

Inadequate Resettlement of Refugees in the Southern European Union

Summary

The European Union (EU) and specifically the countries in southern Europe have experienced an unprecedented number of refugees entering its countries since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011. The resettlement of these refugees has been inadequate due to a number of factors, and there are many bureaucratic obstacles to refugees applying for asylum in an EU country. Additionally, countries simply lack space, resources, and legal staff to handle the influx of newcomers. These factors lead to a variety of negative consequences for the refugees and the host countries, including violence among refugees and law enforcement, and financial insecurities and poor living conditions for refugees. Several organizations have intervened in order to improve the refugee resettlement process in Europe, doing things such as revolutionizing the design of refugee camps, providing refugees with an economic identity and footprint, providing temporary host families for refugees, and providing specialized instruction and skills training to the refugees.

Key Terms

Asylum — The protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee.¹

European Commission — The European Union's politically independent executive arm. It promotes the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget.²

European Union (EU) — An international organization comprising 27 European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies.

Refugee — According to a definition provided by the European Union (EU), individuals must fit the following criteria to be considered “refugees”: 1) they are not from the EU country in which they are currently staying, nor are they from any other member states of the EU; 2) they have

¹ “Asylum: Definition of Asylum by Lexico.” Lexico Dictionaries | English. Lexico Dictionaries. Accessed April 8, 2020. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/asylum>.

² “European Commission.” European Union, March 23, 2020. https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-commission_en.

left their country of origin, due to a “well-founded fear of persecution”; and 3) they either cannot or will not go back to their country of origin, due to such fear.³

Resettlement — Transfer from the country where a refugee initially sought protection to a different EU member state where he/she can be granted permanent residence status.⁴

Southern European Union — In this brief, the countries considered part of the southern EU include Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Cyprus, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

Context

Refugees and their adequate resettlement has been a social concern around the world for decades. However, in recent years, the European Union (EU) has been one of the hubs of refugee intake and policy. In the EU, the refugee situation escalated to a “crisis” in 2011, when the Syrian civil war began.⁵ This civil war and long-standing violence in nearby countries in the Middle East have been the cause for thousands of people to flee the violence to nearby countries—namely, those in southern Europe, where the EU provides millions of dollars of humanitarian aid in the form of food, shelter, and other resources.⁶

Refugees come to the southern countries in the EU from a number of places and through a number of routes. Due to the civil war in Syria, over half of Syria’s pre-war population (meaning more than 10 million people out of 21 million)⁷ was displaced, either within the country or across borders, and as of 2015, over half of Europe’s refugees traced their origins back to either Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq.⁸ Most refugees usually enter the EU through one of three main routes: the Central Mediterranean route (from North Africa to Italy by sea), the Eastern Mediterranean route (from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria, and Cyprus by land), or the Western Mediterranean route (from North Africa to Spain typically by sea).⁹

³ “Refugee.” Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission, July 12, 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/refugee_en.

⁴ “Resettlement, Relocation or Humanitarian Admission?” European Resettlement Network. Accessed February 1, 2020. <https://www.resettlement.eu/page/resettlement-relocation-or-humanitarian-admission-we-explain-terminology>.

⁵ Pat. “Syria.” European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - European Commission, December 23, 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/syria_en.

⁶ “Syria,” January 18, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/syria_en.

⁷ “Syria - Total Population 2010.” Statista, January 5, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/326599/total-population-of-syria/>.

⁸ “Record 1.3 Million Sought Asylum in Europe in 2015.” Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project. Pew Research Center, December 30, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/>.

⁹ United Nations. “Desperate Journeys. Refugees and Migrants Entering and Crossing Europe via the Mediterranean and Western Balkans Routes.” UNHCR. Accessed February 28, 2020.

When refugees first arrive in the southern European Union, they go through a number of steps as outlined by the EU to ensure their safety and rights are maintained. These steps include registration, fingerprinting, a personal interview, and a medical examination.¹⁰ Refugees have the right to free legal assistance in a language they understand during these initial procedures, and member states of the EU must also ensure that refugees have the opportunity to seek legal assistance at their own cost during the asylum-seeking process.¹¹ During these initial processes, member states are required under national law, when possible, to avoid the use of detention centers as a means to house refugees, but there are instances when detention centers are still used to do so.¹²

As refugees have flooded into Europe in unprecedented numbers since 2011, the EU has realized the need for their resettlement, or in other words, their transfer from the country where they initially sought protection (which tends to be the inundated border countries mentioned below) to a different EU member state where they can be granted permanent residence status.¹³ If and when a refugee is granted this permanent status, he or she is entitled to the following rights: 1. A residence permit valid for three years (and renewable), 2. Documents that enable refugees to travel outside the host country, 3. Access to and equal pay in employment, 4. Education access under the same conditions as nationals, and 5. Social welfare and healthcare.¹⁴

Border countries in the EU tend to receive higher numbers of refugees. In fact, in 2015 alone, 1.8 million migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea or the Aegean Sea to get to Europe.¹⁵ Local communities in Italy and Greece respond to urgent needs of refugees who show up on their coasts, but ultimately must help many of them relocate to other countries inside or outside the EU.¹⁶ The top two countries in Europe that received the most asylum applications in 2015 are Germany and Hungary.¹⁷ During this time, the European Commission proposed the

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/updates/2017/2/58b449f54/desperate-journeys-refugees-migrants-entering-crossing-europe-via-mediterranean.html>.

¹⁰ Papademetriou, Theresa. Refugee Law and Policy: European Union, March 1, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/europeanunion.php#Resettlement>.

¹¹ Papademetriou, Theresa. Refugee Law and Policy: European Union, March 1, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/europeanunion.php#Resettlement>.

¹² Papademetriou, Theresa. Refugee Law and Policy: European Union, March 1, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/europeanunion.php#Resettlement>.

¹³ "Resettlement, Relocation or Humanitarian Admission?" European Resettlement Network. Accessed February 1, 2020.

<https://www.resettlement.eu/page/resettlement-relocation-or-humanitarian-admission-we-explain-terminology>.

¹⁴ Papademetriou, Theresa. Refugee Law and Policy: European Union, March 1, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/europeanunion.php#Resettlement>.

¹⁵ Fotaki, Marianna. "A Crisis of Humanitarianism: Refugees at the Gates of Europe." International journal of health policy and management. Kerman University of Medical Sciences, June 1, 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6600017/>.

¹⁶ Azarnert, Leonid V. "Refugee Resettlement, Redistribution and Growth." European Journal of Political Economy. North-Holland, March 27, 2018. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0176268017305281>.

¹⁷ "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." BBC News. BBC, March 4, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

relocation of over 100,000 refugees and recommended discussions on a permanent quota system for crisis situations regarding refugees, but this proposal was unsuccessful.¹⁸ As the individual EU member states remain fairly divided rather than united in their approach to refugee resettlement, the system remains inadequate and refugees have even been known to turn to self-relocation since no cohesive asylum system exists in the EU.¹⁹

It should be noted that due to the nature of resettlement being an ongoing and lengthy process, many of the statistics used thus far and that will be used throughout the course of this paper are constantly changing. It is difficult to find exact numbers of refugees/migrants that have actually been permanently resettled in the EU, as they move around, migrate to nations outside the EU, etc. This lack of data is part of the reason this poses such a complex social problem today.

Contributing Factors

Administrative obstacles to gaining asylum

Much of a refugee's plight to gain asylum is determined by their ability to produce the correct documentation, and when they cannot, their resettlement process is more lengthy, incomplete, or even impossible. In fact, lack of evidence is often a reason why the resettlement application process is so lengthy. Refugees may bring photos or letters, but do not often bring a lot of documentation such as birth certificates or proof of identity, or proof of need for refugee status with them when they leave their country of origin unexpectedly.²⁰ Without such proof in the form of government documents, caseworkers are left with simply the word of the person as to whether or not they are actually deserving of refugee status.²¹ This can lead to slow down in their application process as governments in the EU try to sort through who is there, why they are there, and how to deal with the lack of documentation.

The sheer number of refugee applications per year also creates administrative complications for the European Union. In 2015, EU countries offered asylum to 292,540 refugees.²² In the same year, more than a million migrants applied for asylum—although many of those who were given refugee status may have applied in previous years because the process often takes more than a year from start to finish.²³ Plus, when translation is involved in

¹⁸ Zaun, Natascha. "States as Gatekeepers in EU Asylum Politics: Explaining the Non-Adoption of a Refugee Quota System." Wiley Online Library. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, November 28, 2017. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcms.12663?casa_token=vZGaqBwuGnUAAAAA:5_lazsfrZXicLx9nXL85HmwUyG1gDnpin6XoL_bqz0G6ZigeS5at-ZH5Q-ciz08gaevzldNmXu9JtZmK.

¹⁹ Zaun, Natascha. "States as Gatekeepers in EU Asylum Politics: Explaining the Non-Adoption of a Refugee Quota System." Wiley Online Library. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, November 28, 2017. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcms.12663?casa_token=vZGaqBwuGnUAAAAA:5_lazsfrZXicLx9nXL85HmwUyG1gDnpin6XoL_bqz0G6ZigeS5at-ZH5Q-ciz08gaevzldNmXu9JtZmK.

²⁰ Dahlvik, Julia. "Asylum as Construction Work: Theorizing Administrative Practices." *Migration Studies* 5, no. 3 (April 2017): 369–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx043>.

²¹ Dahlvik, Julia. "Asylum as Construction Work: Theorizing Administrative Practices." *Migration Studies* 5, no. 3 (2017): 369–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx043>.

²² "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." BBC News. BBC, March 4, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

²³ "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." BBC News. BBC, March 4, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

a communication, as is the case in the asylum procedure for many refugees coming to Europe, transforming a spoken discourse into a written text can be an especially complex process.²⁴ Each meeting with government or migration officials has the potential to be misunderstood by both parties, which can also slow down the process to resettle significantly.

Lack of adequate legal assistance

Refugees often experience inadequate legal assistance when they arrive in a new country, delaying resettlement. Sometimes the lack of legal assistance is simply due to the fact that there are not enough lawyers available and willing to help the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are in need of help with navigating their documentation, registration, and other legal matters. A protection and advocacy adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council offers one reason why this is the case: there are almost 3,000 refugees on the Greek island of Chios and only seven lawyers, not including volunteers.²⁵ Whelan is also quoted as saying that “there are very few actors that are supporting the civil documentation process that [refugees] need assistance with.”²⁶ This lack of legal assistance is fairly widespread across the southern countries of the EU—in a 2020 report from the European Asylum Support Office, concerns are raised in countries including Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, and Hungary about issues such as lack of adequate facilities for carrying out legal processes to lack of legal aid provided by the government to refugees in detention centers.²⁷

Lack of cohesive asylum policy

While the EU operates loosely under common regulations, individual countries still maintain their own autonomy, and in the case of refugee resettlement, no standardized asylum policy exists across the EU²⁸. Each country gets to determine its own willingness to accept refugees, and most have very small, unofficial quotas.²⁹ Although the number of receiving countries in the EU grew from 14 in 2005 to 28 in 2015, most countries only accept between 1,000 and 10,000 refugees, which is less than 10% of the number of refugees who apply every

²⁴ Dahlvik, Julia. “Asylum as Construction Work: Theorizing Administrative Practices.” *Migration Studies* 5, no. 3 (April 2017): 369–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx043>.

²⁵ Vigliar, Virginia. “In Greece, Lack of Legal Aid Leaves Migrants and Refugees Guessing.” Devex. Devex, November 25, 2016. <https://www.devex.com/news/in-greece-lack-of-legal-aid-leaves-migrants-and-refugees-guessing-88964>.

²⁶ Vigliar, Virginia. “In Greece, Lack of Legal Aid Leaves Migrants and Refugees Guessing.” Devex. Devex, November 25, 2016. <https://www.devex.com/news/in-greece-lack-of-legal-aid-leaves-migrants-and-refugees-guessing-88964>.

²⁷ Tsekoio. “7.3 Legal Assistance and Representation.” EUROPEAN ASYLUM SUPPORT OFFICE, June 25, 2020. <https://easo.europa.eu/asylum-report-2020/73-legal-assistance-and-representation>.

²⁸ Zaun, Natascha. “States as Gatekeepers in EU Asylum Politics: Explaining the Non-Adoption of a Refugee Quota System.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 1 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12663>.

²⁹ Hatton, Timothy J. “Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the Crisis in Europe and the Future of Policy.” *Economic Policy* 32, no. 91 (January 2017): 447–96. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix009>.

year.^{30,31} Plus, a number of other factors can determine how many refugees are hosted by each member state, including geographical location, the level of benefits offered in the asylum procedure, and whether or not refugees intend to assimilate to their host country's culture or remain living in networks of their own ethnicity.³² These factors create a state of disorganization that renders the resettlement process inefficient. While around 10,000 refugees were successfully resettled in the EU by the end of 2014, 1.15 million refugees were still in need of resettlement at that time.³³ No cohesive resettlement policy exists in the EU to address this disparity, and without such a policy, countries are left to act on their own accord and decide for themselves how many refugees to accept.³⁴ Some countries have therefore had to take what they might consider a disproportionate share, while others refuse to accept hardly any refugees at all.

Volatile relations between countries

When thinking about the refugee resettlement process, one also has to think about the ever-changing and often volatile relations among countries both inside and outside the EU that affect the effectiveness or feasibility of this process. Especially during times of war or political conflict, some EU countries have restricted their borders to refugees of certain nationalities. For example, the war in Syria intensified in 2015, and ISIS declared war against the West. Because of this, displacements to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan surged, and mass movement through Turkey to Greece and on to other EU countries increased. This was met with border closures and restrictions, likely as an effort by EU countries to make sure their own people were protected during this volatile time.³⁵ Thus, outside factors that affect a member state's border policies or procedures also factor in to making refugee resettlement even more of a problem than it might originally seem.

Problems along borders

To add to the problem, some southern European countries have been known to shut down borders, effectively halting the movement of refugees toward their resettlement locations and leaving thousands of refugees stranded between countries. Most countries are unprepared to handle the wave of migrants and instead focus on their own border policy as a means to stop

³⁰ "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." BBC News. BBC, March 4, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

³¹ "Asylum Statistics." Asylum statistics - Statistics Explained. Accessed March 23, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics.

³² "On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU." Intereconomics. Accessed February 1, 2020. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

³³ Hatton, Timothy J. "Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the Crisis in Europe and the Future of Policy." *Economic Policy* 32, no. 91 (January 2017): 447–96. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix009>.

³⁴ Altemeyer-Bartscher, Martin, Oliver Holtemöller, Axel Lindner, Andreas Schmalzbauer, and Götz Zeddies. "On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU." Intereconomics, January 1, 1970. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

³⁵ Hatton, Timothy J. "Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the Crisis in Europe and the Future of Policy." *Economic Policy* 32, no. 91 (January 2017): 447–96. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix009>.

the flow. In 2015, Hungary shut off its southern border with Serbia due to conflicts regarding refugee movements, which blocked a refugee railroad that had brought more than 170,000 refugees into the EU since the beginning of the year.³⁶

Perhaps one of the most visible factors that contributes to the inadequate refugee resettlement process can be seen in the southern border countries of Europe, where thousands of refugees arrive by sea and first touch ground in Europe. The Dublin Regulation, adopted by the EU in 2003, allocates refugees and asylum seekers to various European states, “*generally placing responsibility [for] resettlement upon the state in which the migrant first entered Europe*” (emphasis added).³⁷ Since around 2015, boatloads of migrants crossing the Mediterranean have stretched resources in border countries Italy and Greece (the main arrival countries for refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea) to their limits.³⁸ This puts an uneven amount of pressure on countries in the EU that happen to be geographically located where refugees tend to first arrive, usually because they are located on the southern coast or another border of the EU. This uneven weight that southern border countries must carry means that processes toward resettlement are slowed due to capacity limits and other factors mentioned elsewhere in this brief.

Unwillingness of countries to accept refugees

In addition to administrative obstacles, refugee resettlement is also hindered by the fact that many countries in the EU simply do not want to accept more refugees. Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia have either refused outright or resisted taking in refugees since the European Commission first pushed through temporary quotas in 2015 as a way to ease the burden on frontline states—mainly Italy and Greece.³⁹ When member states outrightly refuse to take in a share of refugees for resettlement, the number of applications for asylum in other member states increases.⁴⁰ Even France, which has seen at least a 9% increase in refugee acceptance year over year since 2015⁴¹, is still fairly limited in its willingness to accept

³⁶ Kingsley, Patrick, and Emma Graham-Harrison. “UN Warns European Unity at Risk as Borders Close to Refugees.” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, September 19, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/19/refugees-croatia-hungary-borders-europe>.

³⁷ Glover, Kelsey. “Risk Analysis In Refugee Resettlement.” *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law* 29, no. 2 (2019).

³⁸ “EU ‘Has East-West Split’ on Migrant Quotas.” *BBC News*. BBC, December 14, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42352876>.

³⁹ Gotev, Georgi. “EU Struggles to Settle Refugee Quotas Row by June.” *www.euractiv.com*. EURACTIV.com, January 26, 2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/eu-struggles-to-settle-refugee-quotas-row-by-june/>.

⁴⁰ Altemeyer-Bartscher, Martin, Oliver Holtemöller, Axel Lindner, Andreas Schmalzbauer, and Götz Zeddies. “On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU.” *Intereconomics*, January 1, 1970. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

⁴¹ “France Refugee Statistics 1960-2021.” *MacroTrends*. Accessed March 23, 2021. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/FRA/france/refugee-statistics#:~:text=France%20refugee%20statistics%20for%202019.a%2010.74%25%20increase%20from%202018>.

refugees due to concerns about terrorism and loss of national identity.⁴² While most countries in the EU have accepted or are accepting refugees to some extent, the countries that do not accept refugees make the situation more difficult.

Consequences

Poor living conditions

Because the process of being fully resettled can often take months or even years, many refugees end up in temporary or permanently inadequate living conditions due to overcrowding or other causes. For example, in France, refugees resigned to sleep on the streets in makeshift refugee camps in freezing conditions in Paris in 2017.⁴³ A journalist describes one makeshift refugee camp in France as “a sprawling and squalid ‘jungle’ of tents and improvised shelters” where an estimated five to seven thousand refugees live. At this makeshift camp, tents are often infested with rats, water sources are contaminated by feces, and the refugees living at the camp have experienced a number of health-related issues such as scabies, post-traumatic stress, and tuberculosis.⁴⁴ This example is not an isolated incident, and similar conditions have been reported in refugee camps in Greece⁴⁵ and Italy.⁴⁶ When the Moria refugee camp was destroyed by fire in 2020, 13,000 people were left without shelter.⁴⁷ To make matters worse, the living conditions in the provisional tent camp being used as a temporary replacement to Moria until a permanent camp can be built are not sufficient either, and as of October 2020, 8,000 people were living in tents not fit for winter conditions.⁴⁸ Resettlement camps often do not provide

⁴² Noack, Rick. “This Map Helps Explain Why Some European Countries Reject Refugees, and Others Love Them.” The Washington Post. WP Company, May 2, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/08/this-map-helps-explain-why-some-european-countries-reject-refugees-and-others-love-them/>.

⁴³ Dearden, Lizzie. “Police in Paris Are Tear Gassing Homeless Refugees and Stealing Their Blankets.” The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, March 19, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-paris-migrants-france-police-sleeping-bags-blankets-violence-refugee-rights-data-a7575376.html>.

⁴⁴ Roff, Chelsea. “I Volunteered in a Refugee Camp. These Are The Stories You Won't See on TV.” HuffPost. HuffPost, December 7, 2017. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/life-in-a-refugee-camp-hu_b_10245416.

⁴⁵ Papadimas, Lefteris. “Migrants in Greece Living in 'Horrible' Conditions, Says Europe Rights Watchdog.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, October 31, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-greece-asylum/migrants-in-greece-living-in-horrible-conditions-says-europe-rights-watchdog-idUSKBN1XA100>.

⁴⁶ Daria Mendola, Annalisa Busetta, Health and Living Conditions of Refugees and Asylum-seekers: A Survey of Informal Settlements in Italy, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Volume 37, Issue 4, December 2018, Pages 477–505, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdy014>

⁴⁷ “Moria Migrants: Fire Destroys Greek Camp Leaving 13,000 without Shelter.” BBC News. BBC, September 9, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54082201>.

⁴⁸ Jazeera, Al. “‘Moria 2.0’: Groups Slam Conditions at Replacement Refugee Camp.” Refugees News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, October 21, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/21/moria-2-0-groups-slam-conditions-at-replacement-refugee-camp>.

adequate living conditions for the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe, which in turn, makes it such that refugees are not adequately resettled at all.

Socio-economic disparities

Refugees in southern Europe, even when considered “resettled” in their new country, still experience financial insecurity and unemployment at higher rates than other groups. For example, it takes roughly 15 years for a refugee in Europe to reach the same employment rate as other migrant groups such as non-refugee immigrants.⁴⁹ Plus, in most countries in the EU, the employment rate is much lower for refugees than it is for EU natives.⁵⁰ This is especially true for refugee women in the EU, though the rates are still lower for refugee men as well.⁵¹

These disparities are not limited to employment rates. In nearly all EU member states, accepted refugees experience a lower standard of living than the native-born population.⁵² This includes gaps in educational achievements of resettled refugees as well as refugees being at higher risk of social exclusion and poverty.⁵³ This also manifests itself in refugees being more prone to mental disorders or diseases than other populations.⁵⁴ Overall, refugees experience greater levels of socio-economic distress and barriers to achieving a high quality of life, even upon being resettled in a new country. Thus, these refugees’ resettlement process is never quite complete.

Violent crime

When refugees cannot fully settle in a physically sound environment and start building a new life for themselves and their families, some turn to crime instead. In a study done among five refugee camps in Greece, at least 14% of violent acts committed toward refugees were done by other refugees as opposed to by law enforcement officers, smugglers, or a member of the native population—one camp had as high as 80% of violent crimes committed by other

⁴⁹ Altemeyer-Bartscher, Martin, Oliver Holtemöller, Axel Lindner, Andreas Schmalzbauer, and Götz Zeddies. “On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU.” *Intereconomics*, January 1, 1970. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

⁵⁰ Altemeyer-Bartscher, Martin, Oliver Holtemöller, Axel Lindner, Andreas Schmalzbauer, and Götz Zeddies. “On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU.” *Intereconomics*, January 1, 1970. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

⁵¹ Altemeyer-Bartscher, Martin, Oliver Holtemöller, Axel Lindner, Andreas Schmalzbauer, and Götz Zeddies. “On the Distribution of Refugees in the EU.” *Intereconomics*, January 1, 1970. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2016/number/4/article/on-the-distribution-of-refugees-in-the-eu.html>.

⁵² “Long-Term Social, Economic and Fiscal Effects of ...” Accessed March 23, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/jrc107441_wp_kancs_and_lecca_2017_4.pdf.

⁵³ “Long-Term Social, Economic and Fiscal Effects of ...” Accessed March 23, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/jrc107441_wp_kancs_and_lecca_2017_4.pdf.

⁵⁴ “Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In.” OECD instance. Accessed March 23, 2021. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2015-settling-in_9789264234024-en;jsessionid=7-NRQCB95RCBOhFs6rJJ4c3z.ip-10-240-5-119.

refugees.⁵⁵ Refugees as a population are more likely to feel the emotional pressures of rapid change in a short period of time, and if not handled properly, these pressures have the potential to lead to violence.⁵⁶ In 2015, Germany admitted over 890,000 asylum seekers, but refugees were 90 percent responsible for an increase in violent crime in 2015 and 2016.^{57 58} However, refugees from war-torn countries are less likely to commit violent crimes than are refugees from countries who are less likely to be granted asylum.⁵⁹ This crime creates tension between refugees, law enforcement, and EU citizens, even though not all refugees engage in violent crime. Also in Germany, in 2017, there were 447 killings or attempted killings by asylum seekers and refugees, most of whom were in Germany legally.⁶⁰ While crime in Germany in 2017 hit an all time low since 1992, there was an increase in migrant crime during that same time period.⁶¹ This correlation between migration and violent crime indicates that the effects of inadequate resettlement on refugees can lead to violence even after resettlement has taken place.

Practices

Modernize refugee camps and arrival centers into functioning “cities”

As already mentioned, countries across the European Union simply don’t have the space or resources to accept the large numbers of refugees that are seeking asylum. As a result, many refugees spend significant time in refugee camps, which are often not sanitary, sustainable places for healthy living. One intervention to help fix this problem is to modernize refugee camps and turn them into functioning “cities” rather than just temporary gathering places. One group trying to do this is More Than Shelters. The organization’s main goals are to create humane habitations for refugees and displaced people, encourage refugees to shape

⁵⁵ Farhat, Jihane Ben, Karl Blanchet, Pia Juul Bjertrup, Apostolos Veizis, Clément Perrin, Rebecca M. Coulborn, Philippe Mayaud, and Sandra Cohuet. “Syrian Refugees in Greece: Experience with Violence, Mental Health Status, and Access to Information during the Journey and While in Greece.” *BMC Medicine* 16, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1028-4>.

⁵⁶ Keygnaert, Ines, Nicole Vettenburg, and Marleen Temmerman. “Hidden Violence Is Silent Rape: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands.” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 14, no. 5 (2012): 505–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2012.671961>.

⁵⁷ Glover, Kelsey. “Risk Analysis In Refugee Resettlement.” *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law* 29, no. 2 (2019).

⁵⁸ Alkousaa, Riham. “Violent Crime Rises in Germany and Is Attributed to Refugees.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, January 3, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-crime/violent-crime-rises-in-germany-and-is-attributed-to-refugees-idUSKBN1ES16J>.

⁵⁹ Alkousaa, Riham. “Violent Crime Rises in Germany and Is Attributed to Refugees.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, January 3, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-crime-idUSKBN1ES16J>.

⁶⁰ “Reality Check: Are Migrants Driving Crime in Germany?” BBC News. BBC, September 13, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45419466>.

⁶¹ “Reality Check: Are Migrants Driving Crime in Germany?” BBC News. BBC, September 13, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45419466>.

their own future by providing training and education, and transform refugee camps from short-term shelters to sustainable ecosystems.⁶²

The idea here is to design refugee camps and arrival centers for refugees that are based on modern urban design methods. The organization seeks to design camps with the idea in mind that they should be places of dignity, that refugees remember as their first “city”.⁶³ The organization often uses existing buildings and converts them into shelters for refugees. It applies sustainable business models in order to conserve resources, and test and scale its designs.

Impact

Since its inception, More Than Shelters has worked in camps both inside and outside of Europe, in countries including Jordan, Greece, Nepal, and Germany. These programs have reached over one million participants and developed innovative new technologies used in refugee camps such as solar lamps.⁶⁴ The effect of these programs is felt most among the refugees themselves, especially women and children, as their places of survival are turned into places of living.⁶⁵ Refugees who live in cities designed by More Than Shelters can enjoy safety, security, and privacy⁶⁶—all of which are needed to help them create a new life and be considered adequately resettled.

Gaps

More Than Shelters’ website does not have any impact information. We don’t know how many camps the organization has renovated. This may be due to the fact that the long-term effects of city planning and development are just that—long-term. It is too soon to really know if something like what More Than Shelters will really have positive consequences for its beneficiaries in the long term. The lives of refugees are constantly changing, and something like urban design takes careful planning, jumping through government loopholes, fundraising, and much more. More Than Shelters faces an uphill battle trying to enact long-term change for a population that tends to take things one day at a time.⁶⁷ The organization does not clarify what it means by “reaching” one million participants.

⁶² “Humanitarian Innovations.” More Than Shelters. Accessed February 1, 2020.

<http://www.morethanshelters.org/eng/>.

⁶³ “Daniel Kerber.” Ashoka. Accessed February 1, 2020.

<https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/fellow/daniel-kerber>.

⁶⁴ “Transition Countries.” Hello Europe. Accessed March 26, 2020.

<https://www.hello-europe.eu/category-transition-countries>.

⁶⁵ “Empower Women - More than Shelters: Reconceptualizing the Notion of Refugee Camps.”

EmpowerWomen, December 19, 2016.

<https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/community/stories/2016/12/more-than-shelters-reconceptualizing-the-notion-of-refugee-camps>.

⁶⁶ “Empower Women - More than Shelters: Reconceptualizing the Notion of Refugee Camps.”

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⁶⁷ “Humanitarian Innovations.” More Than Shelters. Accessed February 1, 2020.

<http://www.morethanshelters.org/eng/>.

Key Takeaways

- Over one million refugees have flooded into Europe since 2015, creating the need for their resettlement.
- Resettlement of refugees is often inadequate due to a number of factors including bureaucratic obstacles to gaining asylum, limited access to legal assistance, and limited capacity per country to take in refugees.
- Border countries are particularly affected by the flood of refugees and often don't have the resources or capacity to handle the influx.
- When refugees are not adequately resettled in a timely manner, they experience heightened levels of violence and tension with law enforcement. They are also often subject to poor living conditions.
- Some practices have been implemented to improve the resettlement process for refugees, including an app that provides them with an economic footprint and programs that train refugees in life skills or provide them temporary living arrangements.
- The refugee situation is constantly evolving as people are transient, and statistics are often incomplete or inadequate due to their snapshot nature.