PERSISTENT MYTHS ABOUT MIGRATION IN GREECE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

IN 2014, WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT and support of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, we co-authored a brochure entitled *Eleven Myths and Even More Truths: Migration in Greece.* In that edition, we attempted a documentation of the facts concerning the migration phenomenon in the country and, on the basis of that documentation, we tried to deconstruct a series of widespread myths that had fuelled the dramatic rise of the neo-Nazi far-right in Greece.

That booklet was received with interest and we hope that it helped with the argumentation against racist and xenophobic voices. An updated edition was then published in Greek in 2015.

Now, almost four years later, the given facts on the issue are quite different. The refugee flow of 2015 radically changed the terms of the public discussion about the subjects of migration and asylum, not just here but across Europe. In Greece, while in 2014 the refugee population was a tiny minority among the foreigners residing in the country, today – while still very much a minority – it amounts to a few tens of thousands and is particularly visible due to the special circumstances concerning its reception and accommodation. The entrapment of a large number of refugees on certain islands of the Aegean (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos) as a result of the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016 has created an often-volatile atmosphere in certain local communities. At the same time, the implementation of the agreement, in relation to the procedures for the examination of asylum applications, has led to the rejection of many applications from Syrian citizens on the rationale that Turkey represents a "safe third country" for them. In the rest of the country, the coexistence of refugees with local

communities seems to have proceeded quite smoothly, despite the fact that the former are often troubled by the authorities in their attempt to exercise some of their rights.

The large refugee flow of 2015 did not strengthen the domestic neo-Nazi far right, for a number of reasons. In our opinion, the legal troubles faced by the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn organisation, due to the entanglement of its entire leadership in the murder of Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013 and in a multitude of other crimes, crucially contributed to preventing the far right from taking political advantage of the insecurities that the refugee flow generated among a section of public opinion.

Unfortunately, though, the opposite occurred in many other European countries. The refugee issue is the basic cause of the constant difficulties that the German coalition government has faced, while Chancellor Angela Merkel has shifted from the "we can do it" stance in 2015 to more conservative approaches and practices. In other countries, the refugee issue has proved to be the main arena of political confrontation, almost always signalling the strengthening of far-right and xenophobic formations. Indeed, this has mostly happened in countries with a very small refugee presence, such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria. Among the great political changes of recent times, undoubtedly of special importance has been the emergence of the new coalition government in Italy and the appointment of an openly racist and xenophobic politician, Matteo Salvini, to the position of Minister for Interior.

Faced with this obvious "right turn", EU institutions have remained perplexed, mute and passive. The EU has not managed to impose common rules for the reception and accommodation of refugees, while it tolerates the abdication of certain countries from their common responsibilities and mostly from the obligation to show communal solidarity. Lastly, for that matter, it seeks

solutions that lie at the opposite end of the spectrum of respect of human rights, such as "closed centres" and "disembarkation platforms". In this context, the future does not look very promising. While the EU today is not facing a refugee crisis (no one can seriously claim that the numbers today are anywhere near that), it has accepted the creation of an internal political crisis because of the refugee issue.

Against this background, today, four years on since 2015, we attempt to answer a series of questions on issues concerning the integration of the refugee population into Greek society, to deconstruct the new myths spread by the far right in the country in light of the refugee issue (myths that are regretfully in some cases reproduced by politicians across the democratic spectrum), to corroborate our position with evidence, to assess the (in)effectiveness of EU policy on the refugee issue, and propose ideas for a different policy at national and European level.

Of course, we cannot claim that this is an exhaustive study. Our goal is to present the reader with the basic elements of the issue and to bring out aspects of another response that is different from the prevailing one. From our side, we consider this new edition a small contribution to the relevant discussion and a tool in the battle against the far right, which is always lurking in the shadows to emerge as a representative of "common sense" and the "average person".

☐

IS GREECE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES?

When we presented our findings on hate crime to the Greek Parliament in November 2012, a member of the governing party said that foreigners were coming to Greece like "cockroaches".[1]

The country cannot be found unprepared in the face of the possibility of being flooded with thousands of refugees and irregular migrants.[2]

NUMBERS ALWAYS FEATURE PREDOMINANTLY in the public debate concerning migration and refugee issues. Sadly, it is not just the far right that engages in the rhetoric that speaks of millions of migrants having colonised Greece, an argument that has been incorporated and normalised in the discourse of several political parties.

The truth is, of course, quite different: of the truly inconceivable number of 850,000 people that entered Greece in 2015 and the 150,000 that entered during the first quarter of 2016, very few actually remained in the country. The Greek authorities speak of about 60,000 people who were trapped in Greece after March 2016, due to the EU-Turkey agreement. Of these people, 21,999 were transferred to other EU countries through the relocation programme, while more than 8,000 family reunification applications have already been processed.[3]

All in all, the number of foreign nationals remaining in Greece

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1. A Human Rights Watch representative, referring to the remarks of Katerina Papakosta, then an MP of the governing conservative New Democracy party and who in August 2018 was appointed a deputy minister in the Syriza–Independent coalition government. See also "Which New Democracy MP described migrants as 'cockroaches'?" (in Greek), *TVXS*, 14 May 2013 (https://bit.ly/2Q2wBnn).

2. Question from 57 New Democracy MPs, 1 August 2016. See also "New Democracy: Current question from MPs regarding the migration issue" (in Greek), SofokleousIn, 1 August 2016 (https://bit.ly/2OJb5nj).

3. Data from the Ministry of Migration Policy's Asylum Service, 30 March 2018 and 30 September 2018, respectively (http://bit.ly/2X7KZPy).

from the period of the great crisis of 2015–2016 amounts to less than 30,000 people. To those, we ought to add the much smaller, although constantly increasing, number of people who have entered Greece since the EU-Turkey agreement, of which only a small portion manages to reach the Greek mainland.[4]

This population has joined the group of "older" legally residing migrants – but even regarding this category, the reality is quite different from the rumours in circulation. In the first edition,[5] we reported that, according to Ministry of Interior and Hellenic Police data, approximately 620,000 migrants with a residence permit were residing in Greece in 2009. While this number has constantly fluctuated, it remains on a downward trend.

At the moment, we are talking about the following numbers: the number of recognised refugees of the first degree[6] combined amounts to 29,789 foreign nationals,[7] while another 52,083 asylum applications are pending. At the same time, the number of migrants legally residing in Greece amounts to 544,443.[8] In conclusion, and although the relevant numbers fluctuate constantly, we are speaking about a legally residing population of no more than 630,000 people.

At the same time, we can quite safely speculate that the number of undocumented third-country nationals has fallen, considering that both the economic crisis and various legislative and admin-

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4. See below under Question 10.

5. Vassilis Papastergiou and Eleni Takou, *Eleven Myths and Even More Truths: Migration in Greece*, 1st ed., Athens: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2014, p. 4.

6. It refers to the initial examination of an asylum application by the competent authorities. In the case of a rejection, there is the possibility of a second-degree appeal, for which no statistics are available.

7. Greek Asylum Service, Refugee status and subsidiary protection, as of 30 September 2018 (http://bit.ly/2X7KZPy).

8. Ministry of Migration Policy statistics, September 2018 (https://bit.ly/2Q2YOOp).

istrative changes (the abolition of visa requirements in Schengen countries for Albanian nationals, the streamlining of access to the asylum procedure after 2013, etc.) have led to a reduction in the number of people residing in the country without documents, either through their regularisation or their departure from the country. In 2015–2016, it is clear that third-country nationals who had resided in the country before 2015 left Greece via Idomeni at the border with North Macedonia.[9]

The Greek Ombudsman noted the same in a related report in 2017, where he stressed that "the total administrative workload related to illegally residing persons or persons in the 'grey zone of legality', since the second quarter of 2016, is exceptionally low, perhaps one of the lowest since 1990."[10]

So, the reality does not relate in any way to the exaggerations that we observe in public discourse. If Greece could fundamentally solve the pathogenies of the administrative procedure for Greek citizenship, which – even with legislative improvements – continues to keep thousands of fully integrated third-country nationals and second-generation children in a foreigner status,[11] then the picture would be even more different. In any case, the Greek reality is keeping pace with the European average.

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9.   To cite just one example, based on the UNHCR data for refugees, from 1 October–31 December 2015, while the number of recorded arrivals in Greece was 419,268 people, the respective number of border crossings towards North Macedonia for the same period was 443,410 (https://bit.ly/2y-Ck6uG).

10. Greek Ombudsman, *Migration flows and refugee protection: administrative challenges and human rights* (in Greek), special report, Athens 2017, p. 14 (http://bit.ly/2X8ynHH).

11. Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality & Diversity, "Announcement on the 3 years since the voting of the Citizenship Law for the Second Generation," 9 July 2018 (http://bit.ly/2X6XV8d).

IS THE NATURALISATION OF REFUGEES AN ATTEMPT TO CORRUPT THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM?

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Tsipras' big scam with citizenship.[1]
850,000 "naturalisations" for electioneering purposes.[2]

FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE INTENTIONALLY attempts to connect the issue of citizenship with the increase in refugee flows. According to this rhetoric, the refugee population constitutes a pool of ready-made candidates for Greek citizenship, with the ulterior motive of corrupting election results and – in a more advanced reading – the composition of the nation. It is no coincidence that such approaches have a very loose relationship with the facts.

The reality is, of course, quite different: as early as 2001 the acquisition of Greek citizenship by recognised political refugees through naturalisation was regulated by law (2910/2001). According to the provisions of this law, a recognised political refugee could submit an application for citizenship through the naturalisation process provided that (s)he had completed five years of legal residence in the country, and that (s)he fulfilled the other formal and substantive statutory requirements. The preferential treatment of the refugee population compared to economic migrants – for whom the same law required 10 years' legal residence in the country – was justified on the grounds that the state recognises that the bond of the recognised refugee with his or her home country has been severed for reasons for which the person is not responsible, with the result that the establishment of a new bond with another state is easier.

A subsequent law (3838/2010) reduced the necessary years of legal residence to seven for economic migrants and three for refugees. Yet, citizenship can only be granted if the application fulfils the other formal and substantive statutory requirements. It is not handed out "automatically", as far-right discourse often maintains.
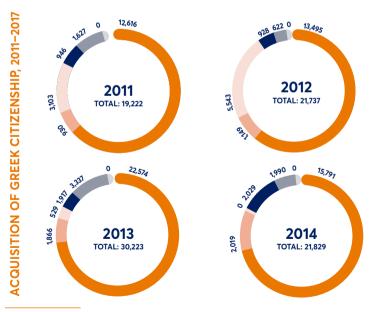
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1. Front page of *Parapolitika* newspaper, 14 April 2018 (http://bit.ly/2SEp-cQO).
2. "850,000 'naturalisations' for electioneering purposes" (in Greek), *capital.gr*, 12 April 2018, capital.gr (https://bit.ly/2zIshnX).
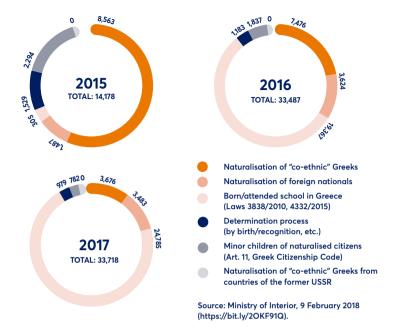
The relatively recent legislative changes to the citizenship law (4332/2015) have not altered these facts, but exclusively concern the requirements for the acquisition of citizenship by the children of migrants born in Greece to legally residing parents or by children legally residing in Greece and attending a Greek school.

However, the changes to the former law (3838/2010) were deemed unconstitutional by the Plenary of the Council of State in the heavily disputed decision 460/2013,[3] with the result that this law was never practically applied and a large number of applications from second-generation migrants accumulated in 2016 and 2017 after the adoption of the new legislation.

In total, according to data from the Ministry of Interior, Greek citizenship was granted to 174,394 people from 2011 to 2017. The annual breakdown is as follows:

ACQUISITION OF GREEK CITIZENSHIP, 2011–2017

2011 — TOTAL: 19,222 — 12,616 / 0 / 1,627 / 946 / 3,103 / 930

2012 — TOTAL: 21,737 — 13,495 / 0 / 622 / 928 / 5,543 / 1,149

2013 — TOTAL: 30,223 — 22,574 / 0 / 3,337 / 1,917 / 529 / 1,866

2014 — TOTAL: 21,829 — 15,791 / 0 / 1,990 / 2,029 / 0 / 2,019

3. Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, pp. 16–20.

2015
TOTAL: 14,178

0 · 8,563 · 2,294 · 1,529 · 305 · 1,487

2016
TOTAL: 33,487

1,183 · 1,837 · 0 · 7,476 · 3,624 · 19,367

2017
TOTAL: 33,718

979 · 782 · 0 · 3,676 · 3,483 · 24,785

- Naturalisation of "co-ethnic" Greeks
- Naturalisation of foreign nationals
- Born/attended school in Greece (Laws 3838/2010, 4332/2015)
- Determination process (by birth/recognition, etc.)
- Minor children of naturalised citizens (Art. 11, Greek Citizenship Code)
- Naturalisation of "co-ethnic" Greeks from countries of the former USSR

Source: Ministry of Interior, 9 February 2018 (https://bit.ly/2OKF91Q).

So, on average, in the seven-year period from 2011 to 2017 fewer than 25,000 people received Greek citizenship per year. This number (representing on average 0.2 percent of the whole population per year) fully corresponds with the European average.[4] a fact also confirmed by data furnished by the same ministry in response to a parliamentary question that put the total number of naturalisations of foreign nationals at 17,000 (76 percent of the processed relevant requests) from 2010 to 2018.[5]

Furthermore, we should point out that the previous decade had seen even lower rates of citizenship acquisition, the equivalent of less than 0.1 percent of the general population on average per

4. Eurostat, Acquisition of citizenship statistics, data up to March 2018 (http://bit.ly/2T2tC4b).
5. Greek Parliament, Reply to parliamentary question 5237 (in Greek), 17 May 2018 (http://bit.ly/2S7Wh2m).

year from 2005 to 2010.[6] In any case, for the most part, these "Hellenisations" (according to the inaccurate terminology of the press) concerned co-ethnic Greeks.

The overview of the legislation shows that the acquisition of Greek citizenship by refugees is not a simple matter, as on the one hand there is no facility for the "automatic" acquisition of citizenship since – and rightly so – the obligation to fulfil substantive requirements even applies to recognised political refugees.

In sum, citizenship is granted in accordance with rules and procedures, which have not been substantially altered in recent years. The word spread by Greek far-right groups and parties for petty-political or parapolitical reasons bears no relationship to reality.

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6. Eurostat, Acquisition of citizenship (https://bit.ly/2Km1uRa).

ARE MOST NEWCOMERS NOW IN FACT ECONOMIC MIGRANTS, AS OPPOSED TO 2015?

80 percent of those passing through the Greek islands are not refugees, but male economic migrants.[1]

MIXED MIGRATION FLOWS are not a new phenomenon in Greece. However, the mass flows of 2015, apart from the numerical blowout, also had another characteristic: the massive arrival of Syrian refugees substantially altered the perception of the flows by Greek, as well as international, public opinion. As it was distinctively put, "the constant media publicity of the extremely bloody Syrian drama mobilised strong feelings of sympathy and solidarity towards individuals that are obviously struggling to escape from a hell familiar through our screens."[2] The dominant narrative that "they are all illegal migrants" shifted towards "they are all refugees", deactivating racist reflexes for several months and supporting the remarkable wave of solidarity.

This narrative did not last long: the declaration of the EU-Turkey agreement was not only accompanied by the government rhetoric that "Greece could not take any more refugees", but also by a constant call for change in the nature of the flows. Hence, the minister for migration policy kept repeating at every opportunity the leitmotiv that the percentage of those arriving to the islands were overwhelmingly single men, with an economic migrant profile.

The reality is quite different: According to UNHCR statistics, in 2016, 47 percent of the new entrants were from Syria, 24 percent from Afghanistan and 15 percent from Iraq.[3] In 2017, 72.3 per-

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1. "Y. Mouzalas: 80% of those passing through the Greek islands are not refugees, but male economic migrants" (in Greek), *Liberal*, 9 February 2017 (https://bit.ly/2KkPqzG).
2. Andreas Takis, *Refugee Crisis 2015: Chronicle of a foretold crisis* (in Greek), 4 December 2015, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Greece (https://bit.ly/2ly1vqn).
3. UNHCR, "Refugees and Migrants Sea Arrivals in Europe: Monthly Data Update: December 2016," 31 December 2016 (https://bit.ly/2tv2CLQ).

cent of the new entrants came from these three countries, while 59 percent were women and children.[4] The first two months of 2018 confirm the same picture: the majority of the new entrants were from Syria (30 percent), Iraq (29 percent) and Afghanistan (13 percent), while men represented only 41 percent and, in the main, did not travel alone.[5]

Hence, the narrative regarding the alteration of the flows serves more the need of the government to support the new deterrence policy than reality itself. That is why, apart from the ethnic composition of the flows, another important parameter is being distorted: the very condition of membership of the international protection regime itself.

An important element that this whole debate obfuscates is that refugee status is attributed to people facing a *well-founded fear of persecution and is not limited to those coming from conflict zones.* For example, in several countries of origin, homosexuality is still punishable by death, while in other countries, systematic persecution of homosexuals is carried out by non-state actors, including Islamic State.[6] Consequently, a homosexual from Sudan or Saudi Arabia is naturally entitled to international protection, even though he or she is not from a war zone.

Therefore, it must be made clear that refugees are not just the people coming from war zones. According to the Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person that leaves his or her country owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation, or owing to political opin-

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4. UNHCR, "UNHCR Refugee and Migrant Arrivals to Europe in 2017 (Jan–Dec 2017)," 31 December 2017 (https://bit.ly/2MqqiYK).

5. UNHCR, "Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard (February 2018)," 5 March 2018 (https://bit.ly/2N0pDyC).

6. Pamela Duncan, "Gay relationships are still criminalised in 72 countries, report finds," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2017 (https://bit.ly/2w28YRK).

ions – as we see all the more frequently in the rising number of Turkish citizens that flee the "undeclared dictatorship" in the neighbouring country.

CATEGORIES OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS LIVING IN GREECE

Migrants/third-country nationals

Citizens of a non-EU member state, mostly people that leave their country of origin in search of better working and living conditions in general in the countries of final destination.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Third-country nationals with a well-founded fear of persecution upon a return to their country of origin (for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group), or who are in danger of serious harm (death penalty, execution, torture or inhuman treatment) if they are returned.

EU citizens

Citizens of other EU states that enjoy freedom of movement within the EU.

Co-ethnic ("omogeneis") Greeks

Individuals from post-Soviet states or Albania that do not possess Greek nationality, and therefore are not Greek citizens, but are considered as being of Greek "ethnic origin".

Undocumented migrants, migrants "without papers"

The term "illegally residing migrants" describes both migrants who entered and reside illegally in Greece without having acquired legal residence status, and those who "lost their legal status" because, at a certain point, they no longer fulfilled the provisions of legal residence status that they once had.

WILL THEY NOT LEAVE FOR NORTHERN AND CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SOONER OR LATER?

THE LARGE REFUGEE FLOW of 2015 did indeed have a clear direction: the compass kept pointing north. The combination of high expectations for an organised refugee reception system, a certain level of social benefits, a competent level of economic development and an environment of tolerance compelled the majority of refugees to anticipate a transition to and settlement in the countries of the European North. Germany especially proved to be the champion in refugee preferences. However, we should not understate the fact that the 2015 flow pales in comparison to the number of refugees that remain in countries close to Syria, awaiting to return to their country whenever peace returns there. The South–North movement up to January 2016 was massive and mostly unobstructed. From that point on, the old constants of the problem of managing the refugee population resurfaced and the inadequacy – both at the level of solidarity and at the level of efficiency – of European planning for coping with the refugee flow reemerged.

Since March 2016 and by virtue of the EU-Turkey agreement, most refugees have been trapped in Greece and in Italy. The northern borders remain closed and illegal passage to northern Europe has become extremely expensive and dangerous. In Greece, the entrapment takes place mainly in five islands (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes), because the agreement was also accompanied in Greece by the geographical restriction of new entrants to these five islands until the possibility of their return to Turkey has been examined (see Question 10). The overconcentration of population in the islands has been partially relieved by the lifting of the geographical restriction for those characterised

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1. "Avramopoulos: Refugee relocation is proof of the European solidarity" (in Greek), *Eleftheros Typos*, 14 September 2016 (https://bit.ly/2Mp5xwJ).

as vulnerable, which, under European and Greek legislation, means individuals who belong to a population group that is considered especially disadvantaged and in need of special protection. Hence, Greek law recognises as vulnerable "a) unaccompanied minors, b) persons with a disability or an incurable or serious illness, c) the elderly, d) women in pregnancy or who have recently given birth, e) single parents with minor children, f) victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation, persons with post-traumatic disorder, in particularly survivors and relatives of victims of shipwrecks, and g) victims of human trafficking" (Article 14, Law 4375/2016).

The tendency and desire for movement towards the North remains strong. It is now expressed either through the illegal movement through smuggling networks or through the appeal to the Dublin mechanism that regulates the terms of family reunification (see below). The affirmation that refugees will sooner or later move towards some other European country, which may somewhat appease Greek public opinion, obscures the reality that a certain – but not large – number of existing refugees will ultimately settle in Greece and, therefore, that we need to open the debate regarding the immediate future of those people as regards the conditions and procedures for their social integration.

The containment of the tendency to move towards the North was reflected in the very limited success of the refugee relocation programme: a European Commission press release in November 2017 stating that "the EU relocation programme is successfully coming to an end"[2] substantively repeated the leitmotiv of the

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2. European Commission, "European Agenda on Migration: Consolidating progress made," 15 November 2017 (http://bit.ly/2X3FFMV).

responsible Greek commissioner (and other officials) that "refugee relocation is proof of European solidarity".[3]

Apart from creating tension, expectations and recriminations, the extensive discussion on the relocation programme in recent last years has *mostly* fuelled misconceptions.

So, let us take things from the start: the notorious Dublin system. The creation of a European common space of free and unrestricted movement of persons (known as the "Schengen space") in the 1990s produced the need for consistency among the asylum systems within the EU. The result of these negotiations was the infamous Dublin Convention (1990), that later became Dublin Regulation II (2003) and Dublin Regulation III (2013). Since 2016, the European Commission has been calling for further revisions.[4]

A basic principle of the Dublin system is not the fair distribution of obligations among EU member states, but the determination of the state responsible for the examination of asylum applications (and, therefore, practically the determination of the state where the people will remain). So, according to the Dublin Regulation, the country responsible for the examination of an asylum application is, certain exceptions aside, the first EU country where the applicant arrives – which inevitably means Greece or Italy and, to a lesser extent, Spain. So, behind the declared Dublin goal of limiting "secondary movements" through the examination of asylum applications in the first country of entry was the political possibility of limiting new entrants to the countries of first reception.

In its nearly three decades of operation, the Dublin system has been fairly criticised for three basic reasons: firstly, it is not fair, considering that it puts disproportionate pressure on the states

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3. "Avramopoulos: Refugee relocation is proof of the European solidarity."
4. European Commission, "Towards a sustainable and fair Common European Asylum System," 4 May 2016 (http://bit.ly/2TTtH6O).

of first reception. Secondly, it is not effective, since the secondary flows persevere one way or another. Even though the system's basic principle is that the asylum seeker cannot choose which country (s)he will resort to, the reality affirms common sense: people searching for a safe and better life have a view on what their life should be like, considering that, after all, the conditions of reception vary from one country to another. Thirdly, it violates the rights of asylum seekers, insofar as the fair and effective examination of asylum applications is not guaranteed in all member states, and therefore it tries to impose a procedure without having ensured the prerequisite for this procedure: a Common European Asylum System.

In 2015, Greece found itself at the epicentre of an unprecedented phenomenon: an immense number of people created a de facto humanitarian "escape route". Known as the Balkan route, it passes through Greek territory towards the northern European countries. This crisis acutely revealed the structural inefficiencies of the Dublin system: even the German chancellor had to admit in August 2015 that "the Dublin Regulation is not effective" and that "Europe as a whole ought to adopt a common response".[5]

Unfortunately, Europe, as in other times, acted as anything but "a whole". From the summer of 2015, the European Commission exerted increasing pressure on Greece and Italy towards the creation of special centres where the new entrant population would be registered and categorised – the infamous "hotspots" – while pressure was also increased for more returns. In addition, the Commission announced an ambitious relocation plan for 66,400 people "in clear need of international protection"[6] from Greece to

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5. Christoph Herwartz, "Regeln fur Fluchtlinge in Europa: Merkel will Dublin-System abschaffen," *ntv*, 27 August 2015 (https://bit.ly/2lu1i0n).

6. See "Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece" (http://bit.ly/2S2tIDC).

other EU counties, a move which would theoretically render the Balkan route useless for new entrants.

The implementation of this plan in the two following years (2015–2017) fell short of initial expectations, as it evolved into a slow, non-transparent process without procedural guarantees: first of all, the choice to limit the programme to citizens of countries with an average recognition rate for international protection of 75 percent or more (based on Eurostat data) caused – and this was the intention – the exclusion from solidarity of thousands of displaced persons from Iran, Afghanistan, etc.

Moreover, the implementation of the programme was extremely slow, with the member states adding arbitrary stages and procedures, such as selection interviews in their embassies, while the request of applicants to be able to appeal a negative decision was cynically ignored by an EU statement that referred to a process between member states in which the asylum seekers had no say. Therefore, many countries barricaded themselves behind their capacity to deny issuing any reason for the negative decision in order to disguise their substantive refusal to participate in the programme, particularly as there was no process foreseen to challenge a negative decision.

To make matters worse, the same justification, that the relocation programme is an ad hoc arrangement between member states, was ostentatiously disregarded when the responsible Greek and German ministers surreptitiously agreed to prioritise relocation at the expense of family reunification – which is compulsory under the Dublin Regulation – driving hundreds of asylum seekers to even greater desperation.[7] It is, finally, telling that many refugees were asked, in the embassies of countries that in

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7. Eleni Takou, "Regarding the hunger strike in Syntagma: It is inconceivable to contest the implementation of the legislation" (in Greek), *RedNotebook*, 7 November 2017 (https://bit.ly/2Mp681r).

the end refused to receive them, questions regarding their eating habits or their sartorial choices (such as "Do you eat pork?" or "Why do you wear a headscarf?").

The criticism during the implementation of the relocation programme focused somewhat automatically on the services that were called to implement it (such as the Greek Asylum Service) and only secondly on those who designed it, obscuring a basic parameter: as an imperfect corrective move in an innately unfair system, the relocation programme was from the start doomed to become what it became. That is, a "sorting" mechanism for the countries of the North to identity "desirable" asylum seekers that was framed as a solidarity move. Its character was confirmed by the punitive and legally arbitrary decision to exclude from potential relocation those who entered Greece after the EU-Turkey agreement.[8]

Several months since the conclusion of the relocation programme, the results can only be judged as less than satisfactory: only 21,999 people were transferred from Greece to other EU countries.[9] While not wishing to undermine the efforts of the Greek authorities to make use of even the smallest of solidarity tools, we cannot but draw the attention to the bigger picture: it was a pretextual plan without any real intention of building a substantial system of responsibility distribution.

At the same time, as early as March 2016, a discussion began at EU institutional level on a new revision of the Dublin Regulation. According to the European Commission, this latest revision aims towards a fairer solidarity system between member states, attributing a central role to a corrective distribution mechanism.

8. Greek Council for Refugees, "Announcement of the Greek Council for Refugees on the relocation of Syrian refugees after the 20.3.2016," 10 October 2017 (http://bit.ly/2TUv7he).
9. See Greek Asylum Service data, 30 March 2018 (http://bit.ly/2X1eoLf).

The central idea concerns the automatic relocation of refugees from countries which are forced to examine a number of applications disproportionate to its capabilities. If a country chooses not to participate in this refugee redistribution system, it must pay a significant solidarity contribution instead.

The revision has stalled since 2016 due to the conflict between the countries of the South, which seek a stronger solidarity mechanism, and the so-called Visegrád countries,[10] which wish for none.

It is clear that the dynamics within the EU regarding the revision of Dublin, as well as any policy for the fairer distribution of responsibilities, are negative.[11] It is also clear that, almost four years since 2015, the crisis is all but over. The crisis has just been geographically restricted, producing a picture of constant humanitarian destruction on the Aegean islands. As long as European countries continue to arbitrarily replace their international obligations with ad hoc humanitarian gestures and refuse to legislate for safe passage to Europe for the people who need it, we can only speak of a fortress Europe responsible for thousands of deaths at its borders.

Hence, it appears that the common knowledge that refugees "don't want to stay in Greece", even if factually correct up to a point, is a parameter that obscures the real question: that the EU ought to finally comprehend that only a simple and persuasive solidarity system, combined with common reception conditions, can protect Europe from irregular secondary flows.

Unfortunately, the bitter experience of the relocation programme,

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10. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia.
11. "Dimitris Christopoulos: Inhuman political experiments at the expense of immigrants" (in Greek), interview with Tzela Alipranti, *I Epochi*, 8 July 2018 (https://bit.ly/2NAZ6Md).

the arbitrary German obsession with limits on family reunifications that has led to the accumulation of refugees, who are left waiting for months on end for their transfer to their family members, but most of all the obstinate rejection by several European countries of the principle of solidarity and their refusal to take on a share of the responsibility, as well as the tolerance of this stance by EU bodies,[12] show that there is still a long way to go to mould a system for the examination of asylum applications based on the principles of communal solidarity.

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12. See, for example, Donald Tusk's comments from December 2017. Jennifer Rankin, "EU could 'scrap refugee quota scheme'," *The Guardian*, 11 December 2017 (http://bit.ly/2N9ZJc1).

IS SAFE PASSAGE A PULL FACTOR FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES?

05

Moreover, it could not create any pull factor as migrants will stay in pre-removal centres while their applications will be speedily processed.[1]

THE FEAR OF A "PULL FACTOR" for migrants and refugees is a permanent feature in the public discourse of politicians in Europe, especially of those charged with the management of the refugee problem – this is, after all, why the relocation programme discussed in Question 4 was prioritised over the much more effective and fairer tool of resettlement directly from third countries or countries of origin (such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan or straight from Syria).

In this rhetoric, every policy that aims at compliance with international conventions for the protection of refugees is perceived as a factor that attracts new refugees. At first glance, the thought is not unreasonable. However, it conflicts with the reality of the number of refugees based in countries with a bad reputation either regarding their protection legislation or humane treatment of refugees.

The pull factor theory cannot easily explain the 3.5 million refugees from Syria that find themselves in Turkey nor the hundreds of thousands living – often in marginal living conditions – in Jordan or Lebanon. For these millions of refugees, as for the Palestinian refugees living for decades in tents and camps in Lebanon and Jordan, the explanation is quite simple: they have chosen to stay close to their home countries in order to be able to return there more easily, whenever circumstances allow it. In total, the number of Syrians, Iraqis and Afghanis that have moved to Europe represents a small fraction of the total number of those forcefully uprooted.

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1. Yiannis Mouzalas, letter to his counterparts on transfer to the mainland: "Migration Policy minister seeks permission to transfer migrants to Greek mainland, under EU-Turkey deal," *ERT International*, 10 December 2016 (https://bit.ly/2ho6FFz).

As discussed in the previous question, the programme for the relocation of refugees from frontline member states to other EU countries, which was agreed upon in order to contribute to the fairer distribution of the responsibility for the refugee flow of 2015, was concluded on 26 September 2017 and was not renewed, despite the fact that there were voices defending it. But even more than its non-renewal, its failure lies in the fact that in the end only 21,999 relocations took place, i.e. one third of those foreseen.

As far as the family reunification process is concerned, it is regulated by the adjusted Dublin Regulation. This regulation, which determines the country responsible for the examination of the asylum application, for years has constituted the basic mechanism for refugee relocation in Europe. However, here too, we can now discern an evident containment tendency with various manifestations. From Germany's denial to comply with the six-month deadline for the implementation of the transfer to the rejection of a number of applications as having missed the deadline due to the arbitrary interpretation of the regulation, we can now clearly identify a trend towards the restrictive interpretation of the regulation.

Finally, there has been a discussion on the possibility of granting at an EU level a humanitarian visa to legally enter to EU territory to people entitled to international protection. The institution of the humanitarian visa exists (with different conditions) in Australia, the US and Russia. The European Parliament, with a decision of 12 April 2016, is generally in favour of this plan. However, the Court of Justice of the European Union (with its C-638/16 decision) rejected the relevant application of Syrian refugees to the Belgian authorities for the granting of humanitarian visas, referencing the provisions in each country's national law.

What we now know for certain is that the legal pathways to Europe have multiple advantages: they are much safer for the refugees and, at the same time, much less costly for the EU. The reason why they are not favoured is the insistence, to the point of obsession, of European governments that they will constitute a pull factor for refugees. Naturally, it does not derive from any empirical fact that the introduction and implementation of paths for the legal movement of refugees in Europe constitutes a pull factor. On the contrary, it could be a solution to reduce the danger for displaced persons, undermine smugglers and avert some of the constant tragedies that we have witnessed in the Mediterranean Sea.

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DID THE EU-TURKEY AGREEMENT SUCCEED IN STOPPING THE REFUGEE FLOW?

0 6

The EU-Turkey agreement constitutes a diplomatic victory.[1]

IN ITS REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL in March 2018, the European Commission appeared satisfied regarding the results of the EU-Turkey agreement and the EU's strategy on migration and asylum. "The decrease in irregular arrivals has been confirmed throughout 2017," the report noted,[2] while the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, stated: "With arrivals down by almost 30 percent compared to the pre-crisis of 2014, the time is ripe to speed up and intensify our efforts across the board – not to slow down. We cannot risk becoming complacent now. We need more and quicker actions on returns, border management and legal pathways, in particular resettlement from Africa but also Turkey."[3]

The EU has also invoked the significant increase in rescues in the Mediterranean, the assistance for 15,000 people to return to their home countries from Libya and the financial aid to African countries.

The large decrease of – in EU terminology – "irregular border crossings" compared to 2014 and particularly compared to 2015 and 2016 is a fact, evident both in the EU numbers (205,000 crossings in 2017) and in shared experience. However, even though there clearly has been quantitative success based on the EU's self-imposed criteria, there is some data, as well as qualitative elements, that could moderate this excitement.

The first – particularly evident – consequence is the entrapment of

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1. "Tsipras: The EU-Turkey Statement constitutes a diplomatic victory" (in Greek), *Voria.gr*, 18 March 2016 (https://bit.ly/2QUWQxi).

2. European Commission, "European Agenda on Migration: Continuous efforts needed to sustain progress," 14 March 2018 (http://bit.ly/2X9RrFs).

3. "Avramopoulos: The relocation of refugees is proof of European solidarity" (in Greek), *Eleftheros Typos*, 14 September 2016 (https://bit.ly/2Mp5x-wJ).

a very large number of refugees on the Greek islands close to the maritime border with Turkey. The EU-Turkey agreement provided the basis for the exceptional examination of asylum applications through a fast-track process at the border for third-country nationals entering Greek territory from Turkey after 20 March 2016.

This regulation was reflected in Greek legislation through article 60 of Law 4375/2016, according to which special provisions apply regarding the examination of the asylum applications "in case of arrivals that pertain to a large number of third-country nationals or stateless persons, who apply for international protection at the borders or in transit zones of ports or airports in the country, or while staying in Reception and Identification Centres".

The result of that choice is not just the geographical restriction to the islands for a very large number of refugees under abominable and degrading living conditions and the creation of acute problems in those areas but, most of all, the violation of their right to international protection as, by virtue of the legislation adopted, the responsible bodies rejected the applications of many asylum seekers from Syria on the rationale that Turkey constitutes a "safe third country" for them. Consequently, in practice, the agreement annulled or impeded the provision of international protection to a large number of refugees from Syria.

Likewise, as is generally the case in these situations, the refugee movement sought other pathways. And despite the fact that the European Commission's announcement regarding the decrease in the number of crossings is correct (and, of course, at the expense of the refugees' rights), it is however equally true that after March 2016 refugees were forced to choose other, more dangerous, pathways for their entry into the EU, such as the crossing from Libya to Malta or Sicily, as well as the River Evros crossing. The death toll from drownings is truly devastating. It is signifi-

cant that, according to UNHCR data,[4] from the start of 2018 until 21 June 2018 more than 1,000 refugees lost their lives in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, while there has also been an increase in the number of drownings in Evros.[5]

Finally, even the effectiveness as far as the returns policy is concerned is extremely low: in the first two-and-a-half years of the implementation of the agreement, 1,738 people were returned to Turkey.[6] Consequently, the agreement has worked much more to deter the refugee movement from the islands to the mainland than in terms of returns to Turkey, leading to the extreme concentration of refugee populations under miserable conditions. This demonstrates that for the EU, effectiveness is defined much more on a basis of the fear instilled in those thinking of making the trip than by the real number of returns. The message is: "Don't even think of coming to Europe for we will make your life a living hell."

So, if anyone can be satisfied with the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement, it would be the EU bureaucracy, which managed, to a great extent, to control the refugee crisis in order to ease pressure on EU borders. However, the price of this "success" has been both the increase in refugee deaths in Mediterranean waters, as a result of the more dangerous routes, as well as the undermining of refugee rights through the introduction of emergency procedures at the borders, and the creation and the preservation of unbearable living conditions on the Greek islands. This is an extremely costly price to pay in terms of human rights and the rule of law.

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4. "Watery grave: More than 1,000 immigrants have drowned in the Mediterranean from the beginning of 2018" (in Greek), *CNN Greece*, 22 June 2018 (https://bit.ly/2MYu9fN).

5. Nicole Drouga, "Refugee issue: Crossing Evros" (in Greek), *Euronews*, 4 May 2018 (https://bit.ly/2xzAHML).

6. UNHCR, "Returns from Greece to Turkey (under EU-Turkey statement) as of 30 September 2018," 5 October 2018 (http://bit.ly/2SBzH7m).

DOES IT COST TOO MUCH?

Exposed: Scandalous party of €1 billion on the refugee issue with Syriza's signature.[1]

THE SIZE AND EXPLOITATION of European funds for the management of the mixed migration flows emerged as a central point in public discourse in 2015 and 2016, creating frequent recriminations between bodies, organisations, parliamentary parties, the Greek government and the European Commission. A whole blame game then unfolded, with the responsible government minister providing contradictory data and receiving both friendly and enemy fire over his ineffectiveness and mismanagement, and answering back that "despite of the mistakes … somehow or other, we managed".[2]

The truth is, of course, much more complex and here we will attempt to briefly summarise some basic data. A relatively moderate description of the figures estimates that in 2015 and 2016, US$803 million dollars were allocated to Greece from various sources.[3] Much of that money was allocated directly to the government, while an equally large sum was handed directly to international organisations, given the administrative inadequacy of the Greek authorities to manage housing programmes, accompanying support services, etc. Equally significant were the sums that were obtained from other sources, such as governments, funding tools, fundraising by the organisations themselves, etc.

At the same time, for the 2014–2020 period the multiannual EU funding programme has budgeted €295 million from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and €215 million from the

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1. Aris Hatzigeorgiou, "Exposed: Scandalous party of €1 billion on the refugee issue with Syriza's signature" (in Greek), *Eleftheros Typos*, 15 April 2017 (https://bit.ly/2OOuovl).
2. "Mouzalas: We managed well on the refugee issue, somehow or other" (in Greek), *To Vima*, 15 October 2016 (https://bit.ly/2yIRcJH).
3. "Full Breakdown of What Money Went Where in Greece 2015–2016," *News Deeply*, 31 March 2017 (https://bit.ly/2yLuuAw).

Internal Security Fund for Greece,[4] while the potential for emergency funding by the EU and other funding tools such as EEA Grants (financed by Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein) is also significant.

Admittedly, the lack of a national plan and the constant disregard for the responsible ministry as a central coordination body has created management chaos. Hence, management was done, and to a great extent continues to be done, on an incidental basis, due to the obvious absence of a plan that the ministry itself should have presented long ago. An important contribution to the management chaos was the emergence of other governmental factors with significant strength, such as the Ministry of National Defence, which was called on to construct the reception centres, or the Ministry of Economy, which was retrospectively handed responsibility for managing the multiannual funding programme for 2014–2020.

Obviously, the issues of mismanagement and the squandering of financial resources are extremely important and merit special attention. Several stakeholders have underlined the mismatch between important available resources and the non-existence of a humane reception system. Much less attention has been given to the Internal Security Fund, despite the long-established tendency towards the further militarisation of the EU's borders under the pretext of migration management.[5] Another parameter that has not been sufficiently examined is that, in a subject where the responsibilities of numerous ministries (migration policy,

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4. Data from the Special Service for the Coordination and Management of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, Internal Security Fund and Other Resources, Ministry of Economy and Development (http://www.ami-fisf.gr/).

5. Apostolos Fotiadis, "How the expansion of the military-industrial complex in Europe radically changes the EU" (in Greek), *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 14 August 2017 (http://bit.ly/2V3h7lh).

citizen protection, shipping, labour, health, foreign affairs, defence, finance, among others) are entangled, the chronic malfunctions can only be attributed to central government choices, and not just to a single ministry or a single person.

An even more important parameter – one that is unfortunately systematically concealed by this entanglement – is that the European funding system is designed to produce policy itself, a policy compatible with the central EU design for the deterrence of migration. So, the EU does not hesitate to provide generous funding for the relocation programme, for food in the camps or, even more, for defence systems and border surveillance tools.

The same, however, does not apply to issues that it considers secondary, such as the integration of both recognised refugees and legally residing migrants. Even worse, the same does not apply to issues that the EU skilfully treats as non-existent, such as "undocumented" persons. So, an asylum seeker can be entitled to a monetary benefit, food or housing, but if his/her application is examined and rejected, all that ceases. One could argue that the same happens in other EU countries. However, things are not that simple: other EU countries could close their borders when they decided that "they can't take any more", while in the relocation programme, they made sure to accept only persons "in clear need of international protection",[6] thus avoiding from the outset the problem of a large population without legal documents.

So, Greece was gradually left on its own to manage "everyone else". This, of course, does not absolve the Greek government of its monumental mismanagement and the destructive choices of its responsible ministers. However, it shows the big picture that we should always keep in mind, for a half-truth is much worse than a lie.

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6. See Question 4.

So, in the face of the mismanagement of EU funds, the crucial question is: "but how on earth can the European institutions still not know about all this?" Therein lies the real issue: they not only know it, but it also suits them. With an unusual but also familiar doublespeak, the European Commission profits from the administrative chaos and inhuman conditions that prevail on the Greek islands, and not just on the islands, in order to send the refugees and migrants outside its territory the message "do not come here for we will make your life a living hell", while, at the same time, having technically completed its share of the responsibility.

After almost a decade of financial crisis, the Greek government should be fully conscious of what the results are when the lack of a consistent strategy clashes with EU's cynicism and blackmail. That's why it's more urgent than ever to put together a consistent and realistic plan that will lead to the construction of solid infrastructure under humane conditions.

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IS THE SMOOTH
INTEGRATION OF
THOUSANDS OF MUSLIMS
INTO OUR SOCIETY
POSSIBLE?

Moderate Islam is a myth.[1]

THE CONTEMPORARY FAR RIGHT has altered several elements of its discourse of previous decades. In the years following the Second World War, the (quite anaemic) European far-right formulations were antisemitic, hostile towards migration of any kind (even the one originating from the European South), biased in favour of property owners and against trade unionism, and homophobic beyond doubt. Contrary to this tradition, the contemporary far right can be modern, smiling, Europe-friendly (even if had to back-pedal), friendly towards or even an active supporter of Israel and tolerant of same-sex relationships. However, it is almost always xenophobic and Islamophobic. The central pattern in the popular and successful rhetoric of the contemporary far right is that it accepts the equal value of different religions and cultures, but is opposed to their mixing, defending the autonomy of European culture and the vested right for Europe to be Christian.

In this context, real or conceived incidents of migrants or refugees engaging in delinquent behaviour are employed in order to prove the self-fulfilling prophecy that "multicultural society has failed".

To start with, it would be useful to highlight that multiculturalism in a series of European countries (especially in the UK and France, but also in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany) is precisely the result of the colonial past of these societies. The inevitable relationship between metropolis and colony formed relations and produced mutual mobility and relocations. And that way, a small share of the population of the (former) colonies was installed in the heart of the metropolis. The belated criticism of this process is not quite convincing.

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1. Sissy Alonistiotou, "Soti Triantafyllou: Moderate Islam is a myth" (in Greek), *I Kathimerini*, 29 November 2015 (https://bit.ly/2OJsC1U).

Apart, however, from the somewhat distant era of colonialism, the migration of Muslim populations to the heart of Europe was the result of more recent economic planning. The three million Turkish workers and their families living in Germany today served the postwar development of the German economy. The settlement of this population also activated a process that cannot be reversed. Incidentally, this serves as an example of a rather smooth integration. Similarly, the unusual drive of the British economy is due, to a large extent, to the boost offered by the youthful populations of former colonies. In both cases, these populations have today important political representatives both in national and local government.

As we also noted in the previous edition,[2] the population of third-country nationals in Greece remains to a large degree Christian. Of the 700,000 foreigners living in Greece in 2011, only 10 percent originated from Muslim-majority countries (mostly Afghanistan, Pakistan) – that is, 70,000 people, less than 1 percent of the population. The entry of refugees, especially from Syria, after 2015 has undoubtedly increased this population, to a point that it has now reached a share of 1 percent of the general population. This figure bears no relationship whatsoever to the outrageous numbers that Greek far-right groups and parties claim. They are playing an obvious game – a favourite tactic – that of arbitrary numbers.

Radical Islamism does indeed constitute a cause for concern, and there is great need for mobilisation and action to contain it. Let us, though, keep in mind that this particular radicalism is fuelled by social marginalisation and discrimination. From this perspective, institutionalised Greek racism (the back-pedalling on the construction of a mosque in Athens is a poignant example) objectively feeds the – very few, however – radical tendencies in the country.

2. Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, p. 42.

In this context, it would be very useful to demand the political participation, as well as the representation, of the migrant and refugee population in the political scene. On this issue, the parties of the left, but also all democratic parties, ought to act as a catalyst. However, in Greece no party seems to be seeking this demand or have even conceived it as an issue.

☐

WHOSE HEALTH IS IN DANGER AFTER ALL?

Thousands of people, refugees and migrants, among them many young children, enter Greece on a daily basis … The threat to the health of those entering [the country], and subsequently to public health, is evident and significant.

THE TRUTH IS THAT, in the field of public health, government rhetoric has largely shifted from the "health time bombs" that we were called to deconstruct in the past.[1] So much so that the then Minister for Migration Policy wondered in an interview: "Why is it considered natural and not admirable, pardon my expression, the fact that with 1.5 million persons passing through our country, we didn't have epidemics, we didn't have illnesses, we didn't have but a few deaths due to the conditions, and that those of Moria occurred in all probability due to the conditions."[2] The policy of geographic containment in the islands and the miserable conditions in the Reception and Identification Centres caused the deaths of at least six people in the three months from November 2016 to January 2017 alone.[3]

We don't know whether the deaths "made us wiser", as the minister in question, Yiannis Mouzalas, said in an admittedly unfortunate statement. However, we do not seem to have yet fully understood one simple truth: migrants and refugees are not a threat to public health; on the contrary, the conditions in which they are forced to live are a threat to their own health. Since May 2016, the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO) has conducted weekly epidemiological observations
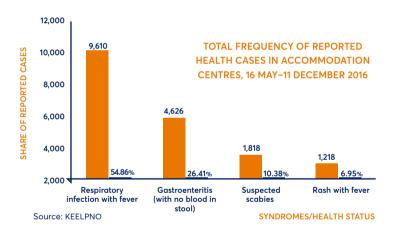
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1. Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, pp. 29–35.

2. Ministry for Migration Policy, "Interview of the minister, Mr. Yiannis Mouzalas, with SKAI" (in Greek), 10 January 2018 (https://bit.ly/2ttRiQc).

3. Pro Asyl/Refugee Support Aegean, "Greek Hotspots: Deaths Not to Be Forgotten," 15 June 2017 (https://bit.ly/2Is51vi).

in all centres accommodating migrants and refugees, collecting data that is relevant to public health.[4]

The presentation of the results for the second half of 2016 fully confirms the picture of the past:[5] the vast majority of the diagnoses concerns respiratory tract infections, gastrointestinal disorders and skin conditions (which are linked, as is commonly agreed, to overcrowding), the lack of hygienic conditions, and food quality. A similar, if not worse, picture can be observed in the – once again overcrowded – administrative detention centres for migrants and in police stations, where the Greek Council for Refugees describes the conditions as "unspeakable".[6]

TOTAL FREQUENCY OF REPORTED HEALTH CASES IN ACCOMMODATION CENTRES, 16 MAY–11 DECEMBER 2016

SHARE OF REPORTED CASES

Respiratory infection with fever	Gastroenteritis (with no blood in stool)	Suspected scabies	Rash with fever
9,610	4,626	1,818	1,218
54.86%	26.41%	10.38%	6.95%

Source: KEELPNO

SYNDROMES/HEALTH STATUS

This picture is also confirmed by the findings of large medical organisations such as Doctors Without Borders, which also adds the factor of the deteriorating psychological health of persons already overwhelmed after fleeing their countries caused by the

4. See KEELPNO website (http://bit.ly/2H5wExo).
5. See Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, p. 29.
6. Elli Zotou, "Detention is the new tendency in the management of the refugee issue" (in Greek), *I Augi*, 18 January 2018 (https://bit.ly/2IoXZHX).

unsuitable living conditions in the organised camps and centres.[7] The same picture is also corroborated by other clinical studies that directly link the most frequently observed disorders (respiratory, dermatological, etc.) to living conditions.[8] All evidence, hence, points to the same conclusion: we speak of a population that, demonstrably, is mostly threatened by its living conditions.

This picture also concerns mass accommodation spaces, i.e. Reception and Identification Centres and Accommodation Centres, and is of course completely unrelated to the population residing in guesthouses and apartments,[9] where epidemiological observations have not recorded incidents deviating from the general population. The vaccination of minors also follows the general population standards.[10]

So, despite the recorded problems of insufficient access to the health system,[11] we cannot help but note that the circumstances of the populations residing under humane conditions in urban centres is much better. This, however, is not just a detail: it goes without saying that the state's responsibility is much bigger for the populations deprived of their freedom. When the state, for any reason, deprives a person of their freedom, it has even greater responsibility for their health and physical integrity. This con-

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7. Doctors Without Borders, "In Greece of 2016: Vulnerable persons left behind" (in Greek), 20 October 2016 (https://bit.ly/2tvcDIW).

8. Amanda M. Rojek et al., "Clinical assessment is a neglected component of outbreak preparedness: evidence from refugee camps in Greece," *BMC Medicine 16*, no. 43 (2018) (https://bit.ly/2MoomzX).

9. Regarding the accommodation programme, see http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/home/.

10. Ministry of Education, "Why children's health is not endangered by refugee children" (in Greek), 3 February 2017 (https://bit.ly/2lDzOwd).

11. Generation 2.0 For Rights Equality and Diversity, "Violation of Refugee Rights by the Administration: Joint Letter" (in Greek), 4 August 2017 (https://bit.ly/2KiWkFw).

cerns not only detention centres and police stations, but also the islands, given the fact that the imposition of geographical restrictions comprises a measure restricting freedom,[12] and therefore renders the competent authorities fully responsible for the living conditions of the people.

12. Vasileios Papadopoulos, Legal Service coordinator of the Greek Council for Refugees, "Legal limitations on the freedom of asylum seekers apart from detention" (in Greek), proposal to the conference "Fundamental Human Rights and their application," 15 January 2018 (https://bit.ly/2Mpe-bLH).

HAS SYRIZA TURNED GREECE INTO A DEFENCELESS COUNTRY?

> **Under the Syriza government, everyone has realised that Greece is a defenceless country. No deterrence policy was adopted. Economic migrants were equated with refugees and were allowed to continue their journey to Europe.[1]**
> **(Kyriakos Mitsotakis, *Efimerida ton Syntakton,* 2 March 2016)**

SYRIZA'S COMING TO POWER brought changes to the generalised practice of administrative detention. Unfortunately, though, things soon enough reverted to their former state: the most recent official data refers to 3,661 detainees in administrative detention on the mainland alone, with the Minister for Migration Policy stating that "closed migrant detention centres will facilitate the asylum process".[2] The existence of a large number of administrative detainees is confirmed by a Greek Ombudsman report that recorded 2,598 detainees in pre-removal centres in 2017.[3]

At the moment, eight pre-removal detention centres (known as Prokeka, from their Greek acronym) exist in the country: at Petrou Ralli, Amygdaleza, Corinth, Xanthi, Paranesti in Drama, Fylakio in Orestiada, Moria and Kos. To the number of detainees in those centres must be added the persons being held in administrative detention in police stations: a recent estimate put this figure at 1,300 persons, rendering the total number of administrative detainees in Greece among the highest in the EU.[4] What makes these figures worse is that there are also many unaccompanied minors among the detainees.[5]

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1. Babis Agrolabos, "Greece under the Syriza government: a defenceless country" (in Greek), *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 2 March 2016 (https://bit.ly/2Rysgd5).

2. "Mouzalas: Closed migrant detention centres will facilitate the asylum process" (in Greek), *HuffPost Greece*, 31 March 2017 (https://bit.ly/2tDo2FS).

3. Greek Ombudsman, "Special report of the Greek Ombudsman on forced returns of third-country nationals" (in Greek), September 2018 (https://bit.ly/2Tbi0Iu).

4. Elli Zotou, "Detention, the new tendency in refugee management" (in Greek), *I Augi*, 18 January 2018 (https://bit.ly/2IoXZHX).

5. Myrto Tilianaki, "Asylum-seeking kids locked up in Greece: govern-

What does the law provide and what is the reality?

Administrative detention can be imposed under Greek law on anyone found illegally present in Greek territory. Detention is a potential measure, mostly imposed when a third-country national is deemed a danger to public order and safety or to ensure his/her deportation from the country. Chiefly, detention should be judged individually for each third-country national and constitute a last resort, after all other possibilities have been exhausted.

Unfortunately, the practice is very different. In March 2018, for that matter, MPs from the ruling Syriza party reported arrests of third-country nationals with strong bonds to Greece and who, in fact, fulfilled the criteria for legal residence.[6] It is clear, therefore, that, after a tendency to avoid generalised detention in 2015, the practice has made a comeback, with the authorities ordering detention indiscriminately without examining the substantial prerequisites. The result is a mass imprisonment of people who have not committed any offence and whose sole "crime" is that they do not possess legal documents.

Regretfully, in public discourse what goes without saying is still hushed up. To provide some examples: First, this detention is of an administrative and not a penal nature. The detained migrants are not criminals. Secondly, those entitled to political asylum in particular have not illegally entered the country. Thirdly, if removal from the country's territory cannot be achieved or is de facto impossible, long-term detention is rendered not only pointless, but also illegal.

No one can deny that the arrest and removal of third-country nationals who have entered the country illegally is a responsibil-

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ment should transfer children on their own from cells to safe housing," *Human Rights Watch*, 23 January 2018 (https://bit.ly/2n6FKOC).

6. Greek Parliament, Reply to parliamentary question 4704 (in Greek), 26 March 2018 (https://bit.ly/2Kj6zgf).

ity of the state. In the coming years, this is going to be an even more urgent issue, considering that a significant number of those people that arrived in 2015 and 2016 originate from countries with low rates of asylum recognition and, in the end, are likely to receive a negative decision, which means that they will automatically fall into the "undocumented" category.

These jurisdictions, however, do not operate in a vacuum but are obliged to follow certain general rules that concern special issues, such as access to the asylum process, adequate access to fundamental rights such as health care or the respect of general rights, such as detention conditions and the legitimacy of the deprivation of liberty.[7]

It is of crucial importance to find a strategy that is balanced, on the one hand, between the return policy and, only if deemed necessary, detention, and, on the other, the proportional and rational application of legal tools. It is essential, that is, to draw up an operational plan regarding the time limits of administrative detention and the alternative to detention measures, given that generalised detention, apart from the issues relating to fundamental rights, is deemed costly and ineffective, based on international experience.

The perceived generalisation of administrative detention constitutes a serious threat to the rule of law, turning detention from an ultimate individual administrative measure into a means of deterrence in migration policy. It pushes the targeted population itself into obscurity in order to avoid arrest, resulting in the existence of persons institutionally "invisible". In this context, there is also an urgent need for the administrative practice to comply with the legislation, which provides that alternative

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7. Konstantinos Tsitselikis, "The black iceberg" (in Greek), *Protagon*, 9 April 2013 (https://bit.ly/2KjV70Q).

measures that do not entail detention are favourable and should always be taken into consideration prior to the ultimate recourse to detention. The generalisation of an alternative to detention measures (for example, the obligation to appear at a police station, the retention of travel documents, the provision of suitable guarantees) is the only path that combines safety with the respect of rights.

Geographical restriction: a new form of detention?

After the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement of 18 March 2016, the Greek Police and/or the Asylum Service started imposing restrictions on the movement ("geographical restrictions") of third-country nationals entering the country without legal formalities through its maritime borders pending the completion of the asylum process or their removal from the country.

The law provides that vulnerable groups are exempt from geographical restriction. However, the administrative procedure for the determination of vulnerability is an extremely problematic procedure, as every organisation working in this field can attest.[8] In any case, though, the imposition of the measure restricting movement to each island involves a restriction of liberty, and therefore, its systematic and indiscriminate imposition is arbitrary. Regretfully, the EU-Turkey agreement has transformed whole islands into detention spaces, which is extremely problematic for both the safety and the social cohesion of entire areas.

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8. See, for example, Doctors Without Borders, "Dramatic deterioration in the conditions for asylum seekers in Lesvos," 13 July 2017 (https://bit.ly/2M-jykCE); and Social Change Initiative/Greek Council for Refugees, *Borderlines of Despair: First-line reception of asylum seekers at the Greek borders*, 25 May 2018 (https://bit.ly/2OuXoeG).

IS IT TRUE THAT FOREIGNERS ARE TAKING OUR JOBS?

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No free provision for "refugees" when there are homeless and unemployed Greek citizens.[1]

IN THE PREVIOUS EDITION,[2] we expressed some thoughts and quoted certain data on the impact of migration on the labour market. Basically, we had claimed that the increase in the number of migrants during the ten years from 1998 to 2008 was accompanied by a dynamic development of the Greek economy (with a GDP growth rate 3.5 percent per year, a decrease in the unemployment rate from 11.4 to 7.9 percent, an increase in the number of jobs by 540,000), which proves that under specific circumstances, migration is accompanied by the creation of jobs and not the taking of them from the local population. We had also claimed, based on Eurostat data,[3] that the crisis after 2008 affected migrants much more than the local population, and, for that matter, older migrants much more than new ones.

We believe that these observations still apply: however, there are also certain developments after 2014 that are worth noting. The increased refugee flow from 2014 to 2018 was a development of little consequence to the employment market. The majority of the refugee population in the first phase (which we can define as the period of well-founded expectation of movement towards the European North, that is, up to 20 March 2016) did not in essence attempt to seek employment in Greece; their main aim was a quick exit from the country. The period after the implementation of the agreement, despite the fact that it significantly limited this possibility to move North, was not, however, accompanied by a change in relation to the integration of the refugees of the

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1. Kyriakos Velopoulos, "No free provision for 'refugees' when there are homeless and unemployed Greek citizens" (in Greek), *Voice News*, 6 July 2018 (https://bit.ly/2IaPxNL).
2. Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, pp. 35–37.
3. Manolis G. Drettakis, "Foreigners don't take jobs, they lose the ones they have" (in Greek), *I Augi*, 1 September 2013 (https://bit.ly/2KjZ7OF).

2014–2018 period into the employment market. In their vast majority, the 60,000 refugees of this period remain outside the labour market. There has been no significant trend towards integration. Among the reasons for this incompatible course are a) the continuous expectation of movement towards countries of the European North, particularly Germany, through either established procedures, such as family reunification, or illegally; b) the language barrier; and c) the fact integration policies are still in an embryonic stage, especially in the labour market. An indication of the third point is the fact that it took the Greek authorities two years, as well as the publication of briefing notes and an explanatory circular,[4] to convince public services to apply existing legislation allowing refugees to be provided with a social security number (AMKA), a necessary condition for their employment.

At the same time, unemployment has gradually receded in the country. From 27.1 percent in 2014, the Hellenic Statistical Authority recorded a 19.5 percent unemployment rate in May 2018.[5] However, the quality of the jobs created (types of contracts, pay) is a very real and significant issue. However, contrary to what the far right repeats monotonously, we have to conclude that the unemployment curve had no bearing on the curve of migrants and refugees living in the country. This also derives from the experience of the people working in organisations that provide services to the refugee population, who observe that this is a population that continues to survive mostly on UNHCR benefits and provisions, and much less on its own employment.

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4. See explanatory circular of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity, protocol no. 31547/9662/13-2-2018 on the provision of AMKA to international protection beneficiaries and asylum seekers.

5. "Greek unemployment falls below 20 pct in May," *Ekathimerini*, 9 August 2018 (http://bit.ly/2BF1oSt).

In reality, the problem is the exact opposite of what the far right claims. The point where Greece falls tragically short is the existence of an active integration policy, in the form of encouraging the employment of the refugee population, language education and the removal of the various obstacles that the authorities invent and put in the refugees' path.

The 2015 refugee flow in Germany was considered by the German elite as an opportunity to overcome labour shortages. In this context, this – unprogrammed or even unregulated – arrival was considered integral to the plan for the development of the German economy. Can Greece's much smaller refugee flow find a place in a respective plan? This question should be answered not by the refugees themselves but by the private and public bodies responsible for employment.

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SHOULD THEY NOT INTEGRATE FIRST AND THEN ENROL IN OUR SCHOOLS?

As the government spends that much money on setting up accommodation centres, why does it not create separate learning centres for these children?[1]

THE FULL AND EQUAL access to education for refugee children is a right derived from international conventions. In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), articles 28 and 29 cover the right to education, article 2 the principle of non-discrimination, and articles 6 and 12 the rights to personal development and to social participation, respectively.

The arrival of refugees from Muslim-majority countries mobilised a series of phobic reflexes, which were activated after the familiar instigation of Greek far-right groups and parties. One would expect that refugee children would be exempted, but the reality is quite different. In several of the country's regions, there were mobilisations by parents demanding that refugee children be debarred from enrolling in and attending school. Unfortunately in some cases, these mobilisations were encouraged by the stance of local government officials.[2]

However, the refugee children population (15,000–20,000) is not yet large enough to justify panic, even for people with xenophobic tendencies. At this point, we should keep in mind that in the early 1990s the Greek educational system had taken in a much larger number of foreign students and, for that matter, in the context of the complete absence of registration and lack of legal

1. Statement of Asterios Gavotsis, mayor of Oreokastro, Thessaloniki, at a meeting of the Municipal Council. See "Video: tension and speeches at the extraordinary meeting of Oreokastro council on refugee children" (in Greek), *thestival.gr*, 2 September 2016 (http://bit.ly/2U5ifVA).

2. See, for example, Phaedra Brattou, "A cascade of reaction against refugee children in schools" (in Greek), *I Kathimerini*, 1 October 2016 (https://bit.ly/2mqFhtK); and "Skoutari: They didn't send their children to school because of the refugee children," *ERT*, 19 October 2018 (https://bit.ly/2FAW5bd).

documents for the children or their parents. It was then deemed (and rightly so) that the children's access to education comes first, above any kind of shortcoming concerning the residence status of the children or their parents. The wisdom of this choice is proved on a daily basis through the participation of those children, second-generation migrants, in social life.

The present government has tried to balance the effort to integrate the children into the educational system with the concerns of local societies. The solution it opted for in the end was the organisation of the educational system for refugee children in two pillars: (a) Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP) for children in open reception centres, which means afternoon classes in existing schools or a separate facility inside the open accommodation centres, and (b) Educational Priority Zones (ZEP) for the rest of the areas, which means morning classes in existing schools.

The government has tried to ensure the access to education for a large number of refugee children, which has been accomplished to a great extent, and this is something that must be acknowledged. On the other hand, the choice for this particular integration infrastructure received much criticism, much of it unfounded.[3] We believe it would be better for DYEP and ZEP to operate in the morning hours, along with reception classes and tuition classes in the afternoon hours. In addition, we maintain that the accommodation of refugees is preferable within the urban fabric and not in isolated reception centres. We also regard as problematic the existence of a double educational structure in the form of the creation of special schools inside the camps. This solution demonstrates all the problems of ghettoisation.

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3. See, for example, Kontodima Evangelia, "A look at refugee education today" (in Greek), *I Augi*, 26 March 2017 (https://bit.ly/2lBnQDG).

In a December 2016 report, the Greek Ombudsman recorded a series of problems in the implementation of educational planning, which largely remain to this day.[4] There still is no DYEP kindergarten, meaning children's classes take place inside Reception and Accommodation Centres, nor a ZEP middle school or high school. Finally, there is no planning for minors over 15 years old, resulting in this population dropping out of school.

The children's integration in school is undoubtedly what comes first. School provides regularity in a child's life and in family life, especially after an often long absence from the educational process. From this perspective, we should facilitate the refugee families facing problems such as the lack of birth certificates and not hinder enrolment. In this regard, there are still several problems.

At the same time, we acknowledge that the issue of refugee children's education is not simple. There is great need for targeted action to face special issues (ensuring the enrolment of girls in school and averting their dropping out, training for educators, hiring interpreters and intercultural mediators, and effective guardianship in the case of unaccompanied minors).

At the same time, a concerted endeavour is needed to socialise the children (as well as their parents) in the local community. In that, a solidarity effort within the realm of local government would be critical.

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4. Dimitra Soulele, "Monitoring mechanism: The rights of children on the move in Greece" (in Greek), *Greek Ombudsman*, 7 December 2016 (https://bit.ly/2lAEovv).

HOW MANY ISOLATED INCIDENTS MAKE UP A RACIST PHENOMENON?

Racist crime (hate crime): a criminal offence, that is motivated by hostility against a person or a group, on the basis of a particular real, or perceived by the perpetrator, characteristic of the victim(s). These characteristics vary, according to the scope of protection that each state wishes to provide, and in the Greek legal system they entail committing an act of hate instigated by race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability of the victim.

Police do not look the other way when it comes to racist attacks.[1]

IT IS NOW COMMON KNOWLEDGE that there was a sharp increase in organised racist attacks from 2011 to 2013. It is also common knowledge that in the crucial period after the murder of Pavlos Fyssas and the pre-trial detention of leading Golden Dawn figures on charges of forming a criminal organisation, the recorded incidents fell visibly. The significant decrease in cases of attacks by assault squads can be seen two ways: apart from the positive associations that it obviously has, it comes to corroborate the numerous reports on the existence of these assault squads, against which the Greek state was unfortunately very slow in taking action.

Consequently, and despite the positive steps, the long-term institutional tolerance of crimes of a racist nature does not seem to have been adequately treated: during a presentation of the Racist Violence Recording Network report to the responsible parliamentary committee, one coalition MP from the Independent Greeks party did not hesitate to reproach the chair for thanking a speaker who "offended the Greek people with his words".[2] It has become increasingly evident that racist crime remains a concerning fixture in Greek society, and that the circumstances fuelling and reproducing it consistently re-emerge in daily life, with the management of the migration and refugee issue defining the development of the climate to a great extent.

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1. Statement of Nikos Toskas, Minister for Citizen Protection, in light of the racist attacks in Aspropyrgos: "Toskas: Police does not look the other way when it comes to racist attacks" (in Greek), *The Press Project*, 21 October 2017 (https://bit.ly/2OOp0sa); see also, HumanRights360, "Sworn testimony for the Racist Attacks in Aspropyrgos," 22 April 2018 (http://bit.ly/2NcayKD).

2. Racist Violence Recording Network, "Presentation of the annual report of the Special Tactical Commission of Equality, Youth and Human Rights and the condemnation of racist discourse" (in Greek), 12 June 2017 (https://bit.ly/2yJB8Hw).

According to 2017 data, groups with xenophobic ideology strengthened their presence and manifestations of organised racist violence increased.[3] Some basic patterns can be observed:

1. The targeting of migrant communities, organisations and rights defenders, with the main goal of causing fear among people engaged in solidarity.[4]

2. The targeting of spaces accommodating migrants and refugees,[5] and xenophobic incidents in schools where refugee children are enrolled,[6] with the main goal of intimidating the population and sending the message: "you are not welcome".

3. The continuing of organised, high-intensity violent racist attacks in particular areas, such as Aspropyrgos, in Attica. Unfortunately, the institutional carelessness demonstrated by the state concerning these incidents continues to send the message to attackers that they can "keep beating up people undisturbed".[7]

A very important parameter on how the racist violence phenomenon will evolve in the country is undoubtedly the developments in the Golden Dawn trial – which is why every democratic citizen ought to stay informed and support the developments in the legal battle against neo-Nazism.[8]

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3. Racist Violence Recording Network, "RVRN Annual Report 2017," 28 March 2018 (http://bit.ly/2TQBBxy).

4. See "Arson attack at the Afghan community offices" (in Greek), *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 22 March 2018 (https://bit.ly/2lB42Qy); and Human League for Human Rights, "Today's threats of Krypteia against the HLHR" (in Greek), 22 March 2018 (https://bit.ly/2KdSI7S).

5. Sofia Houda, "Dafni: Attack at the house of 11-year-old Amir – parties' reactions" (in Greek), *ERT*, 3 November 2017 (https://bit.ly/2KbQOIT).

6. New tensions at primary school in Oreokastro over young refugees attending school" (in Greek), *HuffPost Greece*, 20 February 2017 (https://bit.ly/2MpzQn2).

7. HumanRights360, "Sworn Testimony for the Racist Attacks in Aspropyrgos."

8. See http://goldendawnwatch.org/.

There is, however, another important parameter: low-intensity racist violence – which is not recorded either by the authorities or the NGOs – is a daily reality in the lives of migrants and refugees, constituting the foundation on which the most extreme phenomena of racist violence can grow. The routinisation of racist violence and the increasing reluctance of victims to demand their fundamental rights signify a diminishing of the notion of the rule of law itself, which should indeed be of concern to everyone.

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MIGRATION IN GREECE:
A CRISIS WITHIN A CRISIS

AFTER THE ARAB SPRING in 2011 and the escalation of the war in Syria, the number of people seeking international protection in Europe – either through Turkey or through the central Mediterranean – began to grow. In 2015, the pressure on European borders increased dramatically, adding further problems to an EU already fragmented due to the economic crisis.

The significant political and communication coverage of the events of 2015 had many consequences: one of them was to present this particular crisis as something unprecedented for both the Greek and European reality. It was not exactly like that: however unprecedented in numbers, the situation also had some very familiar features. From a historical perspective, it was what migration has always been in Greece: a Greek crisis (of management) within another European crisis (of policy and of values).

Is there a refugee crisis, and where?

It is well-known that the UNHCR reports that there are more people displaced from their homes today than in any historic moment since the Second World War: more than 68 million. What is less known is that 85 percent of these people are situated in developing countries, while the EU – a bloc with over 500 million people – has received but a very small share.[1]

Therefore, the significant increase in flows towards Europe has not produced an internal refugee crisis: the real refugee crisis is

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1.   UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance: statistical yearbooks" (https://bit.ly/1YkKspr).

unfolding somewhere far away. Its management, however, clearly constitutes a reception crisis and a generalised crisis of the rule of law within EU states.

The migration and refugee flows of 2015 caused unprecedented panic among European governments. A series of measures was then proposed, such as relocation and the creation of the infamous hotspots for the registration of the population, and Greece was the country most called upon to implement them.

Despite the measures, however, the people continued their journey through the Balkan route. The decision to relocate within the EU was considered – astonishingly so, in all fairness – a solution to the problem of irregular movements, that would also direct those people to the system proposed by the European states. It is indeed astonishing how EU officials could believe that a system extremely complex and structurally based on the doctrine of deterrence, which the governments themselves as well as the European citizens mistrust, would appear convincing in the eyes of people who had travelled thousands of kilometres for a safer and better future.

Of course, it didn't happen like that. And within the narrative of the crisis that it had constructed for itself, Europe has since engaged in a constant dismantling and circumvention of its own rules and decisions.

In the end, who does Europe answer to?

For the discerning reader, this ostensible contradiction between the declared and fundamental principles of the EU and its real courses of action does not come as a particular surprise. So, Greece found itself once again in the midst of a constant process, where the EU has attempted through its executive branch – the European Commission, but also its agencies – to intensify the doctrine of deterrence, bypassing the institutional procedures and accountability mechanisms that it is supposed to serve. And, for that matter, to such an extent that bilateral agreements with

third countries now tend to substitute in practice EU law on migration and asylum.

So, no surprise: Europe kept trying to push the thousands of "uninvited" migrants and refugees trying to reach its shores further and further away from the European continent. The EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016 decreased the movement of Syrians towards Europe, despite the fact that over five million Syrians are still displaced by the war in neighbouring countries (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon). Although Afghanistan is becoming more and more dangerous, European governments insist on trying to deport Afghans to Kabul. And to deter undesirable migration from sub-Saharan Africa, Europe has not hesitated to financially strengthen the local warlords in Libya to stop the boats – the same people who were responsible until very recently for smuggling and are still responsible for unspeakable torture and atrocities.

Is the crisis over?

According to the prevailing narrative, the so-called "refugee crisis" reached its climax in 2015 and 2016 and has remained at a manageable level since. This narrative artfully obscures the reality. The crisis has only been geographically restricted, creating a constant picture of humanitarian destruction in the Mediterranean.

In May 2018, a coalition of organisations published a list of 34,361 people who died since 1993 as result of the "militarisation, asylum laws, detention policies and deportations" in Europe.[2] European policy, as it is developing, does nothing but accelerate the growth of this list.

European leaderships often urge us to think of "solutions" for the crisis, but crises are only solved when we face their real causes. As long as wars continue – wars often started or instigated by European states – people will continue to migrate. And the efforts of our

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2. On the circumstances of the refugee deaths, see Fatal Policies of Fortress Europe, "About the 'list of deaths'" (https://bit.ly/2zqTNpY).

governments to deter undesirable migration have resulted in the deterioration of the same problems that they attempt to solve.

The crisis is more present than ever. And if EU countries continue to exchange their legal obligations with voluntary humanitarian gestures, and the people entitled to international protection remain without legal pathways towards the EU, the long list of tens of thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean will keep growing.

What else could be done?
In the first edition, we stated that "often, people with good intentions reproach the Left because, according to their opinion, it settles for the statement of general humanitarian opinions and does not propose specific solutions of the migration issue".[3] Unfortunately, the left government did not wander off the beaten track, using the "realism" card as an answer to any kind of criticism. However, when human rights contrast with political reality, this is bad news for both human rights and for political reality.

Naturally, the people engaged in solidarity cannot substitute government policy: it was, however, an obligation of the left to build its government policy in a way that was complementary – and not in contrast – to these people. It did not do so: its policy discouraged and largely deactivated the large solidarity wave by more or less telling them in the spring of 2016 that "society cannot take any more".

This message was the result, understandably to a degree, of European pressure. A small state like Greece does not, of course, possess the power to change the correlations in the migration issue. Regretfully, however, the attempt at a complete paradigm shift and the promotion of a policy disconnected from the doctrine of deterrence and security was in the end undermined from within. So, the alignment with the Brussels agenda continued, in exchange for the ensuring of funding for the management of EU borders.

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3. Papastergiou and Takou, *Eleven Myths*, p. 50.

To make things worse, now that the numbers entering Europe and the funding has decreased, Greece is once again left on its own in a zero-sum game: an EU-Turkey (non-)agreement that serves no other purpose but the cramming of people on the islands, an increase in flows and the familiar constant violations of rights along the Evros River, with daily illegal pushbacks, the disruption in social cohesion and an increase in xenophobia.

Europe, of course, does not have a better track record in this field; rather the opposite. In 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants proposed two solutions in response to the crisis: the mass resettlement of Syrian refugees at an international level, and a temporary work visa status to facilitate the movement of refugees without them being trapped in deadly illegal routes. The reason why this did not happen is simple. European governments just did not want it to happen.

With the Dublin revision plan essentially frozen,[4] European leaders have begun occupying themselves with new ideas to resolve the ongoing political crisis on migration, reintroducing a different solution: the creation of processing centres for asylum applications outside the EU's (fully militarised) borders. They hope that by decreasing the flows towards the EU, they will face less pressure for a compromise regarding the distribution of responsibilities internally.

It is not a management shift. It is a structural shift that has been taking place for a while inside the EU which has become completely visible: in hard times, we return to national solutions. Every man for himself.

The creation of "disembarkation platforms"[5] and the adoption of the relevant argumentation by centre-right and centre-left parties,

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4. ANSA, "Talks on Dublin revision stall, sources say," *InfoMigrants,* 28 May 2018 (https://bit.ly/2O4k6dz).

5. David M. Herszenhorn and Jacopo Barigazzi, "EU leaders consider centers outside bloc to process refugees," *Politico*, 21 June 2018 (https://politi.co/2t6esfl).

but also by international organisations, such as the UNHCR and International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is a landmark moment in the fascistisation course of Europe. These platforms are presented as a way to provide international protection only to those needing to it. This obscures reality, for the definition of "refugee" is, apart from a legal concept, also a political concept, the demarcation of which is always a battle regarding who deserves it and who does not.

So, the advocates of deterrence and militarisation accuse anyone with a different point of view of being a naïve advocate of open borders. It is, of course, a false dichotomy, used simply as a pretext. In the 21st century, borders are not just lines on a map, but filtering systems for people – and the moral quality of the filter at the borders characterises and gives meaning to the civilisation and the democracy that these borders enclose. European leaderships seem to be trying to support the theory that we need to push away migrants in order to avoid fascists. What is really happening is that we are creating fascists to push away migrants.

In reality, hence, the sole dilemma that remains is whether we will continue to be a Europe that engages in the process of externalising migration management or one that returns to the fundamental principles of the rule of law and the EU acquis. Let us be honest: there is no simple solution to the migration issue; it should, however, be an issue that follows a moral compass. In that sense, and keeping in mind that migration will continue as long as the conditions that give birth to it exist (wealth inequality, poverty, wars, climate change), it is vitally important that we seek proposals that will combine realism with fairness and the respect for human rights.

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PERSISTENT MYTHS ABOUT MIGRATION IN GREECE

The refugee flow of 2015 radically changed the terms of the public discussion about the subjects of migration and asylum. The previous dead ends of European policy were exacerbated by the large number of refugees who sought refuge and protection on European soil. Europe chose to form its policy based on numbers and not on humanity, on border security and not on human rights, on the refugees' entrapment in the countries of first reception and not on a common distribution system, on a logic of deterrence and not on one of reception and integration.

Hence, with these changes in mind, this publication attempts to answer a series of questions, to deconstruct the myths circulated by the Greek far right, to assess the inadequacy of EU policy and to propose elements of a different policy on a European as well as on a national level, wherever that is possible.

> *"Let us be honest: there is no simple solution to the migration issue; it should, however, be an issue that follows a moral compass. In that sense, and keeping in mind that migration will continue as long as the conditions that give birth to it exist (wealth inequality, poverty, wars, climate change), it is vitally important that we seek proposals that will combine realism with fairness and the respect for human rights."*