

# Unauthorised migration to the EU

Unauthorised migration to the EU has reached unprecedented levels over the past year, yet this is not a new phenomenon. Representations of the 'crisis' as a recent phenomenon are problematic because they ignore the longer-standing history of precarious migration to the EU across the Mediterranean.

This briefing presents preliminary findings from the 'Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat' research project, and are based on an initial overview analysis of research interviews in Kos (Greece), complemented by an initial overview analysis of research in Malta and Sicily, and substantiated by the researchers' combined knowledge and experience in the field of EU border security, migration, and international refugee law.

## Key findings

- The current migratory 'crisis' is not new, but serves as a continuation and intensification of a longer-standing history of precarious migration to the EU that urgently needs addressing; there are significant risks to both EU member states and those migrating in not doing so.
- To be effective, policy interventions need to be co-ordinated regionally, and must be global in their outlook and in the assessment of their likely impact.

- Protection efforts and human rights obligations urgently need prioritising in multi-lateral policy interventions, which must at all times maintain a commitment to obligations under international law.
- Rather than basing policy on questionable assumptions about migration, policy needs to be based on evidence grounded in the journeys and experiences of refugees and migrants themselves.
- The notion of the Mediterranean 'migration crisis' and general categorisation of migrants imply an overly simplistic refugee/migrant divide; a more nuanced approach is needed to understand the diversity of migratory experiences.
- Current assessments of migrant vulnerability overlook the complex nature of precariousness, which has emotional, physical, legal and social aspects. This needs to be understood in relation to historical and institutional factors underlying migration.
- Concerns that legal migratory routes act as 'pull factors' are overstated. Migrants' decision-making is a fluid and fragmented process prior to arrival in a place of safety.
- These findings highlight the need for procedures to assess diverse protection requirements, and a commitment to the transformation of historical and institutionalised circumstances causing precarious migration.

## Research team

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The ESRC's urgency grant-funded 'Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat' research project involves a total of 225 in-depth interviews, carried out in two phases. Phase 1 (September-November 2015) collects a total of 150 interviews, split equally between three island arrival sites on the central and eastern Mediterranean routes: Kos (Greece), Sicily (Italy) and Malta.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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