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The Asylum-Seeking Process and Refugee Integration in the EU

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## THE ASYLUM-SEEKING PROCESS AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN THE EU

### Abstract

This paper provides a background on the current refugee crisis in the EU, with a focus on migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and examines the asylum application process and refugee integration efforts. Many EU member states are so overwhelmed with the massive influx of asylum-seekers that they cannot efficiently process asylum applications, which keeps migrants stuck in a period of limbo until a decision is made. There is so much focus on refugees as a political and national security issue that states can't focus on reforming the application process. A similar issue faces refugee integration efforts. It is highly expensive for states to establish aid and programs to help integrate refugees, which is creating a lot of disagreement on how to proceed within the government, and ultimately hindering the settlement of refugees. However, this thesis will show that efficiently accepting refugees and investing in their integration can be beneficial to a country within just a few years.

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**Introduction**

The migration crisis that has been overwhelming European states for the last several years is a massive and complex event. People have been emigrating from many different countries in the Middle East and North Africa and usually end up crossing several different nations in Europe before being able to settle in a new country. Some are granted asylum, which gives them a refugee status and the rights that come along with that status, and others are denied asylum and sent back to the country from where they fled. In addition to the complexity of the different countries of origin and destination, there are also many different methods that people use to immigrate. Some cross the Mediterranean Sea while others take a land route from Turkey to Bulgaria or Greece. Regardless of where people migrate from and how they get to Europe, most end up in refugee camps and have to go through a long and rigorous process to apply for asylum.

The EU is struggling to take in this influx of asylum-seekers, which is often described as being the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. But, the population of migrants entering Europe is just a fraction of the number of migrants that developing nations of the world are managing. Somehow, the biggest burden of this refugee crisis has been placed upon the countries who are the least equipped to provide for massive populations of people who need assistance. The EU faces a prisoner's dilemma in the light of this crisis; if every state would willingly take in a larger portion of the refugees entering the EU, then the burden could easily be spread across Europe. However, most European states have shown a preference for pushing the "problem" of refugees onto other nations and skirting around some of the laws meant to protect the rights of refugees.

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For the purpose of this paper, this migration event will often be referred to as a “crisis”. This is not meant to imply any racial or religion based security threat from the migrants, but rather the term is used to convey the struggle that the European nations are facing while trying to manage the huge influx of people.

### **Defining Migration**

The terms “refugee” and “migrant”, although often used interchangeably in the media, have important and distinct definitions. The 1951 Convention on Refugee Rights defines a refugee as a person who has left their country of origin “due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, [or] membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” (“The 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees”, 2001). To become a refugee, a person must be granted refugee status by the state to which they have fled. A migrant, by contrast, does not need to be formally recognized by a state, and therefore receives none of the aid or rights that are afforded to refugees. A migrant is someone who has left their home for a variety of reasons, not just in fear of their wellbeing, and so they do not always qualify for refugee status. Finally, an asylum-seeker is someone who has registered with a possible host state and is in the process of having an asylum application processed with the hope of being granted refugee status.

The European countries that are being affected the most by the refugee crisis can be divided into two main groups: countries of first asylum and destination countries. Italy and Greece, for example, are countries of first asylum because of their location in proximity to the countries of origin. Italy and Greece have thousands of miles of coastline along the Mediterranean Sea, making it an appealing access point for those who are crossing the sea from North Africa or Turkey. Countries like Germany and Sweden have become important

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destination countries for refugees as their economic and political stability make them appealing places to relocate. However, the process of getting admitted to those countries of destination is very tedious and it can take many years, leaving most asylum seekers stranded in temporary housing camps.

### The Asylum Process

#### The Common European Asylum System

Part of the issue with the asylum-seeking process is that each country has its own procedure, although they all are required to follow the same standard framework under EU legislation. The EU created the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in 1999, although it has been revised many times since. The CEAS lays out directives on how to process and treat asylum-seekers as well as how to identify which country is responsible for them. Some of the directives include that all asylum-seekers must be registered and fingerprinted, and a personal interview must be part of the application process (Papademetriou, 2016). However, the EU has shown no initiative to attempt to enforce the CEAS, so states have largely been able to apply whatever treatment they wish upon migrants. The CEAS should, theoretically, have made the asylum process equal in all states, thereby giving an asylum-seeker an equal opportunity to be granted refugee status in all states. However, this has very clearly proven to not be the case. Ultimately the CEAS only provides a very low baseline standard for how to manage migrants, which is an unfortunately common issue present in EU legislation.

Each state agency has almost identical requirements and procedures for the asylum-seeking process, but the agencies all operate independently of each other and there is little transparency between EU migration agencies. In Germany, for example, the asylum process is handled by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, abbreviated as BAMF from the

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German translation. In Sweden, the Sweden Migration Agency handles refugees. In both states migrants must register their arrival with the state migration agency upon entry into the state. In Germany, this identification gives migrants access to state benefits like food and housing (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016a). However, state benefits provided to migrants vary greatly from state to state, which also has a significant impact on the overall cost of hosting migrants.

For example, migrants in Sweden who are in housing centers that provide meals get about €72 per month, while those in centers that do not provide meals get almost €2,000 per month. In Germany, meals are usually provided at reception centers and refugees are given €143-216 per month for their expenses. Migrants who are granted asylum and have been in the country longer than 15 months receive about €400 per month. In the Netherlands, asylum-seekers are given €32-232 per month for food and other expenses (Trevelyan, 2015). These aid packages vary widely across the EU and are often significantly less than the welfare that can be claimed by citizens.

Once a migrant is registered they can begin the more complicated process of applying for asylum. In all EU countries, this includes a mandatory interview wherein the migrant's motives for leaving their home country are determined. Asylum-seekers are also required to be fingerprinted and have photographs taken for the agency's records. Finally, an investigator for the state's migration agency will review individual asylum applications to judge whether asylum should be granted (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016b). Protection for approved applications can vary from complete refugee protection, entitlement to asylum, subsidiary protection, and a national ban on deportation. Each provides different levels of protection and rights to migrants, and it usually affects how long a refugee is permitted to reside in each country (Federal Office

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for Migration and Refugees, 2016b). In Sweden, for example, someone granted subsidiary protection will be given a 13-month residence permit, but someone granted refugee status will be given a three-year residence permit (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016a).

**The Dublin Regulation.** Arguably one of the biggest inconsistencies that has resulted from the CEAS is the way that the EU decides which state is responsible for a migrant. The Dublin Regulation puts the responsibility of processing an asylum application on the state that the migrant first enters (Papademetriou, 2016). This creates the clear problem of outer EU nations, especially those in the south, taking on the vast majority of asylum applications. This regulation is largely responsible for the discrepancy in asylum-seeker distribution across the EU, leaving just a few states to provide the most aid.

The Dublin Regulation also inhibits an asylum-seeker's ability to move freely throughout the EU because once a migrant has been registered in one country, then they can be returned to that country if they move to a third country. It also has the possibility of hindering the effectiveness of the registration program because some migrants may try to avoid registration in the first state they enter in order to register and apply for asylum in a different country. The Dublin Regulation encourages migrants to dodge state authorities and avoid registration and identification if they wish to apply for asylum in a state other than the state through which they entered the EU. This, in turn, allows for irregular migration patterns that are difficult for states to manage.

Germany briefly suspended the Dublin Regulation for Syrian refugees in 2015, meaning that Germany was willing to accept applications from any Syrian migrants regardless of how they entered the EU. However, the suspension lasted only a few months as Germany struggled to manage high numbers of migrants (Traynor, 2015). In order for a change to the Dublin

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Regulation to be successful, it needs to be in a unified effort by the whole EU. Otherwise, as evidenced by Germany's experiment, asylum-seekers will overwhelm the states that attempt to change the system independently. The European Commission is aware of the challenges that the Dublin Regulation has presented, and as of 2016 there was some movement on trying to amend the regulation. A few different proposals are in the works, including ideas on how to streamline the process and keep refugee distribution even throughout the EU (European Commission, 2016).

### **The European Asylum Support Office**

Considering that this migration crisis is something the entire European Union is trying to manage, there is surprisingly little assistance coming directly from EU agencies to help with the asylum process. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), established in 2010, is the main EU body involved in unifying the asylum process for member states. Most importantly, the EASO aids in the relocation of migrants in states where there is a disproportionately high population of asylum seekers, mainly in Greece and Italy. Between October 2015 and October 2016, the EASO relocated about 7,280 asylum applicants from Greece and about 2,654 applicants from Italy (European Asylum Support Office, 2017). The majority were relocated to France, although The Netherlands, Germany, and Finland also took in about 1,000 migrants each. Compared to the overall number of asylum-seekers stranded in Greece and Italy, however, those relocated are only a small fraction. The EASO will have to greatly increase its efficiency and capacity to really ease the pressure on those two states.

In May 2016, the European Commission put forward a proposal to amend the European Asylum Support Office to make it an official agency. By doing so, the EASO, which would instead be called the European Union Agency for Asylum, would have a greater ability to assist

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member states and enforce a EU wide standard on the asylum process. Ideally, the new European Agency for Asylum would be able to implement an EU-wide asylum process that would be managed by the EU, not by individual state agencies. This could allow for a fairer distribution of refugees as well as an expedited asylum application process, although it could come at significant cost to EU member states. As of December 2016, the EU Council was ready to begin talks with the EU Parliament regarding the creation of this agency (European Council, 2016).

### **The EU-Turkey Deal**

In March 2016, the EU made a landmark deal with Turkey as an attempt to control irregular migrants entering Europe through the eastern route from Turkey to Greece. The agreement essentially states that any irregular migrants that arrive in Greece will be returned to Turkey. In this case, irregular migrants are those who either have their asylum application denied or completely fail to apply for asylum. In return Turkey for taking back these migrants, the European Union has agreed to begin resettling the Syrian refugees who have been residing in Turkey (Collett, 2016). The idea is that these returns and resettlements will be done on a one-for-one basis; for every irregular migrant that is returned to Turkey, the EU will resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey. This deal did successfully reduce the number of migrants using the Turkey-Greece route, but it also brings up many issues that question the ethics and legality of the deal (Rygiel, Baban, & Ilcan, 2016).

After March 2016, the number of migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean route sharply decreased. There were about 27,000 migrants who utilized that route in March, but fewer than 4,000 in April. For the remainder of 2016 and for January 2017, those numbers would continue to range from 3,500 to as low as 1,200 per month. The Central Mediterranean route, however,

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would see a notable increase in monthly migrant numbers. March and April 2016 averaged at about 9,500 migrants per month crossing the central route, but May-October saw about 17,000-27,000 migrants per month (UNHCR, 2017).

Unfortunately, the data do not specify the nationalities of migrants, so it is impossible to fully claim that the increase in migrants across the more dangerous central route is due to Middle Eastern refugees finding a new path into the EU. However, given the extremely reduced number of migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece, it does seem safe to conclude that the EU-Turkey deal did cause fewer migrants to cross into Greece. This may simply mean that more migrants have found themselves stranded in Turkey instead of finding new migration routes through North Africa.

This deal also brings up a number of logistical challenges that bring into question the effectiveness of the return and resettlement agreement. Greece is already experiencing a huge backlog of asylum applications and appeals, so it doesn't seem feasible that Greece could possibly implement a whole new system on such short notice. Greece is simply lacking in personnel and infrastructure and doesn't have the ability to create this new system overnight. Furthermore, the EU doesn't seem to have the ability to handle such large-scale resettlements as they have promised Turkey. As discussed earlier, the EU has so far only been able to resettle a small fraction of the total number of refugees in Italy and Greece, so clearly the EU has yet to really establish a functional resettlement system.

### **Entering Europe via the Mediterranean**

Even before migrants become embroiled in the bureaucratic trials of applying for asylum, they face a whole other set of life-threatening challenges while trying to get to a country that will allow them to apply for asylum. In January of 2017 alone, there were about 230 deaths at sea

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and approximately 3,340 arrivals who crossed the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2017). That puts the death rate at about 6.4% even several years into this mass migration. This could be partly because January is simply a dangerous month to try and cross the Mediterranean due to bad weather conditions, and partly because some of the big rescue operations that were implemented in the beginning of this migration crisis have since been shut down, leaving migrants with a much lower chance of rescue.

### **Migration Routes**

There are a few main maritime routes that migrants take when crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and none are an easy journey. The Eastern Mediterranean route is probably the most well-known, as it was a common route for migrants even prior the onset of this crisis. This is a crossing of the Aegean Sea from the coast of Turkey into Greece. Migrants often end up landing on one of Greece's many islands like Lesbos, Chios, and Samos, where they are initially processed. The migrants who use this route are primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2016a). Lesbos is arguably the island that has received the most attention due to its proximity to Turkey. Many migrants attempt to take small rubber dinghies from Turkey to Lesbos across 10-15km of the Aegean Sea. In good weather and prime conditions, this can take 1-2 hours, but poor sea conditions can add several more hours to that journey (Hernandez & Stylianou, 2016).

The other common route is the Central Mediterranean route where migrants cross from Tunisia or Libya to Italy. As with the eastern route, migrants often land on Italian islands like Lampedusa or Sicily instead of making it all the way to the Italian mainland. Given the location of this crossing, the migrants who use this route are usually from African countries like Nigeria and Eritrea (UNHCR, 2016a). Unfortunately, the Central Mediterranean route has proven to be

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the most deadly way to make the crossing into Europe. In the first half of 2016 death toll statistics show that 1 out of every 23 migrants through the central route died. This is a huge increase from 1 in 53 during 2015 (Black, Singleton, & Malakooti, 2016). It is common for small vessels packed with over 100 people to capsize along this route, so the death tolls can increase quickly. The central route is much more deadly than the eastern route largely because the distance is so much greater. The shortest point between Tunisia and Lampedusa is over 100km, and it is an even greater distance to travel from Libya or to try and land somewhere more north of Lampedusa. The increase in migrant deaths in 2016, despite a reduction in overall migrant numbers, may be due to a shift in European attitudes toward migrants. In 2016 there was a definite move to reduce possible pull factors that could encourage migrants to head for the EU. Some of the large-scale government operations in the Mediterranean that were extremely active in saving migrant lives in 2015 were cut back or stopped entirely. Even though 2016 saw fewer migrants crossing the Mediterranean, those that did cross faced a more dangerous journey because the odds of being rescued were much more slim.

Smuggling networks also play a large role in organizing voyages for migrants in both the eastern and central routes. Smugglers can charge €800-2,000 per person in exchange for a spot on a small vessel. Smugglers also sometimes offer forged documents that migrants might need for the asylum process when they enter Europe. It is well documented that these criminal networks are the reason that small, unseaworthy vessels get packed with migrants to maximize profits per journey (Frontex, 2016). However, it is probably the fact that vessels are so overcrowded that has contributed the most to the sinking of vessels and the overall high death toll.

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The final major point of crossing is from Morocco to Spain, known as the Western Mediterranean route. This route is much less active because of Spain's border protection, although Spain has seen a spike in migrant populations in the last year (UNHCR, 2016a). As 2016 was the deadliest year on record for Mediterranean migrants, asylum seekers are looking for new ways to enter Europe and it may be that access through Spain seems like the next logical route to try for North African migrants. However, this thesis will focus on the central and eastern routes as those have proven the most active in the last few years.

### Refugee Camps

Nearly every country in Europe that is experiencing the mass influx of migrants has established refugee camps. The size and condition of these camps vary, but almost all are extremely overcrowded, undersupplied, and slow to get refugees through the asylum-seeking and resettlement processes. It has been such an issue that an annual migrant response plan estimated that improvements in the Protection and Basic Assistance sectors would take up about 70% of the budget for 2017 (UNHCR, 2016b). The same plan also estimates how vastly overcrowded some of the refugee camps are on the Greek islands. The capacity for the Chios camp is 1,100, but there are over 4,300 migrants in the camp. The camp on Samos is in a similar situation with a capacity of 850 but a current population of almost 2,500.

Unfortunately, refugee camps throughout mainland Europe are all in similar conditions. Some are makeshift camps that popped up places where there was a bottleneck in migrant movement, and other camps are government run. For example, for a while in 2015 the Keleti train station in Budapest turned into a refugee camp as over 2,000 migrants gathered there to wait for trains that would take them to Austria, which would get them one step closer to settling in Germany (Katz, 2016). The state often demolishes the makeshift camps, sometimes set up in

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the middle of major cities, after a short period of time. In the case of the Keleti train station camp, it took only a few months for the train station to shut down all train services in order to clear the migrants from the area.

The government camps, on the other hand, tend to be in rural, isolated locations and out of the way of major cities, as though to keep the problem out of sight of the main population. However, many asylum-seekers have refused to enter the government run camps (Katz, 2016). There seems to be a widespread fear that once they enter government camps, they will become bogged down and stranded by the bureaucratic process.

Refugee camps, like the whole asylum seeking process, tend to vary greatly in governance and quality depending on where they are located. Turkey, for example, has done shockingly well for migrants in the camp of Kilis, located right near the Syrian border and not far from the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. The camp opened in 2012, a few years before the refugee situation became a full-blown crisis, and was built mainly using shipping containers as shelter. The camp is well-lit, very organized, and surprisingly clean. Some of the amenities include schools, power lines, playgrounds for the children, and working plumbing (McClelland, 2014). Some of the newer container homes in the ever-growing camp are two stories high, accommodating one family on the bottom floor and one on the top. The container homes consist of a main room, a bed room, and a bathroom complete with a shower and toilet (Sommerville, 2016). This is a stark contrast from some European camps where there is no running water, let alone any organized bathroom facility.

The Calais camp in France is one of the most well-known makeshift camps in Europe because of its size and the repeated attempts by the government to demolish it. It was suitably nicknamed “The Jungle” because it is a ramshackle assembly of tents and rickety shelters.

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However dilapidated it may be, it still contained some amenities like restaurants, barbers, and cafes, although housing conditions were very poor and lacked basic sanitation. Many migrants had to build their own shower stations out of crates and plastic tarp. The Calais Jungle was first demolished in April 2015 when there were about 1500 irregular migrants living in the camp. However, migrants quickly returned to the site and began to rebuild (Davies & Isakjee, 2015). When the camp was demolished by French authorities again in October 2016, it had grown to accommodate 6,000-8,000 people who had to be bussed out to other refugee centers around the country (Blamont, 2016).

There seems to be a major difference in the quality of refugee camps between Europe and Turkey. It would seem that the EU should be better equipped to provide for refugees, and yet it is Turkey who has been successful in building up clean facilities for them. This may be partly because Turkey didn't have any choice in its role in the migrant crisis. Refugees flooded in before Turkey had a chance to react, so Turkey was only left with the option to accommodate the asylum-seekers. The EU, on the other hand, is constantly experiencing friction between different member states about whether it is best to take in migrants or keep them out. As a result, government run refugee camps seem to be only half thought out and aren't managed very well, and the makeshift camps keep popping up as a result of poor management of the government camps. Ultimately, without a refugee agreement that is truly accepted by all of the member states, there is little chance that the situation in refugee camps will change. Unfortunately, there seems to be little chance of an agreement like that happening as long as states continue to choose their own needs, under the guise of national security, over the needs of the refugees.

### **Destination Countries**

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Many asylum-seekers who enter the EU through Greece or Italy don't intend to settle there; it is just the easiest way to enter the region. Many people plan to continue north to settle in states like Germany, England, or Sweden, but it can take months or years to get there because they get stuck in the asylum-seeking process. Germany has developed a reputation for being the most welcoming EU state for refugees. Between July and September 2016, Germany alone processed more than 237,000 first time asylum applications, which was 66% of all first-time applications submitted in the EU. By comparison, the country which processed the second largest volume of first-time asylum applications for that quarter of 2016 was Italy with 10% of all EU applications (Eurostat, 2016b).

Germany processed 745,155 asylum applications in 2016. Of those, 256,135 were granted, meaning that Germany had about a 34% acceptance rate of asylum-seekers. In Sweden, 28,865 asylum applications were processed and 16,865 were approved, which is about a 58% acceptance rate ("Asylum and Dublin Statistics", 2016). This shows that while Germany has been accepting in allowing migrants to submit asylum applications, the overall rate of acceptance is much lower than that of other destination countries. Most other EU countries only had fewer than 30,000 asylum applications in 2016, which puts them in a situation similar to that of Sweden, and they also had much higher acceptance rates. Therefore, it should be noted that countries having to process a higher volume of asylum applications are much more strict about which migrants are granted asylum.

### International Refugee Rights

The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted on July 28, 1951 in response to the refugee crisis that came about during World War II. During the war, it was recognized that refugees required some rights beyond what was stated in the 1948 Universal

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Declaration of Human Rights. The 1951 Convention, put together by the United Nations, was created to lay out the rights of people who qualify as refugees and the responsibilities of the states that host them. The Convention also defines a refugee, which makes them different from migrants because refugees are relocating because of a fear for their life or wellbeing. Most states are signatories to 1951 Convention, including all of the European Union and Turkey. Although the 1951 Convention is decades old and was created with a different crisis in mind, it is still international law and many of the rights and responsibilities included in the document are very pertinent today.

One of the rights included in the 1951 Refugee Convention is the freedom to practice religion (“Convention relating to the status of refugees”, 1951). This is especially applicable today as Middle Eastern and African migrants often have religions that are very different from what is common in Europe. While there are no outright violations of this right, there are plenty of areas of concern around the right to religious freedom. A vast majority of the refugees entering Europe are Muslim, and therefore should retain a right to practice Islam unhindered. However, there have been many instances all across Europe of local governments instating bans on full-face coverings, like the burqa and niqab, that are worn by some Muslim women. These bans essentially target people who practice Islam. As a result, women who are no longer allowed to cover themselves per their religion may feel very uncomfortable, fear for their personal safety, and struggle to integrate with a society that seems to be fighting them.

The freedom of religion for refugees is also arguably being violated through the increasing instances of racism and hate crimes committed towards Muslims in Europe. While it isn't usually coming directly from the government, the states are doing very little to crack down on the issue. There is a shocking lack of official documentation on these hate crimes, but they

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are undoubtedly a common occurrence in a region that is feeling overwhelmed by other cultures. There are anti-Muslims groups and parties being formed all over Europe. In Germany, PEGIDA (the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) is a movement dedicated to spreading a message of Islamic hate. This group does not have any official political affiliation, but it does have tens of thousands of participants who likely align with the right-wing political parties. There has been a recorded increase in violent hate crime incidents in the vicinity of PEGIDA demonstrations, but the German government has made no attempt to address the problem (Younes, 2016).

Furthermore, Article 23 of the 1951 Convention states that refugees must be provided the same public assistance that is given to nationals. However, most states provide significantly less aid to refugees than the standard unemployment or welfare rate given to citizens. In Hungary, refugees and asylum-seekers are given just a tenth of the normal unemployment benefit. In Denmark, refugees are granted a sum equal to about half of the national unemployment benefit (Trevelyan, 2015). This is a clear violation of the rights granted to refugees, but little is being done to provide them with a larger aid package because the cost of supporting such a huge influx of refugees is simply too high.

The 1951 Convention also prohibits the refoulement, or return, of refugees. States are not allowed to expel a refugee or return a refugee back to the country they came from if the threat to the refugees' wellbeing is still present ("Convention relating to the status of refugees", 1951). This part of the Convention is something that some states in the EU have tried very hard to work around. The EU-Turkey deal, for example, does not technically violate this treaty because Greece is only returning migrants to Turkey if they were denied refugee status. However, it is ultimately up to Greece to decide how rigid the requirements are to be granted asylum. Germany

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also started deporting thousands of migrants who were not granted refugee status. Although Germany has proven itself to be one of the most welcoming countries for refugees over the past few years, the number of deportations for undocumented migrants rose sharply in 2016 (Knight, 2016).

Unfortunately, the Convention does not state that nations are required to admit refugees; it just provides rights for those who have already entered a country. It could be argued that turning refugees away at a state border could constitute refoulment, but the Convention is very vague in its wording. As this refugee crisis stretches on and tests the limits of EU nations, some countries are starting to turn away refugees, not just unregistered migrants, at the border. Other states, like Hungary, are building fences and walls on the border to keep migrants from entering. Germany turned away an estimated 13,324 people from its borders in the first half of 2016, which is nearly double the number who were turned away in all of 2015 (Knight, 2016). Even Germany, which is known for its acceptance rate of refugees and migrants, seems to have begun to crack down on migrant admittance even if it means possibly going against the 1951 Convention.

### **Economic Integration of Refugees**

Once a migrant gains refugee status and finally ends up in a destination country, then the grueling process is only half over. The next step is integration into a whole new society. Refugees must learn a new language and understand an entirely different culture. Governments spend millions of dollars on programs and aid to integrate refugees into society by helping them to find necessities like housing and employment. To add to the challenge, every country has a portion of the population who don't support their country taking in refugees, so there can be pushback from locals that makes integration especially difficult.

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Unfortunately, integration of refugees hasn't been a primary issue area for the EU; the main focus has been on how to process such a huge influx of asylum applications and how to handle migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. There really hasn't been a collective effort of the EU as a whole to discuss how to really integrate refugees both economically and socially, and how to avoid refugees ending up in isolated ghettos, intentionally or not. This has left states to come up with individual policies that show varying amounts of success. It is only now, as migrant numbers are in decline, that states are really able to turn their focus on what to do with all of the refugees that have been accepted. The following sections will look at different facets of refugee integration and policy and some of the successes and challenges that have been observed.

### **Literature Review**

Refugee integration is a crucial, although often overlooked, facet of the whole asylum-seeking process. Many states in the EU seem to be so bogged down with trying to figure out an efficient and fair way to process asylum applications that little consideration has been given to integrating people into a new country once refugee status has been granted. Current integration efforts tend to consist of underdeveloped state programs and assistance by nonprofit NGOs, but many studies have shown that supporting refugee integration can ultimately be a profitable investment for states.

Philippe Legrain, a former advisor to the European Commission, pioneered a major international EU study on the effect of refugees on the economy. He found that however much money a state invested in refugees would be returned in double through economic growth within five years (2016). Legrain states that refugees can stimulate the economy by creating jobs, encouraging innovation, and often by taking lower-level jobs, leaving higher paid and higher skilled work to the natural citizens. This finding has also been backed up by the results of a

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smaller-scale German study on refugees and the economy. The study of refugees in Germany also found that investing in refugee integration can result in increased revenue for the state government (Bach et al., 2017). Furthermore, the study by Bach emphasizes the importance of language skills and education in the integration process as a crucial step to allowing refugees to be successful in their host country. Language and education are two of the most important factors in entering the labor market.

Gareth Mulvey cites an inability for refugees to access the labor market as a major setback for integration policy (2015). In his study of refugees in Scotland it was found that thirty-nine percent of the refugees took over two years to gain refugee status, a time during which it can be particularly difficult to find employment either because of limitations from the government or because of not having a permanent home. A study by Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore goes a step farther in stating that asylum policy and integration policy are contradictory, in part because the asylum process places employment restrictions upon refugees and yet employment is a primary goal of integration policy (2016). This study shows how harmful a lack of clarity and collaboration can be for Europe's policymaking efforts.

Scarpetta and Dumont, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, analyzed Europe's current ability to integrate refugees. They claim that Europe is fully capable of integrating refugees, despite the obvious challenges, but that much more effort needs to be put into the integration efforts (2016). They recommend that more investment be put into increasing the capacity and capability of integration programs, and that those programs be much more readily available to refugees. A report by Konle-Seidl and Bolits identifies that different EU countries had different levels of refugee experience and readiness (2016). Some countries, like Sweden, have a history of taking in refugees and providing assistance, but some

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states in the EU were not as prepared and so policy is only being created as issues arise and become serious. This creates a large delay between when a problem surfaces and when legislation is finally passed to address it. The report ultimately cites a lack of transparency about integration efforts by EU member states and recommends more communication and refugee-specific policy.

### **Refugees in the Labor Market**

A leading indicator of successful integration is the ability of a refugee to find a stable job. Once asylum-applicants have reached a certain point in the application process, they are allowed to begin looking for employment. Although some nationalists might argue that the influx of refugees will steal jobs from natural citizens, studies have shown that increased migration has little to no net effect on the wages and employment opportunities of natural citizens (Aiyar et.al., 2016). And yet, the reality is that unemployment is a big problem for refugees. Part of this can be attributed to many jobs in Europe requiring higher education, or a high school diploma at the very least. This is especially true of the countries who are the most equipped to take in refugees, like Germany and Sweden. Unfortunately, most migrants are not qualified for such jobs. One study found that about 74% of asylum applicants in Europe are male, and 82% are under the age of 35. These young men are also often uneducated, so the work available to them in Europe is limited to untrained labor (Breitenbach, 2016). In Sweden, only about 5% of all jobs are available to those without a high school education. That percentage is slightly higher in Germany at about 9% (“Seeking Asylum”, 2016).

Even refugees who possess valuable skills and held prestigious careers in their country of origin struggle to find jobs. Refugees and migrants, especially those from Africa and the Middle East, often face extreme prejudice about their education levels when they get to Europe. One

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study in Finland showed that 21% of Russian migrants had their tertiary education recognized, while fewer than 10% of Somali migrants received the same recognition (Peromingo, 2014). People who worked as doctors, accountants, and scientists in their country of origin can frequently get placed in low-skill labor jobs in Europe. Part of the hesitation to hire refugees may stem from the uncertainty about how long they will be living in one place, as housing arrangements and durations can often be unclear.

**German job programs.** Germany has had a one-euro jobs program for over a decade, but that program has recently been upgraded and amended for refugees to utilize. Originally the program was designed to provide unemployed people with a part time job that would be a steppingstone to rejoin the labor market; those who were unemployed and claiming government benefits or welfare faced having that aid cut back if they did not take a one-euro job. The jobs are less than 30 hours per week and only pay €1-€2.50 per hour, and they only last three-six months. Jobs include simple, unskilled work such as janitorial work, serving food, painting buildings, and doing laundry. This low pay and temporary placement in a dull job encourages those in the program to continue looking for a permanent job elsewhere that can pay a livable wage, although some studies have argued that the program was not successful in helping the unemployed find jobs (O'Brien, 2005). Now, this program has also helped to place refugees in some low-paying jobs with the hope that it will allow them to get some work experience and show dedication to finding permanent employment.

Previously, these one-euro jobs were reserved for German and EU citizens; only if there were none available would the jobs be open to migrants. In May, 2016, German Chancellor Angela Merkel introduced several new refugee integration policies, including a suspension of the rule preventing refugees from taking part in the program. The new law dictated that 100,000

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new one-euro jobs would be created to help unemployed refugees supplement their benefits and enter the workforce. The program began on August 1, 2016, and by November of that year only 4,392 refugees were participating in those jobs, although there were over 12,000 applicants during that time (“‘One-euro job’ program”, 2016). This is a surprisingly low number considering the overall number of unemployed refugees, although there could be many reasons for such a low participation rate. Some refugees prefer to take part in job training programs that may increase their prospects of a better job in the future. Others may feel that the prospect of a one-euro job is degrading and they may want to look for better options, or prefer to remain unemployed altogether.

Some German cities have also been active in supporting internships and apprenticeships for refugees by working with employment agencies and companies to pair refugees with programs. Even if some businesses don’t necessarily see hiring refugees as a benefit, they may still see it as an issue of corporate responsibility. Siemens and Daimler are two large firms that set up internship programs for refugees, but there have also been a lot of smaller business to who have taken part (Hooper, Desiderio, & Salant, 2017). These programs, which can later turn into permanent jobs, are an important stepping stone for refugees who are trying to enter a career in a field in which they already have experience. Unfortunately, these programs aren’t readily available, and so competition to get an internship is extremely high. The number of refugees to have taken part in internships and apprenticeships in Germany is likely not higher than 10,000, yet Germany is currently hosting over one million migrants, many of whom are looking for work (Colby, Nicola, & Matthews, 2016).

**Swedish job integration programs.** Sweden has placed a lot of focus on training and integration programs instead of creating job-finding programs or low-wage jobs for migrants to

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work. Helping refugees learn Swedish is a major part of this integration plan. In 2014, a law called Swedish from Day One was created by Aida Hasnialic, a 1992 Bosnian refugee who became the Swedish Minister for Upper Secondary School, Adult Education and Training (Mucci, 2016). This \$1.2 billion program teaches refugees to speak Swedish right away to help them to better integrate into Swedish society. Through the program, refugees get to not only study the Swedish language, but also take part in other group activities like cooking, crafts, and outdoor trips, which can be very helpful in getting to know others. This can be a helpful first step in beginning to create a social network in the host country. The European Association for the Education of Adults estimates that 73,500 refugees participated in the program between August and December 2015 (Kozyra, 2016).

As most of Sweden's job training and integration programs take a year or two to complete, it is too soon to tell if this strategy is successful at all, let alone if it is more successful than Germany's strategy of creating low-wage jobs. It is a perfectly valid program idea; the language barrier is the first and most obvious obstacle to overcome when entering a different country. Refugees who complete the Swedish from Day One program may find themselves better able to navigate daily life in Sweden, but there are still biases and obstacles to overcome when they try to find jobs. Many companies don't want to hire refugees because they don't know for how long their residence permits are valid, or they don't consider their experience to be as valuable. Only time will tell if Swedish integration programs will ultimately allow refugees to find employment opportunities.

Some cities in Sweden have been experimenting with subsidizing refugee employment by offering to pay for up to eighty percent of the refugee's salary. This method of incentivization has proven to be an effective way to increase the hiring rates of refugees, especially in high-wage

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– Legrain says 1/3 are college grads

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skilled jobs (Aiyar et. al., 2016). Unfortunately, these subsidies are only temporary, and many refugees will lose their job once the government stops covering most of the cost of their employment (Hooper, Desiderio, & Salant, 2017). Even for refugees who are let go once the subsidy ends, the program can still serve as an effective to allow refugees to get some experience in the Swedish workforce and begin to build a new professional network. However, the program does little to encourage the long-term employment and integration of refugees if the employment isn't permanent.

**Finnish job integration efforts.** Finland has placed its focus on assessing the skills of refugees and asylum-seekers by attempting to find refugees with skills that can help to fill some of Finland's employment gaps. Migrants are provided with a professional skills assessment upon entering a reception center, and they can later take part in an even more comprehensive skills assessment after being granted refugee status. The initial assessment that migrants undergo after registration is used to figure out where they might best be resettled (Desiderio, 2016). This gives refugees a much better chance of entering the labor market relatively quickly as they aren't all competing for a few jobs in the same city. By formally recognizing the skills and experiences that some refugees bring, and by placing them in areas that have a shortage of that certain skill set, refugees can avoid having to work unskilled labor jobs for which they are vastly overqualified.

Some Finnish companies are taking it upon themselves to recruit educated refugees and provide the training they need. For example, Finland has been experiencing a sizable and constant shortage of software developers. One large tech company called Nord Software created a large internship program to teach refugees how to code, and connected with over a dozen other software companies to create jobs for the program graduates. Even refugees who had zero

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coding experience were able to join the program, all they needed was the desire to put in the effort to learn. Now the program is being expanded to train even more asylum-seekers, up to two hundred, who can then be used to fill the tech employment gaps not just in Finland, but in other European states too (Henley, 2016).

Finland's method of considering the skills that asylum-seekers bring is a great way to aid in labor market integration, but it likely only works so well for Finland because there are fewer asylum-seekers there than in some of the other EU states. Finland admitted over 32,000 asylum-seekers in 2015, a year when some other states saw hundreds of thousands of asylum applicants (Henley, 2016). The process of doing a serious skills assessment, and using that to decide on refugee resettlement, requires a lot of work on the part of the national asylum agencies. However, it is a tool that could prove very beneficial for other states to adopt.

**“Brain waste” of college educated refugees.** Refugees are often categorized in a stereotype of being poor and uneducated, but that is far from accurate. In fact, at the very beginning of a refugee crisis it is the wealthier and higher educated people who are the most likely to leave a country first as they are the most likely to have the knowledge, money, and means to do so. All countries have doctors, lawyers, scientists, and other high-education level jobs; even states like Syria that are experiencing brutal wars have a need for people with a high-level education. Unfortunately, once these highly-educated people become refugees in another country it is very difficult to find a job that is in the same field as their previous career, let alone a job that will provide a similar wage.

This “brain waste”, that is, ignoring the education and skill of some refugees, is extremely detrimental to host countries. There is a demand for skilled and vocational employees all over Europe, yet refugees struggle to find even low-level unskilled labor jobs. In Sweden, the

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demand “includes graduate occupations, such as software developers, physicists and doctors, as well as skilled vocational ones, such as bricklayers, nurses and mechanics” (Legrain, 2016, p.29). At the same time, about 30% of the refugees in Sweden had a college degree as of 2015. There are plenty of refugees with the knowledge and experience to fill these occupation gaps, but social bias makes it very difficult to refugees to fill these jobs. There needs to be a better way to assist educated refugees in finding jobs that properly fit their education and skill set. The jobs are out there, they just aren’t readily available to refugees.

**Refugee entrepreneurship.** Another way to support the integration of refugees into the labor market is to encourage entrepreneurship and the creation of small businesses. It requires far less government assistance and can ultimately help to stimulate local economies. Past studies on migrant influxes have shown how innovative and successful refugee businesses can be. Today, there are many million and billion dollar businesses that were created by refugees who fled from major conflicts during the twentieth century (Legrain, 2016). Some refugees even create innovative businesses based on their experiences with the asylum-seeking process by trying to provide a service that they saw as lacking. In a refugee camp in Jordan, one refugee set up a successful pizza delivery service. In that same camp, another refugee set up a beauty salon and wedding dress shop, and provided services to about 700 other refugees within the first year of operation (Parater, 2016).

Many refugees are ready and willing to open small business across Europe, but they don’t always know how to navigate the process of opening a business. Cities could easily develop simple courses that teach basic business skills and explain how to start a business, and that could go a long way in encouraging entrepreneurship. Access to professional networking and mentorship could also help refugee small businesses be successful. There also needs to be more

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effort to reduce barriers that refugees face in starting to start a business, like making it easier for them to get small loans for businesses. Small steps like these aren't very costly to the local government, but can be a good way to encourage refugees who are interested in being entrepreneurs.

### **Refugees as an Economic Investment**

Recently, it has been argued that refugees can ultimately serve as a significant source of economic growth for a country. One study of the EU, using data from the International Monetary Fund, claims that “investing on euro in welcoming refugees can yield nearly two euros in economic benefits within five years” (Legrain, 2016, p.7). It is extremely costly for countries to take in refugees initially as they arrive with virtually nothing; the state needs to provide them with shelter, food, and financial aid in addition to the cost of processing asylum claims and setting up integration programs. It is estimated that EU states spend between \$8,640 and \$12,960 per refugee. However, after refugees get settled, they can help stimulate the local economy through spending and even create jobs through the agencies that are created to help process and integrate refugees.

A case study of refugees from Vietnam in the 1970s can support this claim of refugees being a long-term economic benefit. They fled under very similar conditions; most had little English knowledge and many countries were hesitant to admit them. However, a study conducted in Canada showed that within 10 years, Vietnamese refugees had lower rates of unemployment and welfare dependency than natural Canadian citizens. The situation in the US is similar, as today Vietnamese refugees have higher employment rates and household incomes (Legrain, 2016).

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Germany is expected to see a GDP increase of 0.5 percent by 2030 as a result of the refugees it has admitted (Legrain, 2016). By comparison, Germany only spent an estimated 0.2 percent of its GDP in 2015 (Aiyar et. al., 2016). This economic benefit comes mainly from the jobs that refugees can take if they are given the opportunity to do so. There are employment gaps in every country where there is a shortage of people with the experience needed to employ them in certain industries. This issue applies to both low-skilled and high-skilled jobs, and there are plenty of refugees with the college education to take on those high-skilled jobs, too. In Sweden, for example, there are shortages in college-educated people to fill jobs in industries such as software development and medicine, but there is also a need for mechanics and bricklayers. It was also found that these were some of the most common fields in which refugees had experience (Legrain, 2016). If refugees are able to overcome the barriers to entering the workforce and have their skills recognized, then it can go a long way in helping the host states overcome employment shortages and ultimately boost production.

Refugees are also beneficial for the European workforce at a time when Europe's population is aging faster than it is reproducing (Aiyar et. al., 2016). This aging population means that the workforce is lacking in young workers, a problem that can be fixed by the overwhelmingly young population of incoming refugees. Over 600,000 of the 1.2 million asylum applicants entering the EU in 2016 were between the ages of 18 and 34 (Eurostat, 2017). Refugees can help to fill those employment gaps caused by the aging workforce, which in turn is beneficial to the economy.

In addition to benefitting the host country, refugees can also continue to benefit their country of origin through remittances. Many refugees will send money back to their families back home once they are employed. In 2015 migrants sent an estimated \$431 billion in

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remittances back to developing countries, an amount much larger than what is provided by international aid (The World Bank, 2016). This money can go a long way in helping the development of countries of origin, which in turn can help to reduce the issues that caused the refugee to flee in the first place.

### **Social Integration of Refugees**

“Social integration” is a very vague term that can be interpreted in different ways. In this context, it will be used to differentiate from efforts to educate and employ refugees. Social integration will refer to the ability of a refugee to become members of society in their host country by having access to basics such as long-term housing and personal safety. This also involves natural residents of the host country, as they must be relatively welcoming or, at the very least, impartial to the arrival of refugees to allow for complete social integration.

### **Long-term Refugee Housing**

Although housing is an international right granted to refugees in the 1951 Convention, permanent living accommodations for refugees is an issue that states are struggling to figure out. There is a delicate balance between finding an affordable way for the state to provide housing, and creating housing that isn't so low-quality that it is almost inhumane. Care also must be taken to avoid creating ghettos where poverty and crime might flourish in the future. It is easy to build barrack-like buildings that force people to live in close quarters and provide few amenities, but those living conditions can border on inhumane and certainly shouldn't be considered as a long-term solution.

Currently, there is very little data about where refugees live outside of refugee camps, what kind of conditions they live in, and how much it costs to provide that housing. What is clear, however, is that Europe is experiencing a critical shortage of refugee housing. Data from

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2009-2012, before refugee movement was unsustainable, shows a notable decrease in affordable housing, and an increase in the number of families on waiting lists to be placed in social housing (Pittini, Gheklere, Dijol, & Kiss, 2015). Now, European countries are struggling to accommodate thousands of extra people in a housing market that was already failing to provide enough social housing for the economically vulnerable.

Many refugees are being housed in abandoned buildings that have been temporarily converted to house people. In Berlin, for example, the old Tempelhof Airport, which has been inactive for several years, has been repurposed to house an estimated 7,000 refugees (Smale, 2016). White temporary screens have been placed to section off the hangers into 25 square-meter “rooms” that have been filled with six bunk beds each. Some other converted buildings are slightly more appropriate for the job of housing refugees, like the Beyernkaserne in Munich, an abandoned military facility, and the City Plaza Hotel in Athens. However, none of these are long-term living solutions, but rather emergency measures erected to keep refugees from sleeping on the streets in tents. In order to fully integrate refugees on a social level, a more long-term solution, like apartments with running water and plumbing, needs to be more available for refugee use.

Currently, most of the housing focus seems to be on finding temporary shelters to alleviate the number of refugees who are still without basic shelter. Much less consideration is being given to finding long-term housing options. Ultimately, there needs to be a balance between the ease of creating a lot of short-term accommodations, and the time it takes to create more expensive long-term shelters. Cheap shelters are quick to build, but they don't last long and they aren't a long-term solution. Ultimately, refusal to invest in proper long-term housing accommodations will be costly to the state as the housing shortage worsens. Long-term shelters

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need to be complete buildings with running water; those are much more expensive and time consuming to build, but are very important to the social integration of refugees.

Many refugees migrate with the intention of joining family members in another country. Through this family reunification process an immediate family member who is already established in the host state must sponsor the related asylum-seeker. Migrants seeking family reunification make up a significant portion of all asylum-seekers. In 2014, Germany issued over 21,000 family reunification visas to Syrians alone, and Sweden issued 13,400 of the visas to migrants of various nationalities in 2015 (Brenner, 2016). These visas are an effective way to socially integrate refugees. If the family member in the host state is fully integrated with a home and a job, making them a qualified sponsor, then that should help with the integration of the family member who is entering the country. Furthermore, it gives the new refugee somewhere to live and frees up room in the overfilled refugee shelters.

There are also a handful of cases where local citizens have volunteered to take in refugees, or entire refugee families. These host programs are not common, but they are extremely beneficial in integrating the few refugees that do take part. These programs are often run by small nonprofit organizations that match host families with refugee families in need of homes. It would be beneficial for the state to provide funding to these hosting programs to expand their capabilities. For a refugee family to have a place to live with another supportive family could be an extremely efficient way to quickly integrate refugees.

The refugee housing shortage is one of the biggest issues for all states involved in hosting refugees and migrants, and it needs to be addressed immediately. There needs to be a more concerted government effort to either build accommodations or convert more appropriate buildings into long-term refugee housing. Building housing is a bigger time commitment and a

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costlier investment, but it could also be a good employment opportunity for refugees. Either way, it is important to get refugees off the streets; as more and more refugees have to sleep in tents and camps, there will likely be increasing levels of discontent from refugees and local citizens.

### **Hate Crimes and Refugee Security**

To succeed in social integration, refugees need to feel safe and secure not only with their housing and economic situation, but physically too. Blatant violent hate crimes, both physical and verbal, have been an all too common occurrence across Europe. These attacks range from attacks on individuals and families to attacks on entire refugee reception centers and housing accommodations. Unfortunately, recorded numbers on attacks, especially attacks on individuals, are likely much lower than they should be due to the nature of hate crimes and fear of reporting them. Many instances go unreported, and many states don't track the crimes very well. In some countries, it is almost entirely up to civil society organizations to gather reports and data on hate crimes.

Germany is one of the few EU states that does track hate crimes, thanks to a complex classifying and reporting system. In 2016 there were 3,533 attacks on refugees and refugee housing in Germany (Deutsche Welle, 2017). That means that there were about ten reported attacks per day. In 2015 there were 1,031 attacks on German asylum accommodations alone, often in the form of arson. This is a huge increase from the 199 incidents in the year prior (EU Agency for Fundamental Human Rights, 2016). The western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia appears to be the most dangerous for refugees with over 200 attacks by right-wing groups on refugee accommodations. This is more than triple the number of housing attacks in most other states (Schumacher, 2016).

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Every state with a significant refugee population is experiencing anti-refugee sentiment that is sometimes expressed in the form of rallies. These rallies are usually led by extreme right movements like PEGIDA, or conservative political parties like Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD), France's National Front, and the Party for Freedom from the Netherlands. These rallies have often been blamed for inciting people to commit violence and arson. In fact, one study in Berlin reported that instances of hate crimes were greater around the time of PEGIDA rallies (Younes, 2016). The hate speech that is used at PEGIDA rallies is undeniable; even most conservative political parties in Europe have denounced the PEGIDA movement. Furthermore, the fact that many rallies are held in the vicinity of refugee shelters is endangering the security and wellbeing of local refugees. Overcrowded and unprotected refugee shelters make easy targets for hate crimes and arson attacks. Unfortunately, little is being done to put a stop to the inflammatory and Islamophobic rallies that seem to be fueling crime. The leader of PEGIDA is currently under investigation for hate speech and inflammatory remarks, but few other people are facing the consequences of verbal threats (Connolly, 2015).

Social integration is a two-way process; refugees need to make the effort to become self-sufficient, but the state government and citizens also need to take steps to reduce barriers to integration. Right-wing protests play a huge role in fueling violent anti-refugee sentiment. Every EU state, not just Germany, needs to step up security and risk analysis efforts for refugee safety. The line between free speech and hate speech needs to be enforced; rallies preaching violence and racism are only serving to fuel attacks on refugees and hinder the integration process.

### **Unaccompanied Child Refugees**

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Unaccompanied minors have been a special concern of the EU. They are too young to enter the workforce, so focus must be put on social integration and getting them into local schools. Children under the age of 18 can end up alone in Europe for several reasons. Sometimes parents are not able to migrate, so they send their child alone to seek a better life. Unfortunately, sometimes children and family members are simply separated during the migration process, or family members die during migration and the child has no choice but to continue forward alone. Given the chaotic and deadly nature of maritime migration, these scenarios are all too common. In 2015 there were over 88,000 unaccompanied children, that's 23% of all minors who entered the EU and a huge increase from the 23,000 unaccompanied minors in 2014 (Eurostat, 2016a). About 57% of these children were aged 16 or 17, while only 13% were under the age of 14.

These children are often invisible to the government and tend to fall through the cracks in the asylum-seeking process. In Italy, a major location for unaccompanied minors, an estimated one third of registered unaccompanied minors disappeared every year between 2012 and 2014. That number grew to a shocking 56% in the first eight months of 2015 (Ferrara et. al., 2016). One theory states that the missing children are being kidnapped and trafficked by organizations who want them for illegal labor or prostitution. However, it is also likely that the children are simply leaving Italy for a more favorable, and less overcrowded, state in the EU after registering. Regardless of the reason, it is a huge failure on the part of the state to look after these unaccompanied children. Providing care and a rushed asylum process should be a primary concern for states if there is any hope of integrating these children.

About 40% of all unaccompanied minors in the EU applied for asylum in Sweden in 2016 (Eurostat, 2016a). Sweden is probably a popular destination for children because of the

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benefits they have access to; children are entitled to schooling, housed in group homes instead of detention centers, and assigned as guardian and a lawyer. They also have rights to health care, although accessing it can be challenging simply because the whole system is under so much pressure. There are also delays in processing child asylum applications due to the backlogged application system (Riddell, 2016).

Aside from the issues in the application process, one of the biggest issues for minors in Sweden lies in the support and guardianship of the children. Sometimes there is a delay in assigning children a guardian, leaving them without a caretaker for months at a time. Guardians are important for the wellbeing of the unaccompanied minors; they provide support, distribute government-provided funds, and help to educate the children on Swedish culture. Unfortunately, not all guardians are able to properly fulfil their role. Some are assigned too many kids to be able to provide full support, and some are simply too burnt out and over worked to invest too much time and emotional support into the wellbeing of the child. Guardians are volunteers who receive a small stipend for their duty; many are busy with full time jobs in addition to acting as the guardian of multiple children (Riddell, 2016).

Sweden is on the right track for integrating unaccompanied minors, and other EU states would benefit from following Sweden's policies, but the system needs to be upgraded to accommodate the tens of thousands of children that Sweden is taking in. Their current system may work for some states that are taking in fewer than 10,000 children, but Sweden needs to increase its capacity and bring on more guardians with higher levels of training. Many of these kids have been physically or sexually abused in addition to carrying the weight of mental trauma from experiences back in their home state. Access to a supportive guardian, and access to health services through that guardian, is crucial to the integration of these children.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Studies have consistently shown that refugees can be a huge asset to a country.

Unfortunately, with the EU's current policies on asylum-seeking and integration, the road to refugee success is constantly being blocked by political resistance and a lack of transparency. Most of the current migration policies weren't created to manage a migration event of this size. To begin with, the idea of a person having to set foot in a new country to be able to apply for asylum is outdated and endangering thousands, or even millions, of lives. This rule was widely interpreted from the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951, although it is never specifically stated. This method of managing asylum-seekers was certainly never meant to apply to migrations in such large numbers, and it came about in a time when borders were less hardened and easier to access. With today's technology and fast modes of communication, there is little reason for a person to have to wait to enter a new country to apply for asylum. In mass migration situations, such as the one Europe is experiencing, the rules on how to process asylum applicants need to be altered to accommodate such a massive influx of people.

In cases of mass migration, refugees should be allowed to apply for asylum in any European country from any location (Hansen, 2017). Many refugees are stuck in camps in the Middle East and Africa; if they could apply for asylum while still located in those camps, it would help to reduce the number of people desperately trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea just to set foot on a Greek or Italian island. It would also take some of the burden off of Greece and Italy, who are trying to cope with the highest numbers of new refugees upon arrival. Asylum-seekers shouldn't be immediately required to register themselves upon entering one of those two countries, instead they could apply for asylum in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, or any of the other EU states who are taking on a smaller share of the refugee crisis. However, this

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process would require the host states to then take responsibility for transporting the refugees they accept, which would be a costly endeavor. The EU is already struggling to continue resettling just a few thousand refugees a year, so the current asylum processing system would require sizeable upgrades in funding and capacity.

The Dublin Regulation is another aspect of the EU's migration policy that urgently needs to be abolished or drastically altered. The Dublin Regulation is the primary cause of the bottleneck effect that is causing Italy and Greece to be responsible for processing so many asylum applications. The regulation simply wasn't meant to apply to mass migration events. Ultimately, it is harming the EU's ability to share the migrant crisis and properly distribute refugees. It also places even more responsibility, and a higher cost, of resettlement on the EU states instead of letting migrants naturally settle in less crowded areas. Asylum-seekers should be allowed to place their applications in whichever state they want to seek refuge. Once their applications are submitted, then the effect of the Dublin Regulation should be enacted, keeping migrants from submitting applications in multiple countries.

Even without changing the method of accepting applications, the resettlement program is in dire need of expansion. Greece and Italy can't remain responsible for the majority of Mediterranean migrants; they simply can't keep up with the numbers. Their asylum centers are currently so backlogged that it will take people months or years to receive a verdict. The EU needs to agree on a common resettlement system that evenly distributes refugees throughout the region to take the strain off of Greece and Italy. Evenly distributing refugees can help keep overcrowded areas from experiencing severe housing, school, and employment shortages. There have already been some proposals to create such a plan, and many states have pledged to take in a certain number of refugees, but those numbers are not being reached. The EU needs to do

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more to incentivize states to take in refugees by providing aid for their integration. Alternately, the EU could begin to penalize states that do not meet their agreed upon number of refugees.

For states that are taking in refugees, there are many different program upgrades that could help to integrate refugees efficiently and effectively. In order to improve economic integration, it is crucial to reduce barriers for refugees to access employment opportunities. This means that any states that currently require a waiting period between when a refugee enters the country and when they can enter the workforce need to remove that hold. Refugees and asylum-seekers need immediate access to the workforce.

The idea of assisting refugees, or even allowing them to enter a country, has become such a political issue for states throughout the EU that any big policy changes to assist migrants usually end up getting blocked by an opposing party. This is severely hindering integration efforts across the region. If significant aid can't be provided at the EU or state level, then that responsibility needs to be handed over the NGOs that can provide that service. Currently, there are many small organizations that exist to help refugees in many ways like providing meals, helping refugees enter the workforce, and finding homes for refugees. These organizations need to be granted the power and funding to do more for refugees. Unfortunately, there is often a power struggle between NGOs and the UNHCR when they work side by side in crisis situations (Schenkenberg van Mierop, 2004). However, giving NGOs more power to take over in this refugee crisis may reduce the need to use UNHCR resources, and therefore keep the organizations from clashing.

In addition to giving NGOs more power to provide aid, much more authority needs to be handed over at the city level. Cities understand what the shortcomings in their refugee assistance are, they just need the ability to develop their integration programs. That means that the barriers

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that cities face in requesting funding need to be reduced, and there needs to be improved cooperation at the state level in granting that funding for integration. Currently, cities aren't able to get funding directly from the EU, the funds have to be requested by the state. By the time funds trickle down to the city level, the funding doesn't always go to the right places. Removing these city funding barriers can speed up the whole process and allow cities to really focus on some of the priorities of refugee integration.

Finally, it is imperative that refugees are brought into the policymaking process and that their concerns are heard. It doesn't make sense to develop policies with no input from the people who are being affected by the legislation. It is important to keep lines of communication and collaboration open to ensure that the policies that are being developed are truly what is needed by refugees and asylum-seekers. Germany, for example, has its one-euro job program, but that may not really be what refugees need. Refugees in Germany may be in need of access to more skilled jobs, not more unskilled labor, but those concerns haven't been identified yet. It is easy for the policymakers to distance themselves from the issue, but really listening to what is needed by refugees is what is going to make effective policy happen.

### **Conclusion**

The migrant crisis that Europe is facing today is unprecedented for many reasons. Not since World War II have such a massive number of people attempted to relocate so quickly. To add to the complexity, these migrants are coming from many different areas. Most are fleeing from political turmoil or outright war. Syrians certainly make up the highest percentage of the refugees, but many different nationalities from Africa and the Middle East are also involved, making it incredibly difficult to provide aid for the source of the problem because the problems are so widespread. Additionally, migrants crossing through the Mediterranean are particularly

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hard to track or put a stop to, which is part of the reason so many people cross by sea. Maritime boundaries are much more challenging to control than land borders, and migrants will naturally seek the path of least resistance when trying to migrate. However, this is leading to the bottleneck effect that is overwhelming some states and slowing down the whole application process.

Poor management of the asylum-seeking process and the continued use of old, inapplicable, policies is causing deaths and inhumane treatment of the migrants who are seeking refuge. Bottlenecks in the asylum-seeking and registration process are keeping migrants from being able to get on with their asylum application. Instead, they are forced to sit and wait, sometimes in poor weather conditions for days or weeks. Anyone with a well-founded fear for their life in their country of origin has the right to seek asylum, but that right is hardly being fulfilled under the current system. People are being turned away and denied asylum simply because EU states only have the capacity to accept migrants under the most dire conditions right now.

Asylum and integration policy is slowly developing, but much more needs to be done to really ensure that refugees are receiving fair treatment and complete integration. A better integration program could be a huge boost to refugees. Ultimately, getting them involved in the work force is the biggest priority, and arguably the end goal. Not only is it ethically right to make sure that refugees succeed in these host countries, but it can be a major benefit to the whole EU. Refugees can be a great economic opportunity for states, they just need more organized assistance to get them to that point.

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