

Asylum-Related Organisations and their Cooperation Partners in Selected European Countries

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The six European countries discussed in this book are members of the European Union (EU) and, as such, may share similar political systems, standards of living and values. However, they also differ in size, geographical position and historical and economic characteristics – factors that influence their ability to receive and integrate asylum seekers and refugees who are fleeing to Europe. In the preceding chapters, we presented our analysis of the asylum situation in each of the countries selected for our study. This concluding chapter focuses on comparing these countries by examining their respective asylum systems, asylum-related situations and the work done by the local refugee-related organisations and their cooperation partners. Such a comparison is necessary for determining how successful each country is in receiving and integrating asylum seekers and refugees.

Each of the countries in the MAREM project – Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Germany – plays a significant role in the European asylum system because of its geographical and geopolitical position. All of them are also likely to continue to be important destination points for people seeking protection in the future because of their various other features, such as established migrant communities, networks and other forms of organisation.

Characteristics of Studied Countries

Along with other factors mentioned below, the size of a country may be considered in estimating the potential number of immigrants that particular country can host, and may indicate how many immigrants can be successfully integrated into its local educational and pension systems, job market and so on. Specifically, Spain has the largest area (505,370 km²), followed in decreasing order by Germany (357,022 km²), Italy (301,340 km²), Greece (131,957 km²) and the insular states Cyprus (9,251 km²) and

Malta (316 km²). However, of the six countries being compared, Germany is the most densely populated, with a population of 81,1 million by the end of 2015.¹ Italy comes in second, with a population of almost 62,5 million, followed by Spain with 46,4 million. The population of Greece is only 11,5 million, that of Cyprus is 1,2 million and that of Malta is about 400,000. In addition, population density differs in each country (e.g. 84 people per km² in Greece vs. 1,361 per km² in Malta).

In addition to size and population, unemployment rates may also significantly affect a country's capacity to receive migrants. In countries that suffer from the effects of a high rate of unemployment, the willingness to host and welcome asylum seekers and refugees may not be as great as in countries with a rather low rate of unemployment. Among the group of countries we studied, Greece had the highest unemployment rate during the first half of 2016 (23,5%), with lower rates reported for Spain (19,6%), Cyprus (11,6%), Italy (11,4%) and Germany (4,2%); Malta has the lowest unemployment rate when compared with the other five countries (3,9%).²

In 2016, the number of first-time asylum applicants, the ratio of asylum applicants to inhabitants, the predominant countries of origin and asylum recognition rates all differed significantly from country to country. These results will now be analysed and are linked to each country's key characteristics, as shown in Table 1. For the most part, these numbers refer to 2016; only in the case of GDP per capita do we refer to 2015 data, and because these numbers are not expected to change dramatically over a period of one year, the lack of preliminary data for 2016 does not affect the general comparability of the data presented.

1 See https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/SocietyState/Population/CurrentPopulation/Tables/Census_SexAndCitizenship.html;jsessionid=7AF9A150FB3F9221A196FA86C5FD6EDC.cae3.

2 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries>.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the six countries studied in the MAREM project

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
Area (km ²) ³	505,370 (including Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla)	131,957	301,340	316	9,251	357,022
Population (mn) ⁴	46,4	11,5	62,5	0,4	1,2	81,1
Population density per km ²	93 ⁵	84 ⁶	207 ⁷	1,361 ⁸	126 ⁹	234 ¹⁰
Unemployment rate as of July 2016 (%) ¹¹	19,6	23,5	11,4	3,9	11,6	4,2
GDP per capita (2015) (US\$)	25,864 ¹²	18,064 ¹³	29,867 ¹⁴	24,103 ¹⁵	22,903 ¹⁶	40,997 ¹⁷

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- 3 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/326957/umfrage/flaechen-der-eu-laender/>.
 - 4 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253383/total-population-of-the-eu-member-states-by-country/>.
 - 5 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=ES>.
 - 6 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=GR>.
 - 7 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=IT>.
 - 8 http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/sid_102A39E8C66197CF6E9DDF9D7E197FC4/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Laender/Malta.html?nnm=383178.
 - 9 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=CY>.
 - 10 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=DE>.
 - 11 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries>.
 - 12 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/19400/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-spanien>.
 - 13 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/14434/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-griechenland>.
 - 14 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/14438/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf-in-italien>.
 - 15 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/312519/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bip-pro-kopf-in-malta>.
 - 16 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/234226/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bip-pro-kopf-in-zypern>.
 - 17 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/166224/umfrage/ranking-der-20-laender-mit-dem-groessten-bruttoinlandsprodukt-pro-kopf>.

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
First-time asylum applicants: Q1 + Q2 2016 ¹⁸	6,875	17,205	49,375	770	1,145	361,710
Asylum applicants per million inhabitants: Q1 + Q2 2016 ¹⁹	148	1,591	813	1,786	1,353	4,428
Main countries of origin ²⁰	Syria, Ukraine, Palestine ²¹	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq	Nigeria, Gambia, Pakistan	Libya, Syria	Syria, Palestine, ²² Vietnam	Syria, Albania, Kosovo
Total recognition rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016 ²³	71	21	36	85	71	68
Subsidiary protection rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016 ²⁴	67	3	13	69	62	9
Refugee rate (%): Q1 + Q2 2016 ²⁵	4	18	5	11	10	58

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- 18 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_time_asylum_applicants_Q2_2015_%E2%80%93_Q2_2016.png.
- 19 Adapted from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7662180/3-22092016-AP-EN.pdf/22f5de3b-b5a8-4195-82fe-3072a4a08146>.
- 20 [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five_main_citizenships_of_\(non-EU\)_asylum_applicants_2015_\(number_of_first_time_applicants,_rounded_figures\)_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five_main_citizenships_of_(non-EU)_asylum_applicants_2015_(number_of_first_time_applicants,_rounded_figures)_YB16.png).
- 21 Referring to stateless persons originating from the occupied Palestinian territories.
- 22 Referring to stateless persons originating from the occupied Palestinian territories.
- 23 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.
- 24 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.
- 25 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany
Total decisions: Q1 + Q2 2016²⁶	4,515	4,520	47,505	830	1,100	256,680
Rejected decisions: Q1 + Q2 2016²⁷	1,310	3,555	30,510	125	325	82,450

Source: Adapted from the information provided by individual chapters of this book.

The composition of the main countries of origin may correspond in part to each country's geographical position, particularly when one considers that asylum seekers are fleeing war-ridden Syria and the ongoing conflicts in several African and Middle Eastern regions, Asia and Ukraine. Naturally, the locations of these conflicts and the possible escape routes will to some extent dictate the routes taken and the means of arriving (e.g. by boat); however, other factors should be considered as well, including high population densities (e.g. Malta) and size of territory, because these characteristics play an important role in determining the specific circumstances confronting each country and thus determining heterogeneous outcomes.

By July 2016, Greece had both the highest unemployment rate (23,5%) and the lowest GDP per capita (US\$ 18,064) when compared with the other countries studied. In contrast, Germany had by far the highest GDP (US \$ 40,997) and a very low unemployment rate (4,2%), and Malta alone showed slightly better unemployment results as of July 2016 (3,9%).

Individuals seeking protection in Spain are mostly Syrians, Ukrainians and Palestinians from Syria. The main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Greece are Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, whereas in Italy the majority of asylum seekers are from Nigeria, Gambia and Pakistan. In Malta, the main countries of origin are Libya and Syria, and most of the asylum seekers who arrive in Cyprus come from Syria, Palestine and Vietnam. The main groups seeking protection in Germany are Syrians, Albanians and Kosovars.

26 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

27 Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/5/53/First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates%2C_1st_quarter_2016.png and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_by_outcome_and_recognition_rates_2nd_quarter_2016.png.

Cyprus and Greece are the countries closest to Syria, Cyprus being only 97 km west of Syria and Greece having several islands near the border of Turkey, which shares a border with Syria. Malta is 290 km south of Libya, and Spanish enclaves in Morocco are accessible via the African continent. Although Spain borders the sea, only a few asylum seekers arrived by boat in 2015;²⁸ most arrivals by boat as of October 2016 occurred in Italy (158,062) and in Greece (169,459).²⁹ Europe-wide, there has been a decrease in arrivals by sea: in 2015, there were 1,015,078, compared with only 347,098 so far³⁰ in 2016.³¹ Although Greece received the highest number of entries into Greek territory, Greece is used mostly as a transit country (Banulescu-Bogdan and Fratzke 2015: 1).

Regarding both asylum applications per million inhabitants and recognition rates in different countries during the first and second quarters (Q1 + Q2) of 2016, there were 813 applications in Italy, and the recognition rate was 36 per cent. In Greece, the recognition rate was 21 per cent in Q1 + Q2 of 2016, and the number of the asylum applications per million inhabitants was 1,591. In Spain, the number of asylum applicants in the first half of 2016 was 148 per million inhabitants, with a recognition rate of 71 per cent. In Germany, 4,428 applications per million inhabitants were recorded, while 68 per cent of applications were approved. Cyprus saw 1,353 applications per million inhabitants, with a recognition rate of 71 per cent. Malta had one of the highest first-instance recognition rates in Europe in the first half of 2016 (85%), facing 1,786 applications per million inhabitants.

Empirical Results of the MAREM Project

The following section summarises the main empirical results of the MAREM research project undertaken in 2016 and involving six selected EU countries. First, we focus on each nation's characteristics and the status of its asylum procedure and on the work of asylum-related organisa-

28 <http://www.unhcr.org/mt/charts>.

29 http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php#_ga=1.241080067.145257414.1454063806.

30 Date of reference: 11/27/2016.

31 http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php#_ga=1.241080067.145257414.1454063806.

tions and their cooperation networks. We then proceed to discuss the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in each country.

National Characteristics, Asylum Procedures and Work of Asylum-Related Organisations and Their Networks

Spain. The networks of asylum-related organisations in Madrid are heterogeneous with regard to their actor types and spatial reach, although the majority of these actors share similar driving norms and values. Indicators of isomorphism can be identified in the refugee-related organisational field of Spanish organisations, in that their staff members have similar educational backgrounds. These organisations and their partners exchange experiences and rely on funding from the government, which can lead to the assimilation of different actors to one another. Larger and older organisations tend to choose strategic partners. With regard to the implementation of the asylum system on the operational level, we see a gap between talk and action. As a rule the asylum procedure in Spain is prolonged (two years instead of the three months proposed by law), and some organisations focus on push-back practices at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla. Experts state that CEAS in Spain exists on paper only and that funding for asylum-related projects is limited.

Greece. Regarded as one of the main entrance points of the EU, Greece has to face an uncertain and ever-changing asylum situation that is shaped mainly by EU-level decisions. For people on the move, there is no legal way of migrating. Experts report a lack of good hygiene and medical care in the detention centres, and the Greek asylum system fails to provide residence permits and financial aid. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serve in place of government services, and in this context cooperation among the asylum-related organisations is very important. Organisations share their expertise and resources, and a certain degree of homogeneity is evident in terms of the educational background of their staff. Many organisations build their networks with a focus on one project to raise awareness in Greek society and to put pressure on asylum-related politics. In most cases, cooperation between NGOs is not official but instead consists in informal, ad hoc cooperation networks that have expanded over time. Many new NGOs have emerged in response to the refugee crisis. Cooperation networks lean towards heterogeneity with regard to relevant features

of the actors, but there is also a tendency towards homogenisation, as is evident in the similar educational backgrounds of the organisations' staff and their driving norms.

The interviewed experts state that the Greek government shows good intentions towards improving the asylum system but is currently unable to cope with the situation. There are apparent structural deficiencies that make the situation in the country even more difficult. As a tendency of isomorphism, many NGOs deliberately dissociate themselves from the government so they can remain independent and criticise the government's actions. They do not want to collaborate with the state for fear of losing their credibility. However, their reliance on government funding leads to a general feeling of dependency. Tendencies towards mimetic isomorphism are evident in the organisational field – that is, actors tend to copy the others' best practices, with new organisations in particular orientating themselves to the older ones. Well-established organisations, however, rely mostly on their own practices. Although there is a discernible gap between talk and action within organisations, a gap certainly exists regarding the implementation of CEAS.

Greek officials and the European border control agency Frontex have reported human rights violations against asylum seekers in detention camps. Greece is considered the weakest link when it comes to managing the European refugees because of the poor state of its asylum system, its very low recognition rates, human rights violations and pending procedures because of the state's inability to document, register and process the high number of asylum seekers. To improve the situation, a new Ministry for Migration Policy was created. Of major importance for the asylum situation in Europe was the EU–Turkey agreement of 2016, which greatly decreased the number of arrivals in Greece.

Italy. In Italy, NGOs play a fundamental role in defending migrants' rights. As with Greece, the state is not able to fulfil its duties, resulting in a gap between talk and action. Governmental organisations (GOs) play a leading role in the asylum system, and NGOs must adapt to and accept this hierarchy while also trying to fill the gap between talk and action left by the Italian state. Asylum-related actors are well connected to one another, establishing and working in heterogeneous networks in terms of the organisations' tasks and services. Because of the many asylum seekers arriving by boat and the many deaths at sea, rescue missions have been implemented, and these rescue-at-sea operations are strictly defined by a network of formal agreements among the organisations. Triton, the rescue

mission led by Frontex, currently operates in the Mediterranean Sea, which replaced the former Mare Nostrum mission. In response to the large number of asylum seekers arriving in Italy, special relocation centres – ‘hotspots’ – were established, which are located along the coast and are run mainly by EU agencies such as Frontex and EASO. Three of these hotspots are currently operating in Italy, and in 2015, 144 people were re-located in this way.

Malta. The Maltese organisations show a high degree of homogeneity with regard to hiring and employing staff. Isomorphic processes are at work in the asylum-related organisational field. As in the other countries we studied, the organisations in Malta exchange best practices. The asylum-related organisations also attempt to institutionalise cooperation with one another. Their networks are diverse, and cooperation and exchange increasingly occur on the European level. Although the incorporation of CEAS into Maltese law has enhanced cooperation among these organisations, difficulties continue to exist regarding access to the labour market, legal aid and information policy. Although its office is in Malta, EASO has little influence, if any, on the Maltese asylum-related actors.

Cyprus. The situation in Cyprus is similar to that in Malta. NGOs fill the gap left by the state and play a major role in both the reception and the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The Cypriot NGOs are well connected, but more cooperation with the government is needed. Although the asylum system is designed to meet EU standards, integrating migrants into the labour market is difficult. CEAS is regarded as ambiguous: in general, the organisations welcome a common approach, but they criticise CEAS for not meeting the needs of each individual country. As CEAS slowly begins working on the European level, the Cypriot organisations believe they are not influenced by its regulations, owing in part to the fact that most Cypriot asylum-related organisations and their cooperation partners operate on a national level. Most of their cooperation networks are based locally and nationally and have stopped expanding. The organisations orientate themselves to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and have developed a kind of burden-sharing in the way they divide their field of work, specialise in different tasks and share their respective knowledge and experience. Cypriot NGOs try to fill the gap between the government’s actions and the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The regular asylum procedure in Cyprus usually requires a maximum of six months, but now an accelerated procedure has specific time limits for the final decision and for submitting an appeal, which may shorten the waiting time.

This procedure is expected to be part of national legislation but has not yet been put into practice.

Germany. In Germany, NGOs also play an important role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees and sometimes even fulfil state duties. The state outsources some tasks to NGOs, which address them with the help of many volunteers. In Bochum, intense networking among asylum-related organisations is evident. They exchange information and often copy the best practices of other actors, contributing to the isomorphic processes in the asylum-related organisational field. The networks of these organisations tend to be homogeneous in terms of their spatial reach, driving norms and values. In contrast, networks are rather heterogeneous when it comes to actor type. A gap between talk and action can be observed mostly with regard to the treatment and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In the experts' opinion, the CEAS standards are not yet being implemented and properly applied in Germany.

Implementation of CEAS

Although the asylum systems in the six countries generally function in accordance with the CEAS directives, their practical implementation varies from country to country and is not regarded as successful by most experts in the countries we studied.

Greece. The Greek state appears to be unable to implement the CEAS guidelines on its own. National authorities used to control the Greek asylum system, and the police were previously responsible for some of the asylum decisions. Inhuman living conditions of asylum seekers in Greece have been reported, and experts consider the asylum system in Greece to be insufficient because of various human rights violations. Moreover, medical and hygiene provisions are lacking, and even the minimum standards in the Greek camps are not met.

Spain. Many organisation members in Spain also regard the asylum system in their country as insufficient. As is the case in the other countries, Spain is implementing the European directives based on its capacity and willingness to cope with newcomers, even if many experts claim that Spain is more than prepared to receive new asylum seekers. This country's relative unwillingness hinders the proper implementation of CEAS and of laws related to asylum.

Italy. The idea of CEAS is to render the EU an area of protection and to ensure humane reception conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in Europe; however, this right does not at present seem to be entirely granted in Rome, Italy. It is reported that the asylum seekers and refugees are forced to live under bad conditions in the detention centres. According to the results of our interviews, CEAS does not yet seem to have been successfully implemented by the Italian state.

Cyprus. In Cyprus, implementation of CEAS has had an impact on how the work of the asylum-related organisations is being carried out rather than on their work per se. Although CEAS does not seek to influence the philosophical background or working practices of these organisations, it does make sure that their scientific work and research adapt to European standards. Therefore, a gap between talk and action is evident. From the experts' perspective, the national asylum system in Cyprus can be criticised for its poor performance when it comes to handling asylum applications, which does not conform to European standards. Despite certain gradual changes, implementation of the CEAS is still not complete. The EU member states interpret the CEAS guidelines in different ways, and their asylum systems have been standardised only to some degree. Before the Cypriot state authorities took over and implemented their asylum system when Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, the UNHCR had been responsible for the country's asylum-related procedures.

Malta. With regard to CEAS, the situation in Malta is comparable to that in Cyprus. Despite its impact on the practical implementation of the new directives as well as several practical changes in asylum-related issues, CEAS has not been completely implemented in Malta, and gaps persist.

Asylum-Related Actors

The aim of the MAREM project was to collect and analyse data from different asylum-related actors. As shown in Table 2, it was not possible to cover all the actor types in every country or every city. Generally speaking, it was somewhat easy to reach NGOs, and most were willing to participate in interviews and share their own views. In contrast, it was much more difficult to find GOs willing to be interviewed and share specific information and could also speak English (although in Cyprus and Malta, English is one of the official state languages). Another challenge was find-

ing scientific organisations that study asylum-related issues in the relevant cities. Many researchers focus on the issues of migration and integration, but in general asylum issues are not often targeted. Thus, our results should be interpreted with great care. Because the data we collected is limited in terms of the time periods, actors and cities covered, we have been able to study only segments of the whole picture and to show only selected tendencies.

Table 2: Number of interview partners in the countries covered by the MAREM project

Interviewees	Spain	Greece	Italy	Malta	Cyprus	Germany	Total
NGOs	6	7	7	1	5	6	32
GOs	2	1	—	5	1	1	9
Scientific organisations	1	2	—	—	—	1	4
Other	—	—	2	1	—	3	7
Total	9	10	9	7	6	11	52

Source: Adapted from the chapters of this book.

Conclusion

This book describes the work of asylum-related organisations, their cooperation partners, criticisms and proposals and will thus enhance our understanding of the asylum-related situation in Europe. During the MAREM project, we only analysed the egocentric networks of organisations, revealing the main connections between actors. This leaves it relatively unclear which actors do not cooperate with one another. Moreover, we were able to consider only some elements of the network dynamic. For these reasons and in order to explore this complex subject more fully, future research should focus on entire networks and their dynamics.

Reference

Banulescu-Bogdan, N. and Fratzke, S. (2015) Europe’s Migration Crisis in Context: Why and What Next? <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/europe-migration-crisis-context-why-now-and-what-next>.