khartoum Process the EU will channel significant funds through abusive governments in ways that end up harming people trying to flee persecution[114].

Secondly, policy makers need to engage with the issue of development as an important policy objective in its own right rather than primarily as a mechanism for preventing migration to Europe. The current focus in relation to the Central Mediterranean route is on achieving immigration control by proxy with African states (as seen, for example, in the conclusions of the Valletta summit[115] and in the EU's communication on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration, more commonly known as the migration compact[116]). These policies underestimate the significance of intra-African mobility, assuming to a large extent that migration in Africa is

[112] See https://www.iom.int/euro-african-dialogue-migration-and-development-rabat-process
[113] See http://www.iom.int/eu-horn-africa-migration-route-initiative-khartoum-process
[114] HRW (2016) fn.106
[115] See http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/newsroom/all-news/2015-valletta-summit-migration
[116] See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_external_aspects_eam_towards_new_migration_ompact_en.pdf

unidirectional, and the final destination is always the EU. This false premise may ultimately lead to border closures within Africa which would achieve the opposite result. This is because closed borders are known to lead to greater permanence in migration, as the possibility of 'circular migration' which enables people to move back and forth and retain strong links with their families, is removed. Many of our respondents had spent months in Libya and had first moved there with the intention to work and earn money, supporting their families through remittances as well as themselves. Such migration was intended to be temporary and was intended to result in a further journey to Italy. In this context, more inclusive labour markets and continued – or even increased – ease of movement within African regions, may do more to stem the flow of people towards Europe than the proxy border policing.

Finally, Europe cannot be effective in lobbying for more appropriate policies towards refugees and migrants in the countries to which people initially move if it is not willing to demonstrate its own commitments to international legal standards of protection[117]. Recent research by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has found that the politics of containment – reflected in interdiction, interception and off-shore processing – do not impact only on refugees and migrants seeking protection in Europe. As noted in the introduction to this report, low- and middle-income countries are host to 86% of the world's refugee population. Although there are clearly also domestic factors at play, ODI has traced what they describe as a 'ripple effect', with developed countries influencing each other's policies and consciously cultivating or indirectly fostering negative developments in lower income countries. Examples can be found in Indonesia, Kenya, Jordan and now Pakistan, which has started to repatriate Afghan refugees in huge numbers[118]. This will most likely serve only to stabilise already fragile political and economic situations, most likely leading to further outward migration, some of which will almost inevitably reach the shores of Europe. Seen within this wider international context, the European policy response to its so-called 'migration crisis' not only undermines access to protection for those arriving at Europe's shores but threatens the principle of international protection at a global level.

[117] Hargrave, K. and Pantuliano, S. with Idris, H. (2016) *Closing Borders – The Ripple Effects of Australian and European Refugee Policy: Case Studies from Indonesia, Kenya and Jordan* https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10862.pdf

[118] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/30/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-europe-pakistan

Annex 1: Our methodology

The MEDMIG project aims to better understand the processes which influence, inform and shape migration by speaking directly with those who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 and with the numerous State and non-State actors who created opportunities and constraints along the way. To do this, a team of researchers was based in the four countries that are the focus of the study (Greece, Italy, Turkey and Malta) from September 2015 to January 2016, undertaking interviews with refugees and migrants as well as stakeholders and observing events of the so-called 'migration crisis' as they unfolded.

During this time we carried out semi-structured interviews with a total of 500 refugees and migrants, 440 of whom had crossed the Mediterranean by boat in 2015 to Greece (215 interviews), Italy (205 interviews) and Malta (20 interviews) together with a further 60 respondents who had moved to Turkey and were considering making the onward journey to Europe. These countries reflected the key locations of the crisis. In each location we gained access to people inside and out of formal refugee reception structures and adopted a purposive sampling strategy which enabled us to ensure that the backgrounds and demographic characteristics of respondents were broadly reflective of wider trends (See Annex 2 for details).

We also interviewed more than 100 stakeholders, including politicians, policy makers, naval officers and coastguards, representatives of international, non-governmental and civil society actors, migrant and refugee associations and volunteers. These voices reflect the broad range of organisations that responded to the 'crisis' in politics and practice, enabling us to gain close insights into the varied ways that the situation was perceived, understood and experienced in each location.

Our approach to the fieldwork had to be agile in order to adapt to different social and political contexts as well us enabling us to interview people who had recently arrived as well as those who were looking to transit onwards. In Greece, we found a chaotic context of arrival, reception and transit which refugees and migrants often sought to quickly move on from. To adapt to this situation, interviews were carried out at the port of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, which was an important place of arrival and transit to the Greek mainland, and at three locations in the city of Athens: Victoria Square in Athens where coaches depart to the Greek border with FYROM; another square where people were informally residing and in Eleonas camp, one of the first formal reception facilities in Athens.

In Italy, a complex reception system dispersing newly-arrived refugees and migrants to reception centres around the country existed alongside processes of informal reception and transit migration. This meant that many refugees and migrants quickly moved away from disembarkation locations or formal facilities and on to other locations. To capture this complex range of contexts we carried out interviews in various locations in Eastern Sicily, Apulia and Piedmont, as well as in transit and reception centres in the cities of Rome and Bologna. In Malta our interviews were undertaken outside formal reception facilities. The interviews in Turkey took place in Istanbul and Izmir among those living in the city.

The research generated a large dataset within a very short period of time which was coded and analysed using NVivo to identify quantitative as well as qualitative patterns. In addition to undertaking detailed qualitative analysis, this has enabled us to draw out broader patterns and trends within and across countries, different groups of refugees and migrants and according to demographic and other variables.

Annex 2: Our dataset

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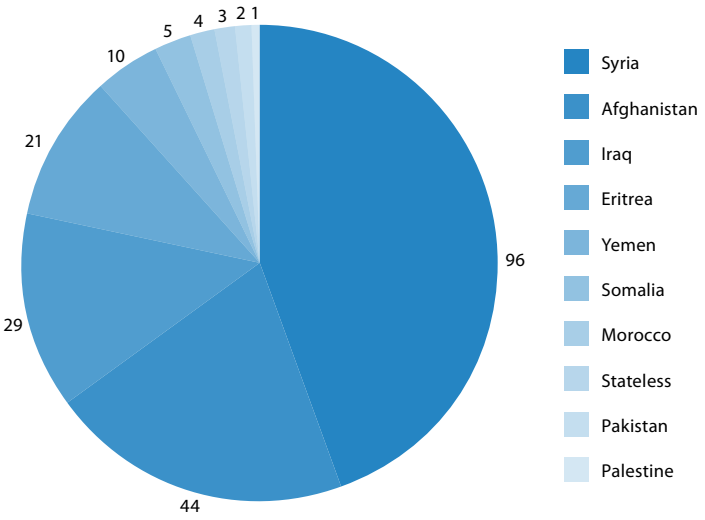
Our dataset consists of interviews with 500 refugees and migrants and 111 stakeholders across the four case study countries. This annex provides an overview of the key characteristics of the data.

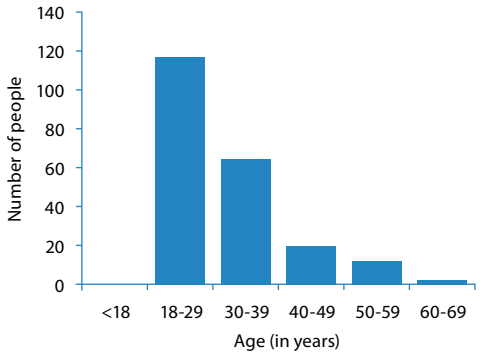
Country case studies

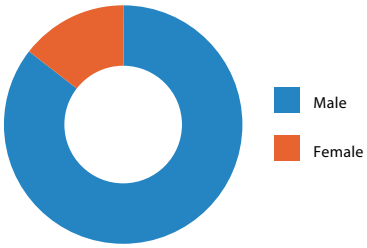
As noted in Annex 1, our refugee and migrant interview dataset broadly mirrors the composition of the refugee and migrant population arriving in our case study countries. The nationalities of our interviewees and the distribution of age and gender are shown on pages 76 -79 for each of these case study countries.

Annexes

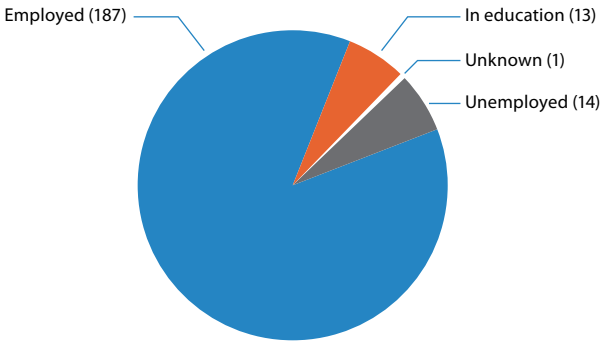
GREECE



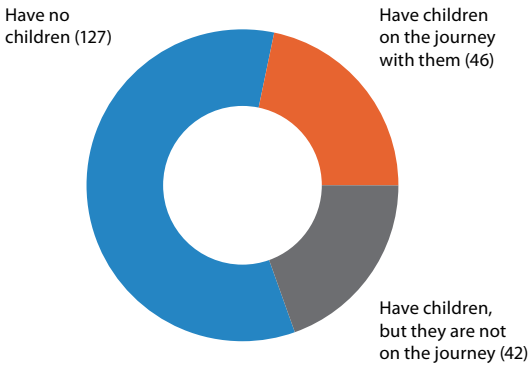




Employment and education prior to migration, Greece interviews

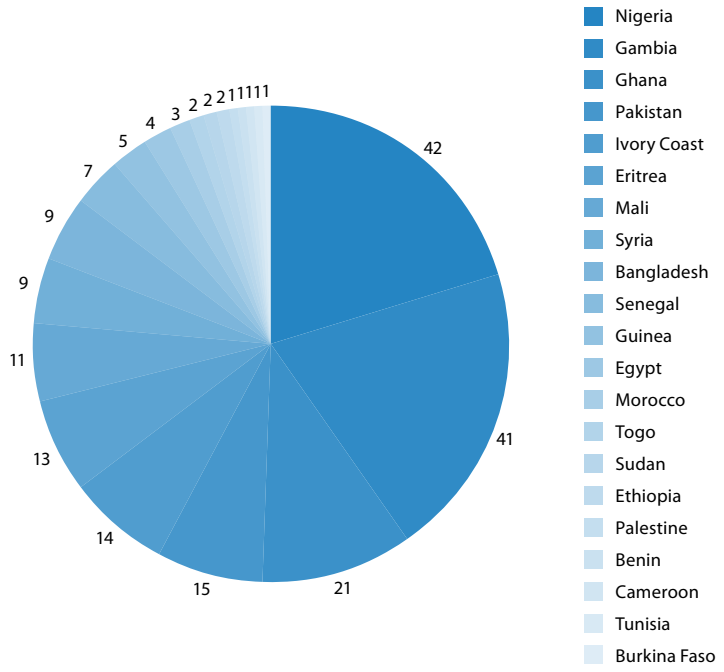


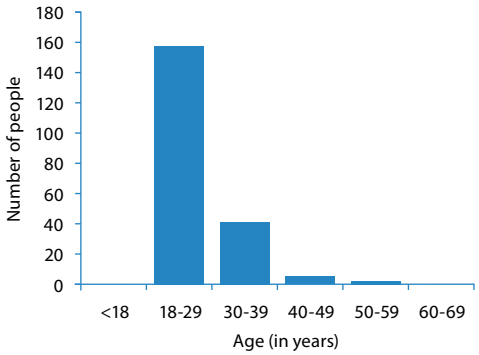
Children on the journey, Greece interviews

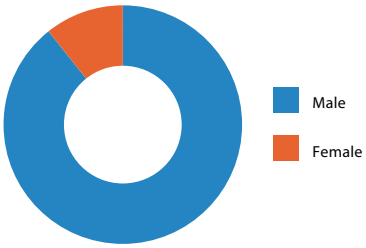


[119] Where figures do not add up to the correct total, it is due to a shortage of appropriate data for some interviewees.

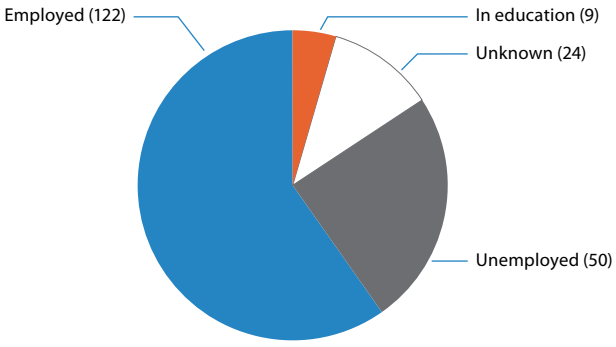
ITALY



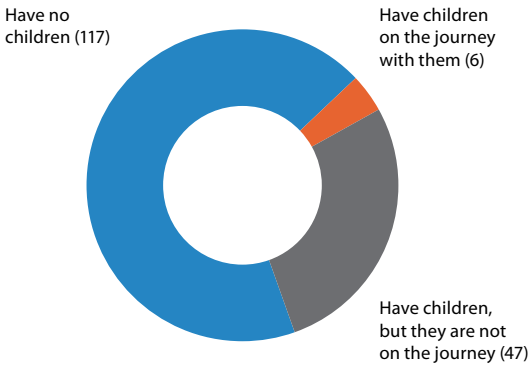




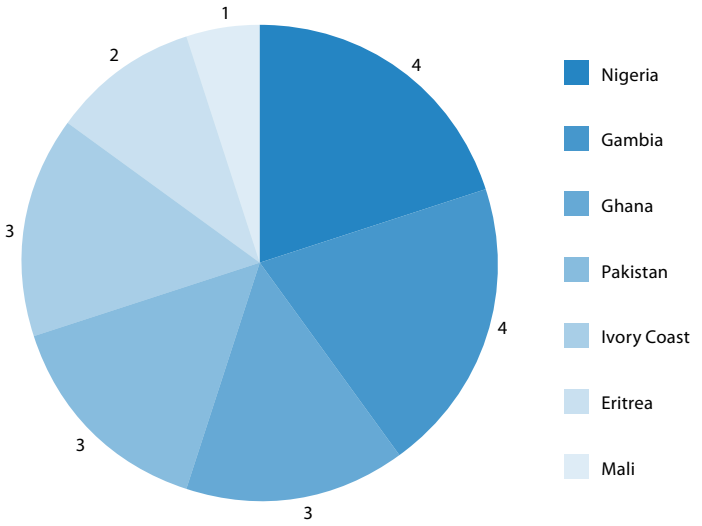
Employment and education prior to migration, Italy interviews

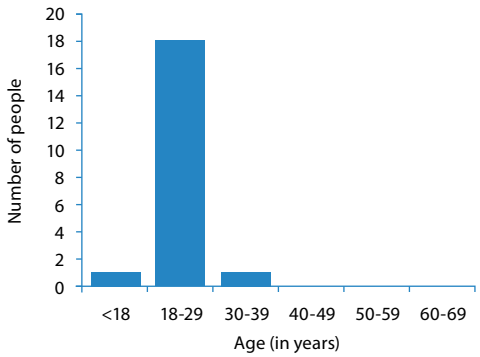


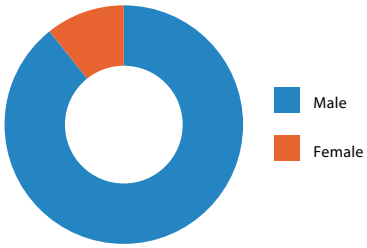
Children on the journey, Italy interviews



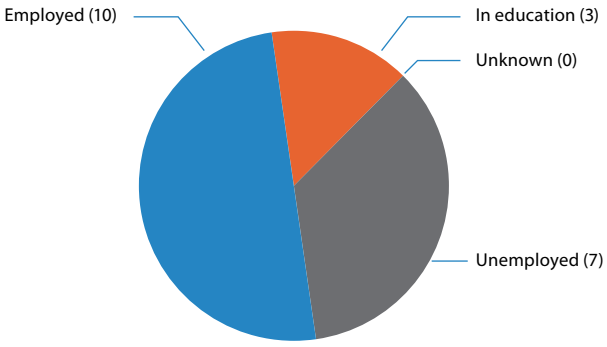
MALTA



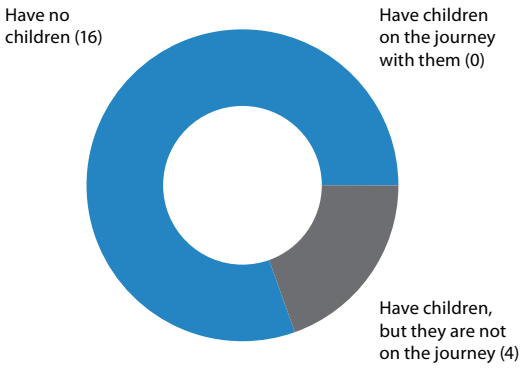




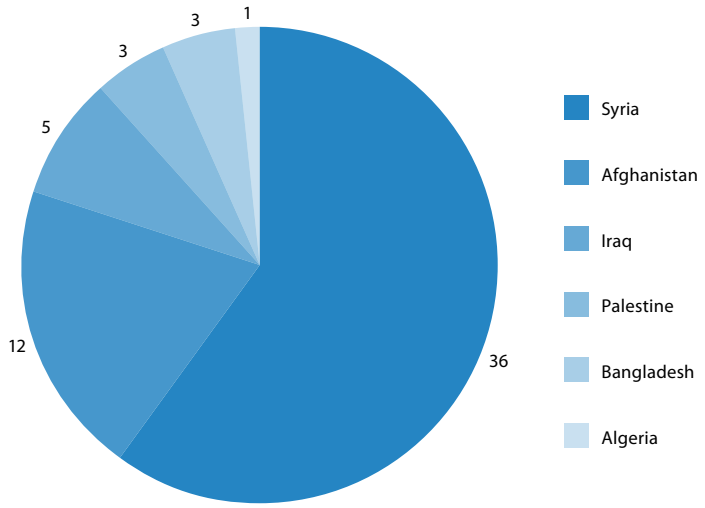
Employment and education prior to migration, Malta interviews

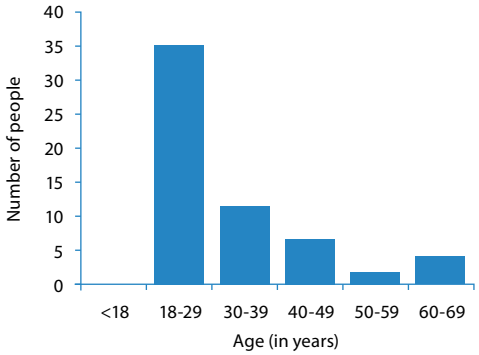


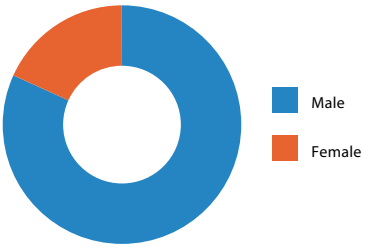
Children on the journey, Malta interviews



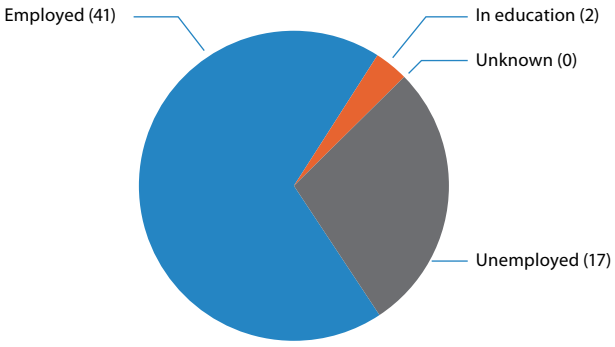
TURKEY



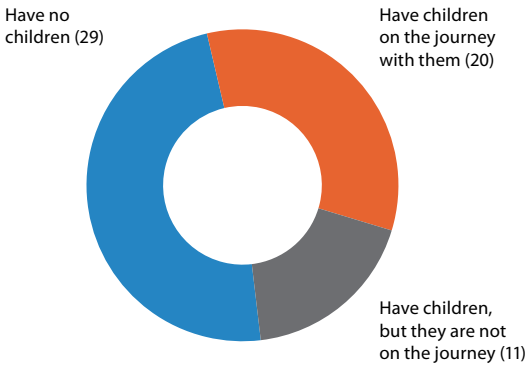




Employment and education prior to migration, Turkey interviews

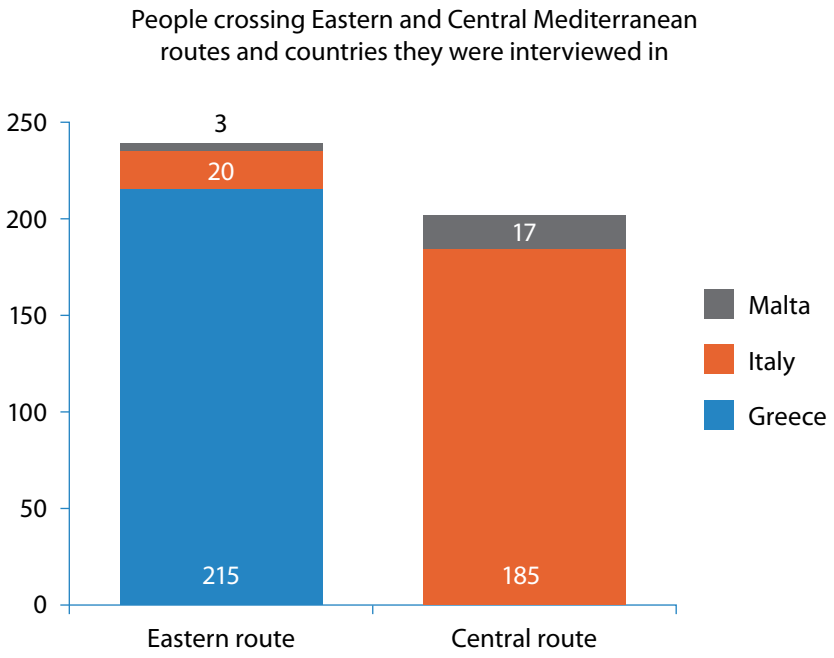


Children on the journey, Turkey interviews



Route case studies

Our dataset can be divided broadly into three route-specific categories: people who cross the Eastern Mediterranean sea crossing from Turkey to Greece, people who crossed the Central Mediterranean from North Africa to Italy or Malta, and people who had moved to Turkey and not yet crossed the Mediterranean to Europe. Across these four countries we interviewed 238 people who had crossed the Eastern route of the Mediterranean, from Turkey to Greece, and 202 who had crossed the Central route from North Africa to Europe.



Stakeholders

We also interviewed 111 stakeholders, from politicians to policy makers, naval officers and coastguards, researchers, experts, representatives of international organisations and NGOs, members of migrant and refugee associations and volunteers. These interviewees were selected to provide expert views, up-to-date insights into evolving migration flows and individual experiences of the situation in each location. The sector of our interviewees in each country is shown in the table below.

Stakeholder type	Italy	Greece	Malta	Turkey	Total
Civil Society	9	7	1	5	22
Expert	7	1	3	1	12
International organisation	3	3	0	0	6
NGO	18	15	5	5	43
Political institution	4	19	3	2	28
	41	**45**	**12**	**13**	**111**

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